



# Imagining Forth the Incarnation: A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh

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**Imagining Forth the Incarnation:  
A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh**

A dissertation presented  
by  
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to  
The Faculty of Harvard Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
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in the subject of  
Comparative Theology

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## **Imagining Forth the Incarnation:**

### **A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh**

#### Abstract

This dissertation is an exercise in comparative theology between two pre-modern textual traditions, one Islamic the other Christian. I read these traditions together, interreligiously, in search of critical and embodied constructive interpretations with a view to our contemporary world. The Christian textual tradition under discussion is the Latin corpus of Johannes Scotus Eriugena (d. *circa* 877), an Irish theologian whose main influences were Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), Pseudo-Dionysius (who wrote before 532), Gregory of Nyssa (d. *circa* 395), and Maximus Confessor (d. 662). The Islamic textual tradition under discussion is the *dīvān* (collected love lyrics, *ghazal* [sg.]) of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ of Shīrāz (d. *circa* 1390) along with a 17<sup>th</sup>-century, South Asian Persian commentary entitled *A Mystical Commentary on the Love Lyrics of Ḥāfiẓ* (*Sharḥ-i ‘irfānī-yi ghazalhā-yi Ḥāfiẓ*), written by a certain Abū al-Ḥasan Khatamī Lāhūrī, whose reading is configured principally by two Islamic discursive traditions (which had coalesced nearly seamlessly in his South Asian context): the first known as the *madhhab-i ‘ishq* (School of Love), and the second known as the School of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240).

This dissertation employs the method of comparative theology informed by the work of Francis X. Clooney, SJ. By reading Eriugena’s corpus through an Islamic theo-poetics, it seeks to redress the highly rationalistic and disembodied reading of his oeuvre that prevails in much of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholarship on the Irish theologian. Rather than a philosophical idealist devoid of any Incarnational theology, the function of the imagination (*khayāl*), metaphor (*majāz*), poetry, the Imaginal World, and passionate love (*‘ishq*), all central to an Islamic theo-poetics (as constructed in this dissertation through a reading of Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī), is applied to Eriugena’s theology to draw out the

constitutive and formative function of the Incarnation in his work. This comparative exercise illuminates the Incarnational theology of Eriugena's thought otherwise occluded by his dialectical reasoning.

The texts are read in the context of their respective historical and intellectual discursive traditions, but in a way that emphasizes the resources they possess for a liberating praxis today. A theo-poetics of the flesh is constructed through this exercise in interreligious, comparative theology. Drawing from the thought of Paul Ricoeur and Cornelius Castoriadis concerning social imaginaries, I transpose this theo-poetics of the flesh into an Incarnational imaginary. The formative function of imaginaries is explored and subsequently related to the Incarnation to suggest that the flesh is constitutive of our relationship not just to each other and the world, but to God. A theo-poetics of the flesh is an Incarnational imaginary that functions to disrupt and subvert dominant and oppressive social imaginaries that have no relation to the Word-made-flesh. Just as the reading of these texts is attuned to their poetics, *how* texts mean, likewise is a theo-poetics of the flesh attuned to *how* we may imagine forth the Incarnation in spaces and communities today: *theo(poïe)sis* is our communal *theosis*.

In addition to contributing to scholarship on Eriugena and to constructive Catholic theology, this dissertation also produces critical insights into the fields of Persian literature (particularly *ṣūfī* poetry), the Islamic mystical tradition ("sufism"), and the state of 17<sup>th</sup>-century, South Asian Islamic discourse. It challenges the dualistic (secular-religious) reading of Ḥāfīz's love lyrics prevalent in the field of Persian literature, and the prominent, modern scholarly conceptions of the purpose of mystical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*) vis-à-vis commentaries on Persian poems. Together, these contributions provide a nondual conceptualization of theology, anthropology, cosmology, and interpretive traditions. This nonduality configures the Incarnational imaginary in the constructive portions of the dissertation.

# Table of Contents

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Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
Acknowledgements .....	xi
Abbreviations and Scriptural Sources .....	xiv
A note on transliterations .....	xvi

## **Introduction: Incarnation, Poetics, and Imagination from Ireland to Paris, from Shīrāz to Lāhūr .....** 1

### **Introduction .....** 1

<b>Eriugena, <i>Ratio</i>, Spiritualization, and Idealism.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Eriugena: Brief Background .....	4
Eriugena’s Sources.....	6
Eriugena’s Readers .....	7
Eriugena: The <i>Periphyseon</i> and His Other Œuvre.....	10
The <i>Periphyseon</i> : Recent Scholarship .....	11
Against the Spiritualization of the Incarnation: Eriugena as Cautionary Tale .....	15

<b>Ḥāfīz, Lāhūrī, and Islamic Poetics: Against the Spiritualization of Imaginative Metaphors. ....</b>	<b>18</b>
Ḥāfīz: Intellectual Contexts .....	21
Ḥāfīz: Brief Background.....	22
The <i>madhhab-i ‘ishq</i> .....	27
The School of Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī: The Akbarian Tradition .....	33
Ḥāfīz, Re-Interpreted .....	36
Abū al-Ḥasan Khatamī Lāhūrī .....	39
Transposing Metaphors from Text to World: Against the Spiritualization of Imaginative Metaphors .....	43

<b>Eriugena Read Through an Islamic Theo-Poetics: Retrieving the Incarnation .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Poetics .....	48
Theo-Poetic Interreligious Reading .....	51

### **Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī Read Through the Incarnational: Retrieving the Imagination .....** 54

<b>A Liberating Praxis to Comparative Theology: Re-Centering the Incarnation.....</b>	<b>56</b>
Comparative Theology: Transgressing Boundaries.....	57
Comparative Theology: Deconstructing Boundaries.....	59
A Liberating Praxis to Comparative Theology: De-Centering a Reified “Christ”, Re- Centering the Incarnation.....	61
Comparative Theology as Critical, Engaged Pedagogy .....	64

### **A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh: The Incarnation as a Christian Imaginary .....** 66

Francis X Clooney's <i>His Hiding Place is Darkness</i> .....	66
Theo-Poetics: From Absence to Presence, from Text to Action, from Word to Flesh .....	67
Mayra Rivera's <i>Poetics of the Flesh</i> .....	68
A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh: Eriugena and an Islamic Theo-Poetics.....	69
<b>Chapter Outlines</b> .....	<b>70</b>
Theophany as Analogical Comparand .....	70
Outlines .....	72
Note on Gender Pronouns for God .....	75
<b>Chapter 1: Eriugena and Theophany: Disclosing the Poetic</b> .....	<b>76</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>76</b>
Poetics and Theophany .....	78
<b>Eriugena's Understanding of Theophany in <i>The Celestial Hierarchy</i></b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>Theophany and Love</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>Theophany and Textual Enactment of Desire</b> .....	<b>87</b>
Theophany: The Movement of God.....	88
The <i>Periphyseon</i> : Textual Enactment of Theophany.....	90
Theophany as Productive of Desire .....	92
<b>Theophany and <i>Plus-Quam</i> Theology</b> .....	<b>94</b>
Defining Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology .....	95
Bringing Together Opposites: <i>Plus-Quam</i> Theology .....	96
<i>Plus-Quam</i> Discourse: A Mirror of Theophany .....	99
The Theophanic World: Always More-Than.....	102
<b>Theophany and the Incarnation of the Word</b> .....	<b>103</b>
God is Beyond by Being Within: A Non-Dialectical, Dynamic Conclusion .....	103
The Incarnational and the Theophanic.....	105
From the Dialectical to the Poetic and Imaginal.....	108
Mayra Rivera, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Francis X. Clooney: Shaping Theo-Poetics .....	110
Towards the Theo-Poetic: Demanding <i>More Than</i> the <i>Periphyseon</i> Offers .....	112
<b>Chapter 2: Ḥāfiẓ and Theophany Illuminating Eriugena: A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh</b> .....	<b>113</b>
<b>Theophany and the Human Person</b> .....	<b>113</b>
<i>Ghazal</i> 148.....	113
The <i>Ghazal</i> 's Form: Unexpected Disruption.....	115
Theophany of Loveliness, Passionate Love, and Mercy.....	117
Theophanic Cosmology to Theophanic Anthropology.....	120
Suffering Passionate Love: A Way of Knowing Beyond Reason .....	123

Multiplicity and Separation: Fruitful Suffering, Perpetual Desire.....	127
A Theo-Poetics of Desire.....	130
<b>Comparative Insights: The Choice for Love and Suffering .....</b>	<b>131</b>
The Elevation of Love above Reason .....	131
The Movement of Suffering.....	138
Making a Choice: Suffering Love or Idealistic Love .....	142
<b>Theophany and Unveiling God for Others.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<i>Ghazal 22</i> .....	145
The Choice to Unveil or Conceal God from Self and Others .....	145
Theophany's Enticing Discord .....	146
Revealing God for Others .....	149
The Fake Ascetic: Fleeing the World .....	155
Humanity's Vocation: To Reveal the Divine Names .....	158
<b>Comparative Insights: Entering Within for More-Than.....</b>	<b>160</b>
Infinite Contemplation of Theophanies .....	161
The Ray of the Flesh: The Material Uplifting Toward the Immaterial.....	163
The Incarnational Structuring of Theophany.....	165
<b>Theophany and Theo-Poetics of the Flesh.....</b>	<b>167</b>
The Sublation of Theophany to the Incarnation .....	169
The Theo-Poetics of the Flesh in the Gospel of John .....	172
Incarnational Living and Suffering Love.....	174
Theophany from <i>Ratio</i> to <i>ishq</i> : Towards a Catholic-Islamic Theo-Poetics of the Flesh .....	176
<b>Chapter 3: From Theophany to Metaphor and the Imaginal in Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Paul Ricœur's Theory of Metaphor .....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Metaphor, Imagination, Nondualism .....</b>	<b>187</b>
Retrieving Nondualism as Dynamic Imaginary.....	192
<b>Metaphor, Imagination, the Imaginal World, and Poetry in the Islamic Tradition .....</b>	<b>197</b>
Metaphor: The Poetics of Speaking and Being.....	197
The Imaginal in the School of Ibn 'Arabī.....	200
Poetic Creation, Poetic Interpretation: Text and World.....	203
Qur'ānic Revelation and Poetic Imagination.....	209
Imagining Discourse and Action Together .....	210
<b>Poetic Imagination as Unveiling.....</b>	<b>213</b>
<i>Ghazal 297</i> .....	213
Ḥāfiẓ's Poetics .....	214

Imagining the Impossible, Poetics of the Impossible .....	216
Imagining Affection in Affliction .....	220
<i>Ghazal</i> 349 .....	222
Neither Self-Annihilation Nor Self-Attachment: Imagining Subsistence in God.....	224
Acting Radically Within the World .....	225
The World is the Metaphor: Imaginary Perception and the Inversion of Reality.....	227
Interpreting Metaphor, Perceiving Reality—Nondually.....	229
The Real Effect of the Imagination on Physical Senses .....	232
Transposing Metaphors, Translating Poetry .....	234
Dynamic Imaginary and the Desire for the Impossible .....	236
<b>Chapter 4: "As it Were": The Liminal Space of Metaphor .....</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Natura Understood: The Removal of Dualities in the <i>Periphyseon</i> .....</b>	<b>241</b>
First Removal of Duality: All Things Are Eternal in the Word and Made in Their Effects .....	244
Second Removal of Duality: All Things Are Eternal and Simultaneously Made in the Word .....	251
Third Removal of Duality: God and Creation .....	253
Incarnation as Nondual Truth: Moving Beyond Synthesis.....	259
<b><i>Veluti</i>: The Metaphor of the Created World .....</b>	<b>262</b>
Apophasis, Kataphasis, <i>Plus-Quam</i> Discourse, and Metaphor.....	264
<i>Veluti</i> as Metaphorical Marker.....	267
<b>Liminality from World to Self: Learning from an Islamic Theo-Poetics.....</b>	<b>272</b>
<i>Ghazal</i> 107 .....	272
Subsisting in God, Imaginally.....	273
Neither Annihilated, Nor United: The Wine Tavern of this World .....	274
Intertextual Metaphors: Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī's <i>Lama'āt</i> .....	276
Perduring Ambiguity .....	278
Engaging the Theo-Poetics of the World through God .....	282
<i>Ghazal</i> 191 .....	285
Ocular Vision of the Real via the Heart: Imaginal Perception .....	286
<b>Seeing Through False Binaries, Seeing the Real Through the World .....</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>Chapter 5: From the Imagination to the Incarnation: Disrupting <i>Ratio</i>, Imagining Infinitely .....</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>296</b>
Imaginariness: The Disruptive and Creative Power of Images and the Imagination ...	296
<b>The Image of God: The Human Person within Metaphorical Tension.....</b>	<b>302</b>
The Nonduality of the Human Person .....	303
Residing Within the Divine Word: The Unconfined Human Person .....	306

<i>Plus-Quam</i> Imaginary: A Dynamic Vision of the Human.....	310
<b>"All Things...Are Images": Phantasies, Theophanies, and Metaphors.....</b>	<b>311</b>
The Incarnation as Exemplary of Human <i>Theosis</i> .....	312
The Perpetual Crossing Over ( <i>Metaphero</i> ) of All Things .....	315
Perpetual Searching as Dynamic Imaginary: “All things...are images” .....	318
<b>"Christ is Our Epiphany": The Omnipresence of Jesus's Flesh .....</b>	<b>322</b>
Christ’s Flesh is Omnipresent.....	323
Christ is Our Epiphany.....	324
Flesh and Words: Perpetual Crossing Over .....	325
Entering into the Wedding Feast of the Lord.....	327
<b>The Incarnation as a Theo-Poetics of the Flesh.....</b>	<b>328</b>
The Incarnation as the Manner of Nonduality .....	330
The Incarnation, Ricœur’s Theory of Iconicity, and Castoriadis’s Social Imaginary: Perceiving Incarnationally .....	332
From Poetics of the Flesh to Theo-Poetics of the Flesh: Entering Within to Go Beyond .....	333
<b>Learning from Ḥāfiẓ: A Theo-Poetics of Broken-Heartedness.....</b>	<b>334</b>
<i>Ghazal</i> 136.....	334
The Heart Capacious Enough for the Real: Becoming Broken-Hearted Like Jesus	336
The Real Heart is the Corporeal Heart.....	337
The Capaciousness of the Heart: Mirroring God’s Infinitude .....	339
Broken-Heartedness: Experiencing Beyond the Intellect .....	341
Subsisting in God Subsisting in Us.....	344
<b>Theologizing the Poetic, Interreligiously .....</b>	<b>345</b>
An Islamic Poetics in Eriugena.....	345
Theology, “as it were a poetess” .....	348
The Centrality of the Heart in an Islamic Theo-Poetics: Imagining God in the World .....	352
The Heart and the Imagination as Liminal Spaces .....	355
Theology as Imagining Forth the Incarnation.....	357
Theology: Extending the Imagination into Embodied Practices .....	359
<b>Chapter 6: Imagining Forth the Incarnation: A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh..</b>	<b>363</b>
<b>The Poetics Between Hermeneutics .....</b>	<b>363</b>
<b>The Incarnation and the Heart's Imaginal Function: A Catholic-Islamic Nondualism</b>	<b>367</b>
Living Through the Incarnate Word .....	368
The Mutual Subsistence of the Heart and the Real: The Double Within-ness of the Incarnate Word.....	371
The Incarnate Word of our Eyesight: The Incarnation as Our Imaginary .....	372
The Word of God, “Always Present to the Eyes” .....	373
Returning to Metaphor and <i>Plus-Quam</i> Discourse: Seeing Christ Our Epiphany....	377

God's Action <i>In Us</i> in this World of Metaphor .....	380
Incarnational Imaginary: Overturning Unimaginative Ideologies .....	382
<b>Subverting Perverse Power: Moving the Eschaton/<i>Reditus</i> to the Present.....</b>	<b>383</b>
Abandoning Dialectical Reasoning for Poetic Imagination.....	388
Reuniting the Spirit with the Flesh: Incarnating God in the Dynamism of Enfleshed Living .....	391
The Incarnate Word Becoming Our Corporeal Senses .....	392
The Incarnation as the Christian Imaginary: Perpetual Incarnating of God, Perpetual Subversion of Perverse Power .....	395
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>398</b>
<b>An Incarnational Imaginary: Communal Theo(poie)sis.....</b>	<b>398</b>
A Concluding Example .....	412
Postlude: A Biographical Example .....	415
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>418</b>
<b>Primary Sources .....</b>	<b>418</b>
<b>Secondary Sources.....</b>	<b>423</b>

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# Abbreviations and Scriptural Sources

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The following abbreviations appear in the footnotes; see bibliography for the full reference information to the sources, listed in primary sources under original author's name.

## Johannes Scotus Eriugena

- PP* *Periphyseon*, or *De Divisione Naturae* (five volumes)  
*CCH* *Commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius's The Celestial Hierarchy*  
*HJ* *Homily on The Gospel of John*  
*CJ* *Commentary on The Gospel of John*  
*Ca* *Carmina* (collection of poetry)

Volume (Roman numeral), page (Arabic numeral), line (Arabic numeral), and manuscript section (three numbers followed by letter) will follow abbreviations, whenever applicable. E.g., *PP* I, 5, 59-61(443B) = volume I, p. 5, lines 59-61 of the *Periphyseon*; 443B will assist readers in locating the section in any English translation of Eriugena's Latin texts that are available.)

## Latin Christian Texts

- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. Tornhout, Belgium: Typographi Brepols, 1953-  
*CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vindobonae/Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky. 1866-1992.

CCSL and CSEL will be followed by volume number, page number, and, when applicable, lines.

## Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī

- DKh* *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ Khvājah Shams Al-Dīn Muḥammad*  
(Khānlārī's critical edition of Ḥāfiẓ's Persian love lyrics, Volume I)  
*DAV* *The Collected Lyrics of Ḥāfiẓ of Shīrāz*  
(Peter Avery's English translation of Ḥāfiẓ's Persian love lyrics)  
*DFo* *Le Divan: Œuvre Lyrique d'un Spirituel en Perse au XIVe Siècle*  
(Charles-Henri de Fouchécour's French translation of Ḥāfiẓ's Persian love lyrics)

## Abū al-Ḥasan Khatamī Lāhūrī

- SH* *Sharḥ-i 'irfānī-i ghazalḥā-yi Ḥāfiẓ*  
(Mystical Commentary on the Love Lyrics of Ḥāfiẓ, four volumes)

Volume (Roman numeral), *Ghazal*/Love Lyric #, and page (Arabic numeral) will follow abbreviations, whenever applicable.

**E.g., *DKh* #148, 312; *SH II*, #152, 1,046; *DAv* #148, 201; *DFo* #148, 452.** = Lyric #148, p. 312 of Khānlārī's critical edition; volume II, commentary on lyric #152 on p. 1,046 of Lāhūrī's *Sharḥ-i 'irfānī-i ghazalhā-yi Ḥāfiẓ*; Lyric #148, p. 201 of Avery's English translation; Lyric #148, p. 452 of Fourchécour's French translation. See bibliography for these editions.

## **Qur'ān**

Unless otherwise specified, citations from the Qur'ān are taken from *The Study Quran*, tr. and ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr et alia. *Sūra*/Chapter number precede verse(s): Qur'ān 3:4-7 is *sūra*/chapter three, verses four through seven.

## **Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament**

Unless otherwise specified, citations from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*. Eriugena cites a version nearly identical to the Latin Vulgate, with some minor differences, which I re-translate when it appears within a larger portion of a citation.

***A note on transliterations:***

Arabic transliteration into the Roman alphabet follows the ALA-LC Romanization Tables for the Arabic language available on the Library of Congress website.

(<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/roman.html>, accessed 1 April 2019).

I have elected to translate Persian words by their Arabic vocalization, whether or not the word is of Arabic origin. For example, even if in a Persian text, the word ذات is transliterated as *dhāt* and not *zāt*, وجود is transliterated as *wujūd* and not *vujūd*, and ثابتہ as *thābita* and not *sābita*. The exception to this is the Persian *wāw/vāv/و*, which when acting as a consonant in a word of Persian origin is transliterated with a *v* and not *w* (e.g., هویدا is *hovaydā*). For Persian letters not in the Arabic alphabet:

p	پ
ch	چ
zh	ژ
g	گ

Finally, for the Persian *idāfa* construction, either *-i* or *-yi* is affixed to the end of the *muḍāf*.

# Introduction

## Incarnation, Poetics, and Imagination from Ireland to Paris, from Shīrāz to Lāhūr

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### Introduction

This dissertation is an exercise in comparative theology between two pre-modern textual traditions, one Islamic the other Christian. I read these traditions together, interreligiously, in search of critical and embodied constructive interpretations with a view to our contemporary world. The texts are read in the context of their respective historical and intellectual discursive traditions, but in a way that emphasizes the resources they possess for a liberating praxis today. By bringing together comparative theology with a liberating praxis, I endeavor to reunify the mind and the body (the personal and political). The following critical, interreligious reading argues that such a nondual reunification is demanded by the Christian Incarnation, particularly as interpreted through the imagination of an Islamic theo-poetics.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than focus on grand historical narratives or general theologies of Christianity and Islam, this dissertation zooms in on two specific textual traditions. By engaging particulars, I hope to avoid false generalizations and monolithic conclusions, even while suggesting that the dangers of disembodiment of the teachings of these texts remains to this day in two ways. First, it remains in the contemporary privatization and spiritualization of Christian doctrine that segregates private faith in salvation from the public praxis of liberation; this form of Christianity is ultimately the target of critical liberation theology, be it Latin American, black, feminist, womanist, Latinx, Asian, or *mujerista*. Second, such a disembodiment remains in modern idealism

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<sup>1</sup> I aim to illuminate, by interreligious reading, the meaning of salvific liberation as understood by the preeminent liberation theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gustavo Gutiérrez, who conceptualized liberation in terms of Chalcedonian Christology: Christian liberation implies “*the unity, without confusion, of the various human dimensions, that is, one’s relationships with other humans and with the Lord, which theology has been attempting to establish for some time*” (Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988], xiv).

which, broadly construed, suggests that what is *really real* is the mental and immaterial, into which all things are universally subsumed.

This idealism informs the modern and commonly held assumption that assenting to egalitarian, inclusive, tolerant, and even universal personal and private beliefs or dispositions is all that is required to subvert oppressive ideologies productive of embodied suffering. Racism is conquered merely if I *internally believe* in the equality of the races; consumerism is avoided or neoliberal capitalism is undermined merely if I am *inwardly detached* from material possessions; patriarchy is destroyed merely if I *mentally assent* to the parity of the biological sexes or socially-constructed genders; homophobia, transphobia and other discriminating practices against non-normative, non-conforming sexualities are defeated merely if I am *not outwardly hateful* of LGBTQI+ individuals; religious bigotry is avoided merely if I *personally submit* to religious inclusivism, tolerance, and/or universalism. Idealism suggests that racial, economic, social, political, and religious ideological systems and social imaginaries that oppress can be subverted through privatized beliefs; this error emerges from dualistic conceptions of the mind and body that subsequently privilege beliefs or ideas over praxis. This binary fails to recognize the ways in which these oppressive systems and imaginaries organize, discipline, and manage our global societies and local communities, and ultimately bodies, despite, or perhaps *because of*, our best *intentions*.

Christian theology and idealism come together in the emphasis on right belief and personal sin to the exclusion of right praxis and social sin, and in an interpretation of neoplatonic metaphysics “which stress[es] the existence of a higher world and the transcendence of an Absolute from which everything came and to which everything return[s].”<sup>2</sup> Such a Christian idealism privileges the disembodied realm over this embodied world, against the liberating praxis entailed in the enfleshment of a fleshless God. Navigating between the Scylla of the immanently and materially political (the horizontal praxis) and the Charybdis of the transcendentally and

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<sup>2</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 4.

spiritually private (the vertical praxis), this dissertation proposes a nondual reading of the Incarnation through an Islamic theo-poetics. It is both comparative/interreligious and theological.

While the theology performed here presupposes *fides quaerens intellectum*, it aims to be *reflexión crítica sobre la praxis a la luz de la fe*.<sup>3</sup> From the Latin Anselm to the Latin-American Gutiérrez, these comparative theological reflections begin with a faith seeking understanding (Introduction), proceed through critical interreligious reading (Chapters 1-6), and end with a critical reflection on praxis in the light of this newly understood (*after comparison*) faith (Conclusion). It starts with the abstract and spiritual (hermeneutics, faith seeking understanding) and ends with the concrete and fleshy (theo-poetics, critical reflection on praxis in the light of faith). This interreligious *reading* exercise ultimately proffers a *poetics*, or more precisely, a theo-poetics of the flesh, and it emerges from how Clooney defines comparative theology, viz., from “fresh theological insights...indebted to the newly encountered tradition”—the Islamic—“as well as the home tradition”—the Catholic, in my case.<sup>4</sup>

In the remainder of this introduction, I introduce the authors and textual traditions that are the primary sources for this dissertation, along with their scholarly reception. I then propose alternative interpretations of their thought, and follow that with methodological explications of my species of comparative theology. I then submit my own proposal for a theo-poetics of the flesh that will emerge through comparison.

## **Eriugena, *Ratio*, Spiritualization, and Idealism**

Johannes Scotus Eriugena (d. *circa* 877), both of whose surnames designate his birthplace in what is now the territory of the modern nation-state of Ireland, was arguably nonpareil in terms

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<sup>3</sup> See Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *Teología De La Liberación : Perspectivas* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974), 34. In the introduction to the 1988 English edition, Gutiérrez defines theology as “a reflection on praxis in the light of faith” (Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xlv).

<sup>4</sup> Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10.

of intellectual formation for his context; he spent most of his professional life on the continent after having moved to France *circa* 845. There, he functioned under his patron, Charles the Bald, one of the grandsons of Charlemagne, as a teacher of the liberal arts in the Palatine Academy of the court.<sup>5</sup> While it is nearly certain that he acquired his preliminary education in an Irish monastery, it cannot be concluded that he was either a priest or a monk; lay, monastic, and clerical scholars availed themselves of these institutions in Ireland, and there is no solid evidence to suggest that Eriugena was ordained.<sup>6</sup> In this section, I introduce Eriugena along with his intellectual formation and influence. I also attend to how his theology instantiates the potential dangers of an overly spiritualized and idealistic Christian philosophy that ignores “Christianity’s basic incarnational thrust,”<sup>7</sup> something Hans Urs von Balthasar warned against in his writings.

### **Eriugena: Brief Background**

As Boyd Coolman has pointed out concerning the medieval affective Dionysian tradition that developed after Eriugena, authors had to deal with the “convergence of two theological traditions flowing through the western Middle Ages: the (Augustinian) assumption that God is fully known and loved in a beatific *visio Dei*, which is the goal of human existence, and the (Dionysian) insistence that God is radically and transcendently unknowable.”<sup>8</sup> While Coolman is addressing the affective reading of the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition that began with the Victorines of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it is Eriugena, nearly three centuries before, who was the first to deal with the confluence of Western and Eastern theology in his own unique way. He was in part singularly

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<sup>5</sup> Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>6</sup> See Hilary A. Mooney, *Theophany: The Appearing of God According to the Writings of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 27-28. See also Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 13-14. In particular, Carabine notes, “There is no specific reference to him being a cleric, although when chastising him for his views on predestination, Prudentius notes that he has no distinguished rank within the church. That could, of course, mean that he was a simple monk, although no other document of the time makes reference to this fact” (*ibid.*, 14).

<sup>7</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: Truth of God. Vol 2*, Tr. by A. J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 110.

<sup>8</sup> Boyd Taylor Coolman, “The Medieval Affective Dionysian Tradition,” *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 615.

capable of doing this on account of his impressive knowledge of Greek, his proficiency in which distinguished him from his peers, who read the Greek fathers mainly in translation and who had only a rudimentary knowledge of the language made available to them via biblical exegesis.<sup>9</sup>

Remarkable for his time, Eriugena is most famous for his Latin translation of the complete works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (who wrote before 532), the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* and part of the *Ambigua ad Iohannes* of Maximus the Confessor (d. 662), and the *De hominis opificio* (known as *De imagine* to the Irishman) of Gregory of Nyssa (d. circa 395).

The confluence of Greek and Latin Christian theology within the mind of Eriugena compelled him to wrestle with a series of dialectics. These include the *tension* between the *possibility* of knowing God in the beatific vision, exemplified by Augustine’s “between our mind whereby we understand the Father, and the Truth through which we understand Him, no creature is interposed”<sup>10</sup> and “through bodies that we will bear, in every body that we see, whithersoever we will turn our eyes of our body, we will contemplate God Himself with transparent clarity”<sup>11</sup> on the one hand, and the *impossibility* of knowing God in the negative theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, for whom “[God’s] superpositioned darkness is veiled from every light and conceals all understanding,”<sup>12</sup> on the other hand. Other dialectics include that of positing God as sheer being (*esse*) and the phenomenal world as nothingness (*nihil*) of privation, and positing God as

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<sup>9</sup> See Mooney, *Theophany*, 28-30; see also Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 14.

<sup>10</sup> *PP* IV, 27, 708-713 (759BC), citing Augustine, *De vera religione*, LV, 113 (CCSL 32, 259, 122-125): “*quia inter mentem nostram, qua illum intellegimus patrem et ueritatem, id est lucem interiorem, per quam illum intellegimus, nulla interposita creatura est.*”

<sup>11</sup> *PP* I, 10, 206-215 (447B); the quote is from Augustine’s *De civitate dei*, XXII, xxix, 6 (Augustine of Hippo, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De civitate dei* [Turnholt: Typographi Brepols, 1955], CCSL 48, 861, 185-197); For English trans., see Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God Books XVII-XXII* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 503-504. It should be noted that these passages from Augustine also illustrate the intra-Augustine contradiction; in one passage, nothing is interposed between us and God, while in the other, bodies—whatsoever the kind they may be—are apparently interposed (though we still see God).

<sup>12</sup> This passage is from *Letter One* to the monk Gaius, and is based on Eriugena’s Latin translation found at *PP* V, 85, 2714-2715 (920B-920C): *superpositae ipsius tenebrae velantur ab omni lumina et absconding omen scientiam*. See Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Tr. Paul Rorem and Colm Luibhéid (New York: Paulist, 1987), 263 (English); Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum, Vol 2*, Ed. Beate Regina Suchla, Günter Heil, and Adolf Martin Ritter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 156- 157, 1065A (Greek).

nothingness-*beyond*-being and the phenomenal world as being. The nothingness of evil (Augustine) butts up against the Superessential Nothingness of Pseudo-Dionysius's God. These dialectics best illustrate the tension found within the existential "substance" of this world: *how* is this world *God* and *how* is this world *not* God? This "how" gestures toward a theo-poetics.

### **Eriugena's Sources**

In addition to the Greek sources he translated, from western Christian thought Eriugena relies on Ambrose of Milan (d. 397), Hilary (d. 367), Isidore (d. 636), Jerome (d. 420), Gregory the Great (d. 604), and, most importantly and substantially, Augustine of Hippo (d. 430). He of course had training in the secular learning of the trivium and quadrivium, and was inculcated in the works of Boethius (d. 524) and Martianus Capella (d. 420):<sup>13</sup> "no one enters into heaven save through philosophy," he allegedly proclaims.<sup>14</sup> As noted by Carabine, Eriugena's Christian and non-Christian philosophical formation is largely platonic and neoplatonic.<sup>15</sup> His theology thus precedes the influx of Aristotelian sources from the Arabic and Islamic translation movement, which had significant impact on Thomas Aquinas and the later scholastic tradition. In any case, philosophy constitutes the *recta ratio*, or right reason, which Eriugena argues is always to cohere with the other measure by which he judges theological conclusions: *auctoritas* (Scripture, arguably his Eastern and Western sources, and ultimately the Incarnate Word).<sup>16</sup>

Despite the platonic and neoplatonic thought shared by these Christian authors, Eriugena still had to wrestle with some key conclusions in which, on the one hand, Augustine, and, on the

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<sup>13</sup> Other non-Christian sources include the Pseudo-Augustinian *On the Ten Categories*, the *Isagoge* of Porphyry (paraphrased in Latin by Marius Victorinus), Virgil, Pliny, Ptolemy, and Macrobius's commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*.

<sup>14</sup> *nemo intrat in caelum nisi per philosophiam*; See Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 15; see also John J. O'Meara, *Eriugena* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 30.

<sup>15</sup> See Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 20-22, for a further discussion on this topic of Eriugena's "authorities."

<sup>16</sup> For example, Eriugena puts in the mouth of the Teacher in the *Periphyseon* the following: "Reason (*ratio*) and authority (*auctoritas*) must be used in order that you may be able to distinguish clearly. For through these two things is constituted the whole power [*virtus*] of discovering the truth of things" (*PP* I, 79, 2440-2442 [499B]).

other hand, the Greek authors, differed. In general, and in agreement with other scholars of Eriugena, the Irishman tended to favor the Greek authors over Augustine, and often had to bend Augustine backwards to get his conclusions to agree with the Greek authorities.<sup>17</sup> A lengthy analysis of the ways in which Eriugena engaged his sources in the construction of his complex and robust theological thought, how he attempted to reconcile Western sources, exemplified by Augustine, and Eastern sources, exemplified by the Pseudo-Dionysius, the particular areas in which he was influenced by these sources, and the manner in which he ultimately ended up being “more Greek than Latin”—all of this remains outside the present purview.<sup>18</sup> Rather, I am endeavoring to enter into Eriugena’s corpus through an Islamic theo-poetics. This interreligious exercise illuminates the occluded potential for an Incarnational imaginary, which is the nondual tension clandestinely subverting his *ratio*.

### **Eriugena’s Readers**

My interreligious reading notwithstanding, the reception of Eriugena’s ideas is mixed at best, and disappointing at worst.<sup>19</sup> His *magnum opus*, the *Periphyseon*, attracted the most attention, although mostly negative: it was condemned indirectly by the ecclesiastical authorities

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<sup>17</sup> See Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 21-22; see also John Meyendorff, “Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*: a Carolingian contribution to the theological tradition,” in Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten, *Eriugena: East and West: Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Chicago and Notre Dame, 18-20 October 1991* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 73; see also Michael McCormick, “Remarks on Eastern patristic thought in John Scottus Eriugena,” in McGinn, *Eriugena: East and West*, 58-59.

<sup>18</sup> Otten’s remarks are instructive here: “At times [Eriugena] seems even to manipulate [Augustine], adjusting his texts so as to always have Aug. agree with him. To this end, [Eriugena] makes extensive use of *antiphrasis* in [*De divina praedestinatione*]. Second, when after the 850s [Augustine] has to compete with Dionysius and Maximus Confessor, as [Eriugena’s] proclivities shift to the more rational Greeks, [Eriugena’s] respect for [Augustine] remains both uncontested and flexible. [Eriugena] puts [Augustine] in a larger company of authorities without ever questioning his role as a central Western authority, while he makes sure that [Augustine] does not contradict his favourite Eastern authorities. In [*Periphyseon*] 4 and 5 this leads to an increasing juggling of Augustinian texts by [Eriugena]” (Willemien Otten, “Eriugena, John Scottus,” in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013]. <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199299164.001.0001/acref-9780199299164-e-294> [accessed 28 March 2019]).

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 13 of Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and Chapter 11 of O’Meara, *Eriugena*.

three separate times (1050, 1059, 1210), and directly one time (1225).<sup>20</sup> Thomas Gale of Oxford made the first printing of this text in 1681, and it was promptly proscribed in 1684.<sup>21</sup> The implications of the cosmological principle that forms the basis for Eriugena's theological anthropology and Christology, *theophany*, became all but unspeakable after the 1241 Condemnation of Errors out of the University of Paris.<sup>22</sup> Eriugena's understanding of theophany was often misunderstood as pantheistic, on the one hand, and as preventing the eschatological, unmediated vision of God, on the other hand. One can already note the tension involved within a theophanic cosmos, a tension that leads to two seemingly contradictory conclusions when one side of the dialectic is emphasized over the other. Either we are *always* seeing God, or we will *never* see God; the aim of this dissertation is to investigate *how to live within that tension*, a *dynamic imaginary of the Incarnation*, as I will suggest, rather than reduce it to a static synthesis, monism, or hegemonic universalism, all of which are ever looming.

Before these condemnations, Eriugena's œuvre had been well studied.<sup>23</sup> Cappuyns, in *Jean Scot Erigène*, perhaps the root of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century flowering of Eriugenist studies, outlines the many influences Eriugena had on later authors: Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), Alan of Lille (d. 1202/03), Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202), Albert the Great (d. 1280), and members of the Chartres

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<sup>20</sup> Pope Honorius III ordered the burning of all copies of the *Periphyseon* under penalty of excommunication. For a more detailed report of various condemnations, see Maïeul Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Érigène, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre, Sa Pensée* (Bruxelles: Culture Et Civilisation, 1969), 248 fn. 2. See also Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, 86; and Potter's introduction to Uhlfelder's translation: Eriugena, *Periphyseon = On the Division of Nature*, Tr. by Myra L. Uhlfelder, introduction and summaries by Jean A. Potter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), xxiii.

<sup>21</sup> See Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> For Eriugena, theophany precluded the possibility of perceiving the Divine Essence *in se ipso*, that is, without intermediary and completely, even in a post-mortem state. Thus, the first error of the condemnation implicitly condemns theophany. "The first [error] is, that the Divine essence in itself will not be seen by any man or angel. We condemn this error, and by the authority of William, the bishop, we excommunicate those who assert and defend it. Moreover, we firmly believe and assert that God in His essence or substance will be seen by the angels and all saints, and is seen by glorified spirits" (*Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, vol II, no. 3 [Philadelphia: The Department of History of the University of Pennsylvania, 1897], 16).

<sup>23</sup> For a more precise list of condemnations, see the French introduction to *PP I*, vi.

School.<sup>24</sup> Eriugenean thought was summarized in a popular manuscript that circulated throughout the Middle Ages, the *Clavis physicae*, on which Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464) later wrote a commentary.<sup>25</sup> As Rorem notes, the Dionysian corpus circulated widely in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but it was nearly always appended with Eriugena's *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem*, or *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy* (along with Hugh of St. Victor's commentary on the same work).<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the scholastic tradition, Albert the Great had a sound understanding of theophany, and used the term often when discussing the (im)possibility of the beatific vision of God. Surprisingly, this teacher of Thomas Aquinas tended towards a far more Eriugenist doctrine concerning the vision of God and the ultimate (un)knowability of God's essence, in which theophany plays a crucial role, as Simon Tugwell points out.<sup>27</sup> This is noteworthy, given that the implications of "theophany" had already received their official postmortem several times. This suggests that the teacher of the Angelic Doctor was so drawn to theophany that he chose to continue to use it in his writings, even if he often elided its meaning with "participation", favored by his student.<sup>28</sup>

The pre-modern reception of his corpus is marked by an interpretation that emphasizes his pantheistic tendencies. This is likely because of his robust theology of theophany, which if

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<sup>24</sup> See Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Érigène, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre, Sa Pensée*, 233-269.

<sup>25</sup> See Paolo Lucentini, "Le annotazioni di Nicola Cusano alla «Clavis physicae»,» in his *Platonismo, Ermetismo, Eresia Nel Medioevo* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 19-48.

<sup>26</sup> For the reception of Eriugena's and Hugh of St. Victor's Dionysian texts, see Paul Rorem, "The Early Latin Dionysius: Eriugena and Hugh of St. Victor," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 601-14. Rorem argues that, while Hugh's reception was far more influential, it was Eriugena's that was far more faithful to Dionysius.

<sup>27</sup> "[In] the later Dionysian commentaries Albert moves with much greater confidence toward a coherent and surprisingly Eriugenist doctrine, in which the notion of theophanies plays an important part" (Simon Tugwell, *Albert & Thomas: Selected Writings* [New York: Paulist Press, 1988], 84). For Albert's reception of Eriugenist doctrine of theophany, see the entire introduction of Tugwell's translation.

<sup>28</sup> "The intellect is not proportionate just by its nature to this contact, but it is made proportionate by the light of glory coming down to it and strengthening it and raising it above its nature; and this is what is meant by saying that *God is seen by way of theophany and participation*, inasmuch as different intellects are strengthened in different ways to see God" (Tugwell, *Albert & Thomas*, 86, citing Albert [*emphasis mine*]).

interpreted narrowly and without careful attention to his other main theological concept, *plus-quam* (more-than) discourse, can easily present the material world as (*substantially*) equivalent to (a *nonsubstantialist*) God. It certainly does not help that there are moments in the *Periphyseon*, his principal text, in which such an equivalency is proclaimed (or, rather, exclaimed in both excitement and terror). But *theophania*, or God-appearance, is also the word used in the Greek Christian tradition to refer to the Incarnation of the Divine Word in the person of Jesus Christ, and the link between the Incarnation and theophany is made in my own interreligious reading later.

### **Eriugena: The *Periphyseon* and His Other Œuvre**

The *Periphyseon* (from the Greek, *περί φύσεως*, “Concerning Nature”) is also known as *De divisione naturae* ever since Thomas Gale’s edition called it such, and is rendered most often in English as “The Division of Nature.” I will draw from his other texts because, I argue, an intertextual reading provides further meaning to the interreligious interpretation I am offering (this intertextual reading is sorely lacking in previous Eriugenean scholarship).<sup>29</sup> These include, most importantly, his *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem* (*Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy* of the Pseudo-Dionysius), *Homilia super ‘in principio erat verbum,’* originally known as *Vox spiritualis aquilae* (“the spiritual voice of the eagle”, which constitute the first words of the text), which is a homily on the first 14 verses of the Gospel of John, *Commentarius in evangelium iohannis*, a commentary on the Gospel of John until chapter six (with several lacunae),<sup>30</sup> and *Carmina* (or, *Verses*), which is a very small collection of his poetry.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A recent exception is Mooney’s *Theophany*. However, her own excellent investigation of “how did Eriugena understand and present the appearing of the divine” (Mooney, *Theophany*, 42) is still largely structured and guided by the order of the *Periphyseon*. Her first content chapter (two) cites nearly entirely from Book I of the *Periphyseon*; chapter three adduces from Books II and III, in order; her chapter four draws from Book IV, chapter five from Book V. She occasionally ventures into his other sources, but not in any substantive way.

<sup>30</sup> The commentaries on the following chapters and verses are missing in the extant manuscript: 1:1-10; 1:30-2:25; 4:28b-6:4; 6:14-21, 25. See *CJ*, xciv (introduction).

<sup>31</sup> For a list of his other texts and a potential timeline of his writings, see *Sources Chrétiennes*, Volume 151 (Paris: Cerf, 1941–), 48-49.

The *Peryphyseon* was written between 864 and 866, and therefore after or at least during his translations of the Pseudo-Dionysius (860-862), Gregory of Nyssa (862-864), and Maximus the Confessor (864-866), but before his commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy* of the Aeropagite, his exegeses on the Johannine Gospel, his extensive revisions on his translations of the *Corpus Dionysicum* (865-870), and his poetic works. The Irishman's *magnum opus* is a five-book dialogue between a *Nutritor* (Teacher) and *Alumnus* (Student), the subject of which dialogue is *Natura* and its fourfold division. This division forms the superstructure of both the text and all of reality, *inclusive of the Divine Nature as origin (principium) or cause (causa) and end or limit (finis or terminus)*; the anthropocosmic movement of *exitus* and *reditus* is thus another organizing principle of the text. Eriugena had planned on one book per division, but was forced to add a fifth book on account of his prolixity.

### **The *Periphyseon*: Recent Scholarship**

Recent 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholarship on Eriugena, while impressive and edifying (for which I am grateful), nonetheless suffers in general from a twofold deficiency.<sup>32</sup> First, monographs on the Irishman often narrowly focus on his *Periphyseon* to the exclusion of his other works. Second, aside from two most recent monographs, scholarship reads him as an idealist, a mere secular philosopher with Christian coloring, and/or a ratiocinative genius for whom the suprarational, the poetic, the imaginative, the metaphorical, and ultimately the Incarnational, play no part or are merely ornamental. Given the masterpiece and complexity of the *Periphyseon*, and his explicit exultation of *ratio*, these deficiencies are more than reasonable; precisely because of this, I aim to redress this narrow reading by reading his corpus through an Islamic theo-poetics.

John J. O'Meara, in his *Eriugena*, does a marvelous job of collating Eriugenist studies

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<sup>32</sup> It is superfluous to reproduce Mooney's extensive overview of Eriugenian scholarship; see Mooney, *Theophany*, 12-20.

theretofore and offering a succinct biography of the Irishman.<sup>33</sup> It is, on the whole, a literature review summarizing scholarly research; however, O’Meara does offer many keen insights of his own. Most notably, he distinguishes Eriugena’s roles into six distinct categories: teacher, ‘controversialist’ (concerning the dispute regarding divine predestination with Gottschalk),<sup>34</sup> translator, author of the *Periphyseon*, exegete, and poet. This is certainly helpful and valid for biographical and heuristic purposes, however it fails to recognize how these roles overlap far more than has often been suggested. In fact, it is Eriugena’s Johannine texts, his commentary on the *Celestial Heirarchy*, and his poetic œuvre that provide intra-corpus evidence for his Incarnational theology. *How* these elements come together to produce an effect on the reader gestures toward a poetic, integral reading of his writings.

Dermot Moran’s *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena* focuses entirely on the *Periphyseon*.<sup>35</sup> As the subtitle of the works suggests (*A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages*), he

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<sup>33</sup> O’Meara, *Eriugena*.

<sup>34</sup> Eriugena was under episcopal authority of Hincmar of Reims, who had asked the Irishman to enter the predestination debate of 851-852. This controversy, which was sparked by the views of the Saxon monk Gottschalk (Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 10), nevertheless found its source in the writings of Augustine of Hippo, whose texts on the subjects of free will, grace, and divine predestination are (in)famously able to be interpreted manifoldly, depending on whether one is reading the earlier, anti-Manichaen Augustine of, say, *De libero arbitrio* (“On Free Choice of the Will”), the anti-Donatist Augustine, or the later anti-Pelagian Augustine of, say, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (“On the Predestination of the Saints”). Suffice it to say, Gottschalk argued for a version of so-called “double predestination” (relying mainly on Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings), while Hincmar supported the eternal predestination of the blessed alone. Both, however, claimed to be reading and interpreting Augustine’s texts accurately and faithfully. Eriugena, utilizing Neoplatonic ideas, dialectical philosophy, negative theology, scripture, and the writings of Augustine himself, rather shockingly (to both Hincmar and Gottschalk, at least), argued that there simply is no predestination beyond God’s works. God is simple, good, and sheer existence or being; evil or sin is non-existence, non-being, and therefore do not exist and consequently cannot be caused by God. When Eriugena defines predestination in chapter 12 of his treatise, he reduces it to God’s creative act: “Therefore let the conversion of this definition be held thusly: If it is true that by one’s foreknowledge, which cannot be mistaken or changed, one disposes one’s future works, and entirely this and nothing else is to predestine; then it is also true that to predestine is entirely this and nothing other than to dispose of one’s future works in one’s foreknowledge, which cannot be mistaken or changed. Thence another conversion is accomplished: if the foreknowledge of everything, by which [foreknowledge] God has disposed of his future works, is divine predestination, then the predestination of everything, by which God has disposed of his future works, is divine foreknowledge; therefore it is demonstrated that the predestination of God is nothing other than his works, since nothing more and nothing less is contained in its definition except the disposition of the divine works” (Eriugena, *Iohannis Scotti De Divina Praedestinatione Liber* [Turnhout: Brepols, 1978], 73 [Latin]; Eriugena, *Treatise on Divine Predestination* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998], 77 [English]).

<sup>35</sup> Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*.

argues that the five-book text presents idealism *avant la lettre*, and that Eriugena proffers a version of Descartes's *cogito*. He self-admittedly avoids his "later theological works"<sup>36</sup>, and views the *Periphyseon* as a text written by a *philosopher* who happens to be Christian rather than as a work whose twofold source is the words and Word of divine revelation itself.<sup>37</sup> While Willemien Otten, in *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, critically challenges the reduction of Eriugena's thought to either a precursor to modern idealism or to a Christianized Proclus, she still restricts her study to the *ratio* in the *Periphyseon*.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, underlying Otten's analysis of the *Periphyseon* (and once again the focus is on this text alone) is her suggestion that "only human reason can effectively contribute to the process of the investigation of *natura*."<sup>39</sup> She suggests that the ultimate mystery of reality is eventually solved by *ratio*, for "the theophanic spell of the universe has in fact been broken, for man seems to impose his rational standards on the universe he investigates rather than letting himself be intimidated by something that from the very start would transcend his human capacities."<sup>40</sup> I argue contrariwise that it is in fact *ratio* that is broken by "the theophanic spell of the universe" and not, as Otten contends, the other way around. *Ratio* is reason informed by theophany, and not reason devoid of theophanic logic; i.e., *ratio is theophanic logic*, and theophanic logic is grounded in the Incarnation. It is thus an Incarnational logic that disrupts ordinary logic. To accomplish this, it is necessary to turn to his other works more often, to read parts of the *Periphyseon* against other

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>37</sup> Moran's more recent "*Spiritualis Incrassatio: Eriugena's Intellectualist Immaterialism: Is it Idealism?*" makes an even more forceful argument that "Eriugena's philosophy of infinite nature is *at least* an idealism." (Stephen Gersh and Dermot Moran, *Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006], 123)

<sup>38</sup> Willemien Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> "In a sense, the notion of theophany could only imply its own failure. Be that as it may, after our anthropological reading of the *Periphyseon* the theophanic spell of the universe has in fact been broken, for man seems to impose his rational standards on the universe he investigates rather than letting himself be intimidated by something that from the very start would transcend his human capacities" (Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 215).

parts (rather than only linearly), and to uncover the poetic and the Incarnational via an Islamic theo-poetics.

If Moran and Otten represent Eriugena the idealist and the rationalist, respectively, then Deirdre Carabine and Hilary Anne-Marie Mooney represent Eriugena the apophatic and aesthetic theologian, respectively. Deirdre Carabine's *John Scottus Eriugena*,<sup>41</sup> along with another article of hers,<sup>42</sup> astutely sheds light on the radical apophasis at the heart of Eriugena's theology and on the subversion of *recta ratio*. She points to "the mystery that lies at the heart of all reality"<sup>43</sup> and how there is ultimately "no rationality of being but instead the opacity of 'nothing.'"<sup>44</sup> In fact, Carabine's reading of the *Periphyseon* points to the inexplicability of "the process whereby unknowing is transformed into knowing." As she asserts, "philosophical analysis"—and thus I contend a purely rational and philosophical reading of Eriugena's texts in which theophany is rendered illogical—"can go no further, for the concept of unknowability does not have much credibility in any metaphysical analysis," given that "the positive content of such [un]knowing is not recognizable as knowing according to the normal epistemological categories."<sup>45</sup> Carabine's intervention is much needed; but she does not suggest how this radical apophasis functions within the Incarnational theology of Christianity. After all, "*nothing*" may be at the heart of reality, but *the Word became flesh for something*.

Finally, Hilary Anne-Marie Mooney, in her *Theophany*, has begun to illuminate the "Christological heart and...anthropological centering that...stem from [Eriugena's] understanding of the incarnation."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Mooney rightfully contends that the notion of

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<sup>41</sup> Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*.

<sup>42</sup> Deirdre Carabine, "Apophasis and Metaphysics in the Periphyseon of John Scottus Eriugena," *Philosophical Studies* 32 (1988): 63-82.

<sup>43</sup> Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 109.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>45</sup> Carabine, "Apophasis and Metaphysics in the Periphyseon of John Scottus Eriugena," 77.

<sup>46</sup> Mooney, *Theophany*, 11.

theophany is “the key to interpreting Eriugena’s account of the disclosure of God.”<sup>47</sup> This God-appearance is rendered explicit in the Incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ, the event to which other authors fail to give proper import.<sup>48</sup> As Mooney has noticed, “it is often experts on the philosophy of Neoplatonism who take up Eriugena’s writings and bring the questions of a philosopher to them,”<sup>49</sup> rather than reading Eriugena from the theological perspective which the notion of Divine Manifestation (*theophany*) demands. In general, Mooney has returned the focus of Eriugena’s thought to the theological and Christological foundations that underpin it, while recognizing that the *Periphyseon* itself “eludes an ‘over-systematisation.’”<sup>50</sup>

While I agree with her descriptions and interpretations often, I also go several steps further. She has done a marvelous job of shedding light on the Eriugenean understanding of the human encounter with the Other Who is God—the encounter with theophany—not as object but as experience. But her reading ends with the aesthetic *reception* of the divine presence, while I ask: *how* do we enter into the theo-poetic *creation* of the Incarnation? I expand this reading by inquiring what sort of encounter is demanded of the human person with *another* human person *qua* theophany (which is constituted by the Incarnation). Eriugena’s dialectical methods lend themselves to purely ratiocinative contemplation, divorced of embodied practices. But I am enabled to interrogate Eriugena further in search of an Incarnational theology through an interreligious, Islamic theo-poetics.

### **Against the Spiritualization of the Incarnation: Eriugena as Cautionary Tale**

In this respect, Eriugena is a cautionary tale against segregating the spiritual from the physical, which segregation is ever emerging on the horizon of Christian discourse, from early gnostic movements, to Enlightenment Christianity, to idealism and the present day; he is a

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Mooney herself agrees with this contention; see *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

cautionary tale against the Christian Incarnation becoming disincarnated from its liberating praxis. It is arguably Enlightenment discourse which codifies this separation for modernity's use. Enlightenment discourse on the separation of the mind from the body, or the personal/private from the political/public, in effect positively values and enshrines the severance of the spiritual from the corporeal or the suprasensible from the sensible as modern, enlightened doctrine. This severance *was paradoxically the punishment of the Fall*; the Incarnation of the Son the Word repaired this separation by bridging in "unity, without confusion" the divine and the human. In other words, the modern segregation of the mind (belief) from the body (practice), or the theological from the anthropological, *is valued over the Incarnational, nondual unity between the two*, and this has deleterious consequences in modernity. This is evident in Immanuel Kant's "dejudaization' of Christianity itself, which, put positively, means its 'rationalization.'"<sup>51</sup> The deist and idealist Christianity of the post-Enlightenment removes all enfleshment from Christianity to construct a purely mental and rational religion.

It is easy to read this rationalization into Eriugena, which is why he serves as an excellent case in keeping all theological discourse on guard against such a universalism, against a Christianity that "revitalize[s] Gnosticism" and extols a "[rational Christ], a Jesus who, rather than disclosing YHWH or the God of Israel as the ground of redemption for Jews and Gentiles alike, instead affirms what the human species 'can or should make of itself.'"<sup>52</sup> This Christianity, effortlessly interpreted from Eriugena's *ratio*, produces a static synthesis in which Christ, the Word, harmonizes the diversity in the world in an eschatological universalism of similarity, sameness, and indistinction rather than diversity, difference, and distinction. This static synthesis produces an ideology of idealism absolved from the demands of enfleshed practices. Christianity

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<sup>51</sup> J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106. Carter argues that "Such a rational religion would serve as the basis of modernity itself, as the basis for the religious expression of whiteness, and as that through which the species will realize itself in and as an ethical, human community" (ibid.).

<sup>52</sup> ibid., 107.

is stripped of its critical confrontation with modern ideologies or imaginaries that constrain radical praxis, and is delimited by modern-day civil religion, liberalism, and neoliberalism that tend to erase difference for the sake of a weak (and marginalizing) form of tolerance, restricted freedom, and provisional liberty.

But this discursive universalism, despite its disincarnate nature *as* discourse and belief, produces enfolded consequences in the social and political world of embodied difference: race, religion, gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity, class, etc. The benign belief that “we are all one” or “all the same” subsumes differences and colludes with oppression by occluding asymmetrical power relations between the oppressed, marginalized, and vulnerable and the oppressor, dominating, and powerful. As Gregory Lipton has argued regarding the modern construction of religious perennialism through the misinterpretations of Ibn ‘Arabī, in universalism the immaterial *essences* of religions are identical, and socio-political differences are *accidental* and ultimately of no import.<sup>53</sup> This relies on the “traditional idealist dualism of essence/manifestation,”<sup>54</sup> otherwise theorized as spirit/flesh, mind/body, private/public, etc. Indeed, universalist idealism, despite its best intentions, is ultimately hegemonic in that “the other's voice is permitted entry only as the voice of sameness, as a confirmation of oneself, contemplation of oneself, dialogue with oneself.”<sup>55</sup>

In Christian idealism or universalism, then, Christian *belief* obviates the need for a liberating praxis of the Incarnation, and relegates salvation to a post-mortem state. What is the point of imitating Christ in his liberating praxis if, ultimately, socio-political differences are accidental, if embodiment is secondary, if *ratio* alone saves. Socio-political transformation is of import only insofar as the other is welcomed into the Christian, idealist fold as *already the same*.

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<sup>53</sup> G. A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 177ff.

<sup>54</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 92.

<sup>55</sup> Ulrich Beck, “The Truth of Others: A Cosmopolitan Approach,” *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 3 (2004): 433.

For modern, largely North American Christianity, historically the Christian *ideal* was *whiteness*, as J. Carter Kameron has argued in his *Race: A Theological Account*. The imaginary of whiteness also colludes with another imaginary, neoliberalism. Indeed, “whiteness as ‘absent presence’ seeks to stand for and be a measure of all humanity. It operates as a universal point of identification that strives to structure all social identities,”<sup>56</sup> while neoliberalism, as Wendy Brown demonstrates in *Undoing Demos*, is a “normative order of *reason*...[a] deeply disseminated governing *rationality*, [that] *transmogrifies* every human domain and endeavor, along with humans themselves, according to a specific *image of the economic*.”<sup>57</sup> It is this oppressive imaginary that the construction portion of this dissertation seeks to disrupt through a theo-poetics of the flesh.

## **Ḥāfiẓ, Lāhūrī, and Islamic Poetics: Against the Spiritualization of Imaginative Metaphors**

Ḥāfiẓ of Shīrāz flourished in the 14<sup>th</sup> century during which his city was renowned as the Abode of Knowledge, or *dār al-‘ilm*; it was in his time the Islamic intellectual and academic equivalent to Paris or Oxford in the medieval scholastic period. Shīrāz was also the most famous cultural capital of the medieval Persian world after Tabrīz, and in this respect this southern city of modern-day Iran was akin to 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence.<sup>58</sup> Its other appellation is a testament to the many *ṣūfī* saints the city produced: *borj al-awliā’*, or Tower of the Saints. Nevertheless, it was also a place of brothels, wine taverns, debauchery, and violence.<sup>59</sup> Among a distinguished and

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<sup>56</sup> Ashwani Sharma, “Postcolonial Racism: White Paranoia and the Terrors of Multiculturalism,” in *Racism Postcolonialism Europe*, ed. Graham Huggan and Ian Law (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 123.

<sup>57</sup> Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 9-10 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>58</sup> There are many monographs written on the Persian city of Shīrāz, and among the most noteworthy: ‘Alī Sāmī, *Shiraz: The City of the Poets Sa’adi and Hāfez, the City of Flowers and Nightingales*, Tr. by R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Print Office, 1958); ‘Alī Sāmī, *Shīraz: Shahr-i Sa’dī Va Hafiz: Shahr-i Gul Va Bulbul*. Kānūn-i Dānīsh-i Pārs. Nashrīyah ; Shumarah-i 10. Shīraz: Chāp-i Musavī, 1958; A.J. Arberry, *Shiraz: Persian City of Saints and Poets* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960); and John W. Limbert, *Shiraz in the Age of Hafez: The Glory of a Medieval Persian City* (Seattle: U of Washington, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Perhaps Limbert summarizes the coincidence of opposites that is the city of Shīrāz when he offers this

esteemed list of well-known mystics, saints, ascetics, scholars, philosophers, theologians, and poets (and poet-saints),<sup>60</sup> Ḥāfiẓ is among the most eminent in terms of popular, scholarly, cultural, and religious standards, and arguably the most celebrated and influential poet of the Islamic

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following evaluation: “What kind of city was Hafez’s Shiraz? First, it was an unstable and violent place, where squabbling, self-destructive drunkards and blood-thirsty hypocrites often ruled, and where the inhabitants saw natural disasters, sieges, invasions, street fighting, marauding tribes, and arbitrary and ruinous taxation constantly threatening their precarious security and prosperity. Second, it was a ‘tower of saints’ (*borj al-owliya*), where holy men spent their lives praying and fasting, and devoted their wealth to helping the poor. Third, it was a city of the *rendan* [libertines], full of hedonism and debauchery of every description, where the brothels, the wine shops, and the opium dens did booming business and filled the ruler’s treasury with taxes on the proceeds. Fourth, it was an ‘abode of knowledge’ (*dar al-elm*), where scholars taught and studied all branches of Islamic learning. Finally, it was a brilliant center of Persian culture, producing superb miniature paintings, calligraphy, and an amazing amount of immortal poetry in a few decades” (Limbirt, *Shiraz*, 121-122). Looking at the many opposites that coexisted in such a city, in which not only philosophers, jurists, ascetics and debauchees coexisted, but also oenophilic, Muslim poet-mystics flourished, Shīrāz (whose famous eponymous wine should not be forgotten) becomes the geographical space in which materialized the conceptualization of Islam that values exploration, ambiguity, wonder, aesthetics, polyvalence, relativism, contradiction, paradox, and metaphor, and in this respect is a superb historical example of an Islam that not only sanctions, but also embraces, “coherent contradiction.” This is the oft-repeated phrase used by Shahab Ahmed in *What is Islam?*, in which he argues for a conceptualization of Islam and the Islamic as one that not only permits but espouses “coherent contradiction,” such that it is found *within the Islamic process for the construction and production of truth, value, and meaning—for meaning-making*—and not in some secular, cultural, “non-Islamic” ideology, philosophy, etc., imposed upon the Islamic way of life. “To live with outright contradiction, as societies of Muslims historically have done, one must be able to conceive of contradiction in such a way that contradiction is coherent and meaningful in terms of one’s paradigmatic values and truths” (Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* [Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016], 404). Ahmed successfully argues this point through a reformulation of Divine Revelation as not only the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, i.e., the Textual Revelation, but also the Pre-Textual and Con-Textual Revelation (see Chapter 5 in particular of *What Is Islam?* for his argument concerning this reformulation and reconceptualization).

<sup>60</sup> Some of these figures who emerged from Shīrāz’s literary, mystical, intellectual and cultural—and, of course, *Islamic*—milieu, include but are not limited to, Ibn Khafīf (variably known as *al-Shaykh al-Shīrāzī* or *al-Shaykh al-Kabīr*, and who is traditionally believed to have brought sufism to Shīrāz, d. 982), Shaykh Abu Muḥammad Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209), and Kathkī (d. 1253), whose full name is Shaykh Mu’īn al-Dīn Abdullah b. Junayd b. Ruzbih Kathki. Limbert offers this succinct summary of how Baghdad sufism penetrated Shīrāz: “Many ṣūfī teachings came to Shiraz from Baghdad in the sixth/twelfth century. In the first half of that century, Sheikh Qotb al-Din Abdullah Ali b. Hosein Makki, whom the Shirazis called Sheikh al-Eslam, studied with the two great rival ṣūfī masters of Iraq, Abd al-Qader Gilani and Ibn Rafā’i (Ahmad Kabir). Returning to Shiraz, Sheikh Qotb al-Din introduced ṣūfī ideas into his preaching. Near the the end of the century, another great teacher of Shiraz, Sheikh Mo’īn al-Din Abdullah Kathki (d. 1253), studied sufism in Baghdad with Zia al-Din b. Sakineh, one of the greatest masters of the period. Kathki in turn became teacher to three of the leading scholars of late thirteenth-century Shiraz” (Limbirt, *Shiraz*, 113). These were Sa’ēn al-Din Hosein Salmani, Sadr al-Din Mozaar Baghnovi, and Amir Seyyed Asil al-Din Abdullah Alavi-Mohammadi (see *ibid.*, 111-113). There was also Sa’dī Shīrāzī (d. *circa* 1290), the astronomer and physician Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1311), the love lyricist immediately preceding Ḥāfiẓ, who associated with him, Khwājū Kirmānī (d. 1352), the Shāfi’ī jurist and Ash’arī theologian Mawlanā Qāḍī ‘Aḍud al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ījī (whom Ḥāfiẓ in fact encountered, d. 1355), Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Alāmah Jurjānī (d. 1413), the poet Fīghānī (fl. 15<sup>th</sup> century), and the famous Muḥammad ibn Yahyā Lāhījī (d. 1506), whose lengthy stay and retirement in Shīrāz gainsay his *nisbah* (the family name often connected to a town). Lāhījī is most famous for his mystical prose work called *Mafātīḥ al-i’jāz*, which is an extraordinary and seminal commentary on the well-known *Gulshan-i rāz* of Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. 1340). Finally, arguably the most important post-classical, pre-modern Islamic philosopher formative of present-day Islamic philosophy was from Shīrāz: Ṣadr ad-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Sadrā (d. 1640). The list would be extensively protracted were I to include other figures who travelled to Shīrāz to study with scholars or to convene with poets, mystics, and saints. See Chapter 6 and the appendix of Limbert, *Shiraz*.

mystical tradition at large; if he is second, it is only to Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (d. 1273).

As Shahab Ahmed has rightfully stated, the *Dīvān* (complete collection of love lyrics) of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ (d. *circa* 1390) was “the most widely-copied, widely-circulated, widely-read, widely-memorized, widely-recited, widely-invoked, and widely-proverbialized book of poetry in Islamic history—a book that came to be regarded as configuring and exemplifying ideals of self-conceptions and modes and mechanisms of self-expression in the largest part of the Islamic world for half-a-millennium.”<sup>61</sup> These love lyrics treat themes of erotic love, wine-drinking, the suffering of passionate love, libertinism (inspired or otherwise), and mystical knowledge by way of desire, among other topics, all while invoking verses from the Qur’ān, allusions to *ḥadīth*, and the larger Islamic tradition to make meaning, find value, and uncover T/truth through a comprehension of the Unseen Realm. The well-known *ṣūfi*-philosopher of the Akbarian tradition, Nur al-Dīn Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 1492), in fact bestowed upon this master poet from Shīrāz the honorific, *lisān al-ghayb*, or Tongue of the Unseen; that is, the person whose poetic imagination and production found its source in the same domain whence the Qur’ān descended onto the Prophet. As Ahmed has stated, “the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ was...a pervasive poetical, conceptual and lexical presence in the discourse of educated Muslims” during the temporal period of 1350 to 1850 and the geographical regions “from the Balkans through Anatolia, Iran and Central Asia down and across Afghanistan and North India to the Bay of Bengal.”<sup>62</sup>

It is no overstatement to aver “the centrality of the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ to the historical *being* of Muslims.”<sup>63</sup> My own experience studying texts from the Islamic intellectual tradition alongside

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<sup>61</sup> Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> This is what Shahab Ahmed calls the “Balkans-to-Bengal complex.” See *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>63</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 33; For the “Ḥāfiẓocentric” nature of Persianate, Islamic civilization, see Leonard Lewisohn, “Socio-historical and Literary Contexts; Ḥāfiẓ in Shīrāz,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn (New York: I. B. Tauris in Association with Iran Heritage Foundation, 2010), 16ff.

Muslim students and scholars from Iran is a testament to how Ḥāfīz’s poetry informs the understanding and meaning of various mystical and/or philosophical teachings and concepts. Not a session occurs in which an otherwise obscure mystical or philosophical statement is not rendered lucid by a couple *bayts* (couplets) from a *ghazal* (love lyric) of Ḥāfīz, recalled by a student who grew up surrounded by the lyrics.

### **Ḥāfīz: Intellectual Contexts**

The *ghazals* of Ḥāfīz and the 17<sup>th</sup>-century commentary by Abū al-Ḥasan Khatamī Lāhūrī discursively participate in the School of Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and the *madhhab ‘ishq* (School of [Passionate] Love), for the poet more implicitly, and for the commentator explicitly. These traditions have been the subject of Orientalist discourse since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars such as Reynold A. Nicholson and Miguel Asín Palacios tended to essentialize Islamic mysticism into pantheistic monism, neoplatonic thought in Islamic vocabulary, or Christian theology translated into Islamic spirituality.<sup>64</sup> The more modern reception of Ibn ‘Arabī has claimed him to be a universalist of the *religio perennis* who concealed his autonomy from the religious authorities by his perfunctory claims to the heteronomy of the *sharī‘ah*; but this intellectual biography is sharply critiqued by Gregory Lipton.<sup>65</sup> The modern reception of the School of Love, particularly its spokesperson, Rūmī, is informed by a similar privatized reading; Rūmī, Ḥāfīz, and other Muslim poets are de-Islamicized and rendered spiritual teachers devoid of Qurā’nic and other Islamic scriptural constitution.<sup>66</sup> The essentialist reading of the ṣūfī tradition has been

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<sup>64</sup> See, e.g.: Miguel Asín Palacios, *El Islam Cristianizado: Estudio Del Sufismo a Través De Las Obras De Abenarabi De Murcia* (Hiperión, 1981); Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge [Eng.: University Press, 1967), and *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1963).

<sup>65</sup> Lipton, in *Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabī*, critiques Henry Corbin, Reza Shah-Kazemi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and, as founding figure of the *religio perennis*, Frithjof Schuon.

<sup>66</sup> An excellent summary of the process of de-Islamicizing classical and post-classical Persian poetry with respect to Rūmī is found in the popular article by Rozina Ali, “The Erasure of Islam from the Poetry of Rumi,” *The New Yorker* (Jan 5, 2017) <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-erasure-of-islam-from-the-poetry-of-rumi>. William Chittick challenges such a reading in his *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983). The various authors in the edited volume by Leonard Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, challenge the non-Islamic reading of Ḥāfīz.

redressed with a historicist critique by Ahmet Karamustafa, and the de-Islamicized reading of the poets by Shahab Ahmed.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, scholars of Persian literature have critiqued what they allege is the subsumption of Persian poetry by the Islamic mystical tradition, or sufism, emptying it of its social, political, and otherwise “secular” and literary underpinnings.<sup>68</sup> In this literary critique, scholars claim that the mystical technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*) for the poems abstract metaphors from the poetry and convert them into one-to-one allegorical readings referring to metaphysical concepts. In my reading of Lāhūrī’s commentary, I will challenge this critique, but also nuance the role of technical terms.

Let me now turn to the figure of Ḥāfiẓ and the intellectual and spiritual context in which he flourished, and through which I will interpret his love lyrics.

### **Ḥāfiẓ: Brief Background**

I am interpreting Ḥāfiẓ’s poetic œuvre through the hermeneutical lens of the Islamic mystical tradition that preceded and followed him, and thus reading his love lyrics *as Islamic*, notwithstanding the debate over whether Ḥāfiẓ was explicitly a mystical poet or rather a court poet who employed the language of the mystics as tropes. This debate has kept many a scholar of Persian literature and Islamic mysticism busy. It is problematized by the permeation of Akbarian thought into so much of Islamic culture (both the humanities and the so-called rational sciences) by the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the continuity that, arguably, existed between so-called elite

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<sup>67</sup> Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*.

<sup>68</sup> Persian literary scholars such as, inter alia, Julie Scot Meisami and Fatima Keshavarz, tend to preclude the possibility of any Islamic content (Qur’ān, *ḥadīth* literature, and the larger revelatory context) being constitutive of Persian poets. I recall a lecture I gave in Iran regarding the formative function of *‘ishq* (passionate love), as constructed by the *madhhab ‘ishq*, on Ḥāfiẓ. The immediate response from a senior scholar of Persian literature was to remind the audience that the word *‘ishq* never appears in the Qur’ān. The implication was that for a text to be considered “Islamic” it *must explicitly* be a commentary on, or extract from, Qur’ānic verses.

<sup>69</sup> In fact, ibn al-‘Arabī’s influence remained steady and strong from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, at least among non-Ḥanbali scholars, as Khaled El-Rouayheb has convincingly argued; see Khaled El-Rouayheb, “From Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Din al-Alusi (d. 1899),” in *Ibn Taymiyya and His times*, edited by Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 269-318 (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

discourse and popular spirituality complicates this debate.<sup>70</sup> Concerning Ḥāfīz, along the spectrum of this debate resides, for example, ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīn’kūb, who interprets Ḥāfīz lyrics from a strictly historicist perspective,<sup>71</sup> and Leonard Lewisohn, who argues that Ḥāfīz’s lyrics cannot be understood without the lens of both ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought and the 11th- and 12th-century Persian mysticism (part of the *madhhab-i ‘ishq*) that preceded him.<sup>72</sup>

I argue unequivocally for the position averred by Lewisohn (which does not ipso facto contradict various historicist positions), not only because the suggestion that Ḥāfīz was merely a secular court poet uninfluenced by the Islamic mystical tradition presupposes a modern dualism between the religious and the secular that is anachronistic to 14<sup>th</sup>-century Islam, but also because being employed as a court poet does not preclude making meaning, finding value, and uncovering T/truth through the Islamic vocabulary and discursive traditions that surrounded Ḥāfīz.<sup>73</sup>

An overview of the modern, western study of Ḥāfīz would be protracted.<sup>74</sup> Suffice it to say

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<sup>70</sup> See James Morris, “Situating Islamic ‘Mysticism’: Between Written Traditions and Popular Spirituality,” in *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies*, edited by Robert A. Herrera, 292-334 (New York: P. Lang, 1993); this is also in effect the collective argument in Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*.

<sup>71</sup> See ‘Abd Al-Ḥusayn Zarrīn’kūb, *Az Kūchah- ‘i Rindān: Dar Bārah- ‘i Zindagī-i Va Andīshah- ‘i Ḥāfīz* (Tīhrān: Shirkat-i Sihāmī-i Kitābhā-yi Jībī, 1970).

<sup>72</sup> Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīz 1 - Socio-historical and Literary Contexts: Ḥāfīz in Shīrāz”, in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 3-30.

<sup>73</sup> Just as Eriugena was employed by Charles the Bald, and just as he studiously engaged the so-called “secular” fields of the trivium and quadrivium, that he taught the “liberal arts” at the Palatine Academy—all of this does not imply that he was a secular philosopher in the modern sense (much less an idealist *avant la lettre*) as opposed to a theologian in the Christian sense. Likewise, that Ḥāfīz enjoyed the patronage of several regimes, including those of Abū Ishāq Īnjū (ruled 1343-1353) and Shāh Shujā‘ Muẓaffarī (ruled 1358-1384), among others, neither makes him any less of a Muslim poet nor renders his poetry any less Islamic. Just as the fact that some of Eriugena’s poetic pieces are panegyrics written under Charles the Bald or even commissioned by him does not thereby immediately preclude the possibility of interpreting theological meaning within them (not to mention that his whole career was funded by the patronage of Charles the Bald, including his theological works and translations); likewise the fact that Ḥāfīz produced several panegyrics and that “Shāh Shujā‘, Shāh Maṣūūr and other rulers and statesmen featured in his *Dīvān* do have significance as personalities in the political theatre of horrors of medieval [Persia]” (Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 29) do not render his poetic corpus entirely non-mystical, non-Islamic, and thoroughly secular. Lewisohn argues for “the essentially extra-courtly nature of Ḥāfīz’s poetry” (see Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 27-30).

<sup>74</sup> Finding “unity” (a euphemism for “coherency”) in the *ghazals* of Ḥāfīz was the subject of many scholarly articles ever since Arberry’s critique of Sir William Jones (in)famous gloss, “orient pearls at random strung” (A.J. Arberry, “Orient Pearls at Random Strung,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11.4 (1946): 699-712 ). However, once it was argued by Rehder (R.N. Rehder, “The Unity of the Ghazals of Ḥāfīz,” *Der Islam* 51.1 [1974]: 55-96) and later Hillman (Michael C. Hillmann, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*

for now that the anachronistic bifurcation of the secular and the religious, of the so-called literary-cultural and religio-mystical nature of the love lyrics, is a thoroughly modern phenomenon which is also the result of the Romantic understanding of so-called “mystical experience,” viz., that to be a mystic entails undergoing certain ecstatic moments—placing oneself *outside* the profane—that overcome the individual psychologically, mentally, emotionally, and even physically, such that poetic utterances result akin to *shaṭaḥāt* (so-called “theopathic” utterances that lack coherency), thus forming no literary or stylistic unity. This understanding of mysticism prevailed in scholarship even into the second half of the 20th century. J.T.P. de Bruijn, while admitting the fusion between the secular and the mystical in Persian ghazals, avers that a given love lyric cannot be judged to be either mystical or secular until one knows the position and life of the poet.<sup>75</sup> This judgment, on a more obvious level, presupposes that one’s alleged secular

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[Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976]) that finding unity spilled over into thematic content, then the discussion quickly shifted away from formal unity and toward thematic unity of meaning (which Arberry first begun). Nevertheless, Rehder’s critique is still an example of how scholars oppose the secular and the religious in dualistic categories; if there is something “un-religious” in the poem, then clearly it cannot be a *ṣūfī*, Islamic poem. Rehder thus reduces the intentionally ambiguous nature of the love lyric into either-or categories, and further reduces what it means for a love lyric to be “religious” to the *mamdūh* (object of praise) alone: it may be either a divine or a worldly beloved, and thus religious or secular, respectively: “There is nothing in this poem [the Turk of Shīrāz] to cause us to believe that this is a religious or *ṣūfī* poem, or that the beloved is in any way divine. In fact, the capricious and ruthless behaviour of the Turk, the blasphemous statement in *bayt* two, and the way in which the poet invokes God’s help for the Turk, and the absence of any contrary evidence, suggest that this is a secular love lyric” (Rehder, “The Unity of the Ghazals of Ḥāfīz,” 72). The research over the last 30 years concerning the purpose of statements of infidelity and blasphemy, not to mention the nature of the *rend* (libertine, rogue) in Ḥāfīz’s poetry, thoroughly gainsays these reductions. Hillmann, for his part, applies a thoroughly literary and western category of unity to his reading of the *ghazals*: “By ‘unity’ is commonly meant ‘a combination or ordering of parts in a literary or artistic production such as to constitute a whole or promote an individual effect. In other words...the unified object should contain within itself a large number of diverse elements, each of which in some way contributes to the total integration of the unified whole, so that there is no confusion despite the disparate elements within the object. In the united object, everything that is necessary is there, and nothing that is not necessary is there” (Michael C. Hillmann, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, [Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976], 31). He offers a threefold categorization of the Shīrāzī’s love lyrics: 1) those that have a developing, unfolding, or symmetrical structural unity, 2) those that have a unity of force in the effects of rhythm and rhyme, 3) and those that simply lack unity and can be judged to have a limited poetic effectiveness (*ibid.*, 148). However, Hillmann offers a more nuanced analysis in his “résumé-translation” of a Persian article (Michael C. Hillmann, “Sound and Sense in a Ghazal of Ḥāfīz,” *Muslim World* 61 (1971): 111-21). The Iranian scholar, Muḥammad ‘Alī Islāmī, offers an analysis that implicitly questions western and modern dualistic interpretations of the love lyrics. Passionate love intoxicates Ḥāfīz, and categories of physical and spiritual love, secular and mystical love, collapse: “The physical desire felt by Ḥāfīz is so intense that, when he seeks to express its reality, it becomes linked by analogy with spiritual worship. With this metaphor, the beloved becomes an object of adoration; and, all reality becomes finalized and summed up in her presence and existence” (Hillmann, “Sound and Sense”, 120). The unity in the *ghazal* is thus seen to be a unity in multiplicity and diversity (since several subtopics exist within the thematic unity of “passionate love,” or *‘ishq*); see Hillmann, “Sound and Sense”, 121.

<sup>75</sup> “The decision whether a given poem should be called a Sufi ghazal or a profane love song very often does not

(public) work could not have been influenced by one's spiritual or religious (private) training, and seems to contradict the admitted fusion. In any case, the focus on the author in scholarly analysis will only ever explain the static event of the discourse, and never contribute to a comprehension of the perduring, dynamic meaning (arguably a goal of contemporary theology). Furthermore, a close reading of the mystical heritage surrounding Ḥāfīz suggests that rather than a radical subjectivist account of the divine, viz., the belief that mysticism entails ecstatic experiences (psychological, physical, affective, or otherwise), the Islamic mystical tradition trained human subjects to perceive the quotidian with transformed perception.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, modern scholars such as Lewisohn, Āshūrī, and Khurramshāhī, taken together, along with the the broader intellectual and social history of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Shīrāz, demonstrate unequivocally that Ḥāfīz was disciplined by the Akbarian tradition.<sup>77</sup> More directly, he was also

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depend so much on the poem itself, but on what we know about its writer, that is the answer to the question: does the life of the poet provide us with cues of a mystical affiliation, or is the poet only known as a court poet" (J. T. P. De Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Persian Poems* [Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997], 55).

<sup>76</sup> I am in agreement with Denys Turner's argument that there is a contemporary preoccupation with mysticism as "experience", which he terms "experientialism" (see Denys Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* [New York, NY, USA: Cambridge UP, 1995], particularly chapter 11, "From mystical theology to mysticism"). In contradistinction to defining the "mystical" as an event in which one immediately experiences God, I concur with Bernard McGinn's suggestion that there is, rather, a mystical element in Christianity (and, I would argue, in Islam) which is "that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God" (Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, Volume I [New York: Crossroad, 1991], xvii). However, I would go further by suggesting that this "awareness of God" is best expressed as perception which leads to transformed practices; in this case, as Turner suggests, one might even go so far as to say that "theology in so far as it is theology is 'mystical' and in so far as it is 'mystical' it is theology" (Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 265). This is one of the main arguments of Mark McIntosh in his *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998). This same argument can be made, *mutatis mutandis*, for the modern, scholarly bifurcation of the mystical and the theological in the study of Islamic intellectual and social history.

<sup>77</sup> "From the numerical references to his 'forty' years of study [Dīvān-i Ḥāfīz, ed. Khānlārī, ghazal 124:6] and 'the porch and arch of seminary college' (madrasa) and 'the numbing hum empty chatter of debate' [ibid., ghazal 357:3], we know that he specialized in theology when he was a student. The theological texts that he studied in the beginning of the fourteenth century... were the supreme classics of the period. Being a member of the guild of the 'men of learning' (*ahl-i 'ilm*), throughout his adult life the poet evidently received a regular government stipend (*wazīfa*) for his teaching and other professorial duties. As can be seen in certain *ghazal*, he was also steeped in the teachings of the 'Greatest Master' Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240), and he both imitated the poetry and versified the ideas of Akbarian treatises of his latter-day followers such as Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 1273)" (Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 19). In this section he cites Khurramshāhī's monograph on the *Dīvān-i Ḥāfīz*: "It is a matter of extreme probability that Ḥāfīz was well versed in the mystical School of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators (*maktab-i 'irfānī-ye Ibn 'Arabī va shāriḥān-i ū*). Taking into account this deep influence and general popularity of this [Akbarian] school among the intelligentsia [of Ḥāfīz's day], as well as the poet's fiery and sensitive nature and penchant to absorb

formed by the *madhhab-i 'ishq*.<sup>78</sup> I will now turn to a brief introduction of these two overlapping discursive traditions before presenting the 17<sup>th</sup>-century commentary on Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics and its alleged author, Lāhūrī. Even if one were to remain persistent in the un-Islamic nature of Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics—which, given recent scholarship, is contested—one could never challenge the *historical reception* of his poetry as *thoroughly Islamic*.<sup>79</sup>

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philosophical, theological, and mystical ideas and thoughts common to the culture of his time, it would be absurd to maintain that he was entirely ignorant of, or uninfluenced by, or uninterested in, or held himself aloof to, [the Akbarian tradition]" (Bahā' Al-Dīn Khurramshāhī, *Ḥāfiẓ-nāmah: Sharḥ-i Alfāz, A'lām, Maḥālim-i Kalīdī Va Abyāt-i Dushvār-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Volume 1 [Tih-rān: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī Va Farhangī : Intishārāt-i Surūsh, 1987], 600). Lewisohn adds, "Elsewhere, Khurramshāhī (see *Dhihn va zabān-i Ḥāfiẓ* [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Nāhīd, 2000], 420) adjudicates even more positively that 'the mystical philosophy of Ḥāfiẓ (*'irfān-i Ḥāfiẓ*) is the complicated speculative theosophy of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers. It was not the simplistic Iranian mysticism of the 11-12th centuries'" (Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 60-61, fn. 151). Lewisohn suggests Zarrainkūb's *Az kūcha-i rindān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Nāhīd, 2000), 188-90, for an "extended analysis of Ḥāfiẓ's immersion in the intellectual milieu of fourteenth-century Shīrāz, where Akbarian teachings were very much the fashion" (ibid., 61, fn. 151). For an argument that places Ḥāfiẓ squarely within the School of Passionate love, see Dāryūsh Āshūrī, *'Irfān Va Rindī Dar Shi'r-i Ḥāfiẓ: Bāz'nigarīstah-yi Hastī'shināsī-i Ḥāfiẓ* (Tih-rān: Nashr-i Markaz, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> To put it bluntly: "The jottings of historians' gossip may occasionally lay bare the political *context* of this or that *ghazal* or line, but tell us nothing about the unvarying philosophical *subtext* of all Ḥāfiẓ's poems, which is love. *Eros* his his polis, not Shīrāz; *Eros*, the object of his praise, not the court of any prince or vizier" (Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 29-30). If modern scholars still doubt the *Islamic* nature of his poetry, it is because they reduce Islam to a scriptural-legal discourse that includes only the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth* literature, and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), rather than conceptualize the Islamic as explorative, paradoxical, metaphorical, aesthetic, and coherently contradictory; for this more nuanced and critical conceptualization, see Shahab Ahmed's *What Is Islam?*.

<sup>79</sup> In addition to the above, there is no further need to make the case for the thoroughly Islamic nature of Ḥāfiẓ's poetry, given that Lewisohn has done a magnificent job of this (referring to both Persian and western-language scholarship) in his two-part Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfiẓ found in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 32-73). In addition to harkening back to, and "transcreating", many a line from the poets and poet-mystics who preceded him, "it is clear that [Ḥāfiẓ had] the text of the Qur'ān by heart, [and that] he excelled in the sciences of Qur'ān commentary (*tafsīr*) and recitation (*talawwut*)" (ibid., 18). "The poetic cosmos of fourteenth-century Persia blazed with some of the brightest luminaries in Persian poetic history, whose ideas Ḥāfiẓ absorbed and emulated, and whose verse he followed and imitated. As a poet, Ḥāfiẓ was a genius of transformative appropriation, supreme connoisseur of verse-aphorisms and epigrams, who specialized in selecting the choicest verses from the past masters of Persian and Arabic poetry, transcreating their imagery, improvising and improving on their ideas in his own original manner. Hardly a verse of Ḥāfiẓ can be found whose sound, form, colour or sense does not hark back to similar ones in the works of 'Umar Khayyām (d. 526/1131), Sanā'ī (d. c. 535/1140), Khāqānī (d. 595/1198), Nizāmī (d. 598/1202), Zāhīr Faryābī (d. 598/1202), 'Aṭṭār of Nīshāpūr (d. 618/1221), Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl Iṣfahānī (d. 635/1237), Sa'dī (d. c. 691/1292), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 688/1289), Nizārī Quhistānī (d. 721/132), Awḥādī Marāghī (d. 738/1338), or other of the grand master poets of classical Persia. His verse is also steeped in the poetry of Ibn Fāriḍ (d. 636/1235), the greatest Arab Sufī poet" (ibid., 6). Concerning the *madhhab-i 'ishq* tradition, Dāryūsh Āshūrī has demonstrated that Ḥāfiẓ's lyrics are steeped in the ideas and terminology of Maybudī's Qur'ānic commentary in Persian, itself significant for its turn toward *'ishq* as the primary term for "love" as opposed to *maḥabba*, *dūstī*, and *mīhr* used by Anṣārī (d. 1089). For the intertextual study of Ḥāfiẓ and Maybudī, see Āshūrī, *'Irfān Va Rindī Dar Shi'r-i Ḥāfiẓ: Bāz'nigarīstah-yi astī'shināsī-i Ḥāfiẓ*. For an insightful monograph on Maybudī's Qur'ānic commentary, see Annabelle Keeler, *Sufi hermeneutics: the Qur'an commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī* (London: Oxford University Press, In Association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2006).

### **The *madhhab-i 'ishq***

*The secret of the face of everything is the point of its connection (with God). There is a sign (ayātī) concealed in creation. Loveliness (ḥusn) is the trace (nishān) of creation. The secret of the face of that face is that which faces [God]. So long as one does not see the secret of the face, then he will never see the sign of creation and [its] loveliness. That face is the beauty of “what remains in the face of your Lord” (Qur’ān 55:27). What is other than that is not a face, for “Everything on the earth will perish” (Qur’ān 55:26). Know that this other face is ugliness.*  
—Aḥmad Ghazālī, *Savānīh*<sup>80</sup>

This opening quotation from Aḥmad Ghazālī, perhaps one of the most formative figures of the School of Love, is indicative both of the theory of perception of beauty and love the school constructed, and the ways in which members of the school made meaning of the Qur’ānic text within the school’s discourse. I use the term *madhhab-i 'ishq* to refer loosely and broadly to the Persian and Arabic Sufī tradition which includes, among others, figures such as Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922), Abu’l-Ḥasan al-Daylamī (fl. late 10th and early 11th centuries), Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 1123 or 1126), Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī (fl. 12th century), Aḥmad ibn Maṣṣūr Sam’ānī (d. 1140), ‘Abdallāh Anṣārī (d. 1089), ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī (d. 1132), Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209), Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1221), and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273). The School of Ibn ‘Arabī and the *madhhab-i 'ishq* tradition begin to come together in figures such as Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī (d. 1289), Sa’īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. c. 1296) and most systematically in Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492).<sup>81</sup> That being the case, creating a separation between members and non-members of the School of Love is an artificial and somewhat futile task, especially as one enters the history of post-classical Islamic intellectual thought.

Nevertheless, the term itself is both emic and etic; these figures often referred to the

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<sup>80</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *Savānīh*, Ed. by Hellmut Ritter (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānīshgāhī, 1989), 15 (Persian, my translation), Chapter 12; for English see Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *Sawānīh: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits*, Tr. by Nasrollah Pourjavady (London: Routledge, 1986), 33 (English).

<sup>81</sup> For a concise introduction to this coalescence, see Chapters One and Two of *Divine Flashes*: Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*. Trs. William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 3-66. For a penetrating analysis of the early Persian tradition of love mysticism, see William Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). For a succinct survey of the development of Islamic conceptions of love, including a summary of scholarship thereon, see Joseph Lumbard, "From Ḥubb to ‘Ishq: The Development of Love in Early Sufism." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 345-85.

*madhhab-i 'ishq* in their writings, whether poetic or prosaic. By using this term, they were in effect positioning themselves and the tradition from which they drew inspiration alongside the legal tradition: a *madhhab* (pl. *madhāhib*) refers to one of the four schools of thought within Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which schools were all considered valid by Sunni consensus.<sup>82</sup> Thus, while figures were often themselves self-described as members of a legal *madhhab*, they were, in addition, making a “para-nomian” or “supra-nomian” claim by *also* pledging allegiance to the School (*madhhab*) of Love, and thus not so much an antinomian claim (as modern scholarship has often argued—though, of course, this was sometimes the case).<sup>83</sup>

While the history of the transition from *ḥubb* or *maḥabbah*, which is found in the Qur’ān, to *'ishq*, which came to dominate the School of Love, is an edifying and complex one, it is more pertinent for my purpose to offer some further background to the vision of the school rather than to the historical influences upon this school.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, the technical differences between *ḥubb*

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<sup>82</sup> The four schools that were established as valid (by the Mamluk Sultanate) were the *Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfi‘ī*, and *Hanbalī*.

<sup>83</sup> “We need to understand the spatiality of revelation and the fact that there are spaces of Islamic existence besides the spaces of the law, in both thought and practice” (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 454). Rather than term these spaces and discourses “antinomian,” as has often been the case, Ahmed, in *What is Islam?*, prefers “the terms ‘para-nomian’ and ‘supra-nomia’ so as to emphasize that this stance does not necessarily place itself so much *against* the law as it does *beside*, *beyond*, and *above* law” (ibid.). Ahmed adduces and then critiques many scholarly articles and books from the 20th century that argue for the antinomian character of this discourse.

<sup>84</sup> Desire, or passionate love (*'ishq*), by Ḥāfiẓ’s time, had become equivalent to the very essence (*dhāt*) of God according to the *madhhab-i 'ishq*. As Joseph Lumbard has demonstrated, the theology of love in the early period focused on human love for God and God’s love for humanity, explicating the Qur’ānic verse, “a people whom [God] loves [*yuhibbuhum*] and who love Him [*yuhibbūna-hu*]” (Qur’ān 5:54). Here love is understood dualistically. By the early 12th century “love comes to be discussed as the Divine Essence beyond all duality” (Lumbard, “From Ḥubb to ‘Ishq: The Development of Love in Early Sufism,” 346). However, before *'ishq* takes hold, *ḥubb*, one of the words for love used in the Qur’ān (and in the aforementioned verse), already conveys such non-dual meaning according to some interpreters. For an excellent analysis of the use of love in the Qur’ān, see Ghāzī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭalāl, *Love in the Holy Qur’an* (Chicago, Ill.: Kazi Publications, 2010). Besides *ḥubb*, another term for love found in the Qur’ān is from the same root as the Divine Name, *al-wadūd* (loving affectionately). Furthermore, take, for instance, Abu’l-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, who flourished in the late 10th and early 11th centuries: “The origin of love (*maḥabbah*) is God, who is always described with love, for it is an attribute that subsists in Him. In pre-eternity He was eternally contemplating Himself through Himself and for Himself, just as He was in love with Himself (*wājid bi-nafsihi*) through Himself and for Himself, and thus he loved Himself through Himself and for Himself. There in pre-eternity the lover, beloved, and love were one. There was no division in them. For He is the source of unity, and no two things exist in unity. Then God engendered from pre-eternity, for all of His shared divine names, effects which are temporal yet alongside pre-eternity. [...] Love, then, which was the first emergence that was engendered from among the divine attributes, is a luminous principle which appears from pre-eternity to temporality, and it becomes divided into three: lover, beloved, and love, even though originally they were one” (Abū Al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad Daylamī, *‘Atf Al-alif Al-ma’lūf ‘alā Al-lām Al-ma’lūf*, Eds. Ḥasan Maḥmūd Shāfi‘ī and Joseph N. Bell [Cairo: Dār Al-Kitāb Al-

and *‘ishq* (and the dozens of other words for “love” in Arabic and Persian) do not necessarily concern us here; while I do not wish to elide or reduce all of these words, it is noteworthy that someone like Rūzbihān Baqlī can say, “*Ishq* is the perfection of *maḥabba* and *maḥabba* is the attribute of the Real; do not be tricked by words, for *‘ishq* and *maḥabba* are one.”<sup>85</sup> Finally, in the Persian language, the Arabic loanword *‘ishq* came to mean everything from, inter alia, *raḥma* (mercy) to *ḥubb* (love), *hawa* (desire) and *wadūd* (affectionate love).

Yet it must be asked: why does someone like the Muslim, Persian poet Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār take the *shahāda*, the Islamic profession of faith (the first part of which is “there is no god but God,” or, *lā ilāha illā Allāh*), and re-imagine it, re-phrase it, in terms of love: *lā ilāha illā ‘ishq*? “There is no god but passionate love” is a profession of faith founded on a theological anthropology and cosmology in which the human person, created for the sake of loving God, as it were, yearns to return to her Beloved. The paradox is that by sheer fact of existing, there is a radical separation from one’s source; therefore, God, intending to draw human persons unto God’s self, infinitely self-manifests in the many and various forms of the world in order to cultivate the desire of human persons. In this experience of love, the wayfarer comes to mystical recognition (*ma‘rifa*), realization (*taḥqīq*), bewilderment (*ḥayra*), and unveiling (*kashf*) through the pain and suffering (*ghamm* and *dard*) that is concomitant with passionate love.<sup>86</sup> The lover is separated from the Beloved who is at once “closer to him than [his] jugular vein” (Qur’ān 50:16).

The contradiction of being separated from God while simultaneously living in a world that is replete with Divine Self-Disclosures, permeated with the infinite, manifested forms of God’s

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Miṣrī; Dār Al-Kitāb Al-Lubnānī, 2007], 74 [Arabic, translation mine]). For an English translation, see Abū Al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, Trs. Ḥasan Maḥmūd Shāfi‘ī and Joseph N. Bell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), 60. Here one already notices the tension between nondual love in God and the dual love that is manifested in this phenomenal world. It is precisely this tension in which we are called to live by Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics.

<sup>85</sup> Rūzbihān Ibn Abī Al-Naṣr Baqlī, *Kitāb-i ‘Abhar Al-‘āshiqīn*. Eds. Henry Corbin and Muḥammad Mu‘īn (Tīhrān: Intishārāt-i Manūchihīrī, 1987), 138 (Arabic, translation mine).

<sup>86</sup> In Persian, *ghamm* is most indicative of the physical, psychological, and emotional state of a hangover after a long night of drinking.

unmanifest essence, is the source for the tenor of paradox, ambiguity, pain, suffering, and coquetry of the poetic strand of the School of Love. If the *true* human lover lives in and through the Divine Beloved, there is then a paradox of duality. The aim is to remove duality and live in nonduality: the lover is not one with the Beloved, but not two; rather, she remains something in between. By living in this ambiguous space, dualistic categories are oftentimes rejected by members of the School of Love. The distinctions between faith and unbelief, between Muslim, Jew, Christian, Hindu and otherwise, begins to break down. There arise the practice of the inspired libertine, the *rind*,<sup>87</sup> and the prominent pastime of wine-drinking, which formally takes on an antinomian character. Living this perplexing, passionate love destroys all categories, and hence there emerged the category of the School of Love, for love brings together opposites.<sup>88</sup>

In recent scholarship there has been a critical intervention in the presentation of the School of Love as merely affective and ecstatic rather than “a way of going about being Muslim,” as Ahmed aptly interpreted the term *madhhab*.<sup>89</sup> Scholarship on the *ṣūfī* path has often cordoned off the “mystical path” (*ṭarīqa*) from the “legal path” (*sharīʿa*); the latter is the necessary practice and the former is the necessary *and* sufficient practice for reaching the *ḥaqīqa*, the Reality, God. In doing so, scholarship has tended to systematize the various stations along the *ṭarīqa*, describing them as if they were *separate from* quotidian life, as if their mystical practices and experiences had nothing to do with their way of life, their being-in-the-world, on a day-to-day

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<sup>87</sup> For an excellent overview of the meaning and import of the *rind*, see section III of “The Visionary Topography of Ḥāfīz,” by Daryush Shayegan, in Ḥāfīz, *The Green Sea of Heaven: Fifty Ghazals from the Dīwān of Ḥāfīz*, Tr. Elizabeth T. Gray (Ashland, Or.: White Cloud Press, 1995), 28-34. See also Leonard Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīz 2 — The mystical Milieu: Ḥāfīz’s Erotic Spirituality,” in *Ḥāfīz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 31-55. In brief, the Ḥāfīz’s *rind* is so filled with Divine Love and Grace that he no longer is concerned with heaven or hell, nor does he count on his own knowledge, piety, learning, or ostensible religiosity for salvation.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī says as much. See “Metaphor, Imagination, the Imaginal World, and Poetry in the Islamic Tradition” in Chapter Three of this dissertation, in particular footnote 70 of that chapter.

<sup>89</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 38. Ahmed situates Ḥāfīz and the School of Love within his *What Is Islam?* as one of the six questions on Islam that he seeks to cogent and coherent. His own introduction to Ḥāfīz and the School is succinct and insightful; see *ibid.*, 32-46.

basis.<sup>90</sup> Rather, the School of Love was a way of life, it functioned as a “religious account,”<sup>91</sup> and one that was formed by Divine Revelation received by the Prophet Muḥammad, and therefore was *Islamic*. Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī’s Qur’ān *tafsīr* (commentary), *Kashf al-asrār wa-‘uddat al-abrār*, with which Ḥāfiẓ was arguably conversant,<sup>92</sup> says as much in his commentary on Qur’ān 41:162, “Those who are firmly rooted in knowledge”:

The firmly rooted in knowledge are those who have obtained the varieties of knowledge: the knowledge of the *sharī‘a*, the knowledge of the *ṭarīqa*, and the knowledge of the *ḥaqīqa*. The knowledge of the *sharī‘a* can be learned, the knowledge of the *ṭarīqa* comes through practice, and the knowledge of the *ḥaqīqa* comes by finding. Concerning the knowledge of the *sharī‘a*, He says, “Ask the folk of the remembrance (Qur’ān 16:43). Concerning the knowledge of the *ṭarīqa*, He says, “Seek the means of approach to Him” (Qur’ān 5:35). Concerning the knowledge of the *ḥaqīqa*, He says, “We taught him knowledge from Us” (Qur’ān 18:65).<sup>93</sup>

Maybudī does not then suggest that the legal religious duties incumbent on the Muslim are somehow abrogated by the knowledge of the *ṣūfi* path. Rather, the ones firmly rooted in knowledge not only have knowledge of the *sharī‘a*, *ṭarīqa*, and *ḥaqīqa*, but “learn the knowledge of the *sharī‘a* and then put it into practice with sincerity to the point that they perceive the knowledge of the *ḥaqīqa* in their secret core.”<sup>94</sup> There is thus an ineluctable link between knowledge and practice, and this link is characteristic of Rivera’s poetics of the flesh (introduced

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<sup>90</sup> While in practice *ṣūfi* gatherings for the sake of practicing ritual were as common as (if not more common than) Friday prayer at the mosque, one must not be tempted to consider that these practices were for the sake of an “ecstatic experience.” In fact, the *ṣūfi shaykh* or *pīr* (master, guide) would often castigate a disciple with such goals. If one received a sudden *ḥall*, or mystical state, the goal was rather to convert and extend it into a mystical station (*maqām*) that perdured throughout one’s life.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Griffiths defines “religious account” as the interpretive framework through which a person makes sense of her phenomenal experience of the world. A religious account is (1) comprehensive in that “it seems to the person who offers it to take as its object strictly everything, and thereby to have universal scope” (Paul J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 8); (2) unsurpassable in that it is “not...capable of being replaced by or subsumed in a better account of what it accounts for” (ibid., 9); and, most importantly—though all three are required for a religious account to be religious—(3) central in that it is “directly relevant to what you take to be the central questions of your life, the questions around which your life is oriented” (ibid., 10).

<sup>92</sup> See footnote 79 above.

<sup>93</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 219; citing Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, *Kashf Al-asrār Wa-‘uddat Al-abrār* (Tihārān: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihārān, 1952-1960), volume 2, 774-775.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

below): “*modes* of knowing, being, and acting in the world”<sup>95</sup> that keep epistemology, ontology, and embodied action intertwined or even co-constituting.

The link connecting love, knowledge, and practice has often been ignored. Scholars can no longer view these practices and beliefs as elitist or uncommon, or this knowledge as somehow “secret” (though it may very well have been an “open secret”).<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, it is not that love was opposed to knowledge in this tradition, but rather that passionate love was “construed and practiced by the *madhhab-i ‘ishq* precisely as a register or *type of knowing*.”<sup>97</sup> Yes, the poet-mystics of the School of Love often lambasted the philosophers and ridiculed logic and reasoning, but they did so because *they* had access to a knowledge from which the philosopher, with his logic and reasoning, was excluded. Love and the imagination permit coincidences of opposites, paradoxes, and contradiction, something that ratiocination does not.<sup>98</sup> Passionate love is a mode of knowing and living that brings together opposites and valorizes paradoxes, something ratiocination precludes. But more formatively for societies of Muslims from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and from the Balkans to the Bay of Bengal, the modes, mechanisms, epistemology, poetry, metaphors, and images of passionate love were a social imaginary, the “the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings

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<sup>95</sup> Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>96</sup> “[The] self-evident historical *commonplaceness* and *centrality* of the *madhhab-i ‘ishq* and of Ḥāfiẓ-ian literature at the very heart of the mainstream—that is, moving with and as a part of the flow rather than counter to it—of the historical discourses, practices, valorizations and self-constructions of Muslims makes the characterization *counter-religion* highly unsatisfactory, and fails entirely to help us conceptualize *the coherence of contradictory norms* in the lived ‘religious’ reality of Muslims” (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 45-46).

<sup>97</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 42. He continues, “the *experience* of love is a learning experience (or an experience of learning) that *teaches* the lover how to identify value (i.e., what is valuable) and to constitute the human being—both as individual and as society—accordingly, in terms of those values” (ibid.).

<sup>98</sup> “Love [in the *madhhab-i ‘ishq*] functions as an elevating experience for the realization, apprehension, and experience of the values and higher Truth. It functions...as a mode of knowing, of valorizing and meaning-making, and as the medium for the mobilization and incorporation of these meanings and values into a manner and ethos and critical principle of living ‘by means of which societies are bound together’” (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 42). Here Ahmed is quoting a subtitle to the most widely studied work in social theory and political thought in the history of societies of Muslims, viz., the *Akhlāq (Ethics)* of Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūṣī (d. 1274): “On the Virtue of Love, By Mean of Which Societies Are Bound Together,” a subsection of the chapter entitled “Love and Friendship” (ibid., 40).

create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life.”<sup>99</sup> In bringing passionate love into conversation with the Incarnation, I aim to uncover this nondual function of an Incarnational imaginary.

### **The School of Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī: The Akbarian Tradition**

The Akbarian tradition is the name given by scholars to the collection of texts written by Muslim thinkers (whether they be *ṣūfīs*, philosophers, or a mix of the two, which was often the case in post-classical Islamic intellectual history) who were predominantly shaped by the teachings of Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), whose posthumous title bestowed on him by his disciples and commentators was *al-shaykh al-akbar*, “the greatest master.” These Muslim thinkers may have explicitly inserted themselves into the tradition by writing commentaries on Ibn ‘Arabī’s corpus, or may have been implicitly shaped by his thought given the rapid and widespread diffusion of his teachings immediately following his death. The precise and detailed genealogy of this tradition, its influence on the philosophical tradition, and its ultimate rise to predominance such that the distinction between Akbarian thought and Avicennan philosophy was nearly eliminated by the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century—all this does not concern us here.<sup>100</sup> What is of import for this project is the historical fact that even by the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, no learned Muslim could have remained uninfluenced by the anthropocosmic vision and theology of the Akbarian tradition—and Ḥāfīz was certainly learned.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> John Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Polity Press, 1984), 6.

<sup>100</sup> See Caner K. Dagli, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>101</sup> In the English and French, William Chittick, James Morris, Michel Chodkiewicz, and other scholars of Ibn ‘Arabī have produced hundreds of books and articles outlining and systematizing the ontology, cosmology, anthropology, and epistemology of the Akbarian tradition; such scholarship need not be repeated here. Rather, I turn to the most formative concept bequeathed to the later Islamic tradition by Ibn ‘Arabī, viz., that of theophany or *tajalliyāt* ([Divine] Self-Disclosures). For the best introductions to Ibn ‘Arabī, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989) and *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), James Morris, *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn ‘Arabi’s Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005), and Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn ‘Arabi, the Book, and the Law* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993) as well as his *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabi* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

Arguably the single most important contribution to the larger Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition was Ibn ‘Arabī’s systematic explication of the cosmological principle of *tajalliyāt*, the divine self-disclosure or -manifestation, known in the Christian intellectual tradition as theophany. “Explication,” because he did not invent it; the term itself, along with its use to signify the divine self-manifestation, had been around for centuries before him, though it was generally relegated to the discourse of the *ṣūfīs*. The famous *ṣūfī* axiom, *lā takrār fi ’l-tajallī*, “there is no repetition in self-manifestation,” is cited often by Muslim thinkers, and it is perhaps based on what Ibn ‘Arabī ascribes to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996), the author of the *ṣūfī* manual, *Qūt al-qulūb*: “God never discloses Himself in a single form to two individuals, nor in a single form twice.”<sup>102</sup> This statement regarding one’s personal encounter with a divine self-disclosure was transformed into a cosmological principle upon which an entire metaphysical ontology is based. Yes, a *ṣūfī* may perceive a divine self-disclosure, but in fact the whole cosmos is nothing but an unbounded collection of infinite, unique divine self-disclosures. The aim of the human wayfarer is to become a *muḥaqqiq*, or a “realized one” able to *perceive* the divine self-disclosures via *dhawq*, or experiential knowing (literally, “tasting”), and not merely rationally assent to their existence.

Ibn ‘Arabī writes in his most influential text, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*: “The cosmos is nothing but [the Real’s] self-disclosure in the forms of their immutable entities whose [phenomenal] existence is impossible without Him.”<sup>103</sup> This is just one of the hundreds of statements directly addressing the nature of the divine self-disclosures in Ibn ‘Arabī’s oeuvre. Every form (*ṣūra*) of the cosmos is a self-disclosure of God without which meaning (*ma‘nā*) would be unable to exist,

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<sup>102</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, Ed. Osman Yahya (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), I.266.9 (Volume.Page.Line), Chapter 48 “On the Recognition that What Is Can Only Be As It Is, Despite the Establishment of Cause and Effect.” See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 103.

<sup>103</sup> From the *Faṣṣ*/Chapter of Abraham: Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Ed. Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 2015), 82 (Arabic, my translation); for English, see Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabī’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of ‘The Bezels of Wisdom’*, Tr. Binyamin Abrahamov (New York: Routledge, 2015), 51; or Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom (=Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam)*, Tr. R. W. J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 93.

as Qaysarī, in his chapter on the Imaginal World of his introduction to his commentary on the Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ*, states: “There is neither meaning nor spirit except that it possess an imaginal form (*ṣūra mithāliyya*) corresponding to its perfection, since all [meaning and spirit] participate in the [Divine] Name, ‘The Manifest’ (*al-zāhir*).”<sup>104</sup> Two of God’s names appear to contradict each other, viz., the Manifest (*al-zāhir*)—this word has the same root as *zuhūr*, one of the words used for the concept of theophany—and the Unmanifest or Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), and this contradiction is rendered somewhat coherent through the cosmological process of the divine self-disclosures. The cosmos itself is “God/not-God” (*huwa lā huwa*), and each particular thing “is and is not” God. “So [God] is Manifest in respect of the loci of manifestation, while He is Unmanifest in respect of His He-ness (*huwiyya*).”<sup>105</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes in his magnum opus, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, concerning phenomenal entities, i.e., everything in perceptible existence:

So in existence "they are/they are not": The Manifest is their properties, so "they are." But they have no entity in existence, so "they are not." In the same way, "He is and is not": He is the Manifest, so "He is." But the distinction among the existents is intelligible and perceived by the senses because of the diversity of the properties of the entities, so "He is not."<sup>106</sup>

Tension between existence and non-existence, between God and not God, between unity and duality, thus exists at every level of creation. Given this, *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* urges us to “see with two eyes,” i.e., the eye of transcendence or apophasis (*tanzīh*) and the eye of immanence or kataphasis (*tashbīh*).<sup>107</sup> The intellect (*‘aql*) and the rational faculties declare God’s transcendence,

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<sup>104</sup> Dawūd Qaysarī, *Foundations of Islamic Mysticism: Qaysarī’s Introduction to Ibn ‘Arabī’s Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (= *Muqaddima al-Qaysarī*). Tr. by Mukhtar H. Ali (UK: Spiritual Alchemy Press, 2012), 132-133 (Arabic-English).

<sup>105</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyyah*, II.93.35, this is part of Question 87 (“What does the Real require of the monotheists?”) of the lengthy Chapter 73; see also Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 90.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyyah*, II.160.4-6, Chapter 85 “Concerning the Piety of the Veil and the Covering.” See also Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 95.

<sup>107</sup> From the *Faṣṣ*/Chapter of Noah in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*: “Likewise, whosoever declares [God’s] immanence, while not declaring [God’s] transcendence, he has bound and delimited [God], and does not know [God]. Now, whosoever brings immanence/kataphasis and transcendence/apophasis [*bayna al-tanzīh wa’l-tashbīh*] together in his recognition through these two characteristics comprehensively—though this is impossible to do in detail [*‘alā al-tafṣīl*] on account of the unlimited forms of the cosmos—[this person] has known [God] in general and not in detail, just as he knows himself in general and not in detail” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 47 (Arabic, my translation); for English, see Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 37; or Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 74). Ibn al-‘Arabī frequently mentions “seeing with two eyes”, that is, the eye of

while the imagination and the imaginal faculty, via the heart, declare God’s immanence. Yet, these divine self-disclosures permit a veridical perception of God, here and now: “When [the heart] gazes at the Real via His self-disclosures, it is not possible to gaze at anything else at the same time.”<sup>108</sup> The coincidence of opposites, the “they are/they are not” and “God/not-God”, that theophany effects concomitantly affects *how* the world *is*. This *mode* of existence is a *theo-poetics*, which is why *metaphor* in particular is effective in theological discourse.

### **Ḥāfīz, Re-Interpreted**

Ḥāfīz’s modern critics have remained studiously focused, in general, on two main topics. First, finding some sort of unity in his *ghazals*, be it thematic, rhetorical, structural, psychological, experiential, emotional, or otherwise.<sup>109</sup> Second, determining whether Ḥāfīz was more of a court poet or a mystic, a secular artist or a Muslim making meaning, *Islamically*, through poetry, or whether his poetry should be interpreted literally or allegorically (and if the latter, in what way allegory or metaphor functions in his love lyrics). These scholarly critics often presuppose a dualism that simply did not exist either in the contemporary literary and intellectual *paideia* or in the predominant mystico-theological cosmologies. Now, if Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics are read through a) the School of Love’s theological assertion that passionate love is God’s essence, b) the Akbarian cosmology of Divine Self-Disclosures, the Imaginal World, poetic metaphor, and their connection to revelation and c) the Akbarian and School of Love’s formulation of cosmic love, viz., that love is the movement of the cosmos, then inquiring into such dualistic interpretations is futile at best, and misguided at worst. This interpretation I offer is effectively an

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transcendence/apophasis (*tanzīh*) and the eye of immanence/kataphasis (*tashbīh*). For example, “[Humankind] has two visions of The Real, and therefore [God] made him with two eyes. With one eye he sees [God] as being independent from the worlds [apophatically]; he does not see [God] in anything or in himself. With the other eye he sees [God] as the [Divine] Name the Merciful which demands the world and which the world demands; he sees [God] permeating existence in everything” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.151.27-29, Chapter 338 “On the Recognition of the Obstacles of Journeying, and this is from the Muḥammadan Presence”).

<sup>108</sup> From the *Faṣṣ*/Chapter on Shu’ayb: Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 169 (Arabic, my translation); for English, see Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 87; or Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 148.

<sup>109</sup> See footnote 74 above.

Islamic theo-poetics.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to failing to do sufficient justice to the pervasiveness of the *madhhab-i 'ishq* and the Akbarian tradition, scholars have tended to undervalue the formative and constitutive role of metaphor within these two traditions.<sup>111</sup> The articles in the most recent collected volume on Ḥāfīz, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, are by far the single best corrective to previous scholarship. As Husayn Ilahi-Ghomshei contends, the love lyrics of Ḥāfīz are the product of a certain vision of the world wherein the whole world reflects God's face, and the love lyrics themselves are "a sacred scripture...[reflecting] the divine Beloved's countenance."<sup>112</sup> Given that Ḥāfīz's love lyrics themselves become signs of beauty, they mirror

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<sup>110</sup> The cosmic nature of this passionate love has been insightfully highlighted by Bashiri (Iraj Bashiri, "Ḥāfīz and the Sufic Ghazal" *Studies in Islam* 16 (1979): 34-67), who takes to task Hillman's interpretations (in his *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*), and argues that the particular beloveds in the poems are given meaning only on account of this cosmic, passionate love. Bashiri points out that when Ḥāfīz references the cosmos, whether the planets or the constellation Pleiades, the poet is connecting the theme of *'ishq*/passionate love to the cosmos itself. In fact, Bashiri goes so far as to postulate that Ḥāfīz is alluding to various stages on the path of love, or, in other words, the *madhhab-i 'ishq*. The cosmos (along with all of its nitty-gritty experiences, struggles, joys and affliction) becomes, in effect, the means whereby the human subject discovers the passionate love of and for God. Bashiri's reading is certainly an improvement compared to earlier critics, and yet, along with Meisami (see, for instance, Julie Scott Meisami, "Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Epic Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17 (1985): 229-60, and "The World's Pleasance: Ḥāfīz's Allegorical Gardens," *Comparative Criticism: an Annual Journal* 5 (1983): 153-85, and "Allegorical Techniques in the Ghazals of Hāfez," *Edebiyat* 4.1 (1979): 1-40), he claims that this love *transcends the mystical and the mundane*. Once again, these critics are beginning from the modern understanding of what it means for someone or for some experience to be "mystical" or "religious" (or, "Islamic") as opposed to "mundane", "ordinary," or "secular." This "subjectivism" posits that mystical experiences come and go; rather, it appears that the textual tradition to which Ibn 'Arabī, members of the *madhhab-i 'ishq*, and, consequently, I argue, Ḥāfīz, belonged, proposed a mysticism that was intended to be transformative of one's very being-in-the-world, which included one's vision of reality. If the love that is the subject of the *ghazals* of Ḥāfīz transcends both the secular and the mystical, it is because that self-same love has become identical with the very existence of God, and thus pervades the cosmos via divine self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*) in a complex, multilayered cosmology intended to draw God's servants to the Real. God is both the ground of being and beyond being, or the ground of love and beyond love, simultaneously drawing us to God through love and remaining ever out of reach.

<sup>111</sup> Persian literary scholars have remained ineluctably focused on metaphor qua literary technique within the larger Arabic and Persian literary tradition to the exclusion of the theological valence of metaphor—*majāz*—in the *madhhab-i 'ishq* and the Akbarian tradition.

<sup>112</sup> "In Persian literature, the Prophet [*sic*] Ḥāfīz's collected poems (*Dīvān*) constitute a sacred scripture which, just like the rods of Sa'dī, is a faithful reflection of the divine Beloved's countenance. Both poets were prophets; both composed poetic Scriptures that remain miracles of beauty in Persian, their verses appearing as divine signs (*ayāt*) of loveliness and grace. For Ḥāfīz, the entire world reflects the grace and loveliness of the divine countenance, for, insofar as 'Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God' (Qur'ān, II: 115), that Face reveals and casts a ray of the infinite divine beauty in the mirrors of man, cosmos, microcosm, and macrocosm" (Husayn Ilahi-Ghomshei, "The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry," in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 83).

the cosmos that was the source of inspiration in the first place; the “intricacy of Ḥāfīz’s poetry...is derived from the visual experience of beauty in all its ineffability,” which results in the “dilemma of integrating” the multiplicity of divine beauty into a single discourse, as Leili Anvar contends.<sup>113</sup>

The import of metaphor and the imagination is examined constructively in chapter three. Metaphor is not just constitutive of the poetic form, but it is constitutive of this world, too. It must be borne in mind that, for the literary discourses of educated Muslims in Ḥāfīz’s context, *this phenomenal world is itself a metaphor*, “it is the World of Metaphor [ *‘ālam al-majāz*] the experience of which evokes and alludes to the Real-Truth of the Unseen World—the world of Real-Truth, the *‘ālam al-ḥaqīqah*.”<sup>114</sup> This world is not an *illusion*, though the Real-Truth, or God, may *elude* the human subject on account of the *delusions* of Iblīs-Satan. However, most importantly, for the one with proper perception the entire world is an *allusion* (*ishāra*) to God and the means whereby we experience God.

The literary and intellectual paideia of learned Muslim of Shīrāz in the 14<sup>th</sup> century enables a reading of these love lyrics through the overlapping lens of the *madhhab-i ‘ishq* and the

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<sup>113</sup> “It could be argued that each line of the *Dīvān-i Ḥāfīz* is transfused with a beauty cast by [the] reflection of the Beloved in the same way as, in mystical terms, the microcosm [i.e., the human person] reflects the macrocosm. Thus, his poetic images reflect both in their form and meaning an echo of the primordial beauty experienced by the human soul in pre-eternity, when it emerged from nothingness by the command of the Creator. The very intricacy of Ḥāfīz’s poetry reflects the complexity of the experience of love, which in turn is derived from the visual experience of beauty in all its ineffability and the resultant dilemma of integrating the variegated multiplicity of beauty’s reality into a single discourse” (Leili Anvar, “The Radiance of Epiphany: The Vision of Beauty and Love in Ḥāfīz’s Poem of Pre-Eternity,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 123). This “visual experience of beauty” is a direct corollary of the cosmology of *tajalliyāt*, or Divine Self-Disclosure, theophany. The *tajalliyāt* unveil God, while simultaneously veiling God; in fact, the word, “*tajalliyāt*,” itself is etymologically related to the unveiling of a women’s face. In poetry, the meaning (*ma’ nā*) of love is unveiled in the form (*ṣūra*) of the love lyric, but the form is just another veil for the unspeakable meaning. Aḥmad Ghazālī, in the opening to his *Savānīh*, writes that, like the forms of the cosmos, language both veils and unveils meaning. The metaphorical form of poetry facilitates the rendering of meaning into linguistic expression, as it were. The highly gendered and admittedly violent reading notwithstanding: “The following words comprise some chapters dealing with the meanings of love (*ma’ ānī-i ‘ishq*), although the tales of love can never be fit into words nor contained within the confines of language. For those meanings are virgins and the hand of verbal expression can never lift the veil behind which they are becurtained. Nonetheless, our entire affair is to bring those virginal meanings together with the virile males of words in the private chamber of linguistic expression” (Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *Savānīh*, 1 [Persian], cited by Anvar in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 124; for English see Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *Sawānīh: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits*, 15).

<sup>114</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 394.

Akbarian tradition. I avail myself of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century commentary that did just that, and so to a brief introduction to this commentary I now turn.

### **Abū al-Ḥasan Khatamī Lāhūrī**

*A Mystical Commentary of the Love Lyrics of Ḥāfiẓ (Sharḥ-i 'irfānī-i ghazalḥā-yi Ḥāfiẓ)* is a Persian commentary of monumental proportions; it is written by a certain Abū al-Ḥasan Khatamī Lāhūrī (fl. 1617) about whom we know little. Khurramshāhī, the editor of the critical edition of this commentary, points out that “this commentary on the 463 ghazals...gives a clarifying explication and offers an interpretation of every single couplet of each ghazal.”<sup>115</sup> It must be noted that the best known mystical commentaries on Ḥāfiẓ’s lyrics are in Turkish, namely, those of Surūrū (d. 1561) and Sham‘ī (d. 1591). There also exists the famous literal and grammatical commentary by Sūdī of Bosnia (d. 1597). While there are more commentaries by authors hailing from India than by those from Central Asia, Turkey, and Iran, the only one published thus far is Lāhūrī’s; this demonstrates just how much scholarship is lacking in the field.<sup>116</sup>

Lewisohn has this to say about the commentary:

For fathoming the theosophical background and mystical subtleties of Ḥāfiẓ’s esoteric language and theory of love, Lāhūrī’s monumental work (over 4,000 pages of small print) is comparable in its significance to Muḥammad Lāhījī’s (d. 1507) inimitable Persian commentary on Shabistarī’s *Gulshan-i rāz* or Ismā‘īl Anqaravī’s (d. 1631) grand Turkish exegesis of Rūmī’s *Mathnamī*.<sup>117</sup>

It is difficult to overestimate the breadth and the depth of this commentary. Khurramshāhī says it best:

Without an ounce of exaggeration, I can truthfully state that this present commentary is the most complete of commentaries that heretofore have been written by the pen of [pre-modern] authors and

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<sup>115</sup> *SH I*, iv (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>116</sup> For an overview of commentaries, see Abū Al-Qāsim Rādfar, *Ḥāfiẓ'pizhūhān Va Ḥāfiẓ'pizhūhī* (Tih-rān: Nashr-i Gustarah, 1989), 271-297.

<sup>117</sup> Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 14.

published, it is the most elucidating and the one that best solves [the *ghazals*'] difficulties.<sup>118</sup>

I myself can attest to the assistance rendered to me by this commentary. Lāhūrī has at his disposal and seemingly at his fingertips the entire philosophical, theological, and mystical Islamic discursive traditions. He cites with ease various authors in the midst of his interpretations, drawing from a wellspring of sources. As Khurramshāhī notes, his interpretations rarely touch on grammatical or linguistic points; this was the realm of Sūdī, and the present commentary instead proffers “mystical and philosophical...interpretations.”<sup>119</sup>

Given that I am reading Ḥāfīz's love lyrics through the School of Love and the Akbarian tradition, this commentary provides me fortuitously with both historical and meaningful support:

The mysticism that is proposed in this commentary is a blend of nontechnical love mysticism and technical speculative mysticism. The author, moreover, quotes from many excerpts and passages of the Holy Qur'ān and the Prophetic *ḥadīth*, and from the common mystical texts taken from the *Kashf al-mahjūb* of Hujwārī [d. 1072] and the *Tamhīdāt* of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī [d. 1131], up until the influence of Ibn 'Arabī, especially his *Futūḥāt [al-Makkiyya]*, and before this his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, as well as the Persian and Arabic commentaries thereon, for the sake of finding benefit in commenting on the most mystical aspects of Ḥāfīz's poetry. The most foundational texts that influence his thought and that are cited by him are, firstly, the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, and secondly, the *Gulshān-i rāz* of Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī, among many others. The consideration of the sources put to use by the author demonstrates the extent of the domain of his research and investigation.<sup>120</sup>

Through my own reading, I can add several other authors whose oeuvre Lāhūrī cites: Ismā'īl Ibn Muḥammad Mustamlī (d. 1042-1043), Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī, Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥman Jāmī, the theologian and philosopher Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1209), the famous South Asian Chisti saint, Rukn al-Dīn Kāshānī (fl. 14<sup>th</sup> century), the famous commentator of Shabistarī's *Gulshān-i rāz*, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā Lāhījī, and many more.

Beyond the critical edition published by Khurramshāhī, his introduction, and several

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<sup>118</sup> *SH I*, iv.

<sup>119</sup> “Sūdī is entirely linguistic and literary, and does not possess the tiniest mystical inclination. However, the present commentary is just the opposite, it is entirely mystical and philosophical, and consists of the least amount of linguistic and literary aspects concerning the poetry of Ḥāfīz. The language and expression of this commentary is not difficult or uncommon, however it is full of mystical and philosophical technical terms and interpretations” (*SH I*, iv).

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

articles, there has not been much other work done on this four-volume commentary. The only English translations are found in some articles in the volume edited by Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*; these are but several lines here and there.

Throughout this project, I will provide original translations aimed at elucidating the love lyrics that I have chosen to analyze. The purpose of the commentary is severalfold. The first is to gainsay any possible critiques concerning my interpretations that may suggest I am reading the love lyrics out of context. I hope I have sufficiently demonstrated that reading the love lyrics through the lens of the School of Love and the Akbarian tradition is not only historical permitted, but perhaps meaningfully demanded; this commentary provides a source from within the Islamic religious tradition that did just that. This is related to another purpose, viz., to offer readers a voice from within the Islamic tradition that unravels many of the mysteries found entangled in the warp and weft of Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics. Finally, Lāhūrī’s commentary demonstrates the ways in which Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics formed an integral part of the learned paideia of a Muslim living in 17<sup>th</sup>-century South Asia; it also gives a textual artifact of just how broad the *Con-text* of Divine Revelation was: Lāhūrī cites everything from the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* to philosophers and theologians.

According to Shahab Ahmed’s theory of Divine Revelation, which distinguishes the Pre-Text and the Con-Text of Divine Revelation in addition to the actual Text (Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*), Lāhūrī took Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics as an integral part of the dynamic of Divine Revelation.<sup>121</sup> Ḥāfīz,

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<sup>121</sup> For Ahmed, the Text of Divine Revelation is the self-evident inscribed, historical textual artifact of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* literature. But “the act of Revelation of Muḥammad plus the product of text of Revelation to Muḥammad *does not encompass and is not co-extensive or consubstantial with* the full idea or phenomenon or reality of Revelation to Muḥammad” (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 346). Hence the Pre-Text: “The Text of the Revelation requires as its premise an Unseen Reality or Truth that *lies beyond and behind the Text of the Revelation-in-the-Seen* and upon which the act, Text and truth of Revelation are contingent. This Unseen Reality is *ontologically prior to and alethically* (that is, as regards truth) *larger than* the textual product of the Revelation [=the Qur’ān]: it is the source of Revelation... The act and text of the Muḥammadan Revelation together represent a *single historical instance and enactment of this larger and prior dimension of the reality of Revelation*—which I will here term the *Pre-text* of Revelation” (ibid., 346-347). Finally, “*Con-Text of Revelation* is the body of meaning that is the product and outcome of previous hermeneutical engagement with Revelation. *Con-Text is, in other words, that whole field or complex or vocabulary of meanings of Revelation that have been produced in the course of the human and historical hermeneutical engagement with Revelation, and which are thus already present as Islam*” (ibid., 356).

as the Tongue of the Unseen, had access to the Pre-Text of Divine Revelation through the experience (*dhawq*) of love and through his imagination informed by the Imaginal World. Members of the Akbarian tradition whose corpora he cites had access to the Pre-Text of Divine Revelation, too, through the experience (*dhawq*) of existence (*wujūd*), also through unveiling (*kashf*) via the Imaginal World and the imagination, and through realization (*taḥqīq*). Lāhūrī enters into this shared process of Divine Revelation through these texts which form the Con-Text of revelation, which “is the body of meaning that is the product and outcome of previous hermeneutical engagement with Revelation.”<sup>122</sup> He does all of this while pre-supposing the truth of the actual Text of Divine Revelation, namely, the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*.

Lāhūrī’s commentary is thus an excellent case study for Ahmed’s argument that Con-Text, Pre-Text, and Text are in some sort of mutually (inter)dependent, dynamic relationship of ongoing revelation; you cannot engage one without the other, for all three “are inseparably enmeshed together to form the Revelatory matrix of Islam.”<sup>123</sup> According to this theory, “*Text and Pre-Text are simply not available for hermeneutical engagement without Con-Text: text and Pre-Text are semantically embedded in Con-Text; Con-Text constantly informs (in-forms) Text and Pre-Text. Quite simply, a Muslim lives in Con-Text: s/he lives in the complex of meanings that is the elaborated product of previous hermeneutical engagement with Revelation.*”<sup>124</sup> As such, Lāhūrī is a phenomenal and quintessential example of a Muslim being Muslim, of a Muslim engaging hermeneutically with Revelation, and thus *being Islamic* according to the theory set forth by Shahab Ahmed. That is then the final reason for bringing this commentary into this project: it is an utterly Islamic text and thus perfect for such an exercise in comparative, interreligious theology as this one.

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<sup>122</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 356.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, 359.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, 358-359.

## **Transposing Metaphors from Text to World: Against the Spiritualization of Imaginative Metaphors**

The employment of Lāhūrī's text demands that I address the criticisms levied against post-classical Persian commentaries on the poetic tradition. Namely, their use of *iṣṭilāḥāt*, or technical terms, which, critics allege, aim to decode Persian metaphors into one-to-one allegorical correspondences. Interpreting Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics with the assistance of Lāhūrī's commentary, and reading around his own sources for additional insight, the role the imagination plays in unveiling the nondual, theophanic and imaginal nature of this phenomenal world is underscored. Poetic metaphors constructed through the imagination express a vision of a world that is itself a collection of unbounded images and metaphors. Through a theo-poetics, these images display the divine and draw the human subject into a nondual relationship with the Real, a relationship constituted and cultivated in the body—or in more Incarnational terms, in the flesh—via theophany. Passionate love is the effect the phenomenal world has on the human subject.

Lāhūrī turns to the mystical glossaries of technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*) that allegedly aim to reduce the bodily images employed in poetry to intelligible, immaterial realities lying beyond the Imaginal World. These technical terms suggest that formless meaning is a fortiori preestablished in some immaterial realm, and that poetry is merely the form containing pre-existing meaning, and in a weaker manner, to boot. But Lāhūrī's reference to them, I will argue, demonstrates that he is not aiming to reduce poetry to such dualistic or monistic interpretations. Rather, by displacing the love lyric into the experience of passionate love, the metaphors augment perception and, rather than disambiguate the ambiguity of the metaphor, explain away the paradox, reduce the tension of nondual truth, or rationalize suprarational love, engaging the poems mirrors the experience of the theophanic, phenomenal world. Keshavarz, regarding Rūmī's mystical lyrics, is correct to suggest that "the poems themselves are the mystical experience and the meaning, not a container holding them."<sup>125</sup> Meisami and Keshavarz are

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<sup>125</sup> Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalal Al-Din Rumi* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 19.

justified in critiquing the use of technical terms to “decode” love lyrics, if by this they imply that the *iṣṭilāḥāt* render the metaphors into allegorical, one-to-one correspondences.<sup>126</sup> However, I suggest they fail to recognize that the technical terms, instead, refer to dynamic experiences within this phenomenal world itself, not to some disembodied and static experience within the world of spirits. This is radically the case with Lāhūrī’s commentary: he does not reduce the love lyric from historical embeddedness and embodied experience to ahistorical metaphysics and disembodied intellection, but rather transposes or displaces the textual ambiguities and paradoxes of the poetic metaphors *into the ambiguities and paradoxes of this phenomenal, Imaginal World of metaphors*. Our apprehension of reality is augmented through metaphorical images. If Ḥāfiẓ’s *ghazals* reflect the multiplicity of divine beauty (and suffering) in this phenomenal world, then Lāhūrī reflects his poetic metaphors back into the world.

Indeed, this conceptualization of metaphor takes as its starting point the seminal conclusions of George Lack Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*. “[M]etaphor is pervasive in life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”<sup>127</sup> From the fields of cognitive linguistics and philosophy of language, they challenge the modern “objectivist” account of reality, which posits a fully objective and absolute truth external to our minds but accessible via empirical methods allied with “scientific truth, rationality, precision, fairness, and impartiality.”<sup>128</sup> They also gainsay the Romantic “subjectivist” account of reality (which nourished the theory of mystical subjectivism), which posits only relative, private

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<sup>126</sup> For Meisami’s critique of technical terms, broadly understood, see Julie Scott Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Lyric Poetry: Orient Pearls* (London: Routledge, 2010), 48-50; 387-403. For Keshavarz’s critique vis-à-vis Rūmī’s lyrical poetry, see Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 18-22. For Stetkevych’s critique vis-à-vis Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary on his own *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 92 in particular. For Zargar’s analysis of Persian Sufi Glossaries, see Cyrus Ali Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics: beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn ‘Arabi and ‘Iraqi* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 132ff.

<sup>127</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). 3.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, 189.

experiences of subjective reality, to which we give others access via art, poetry, imagination, and metaphor and in alliance with “emotions, intuitive insight, imagination, humaneness, and ‘higher’ truth.”<sup>129</sup> Against both, they propose an account of reality that is “experientialist,” because they argue that “we *understand* the world through our *interactions* with it.”<sup>130</sup> The “*essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another,*”<sup>131</sup> and “imagination...involves seeing one kind of thing in terms of another.”<sup>132</sup> Metaphor is thus “imaginative rationality” because it brings together the objectivism and subjectivism to propose an account of reality in which “truth is relative to our conceptual system, which is grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experience and those of other members of our culture in our daily interactions with other people and with our physical and cultural environments.”<sup>133</sup> The conceptual system for Lāhūrī is the divine revelation of God to the world, singularly and historically instantiated in the revelation given to the Prophet Muḥammad (the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* literature, i.e., the revelatory Text), but continuing perpetually and accessible via the Pre-Text (imagination, experience) and Con-Text (the School of Ibn ‘Arabī, the *madhhab-i ‘ishq*).

In my reading of the love lyrics, I thus challenge the spiritualization and privatization of the poetic metaphors. Rather than the technical terms producing a static correspondence between poetic terms and metaphysical realities or private experiences, I suggest that they transpose the metaphors of the poems back into the metaphors of this phenomenal world. This reading challenges previous reductive interpretations of the Persian poetic and the Islamic mystical traditions. The universalizing interpretation of the School of Ibn ‘Arabī is challenged because the

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<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 189.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 194. Here I do not want to confuse their use of the term “experientialist” with Turner’s use of the term “experientialism.” Turner’s arguments in fact cohere with Lakoff’s and Johnson’s, for Turner is challenging the subjectivist-experientialism of mysticism, just as Lakoff and Johnson are critiquing the subjectivist count of reality that prioritizes private experience.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 193.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, 193.

nondual distinction is maintained in the ambiguity of this phenomenal world. The modern individualized and privatized reading of the Persian poets, Rūmī more popularly but Ḥāfiẓ, too, is challenged because the technical terms compel readers to enter into embodied engagement with the world rather than flee into some idealistic, disembodied practice of universal love. And the Orientalists' interpretations of the larger Islamic mystical tradition as merely a neo-platonic (or Christian) essence with Islamic vestments are challenged by the very *Islamic* nature of both the lyrics and the commentary.

The case against spiritualizing the metaphors of Ḥāfiẓ thus assists in the case against spiritualizing the Incarnation in Christianity in general, and Eriugena in particular. The interreligious insights after comparison emerge at this nexus wherein the Incarnation and the imagination are retrieved for the sake of a liberating, embodied praxis. Metaphor and imagination for Lakoff and Johnson critique the dualistic Romantic subjectivist and modern objectivist accounts of reality; the Incarnation of Christianity and the imaginative metaphors of an Islamic theo-poetics, understood *nondually*, provide the conceptual system (to use Lakoff's and Johnson's term) that shapes our embodied interactions with each other. If there is an objective account of reality at all in this Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh, it is a dynamic, Incarnational imaginary that demands perpetual transformation of self, spaces, and communities.

## **Eriugena Read Through an Islamic Theo-Poetics: Retrieving the Incarnation**

The shared feature between the Christian and Islamic textual traditions at the heart of this dissertation is the central concept of *theophany*, or divine appearance. Eriugena develops this concept through dialectical reasoning, employing to great effect apophatic, kataphatic, and *plus-quam* discourse. Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī represent an Islamic theo-poetics that is constituted by the concept of theophany, too; it is the defining feature of the School of Ibn 'Arabī, which merges with the School of Love in the post-classical context in which Ḥāfiẓ's commentator is situated. Theophany, or *tajalliyāt*, is the structural principal of this theo-poetics, just as it is the organizing

concept for Eriugena's dialectical theology.

Their similarities end there. Eriugena is arguably the only figure in Christian history to make theophany central to his theology; theophany is largely replaced with participation metaphysics in the later history of Christian theology. However, in the Islamic tradition, theophany remains formative of the tradition and widespread from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and informs modern Iranian, Islamic philosophy to this day. Furthermore, Eriugena's method for explicating theophany is dialectical; he relies on *ratio* to unfold his theology of theophany. He has largely been received as a philosopher, dialectician, or idealist rather than as a Christian theologian who makes the Incarnation central to theophany. In the Islamic tradition, theophany was effectively diffused among both scholars and everyday Muslims as lived religion through *poetry*. This constituted a veritable Islamic theo-poetics that was shaped by theophany.

But in this Islamic theo-poetics, several concepts play important functions in addition to theophany: passionate love, metaphor, and imagination. The nexus of these Islamic concepts produces a theo-poetics that seeks to disrupt the normative claims prevalent in dialectical theology, e.g., the law of non-contradiction, the dualism between mind and body, the binary between the divine and human, the separation between theo-logic and theo-praxy, or the image as a "shadow of perception"<sup>134</sup> or a weaker version of so-called empirical reality.

Theophany suggests the boundary between the phenomenal world and God is not impermeable, but porous, and that this world is not less real than God, but rather imaginal. According to this Islamic theo-poetics, the imaginal nature of this world does not diminish its ontological reality, but rather augments it. Metaphor and the imagination render this world *more real than* empirical logic concludes. Finally, passionate love in this Islamic theo-poetics is the movement that spurs not only *poiësis*/creation of the world but creation/*poiësis* of love lyrics; world and words come from the same divine source. Reading Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics retrieves the practical function of metaphor and the imagination at the heart the

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<sup>134</sup> Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 172.

Incarnation, which is the constitutive act of theophany in history. I suggest that Eriugena's theology after comparison provides a renewed understanding of the Incarnation in terms of metaphor, imagination, and ultimately (social) imaginary. But none of this is possible without theophany and poetics.

### Poetics

My project is to read Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics. In a narrower sense, all poets have their *poetics*, viz., “the compositional principles to which a particular poet subscribes.”<sup>135</sup> In this respect, Ḥāfiẓ's poetics is defined by the rules governing the *ghazal*, itself genealogically related to the Arabic *qaṣīda*. Ḥāfiẓ may draw from a collection of pre-established meters, and his rhyme (*qāfiyyah*) and refrain (*radīf*) follow the patterns of the *ghazal*. However, this narrower sense of poetics within the Arabo-Persian literary tradition is supplemented by the broader theo-poetics of the School of Love and School of Ibn ‘Arabī. The relationship between theophanic creation and poetic creation in the Islamic tradition is what Paul Ricœur may have in mind when he explicates *poetics* in terms of the Greek *poiēsis*, or “re-creation.”<sup>136</sup> Poetics is ontological and not just literary or semantic: “Ricœur's poetics and his metaphorical speaking form the privileged entrance to [the] domain of being.”<sup>137</sup> This is because, for Ricœur, the semantic “surplus of meaning” of poetic metaphor elides with, and transforms, the existential “surplus of being” or “possibility of being” in human social existence: “The poetical metaphorical tension is an existential tension... The poetical is added to ontology. Poetry and ontology are connected.”<sup>138</sup> In the Islamic context, the poet participates in divine revelation and

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<sup>135</sup> B.M. Reed, “Poetics, Western,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene et alia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1,058.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Poetry and Possibility,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, edited by Mario Valdés (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 456.

<sup>137</sup> Nel van den Haak, “Social Imagination, Materiality, and Political Discourse,” in Stephanie N. Arel and Dan R. Stiver, *Ideology and Utopia in the Twenty-first Century: The Surplus of Meaning in Ricoeur's Dialectical Concept* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019), 115.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, 118.

mirrors the theophanic cosmos, and the passionate lover is uniquely attuned to see the poetic nature of this phenomenal world. In this narrower sense, my poetic reading of Eriugena is shaped by this Islamic theo-poetics.

In an explicitly broader sense, *poetics* is “the attempt to account for literary effects by describing the conventions and reading operations that make them possible.”<sup>139</sup> Poetics is often contrasted with hermeneutics; the former attends to *how* different aspects of a text come together to *create* an effect on the reader, while the latter attends to *what* meaning is uncovered in the act of interpretation. This distinction is helpful, because I attend to *how* Eriugena brings words together in a *way* that often subverts the logic of his *ratio*; I also bring disparate elements of Eriugena’s corpus together in order to uncover novel effects on the reader otherwise occluded when read separately or linearly. These effects nonetheless are *meaningful* because they are acts of poetic *interpretation*. In brief, *poetics* is *how* texts mean, while hermeneutics is *what* they mean.<sup>140</sup> This distinction is of note for my poetic reading of Eriugena when he delves into *how* (*quomodo*) all things are eternal and made, *how* the Word is made in all things, even if *what* (*quid*) God is remains unknowable.

“Poetic reading,” or a poetic interpretation, is not intended to be an oxymoron or an invalid concept. Literary critic Tzvetan Todorov contends that the relationship between “poetics and interpretation is one of complementarity par excellence.”<sup>141</sup> *How* and *what* texts mean inform each other rather than remain mutually impenetrable. Within the critical interpretation process (the hermeneutical circle of criticism), “interpretation both precedes and follows poetics.”<sup>142</sup> Put otherwise, determining *what* texts mean is possible only when working through *how* texts mean;

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<sup>139</sup> Jonathan D. Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 69.

<sup>140</sup> See Chapter 1 of Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

*how* remains at the center of the *what*. A poetic, interreligious reading of Eriugena’s corpus illuminates the *how* of his texts through an Islamic theo-poetics. Once again, that the *how* is surrounded by the *what* in this critical reading foreshadows the centrality of the Incarnation to the nondual, theophanic structure of the world; this structuring puts *what* God is at the beginning (*exitus, principium*) and end (*reditus, finis*) of this created world, with *how* God relates to this world and *how* humans relate to God and each other in between. A poetic reading of Eriugena means that I read his corpus non-linearly, intertextually, intratextually, and interreligiously, rather than linearly or restricted to a single text at any given interpretative moment.

Closer to the Islamic context, formative classical Arabic literary theorist ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078) studied the Arabic literary corpus of the 400 years preceding him (grouping the Qur’ān with poetic texts). He proposed a poetics to understand *how* metaphor and other poetic imagery were effective in creating new meaning (*ma‘nā*) in audience’s minds. According to al-Jurjānī, “poets put words together in patterns that impact the minds of the audience.”<sup>143</sup> In particular, metaphor brings together words whose accuracy within literal lexicons occupied disparate semantic fields; this transforms “the architecture of mental content [*ma‘nā*] in our heads”<sup>144</sup> to produce new meaning otherwise unavailable outside of the specific arrangement of words in any given poem.

[Poetry] has the power of transformation. It transforms, through its creative and imaginative power, the dead into a living being; it imparts life and existence. ... It is this power of transformation that makes the response to the imaginative activity of poetry what it is. It is not merely an *aesthetic* experience that is created by this imaginative activity, but the transformation of the soul, the creation in the soul of a ‘fresh experience or state of being unknown before’ [*Asrār*] and the overcoming of the soul by a vague type of ecstasy which cannot be hidden or ignored.<sup>145</sup>

*How* words with no or a very thin lexical relation come together in a poetic metaphor to produce

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<sup>143</sup> Alexander Key, *Language between God and the Poets: Ma‘nā in the Eleventh Century* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 197.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, 197.

<sup>145</sup> Kamāl Abū Dīb, *Al-Jurjānī’s Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1979), 265; citing ‘Abd Al-Qāhir Ibn ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān Jurjānī, *Asrār Al-balāgha, The Mysteries of Eloquence, of ‘Abdalqāhir Al-Jurjānī*, Ed. Helmut Ritter (Neşriyat. Istanbul: Govt. Press, 1954), 318.

new meaning is exactly the subject of poetics. Metaphor, or *majāz* in Arabic, goes beyond the lexical definitions of words.<sup>146</sup>

Within the Islamic literary tradition, “God and the poets both went beyond the lexicon.”<sup>147</sup> The later Persian poetic tradition becomes the site for the performance of an Islamic theo-poetics informed by the School of Ibn ‘Arabī and the School of Love. If we transpose this poetics to this project, then I suggest that by reading Eriugena through this Islamic theo-poetics, I am juxtaposing otherwise disparate discursive traditions to uncover something new in the process of comparison. I aim to go beyond the interpretation that is possible when reading Eriugena alone and within the confines of his dialectical logic. A poetic reading of his corpus attends to *how* Eriugena brings words together, *how* new meaning is uncovered when his corpus is read non-linearly and inter-/intra-textually, and *how* new meaning is discovered when his corpus is read through the theo-poetics of Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī. It intentionally seeks moments in which his dialectical logic is subverted or self-subverts. Most importantly, it links *theosis*, or *theo(poïe)sis*, with a theo-poetics—*how* we are to live.<sup>148</sup>

### **Theo-Poetic Interreligious Reading**

By an interreligious reading of Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics, I aim to retrieve the imaginary function of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is an eminently nondual act constitutive of a nondual relationship between various binaries: God and world, divine and human, mind and body, self and other, individual and community. Eriugena, who relies on *ratio* to unfold his division of nature, often reconciles these binaries in ways that appear to produce a static synthesis. In dialectical reasoning, opposites come together to produce a *static synthesis* that resolves differences for the sake of sameness. In an Islamic theo-poetics, I argue that

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<sup>146</sup> The etymologies of both the Greek and the Arabic terms suggest a “carrying through and beyond.”

<sup>147</sup> Key, *Language between God and the Poets*, 104.

<sup>148</sup> For a schematic pre-modern, modern, and post-modern genealogy of theo-poetics, see Catherine Keller, *Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 105-118 (Chapter Six, “The Becoming of Theopoetics: A Brief, Incongruent History”).

opposites coincide to produce a *dynamic imaginary* that maintains disruption-in-continuity. The static synthesis abides by the law of noncontradiction; the dynamic imaginary subverts it.

By reading Eriugena's corpus, especially his *Periphyseon*, through an Islamic theopoetics, I suggest that Eriugena implicitly subverts his own dialectal reasoning through the apophatic, the imaginal, the metaphorical, and *plus-quam* (more-than) discourse. This reading challenges the reception of the Irishman's thought as a forerunner of synthetic, Christian idealism. I draw out moments in the text whereat reason is subverted by a violation of the law of noncontradiction, whereat opposites come together and explode *ratio*, demonstrating that the *auctoritas* of the Scriptures demands *more than* reason alone can produce. This *more-than* is the nondual conception of truth, the metaphorical, the poetic and imaginary—but all as *more real than* the rationally empirical. Eriugena's gaze turns upward toward the abstract and disembodied Word, but this Word, Incarnate, turns our gaze back to this phenomenal world; this is illuminated by Lāhūrī's transposition and displacement of poetic metaphors into the ambiguities and paradoxes of this phenomenal, Imaginal World of metaphors.

I am not suggesting that “the poetic” is somehow irrational, illogical, and merely affective and prone to expressive utterances devoid of coherency or cogency. This is the case *only* if the coherent, cogent discourse is arbitrarily restricted to the rational, the (syl)logical, and the arguments of dialectical reasoning. Helen Vendler, in *Poets Thinking*, submits that poetry is considered irrational precisely because the “process of thinking has usually been defined as a chain of argument, explanation, logical induction, or deduction.”<sup>149</sup> If there is no syllogistic reasoning or empirical evidence in the poem, then it must be irrational. But this presupposes that *valid* arguments are *only* those presented according to these methods. Vendler instead suggests that poets possess their own way of “thinking” that is internally logical, even if incompressible to the ideology of empirical rationalism by which critics have judged poems.

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<sup>149</sup> Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

“Intellectuals” and their “ideas” (invariably expressed in prose) occupy at this moment a privilege in academic and popular discussion which is (absurdly) denied to poets and poems—as though poetry and responsible ideation could not, or did not, overlap.<sup>150</sup>

The relegation of the poetic to the irrational or even unintellectual is the product of a “peculiarly limited conception of what intellect is and how it may manifest itself.”<sup>151</sup> Vendler contends that “thinking is made visible” in poems, and that images employed in poems are “both the product of thought and the bearer of thought,” for they are “thought made visible.”<sup>152</sup> The aim is not to disembody images into ideas of thought, as if somehow this makes the poem more powerful and comprehensible; the aim should be to understand the image or the metaphor within the poet’s own imaginative rationality.

The imaginative rationality—or poetics—of Ḥāfīz, read through Lāhūrī, is formed by the School of Love and the School of Ibn ‘Arabī. Reading Eriugena through this Islamic theo-poetics disrupts his own *ratio* and uncovers another logic, viz., an Incarnational logic best conceptualized as a theo-poetics of the flesh. Rather than reducing his logic to idealism, a theo-poetic reading recovers “thought made visible,” or rather, the “Word made flesh.” This itself is an act of comparative theology in which one text is read in light of another text, with the non-Christian logic and coherency challenging the Christian.

Despite Eriugena’s *ratio*, he remains tethered to an Incarnational theology, and therefore susceptible to a theo-poetic reading of his texts that retrieves the Incarnation as, not *unreasonable*, but *super-reasonable*, or *plus quam rationaliter*. This, I suggest, is where a theo-poetics of the flesh emerges. Explicitly standing against the reading of Eriugena that proposes a rationalized Christology or Christian idealism is, in fact, his own poetry in his volume *Carmina*, his non-dialectical exegesis on the Gospel of John, and his creative commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*, to which I often turn for further insights.

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*, 121.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

## Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī Read Through the Incarnational: Retrieving the Imagination

As already stated, my analysis of Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics and Lāhūrī’s commentary thereon rely on the larger Islamic traditions of which they are a part, viz., the School of Ibn ‘Arabī and the School of Love (*madhhab-i ‘ishq*). I aim to uncover the import of the imagination as both a faculty, method, and “world” in which opposites are able to come together. The imagination allows nondual truth, it permits the violation of the law of noncontradiction. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, it permits the perception of one thing in terms of another. But I take this further with the help of Paul Ricœur’s theory of metaphor: “[metaphor] implies a tensive use of language in order to uphold a tensive concept of reality...the copula of the metaphorical utterance...’is’, *signifies both is and is not.*”<sup>153</sup> Indeed, metaphors preserve being and not being in a single copula that implies “being as,” whereby “the dynamism of meaning allowed access to the dynamic vision of reality which is the implicit ontology of the metaphorical utterance.”<sup>154</sup> What Ricœur calls “the paradox of the [metaphorical] copula”<sup>155</sup> I suggest is a *coincidentia oppositorum*. This dynamism of meaning is reduced to static synthesis by dialectical reasoning, whereas the imagination and theo-poetics preserve this dynamism to produce a dynamic imaginary.

The imagination in an Islamic theo-poetics permits the perception of God and this phenomenal world. I suggest that the imagination, particularly as it functions in Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics and Lāhūrī’s commentary, brings together the divine and the human so that God may be encountered in this phenomenal world. In discussing various love lyrics, I aim to develop this argument through primary sources foundational to Lāhūrī’s revealed Con-Text. This Islamic theo-poetics of the imagination, on a cosmological and anthropological level, assists in re-

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<sup>153</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 68.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 351.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 381.

imagining the Incarnation. By retrieving the function of the imagination in Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics, I redress the narrow literary focus of his work advanced by the field of Persian literature, which often excludes the complex anthropocosmic vision and role of the imagination that informed “the Islamic” from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

While my reading of Eriugena is not intended to shed light on Ḥāfiẓ or Lāhūrī, I cannot deny that my identity as a Catholic theologian tinges my reading of these Persian love lyrics and their commentary. My project is explicitly a retrieval of the Incarnation in terms of the imagination and imaginary practices in this world; consequently, my reading will focus on aspects of the poems and their commentary that facilitate such a retrieval in the Christian tradition, and may ignore others. This is an admittedly appropriative act, in the Ricœurian sense regarding the hermeneutical circle,<sup>156</sup> that nevertheless seeks to remain faithful to Lāhūrī’s commentary on Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics. Therefore, it may be argued that my reading of Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī is “incarnational” insofar as I retrieve the import of the imagination with a view to understanding what it means “to live incarnationally” in the Christian sense. It may seem *prima facie* counterintuitive at best and misguided at worst to learn about the Incarnation from a tradition which Christians historically judged as just another strand of Arianism, and whose texts reject the Incarnation—in Arabic, *ḥulūl* (lit., “alighting” or “descent”) or *tajassud* (lit., “embodiment”).<sup>157</sup> However, my method in comparative theology, detailed in the next section, is

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<sup>156</sup> Ricœur proposes in his interpretation theory a dialectic between explanation and understanding (or comprehension); this dialectic is performed in the threefold hermeneutical arc that is naïve understanding (first reading), objective explanation (critical reading), and appropriation of the meaning of the text (self-understanding and -transformation). His theory, in my view, offers a critique of the historicist interpretations of poetic, imaginative, philosophical, and theological texts, and in particular the texts engaged in this dissertation. For Ricœur, “if all discourse is actualized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning” (Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 12). In other words, the event is a transient occurrence in history, and is not the object of understanding (though it is the object of explanation). Rather, what we aim to comprehend is the event’s meaning insofar as it perdures (see *ibid.*, 12). “The suppressing and the surpassing of the event in the meaning is a characteristic of discourse itself” (*ibid.*, 12). This coheres with comparative theology as explicated below, for matters of history, systems of thought, and data concerning the context of the author may be uncovered—“explained”—but it is the *meaning* that is *comprehended*, which leads to self-transformation, and ultimately action in the present world.

<sup>157</sup> Indeed, from early on Christians considered the Islamic tradition to be genealogically related to Arianism. John of Damascus, for example, in his tome *On Heresies*, writes: “From that time to the present a false prophet named [Muḥammad] has appeared in their midst. This man, after having chanced upon the Old and New Testaments and likewise, it seems, having conversed with an Arian monk, devised his own heresy” (Frederic

non-linear and thematic, rather than linear and historical, which has often been the case in the field of Islamic-Christian studies.<sup>158</sup> Learning about the Christian Incarnation in unexpected places within the Islamic religious tradition endeavors to unlearn the history of polemical Christian-Islamic interactions in search of imaginative and creative comparison. To the method of comparative theology particular to this project I now turn.

## A Liberating Praxis to Comparative Theology: Re-Centering the Incarnation

*Bewilderment would come upon the one gazing at [Jesus]...[which] led some of them to profess divine indwelling (ḥulūl), and [to profess] that he is God...and therefore they are attributed with unbelief (kufr), which is concealment, because they conceal God...in the [mortal] human-skin (bashara)<sup>159</sup> of Jesus...But [Christians are not in error and unbelief] in their saying ‘Jesus is God,’ and not in their saying ‘Jesus is the son of Mary,’ rather they deviated in enclosing God into the mortal, human form [of Jesus]...[That is why] disputes take place among the various [Christian] communities concerning Jesus, [for they ask], ‘What is He?’*

—Ibn ‘Arabī, *Faṣṣ of Jesus in Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*<sup>160</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī submits his own theory for why Christian communities engaged—and continue to engage—in many Christological disputes. I have elected to translate the Arabic *bashara* as “[mortal] human-skin” because doing so provides Christian comparative theologians with critical insight: it challenges the ways in which Christian theology has restricted the divine

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Hathaway Chase, *Writings. The Fathers of the Church, a New Translation*, v. 37 [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999], 153). For the most recent scholarship on this topic. see Peter Schadler, *John of Damascus and Islam: Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations* (Boston: Brill, 2017).

<sup>158</sup> See Axel M. Oaks Takacs, “‘An Interpreter and Not a Judge’: Insights into a Christian-Islamic Comparative Theology”, in Francis X. Clooney and Klaus Von Stosch, *How To Do Comparative Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 98-121.

<sup>159</sup> The Arabic *bashara* refers to the outer skin, the epidermis, of the human being, and it has etymological connections with both humankind (*bashariya*), a human being (*bashar*), *bāshara* (to touch, to have skin-to-skin contact, to have sexual intercourse), and *bushrā/bushr* (glad tidings, good news = Gospel). Within the larger Islamic mystical tradition, a *bashar* (human being) is often how the mortal, unrealized individual is referred to, with *insān* (human person) being the term for the realized (*muḥaqqiq*) person with recognition (*ma’rifa*). Both Austin’s and Abrahamov’s translation of the *Fuṣūṣ* elect “human form” instead of human skin, but I argue that this ignores a crucial meaning intended by Ibn ‘Arabī, and one that provides Christian theological discourse with critical insight.

<sup>160</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 214-215 (Arabic, my translation); for English, see Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 106-107; or Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 177-178.

presence to Christ, severed His flesh from the material, historical world, and exalted Him into a transcendent being segregated from the historical unfolding of God’s salvific, liberating praxis in the flesh, *in all flesh*. Indeed, a commentator adds that the error of concealment was attributing to Jesus *alone* the ontological status belonging to the whole world, i.e., restricting the Real, restricting God, to Jesus alone, whereas in truth “the whole world is invisibly and visibly God’s image/form (*ṣūra*), and not only Jesus.”<sup>161</sup> While I certainly do not suggest that this text supports the Incarnation of the Word as understood by Christian conciliar orthodoxy or even by more pan-cosmic Christologies (say, of Maximus Confessor and of Eriugena his inheritor), I do aver that it provides interreligious insight into how the idealized, dis-incarnated Christ (*what* He is) is often made central to Christian teaching as opposed to the liberating praxis of the Incarnation (*how* He is and *how* we are to be). Accordingly, in this section I will detail the discipline of comparative theology as established by Francis X. Clooney, but focus on how it may provide methods for constructing a liberating praxis to Christian theology. I will connect method in comparative theology with the critical pedagogy of Ira Shor and the engaged pedagogy of bell hooks, who outlines in her *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* the ways in which learning and teaching challenge normative, constructed boundaries that restrain rather than liberate action in the world.

### **Comparative Theology: Transgressing Boundaries**

Comparative theology is an act of interreligious reading that “demands [a] vulnerability to two texts, that never manages to restrict loyalty to one or the other tradition alone, and...in the end is intensified by the spiritual power of both of the texts to which one has surrendered.”<sup>162</sup>

This vulnerability encourages crossing the canonical boundaries of one’s religious tradition, ready to be challenged or even critiqued. Clooney, in *Seeing Through Texts*, relates the boundary-

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<sup>161</sup> Dawūd Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, Ed. Jalāl Al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tih-rān: Sharikat-i Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī Va Farhangī, 1996), 865.

<sup>162</sup> Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 59.

crossing nature of comparative theology to the way words do *more than* words can tell us, and how the *boundaries between words and world become blurred*, much akin to the above-discussed elision of semantic, literary poetics with existential poetics.<sup>163</sup> Crossing religious boundaries is, as it were, a propaedeutic that enables texts to challenge the normative worldview of any theology, lest it become a restrictive ideology.

When we try to see, when we read, when we begin to include, we are confronted with the possibility of ecstasy, where one's carefully composed and focused words get out of hand, overflowing with possibilities which go beyond one's expectation. One is thrust forward in a kind of ecstasy, always from one's home position *but not limited within its boundaries* anymore... *One finally gets to see through texts the texts of one's own tradition and of another, of both as a comparative intertext[.]*<sup>164</sup>

Comparative theology therefore contains the potential for self-transformation that is not merely an anodyne change in one's private belief (idealism, gnosticism), but a critical transformation in one's engagement with the world (poetics, praxis).

At the end of a venture across religious boundaries that is intellectually and pedagogically honest and careful, one might indeed experience what one has been talking about, and one might then have to respond accordingly, or at least consciously refuse to do so. The scholar, become a participant in the narrative he or she has been recounting, then stands opened to such an encounter, free in regard to what comes next. Then, there, one finally engages in true theology, *theoria* and *praxis*.<sup>165</sup>

Comparative theology reimagines theological systems in light of interreligious, critical reading that impacts *how (poetics)* we “read,” as it were, the world. In the process of reimagining theological systems, I submit that comparative theology is inherently transgressive in that, drawing from feminist and social activist bell hooks, like engaged pedagogy it urges “all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so

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<sup>163</sup> “Words stand in the way, words are a window, we see by seeing through words, and by seeing through our efforts to treat them as words. As we assess the diverse facets of this verbal mediation and consider the process of meditation on texts (one does things with words to gain more than words can tell us) it also becomes clear that the results of this inquiry are not to be simplified into straightforward claims regarding a clear, discrete set of results available to be experienced and subjected to ready assent. What this book means is a necessarily complicated thing. The words remain dense and opaque, and we must find our way through them. When we describe where we have ended up, our account ought to bear with it characteristics of this verbal opacity; without indulging in obfuscation, our account ought to resist the pretense of a completeness which would preclude anything new from taking shape, now” (Francis X. Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996], 248).

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, 309.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, 309.

that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions [that enable]...transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries.”<sup>166</sup> Taking bell hooks’ engaged pedagogy as a framework for explicating the discipline, I aver that comparative theology is also an act of transgressive learning that *should* enable a liberating—and transgressive—praxis.

Clooney’s method in comparative theology, employed in this dissertation, is *implicitly* productive of transformation, both of one’s self and of the theology of one’s home tradition. However, sharpening comparative theology with the pedagogical methods of hooks and Shor, I suggest that comparative theology may thereby *explicitly* demand that conclusions be pushed to their intellectual, spiritual limits of *theoria* and translated into an embodied, liberating *praxis* that confronts injustice in *how* one lives, works, plays, and lives.

### **Comparative Theology: Deconstructing Boundaries**

Hugh Nicholson’s *Comparative Theology and the Problem of Religious Rivalry* provides substance to the transgressive nature of comparative theology, even if he does not explicitly suggest as much. For Nicholson, comparative theology neither depoliticizes religion, as 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholars of comparative religion did with their universalist vision, nor essentializes religious traditions, as early 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholars of comparative religion did in their critique of this enlightenment form of pluralism. Rather, comparative theology recognizes religious difference both intra- and interreligiously, and is considered a form of, what he terms, “cross-cultural comparison,” which

understood in terms of the metaphorical process, serves as an effective technique for deconstructing the oppositional contrasts formed [in the construction of essentialized religions]. The metaphorical juxtaposition of parallel features from compared traditions reverses the reductive process whereby a complex set of intercultural relations is transformed into a binary opposition. Thus understood, interreligious comparison can be used effectively to circumvent the formation of essentialized contrasts between religious communities.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

<sup>167</sup> Hugh Nicholson, *Comparative Theology and the Problem of Religious Rivalry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

As Nicholson points out, the comparative theologian constructs religious and cultural boundaries only to deconstruct those very boundaries in the act of what J.Z. Smith has termed analogical comparison (as opposed to genealogical). Analogical comparison brings together temporally and geographically discontinuous phenomena in the scholar's mind in a process that "allows us to notice aspects of the compared phenomena that we did not notice before."<sup>168</sup> But more importantly, the hope is that comparative theology breaks boundaries of the home tradition, which have often been constructed—or at least habitually and normatively received—in the best interests of the dominant group, intentionally or otherwise. This sort of cross-cultural comparison that comparative theology executes "is a technique for breaking from established ways of perceiving a cultural and religious reality, from perceptions that invariably reflect the influence of dominant interests, either those originating from within the tradition studied or those bearing on its history of reception from without."<sup>169</sup>

Given the relational conception of Christian identity in which "the Christian" is defined over and against "the non-Christian" during a period of theological formation from the so-called first-century (Jewish) Jesus movement to today, comparative theology enables that very same Christian identity to take on a dynamic character. "That is to say, it implies a moment in which Christian identity is constructed politically through interreligious contrasts, and another in which those constructions are deconstructed."<sup>170</sup> According to Nicholson, cross-cultural comparison "can be used to 'de-essentialize' and partially deconstruct the oppositional contrasts constructed in the first, political moment of identity formation."<sup>171</sup> Comparative theology functions to break from the theological habits that restrict the possible, that restrain the imagination of the Incarnation, lest Christianity become more and more essentialized, static, and reified into an

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<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, 84.

ideology that imprisons rather than a theology that liberates. Comparative theology as cross-cultural comparison

represents a particularly effective critical method [for unsettling cultural boundaries and deconstructing the essentializing notion of identity that such boundaries typically sustain], particularly when it comes to those forms of cultural-religious identity that have been forged or reconstituted in the modern world with its transcultural, global horizons. The comparative juxtaposition of cultural-religious formations set up resonances between the two whereby prominent features of the one bring to light parallel features of the other that may have been suppressed by various hegemonic discourses, whether those of indigenous orthodoxies or those of Western scholarship. In this way cross-cultural comparison can bring to light parallels that cut across established cultural boundaries, thus revealing the latter's arbitrariness and contingency.<sup>172</sup>

As a Catholic theologian, I remain voluntarily within the confines of a certain tradition; but those confines I suggest enable me to speak to a certain community of readers rather than restrict the possible. Furthermore, comparative theology reimagines those limits by deconstructing them so that they become liberating rather than restricting. Ibn 'Arabī has some critical insight: when Christians restrict the divine to the physical body of Jesus, reify him into a transcendent being removed from the material, historical unfolding of the world—making Him a *what*—then the boundaries become oppressive. Instead, Christ should compel a liberating praxis, and this may be done when we de-center the reified, static Christ in order to re-center the dynamism of the Incarnation, encountering Him as a *how*, a theo-poetics of the flesh. Comparative theology facilitates such a re-imagining of Christian boundaries by its inherently transgressive methodology, especially as sharpened by bell hooks' transgressive pedagogy.

### **A Liberating Praxis to Comparative Theology: De-Centering a Reified “Christ”, Re-Centering the Incarnation**

The dialogical, critical and cross-cultural nature of comparative theology implies moments of transgressive reading, learning, and writing. The comparative theologian explores outside the boundaries of the acceptable to learn anew and reimagine the possible within her home tradition. For the Christian comparative theologian, these boundaries have been shaped—oftentimes constrained—by a two-millennia alliance between Christian theology and not only Latin and

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, 95.

Greek philosophy, but also the “the practice of empire in the advance of Western civilization.”<sup>173</sup> Regarding the former, *Fides et Ratio* even teaches that the Church’s “inculturation in the world of Greco-Latin thought...[was] the providential plan of God.”<sup>174</sup> Regarding the latter, J. Kameron Carter and Jeannine Hill Fletcher demonstrate in their own ways how Christian theology’s supersessionism resulted in a Christocentrism that abstracted the person of Jesus from Jewish covenantal flesh and transformed him into a transcendent, rational being into which all other cultural, racial, and religious identities are subsumed and against which all others are judged.<sup>175</sup>

This Christocentrism ignores the Incarnational theology weaving in and out of the rich and complex history of Christian theology, such as the earlier writings of, inter alia, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus Confessor, or the later writings of, inter alia, Hadewijch, Angela of Foligno, Gertrude of Helfta, and Mechthild of Magdeburg (who stress the humanity of Jesus in his suffering). This Incarnational theology was often concealed not only by the more disembodied (reception of) neoplatonic thought, not only by abstract scholastic theology, but also by anti-semitic, supersessionist discourse, to which is then added the ideologies of Christian empire, Western colonialism’s alliance with Christian mission, slavery, and the neoliberal capitalist project of progress and profit. These oppressive ideologies colluded with Christian thought and thereby occluded a liberating theology of “Christ’s flesh, which is Jewish covenantal flesh...a *taxis*, a material arrangement of freedom that discloses the historical transcendence of God.”<sup>176</sup> Christ’s flesh links the material and immanent with the immaterial and transcendent: it is nondual. Despite the liberating *praxis* of this *taxis*, Christian theology’s material effects on human bodies have been directed more by ideology than by Incarnational theology.

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<sup>173</sup> Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 3.

<sup>174</sup> John Paul II, and Catholic Church, *Faith and Reason: Encyclical Letter Fides Et Ratio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Australian ed. Strathfield, N.S.W.: St. Pauls Publications, 1998), no. 72.

<sup>175</sup> See Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017), and Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*.

<sup>176</sup> Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 8.

Comparative theology is therefore transgressive insofar as it deconstructs the essentializing boundaries of Christian identity and culture, as Nicholson argues, but not necessarily to reject Christ or Christianity, but to uncover the liberating praxis of the Incarnation at the heart the teachings, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Comparative theology, I argue, de-centers the reified “Christ”, i.e., “Christ” as a dis-incarnated being separated from this phenomenal world, so often the subject of soteriology in the theology of religions. It is at once comparative/interreligious (de-centering “Christ”) and theologically Christian (recentering the Incarnation, the Christ of covenantal flesh).

John Hoffmeyer, in his piece entitled “Multiplicity and Christocentric Theology,” has argued that “it is too often assumed that the embrace of Christian particularity entails elevating Christ to the position of the organizing center around which all other creatures must be organized.”<sup>177</sup> This has arguably been the principle at the root of the field of theology of religions, which theologizes the salvific efficiency and deficiency, as well as the truth value, of other religious traditions and adherents within a given soteriology. Clooney’s comparative theology emerged in part out of his frustration with the discipline of theology of religions, which “discerns and evaluates the religious significance of other religious traditions in accord with the truths and goals defining one’s own religion.”<sup>178</sup> Comparative theology does indeed take matters of truth and the central principles of faith seriously, just as theology of religions does; however, in contradistinction to theology of religions, comparative theology demands careful expressions of truth and faith by an “attention to the particular details of [other religious] traditions wherein key truths dwell, and not by a priori judgments informed only by knowledge of [the comparative theologian’s] home tradition.”<sup>179</sup> The prejudgments are the restrictive boundaries of Christian

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<sup>177</sup> John Hoffmeyer, “Multiplicity and Christocentric Theology,” in Chris Boesel and S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Divine Multiplicity: Trinities, Diversities, and the Nature of Relation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 236.

<sup>178</sup> Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 10.

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

theology held captive by a Christocentrism that, to learn from Ibn ‘Arabī, “[encloses] God into the mortal, human form of Jesus” rather than in the resurrected, liberating and quickened covenantal flesh of Jesus. In this regard, de-centering the reified “Christ” means liberating Christ’s flesh.

Hoffmeyer concludes later in his article: “The unsurpassable Word made flesh is the one who is encountered by ‘forgetting about Christ’ ...and centering attention on one’s fellow creatures. The unsurpassably revelatory character of Jesus as the Christ means that the divine center is also decentered.”<sup>180</sup> As a comparative theologian, I “forget about Christ,” but with an addendum: I do not forget about the Christ of covenantal flesh, but rather the essentialized, reified “Christ” of anti-semitic Christian supersessionism, Greco-Latin thought, empire, colonialism, racism, and neoliberalism, so that the Incarnation (Christ’s covenantal flesh) may be rediscovered and reimagined as a liberating praxis. This exercise in interreligious reading, in engaging the Islamic religious tradition generally and an Islamic theo-poetics particularly in this dissertation, is the site wherein is performed the movement of forgetting or de-centering this reified “Christ.” Thus, my method in comparative theology, sharpened by hooks’ and Shor’s critical, engaged pedagogy, ineluctably attends to how dominant understandings of Catholic theology—or even aspects of Catholic theology itself—are restrained by worldly, oppressive imaginaries (white supremacy, neoliberalism, heteronormativity, etc.) and their rationalities, and *how* the liberating praxis of Christ’s flesh may be illuminated after comparison. It does not stop at deconstruction and transgression, but works toward construction and liberation—*in the flesh*, and not merely in the realm of ideas, concepts, and beliefs.

### **Comparative Theology as Critical, Engaged Pedagogy**

Given the *practical, public, and embodied* aims, the constructive conclusions of this project coincide with the learning outcomes of a critical, engaged pedagogy. The method of

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<sup>180</sup> Hoffmeyer, “Multiplicity and Christocentric Theology,” in Boesel, *Divine Multiplicity: Trinities, Diversities, and the Nature of Relation*, 247.

comparative theology relies on a three-step process of unlearning, learning, and relearning similar to the philosophy of education and social movement known as critical pedagogy. In elucidating the method of comparative theology in terms of a critical, engaged pedagogy, I intend to extend the practical, prescriptive outcomes of this interreligious exercise to all those who wish to imagine and to embody new ways of living in the world that confront the unjust and oppressive consequences of dominant social imaginaries. Whether one is a religiously unaffiliated “none” or an ardent and devout Catholic, comparative theology, executed well, should—or at least could—first uncover the ways in which private commitments and public action are constrained by restrictive, unimaginative ideologies, and second, initiate a perpetual process of critical self-reflection in which scholars remain ever on guard against the emergence of hegemonic systems that restrain one’s imagination of the (im)possible; ultimately, it should, as Ira Shor contends regarding critical pedagogy, “relate personal growth to public life, by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change.”<sup>181</sup> Similar to bell hooks’ engaged pedagogy, it rejects the dualistic conception of private and public life, demanding from scholars writing and teaching that is a wholistic connection among life practices, habits of being, and scholarly life.<sup>182</sup> Likewise, this project aims to reimagine the Incarnation as nondual through an Islamic theo-poetics. Similar to critical literacy, comparative theology, too, challenges habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking—or theologizing—received by the dominant tradition so that the boundaries of a tradition may be liberating rather than constricting.<sup>183</sup> Accordingly, the boundary of the Christian tradition, I argue, is the dynamic imaginary of the Incarnation that transmutes all relationships into relationships

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<sup>181</sup> Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>182</sup> See hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 16ff.

<sup>183</sup> Ira Shor defines critical literacy as “habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse” (Shor, *Empowering Education*, 129).

with Christ's flesh. This is precisely what a theo-poetics of the flesh attempts to do.

## **A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh: The Incarnation as a Christian Imaginary**

### **Francis X. Clooney's *His Hiding Place is Darkness***

This project draws inspiration in part from a recent exercise in comparative theology and theo-poetics. In *His Hiding Place is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence*, Francis X. Clooney reads, interreligiously, the biblical *Song of Songs* and the Hindu *Holy Word of Mouth* (*Tiruvaymoli*) along with their respective commentarial traditions; he constructs a theo-poetics attentive to finding and not finding God. This theo-poetics extends desire, disrupts expected theological outcomes, and underscores the inherent incompleteness of theology: "Even the words, acts, and sacraments of the Church cannot in any sure and settled manner make Jesus fully and permanently present; for total and permanent presence would also mark a lack of Spirit."<sup>184</sup> The poetic texts he carefully reads "bring into speech what 'can never come to an end.'"<sup>185</sup> Drawing from Balthasar, Clooney emphasizes the silence demanded by witnessing the glory of God, who enters into the world to direct "the drama of a God who can be unexpectedly other, less and more than we can say and bear."<sup>186</sup> Reaching back to his *Seeing Through Texts*, he suggests that the poetic explicitly explores the ways that words say more than words alone can tell us. The silence of divine absence says more than even the most precise and logical systematic and doctrinal theological programs. His Catholic-Hindu theo-poetics does not preclude returning to the theo-prosaic, to the systematic theo-logic; however, it does "[highlight] the danger of going back with amnesia to [these] ordinary ways of theology."<sup>187</sup> That is, attending to theo-poetics

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<sup>184</sup> Francis X. Clooney, *His Hiding Place Is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), 117.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, 123.

<sup>187</sup> "[It] simply highlights the danger in going back with amnesia to ordinary ways of theology; it pleads for slow learning and sacrifices efficiency for the sake of deep currents of encounter. In writing of God in more formal doctrinal and systematic terms, theologians must write in the shadow of the images, the poetry, and the

enables recovering the poetic in all forms of theological discourse, which is precisely the aim of this project, which reads Eriugena's otherwise dialectical text through an Islamic theo-poetics.

### **Theo-Poetics: From Absence to Presence, from Text to Action, from Word to Flesh**

Clooney notes the eminently intimate, private, and personal nature of an individual encountering God, but suggests that this does not preclude matters of public concern and interest.<sup>188</sup> However, he does not develop how his Catholic-Hindu theo-poetics has public, embodied consequences. While it was not his project to do so, it is mine; from his Catholic-Hindu theo-poetics of divine *absence*, I turn to a Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of divine *presence*, that is, *of/in the flesh*. I push forward Clooney's engagement with Balthasar's theo-poetics and theo-dramatics wherein the imagination functions to infuse, creatively, the divine glory into human words; I extend both Balthasar and Clooney by suggesting that the imagination infuses the divine glory also into human *actions*, theo-drama. This Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh *compels* action; it is an instantiation of Paul Ricœur's interpretation theory. Detailed in *From Text to Action* is Ricœur's interpretation theory of how texts function on readers: "the world of the text necessarily collides with the real world in order to 'remake' it, either by confirming it or by denying it."<sup>189</sup> But later in this volume, Ricœur focuses narrowly on the "transfiguration of reality" that is expressly attributed to "poetic fiction," which "implies that we cease to identify reality with empirical reality."<sup>190</sup>

Poetic language draws from its capacity for bringing to language certain aspects of what Husserl called *Lebenswelt* [Lifeworld] and Heidegger *In-der-Welt-Sein* [Being-in-the-World]. By this very fact, we find ourselves forced to rework our conventional concept of truth, that is to say, to cease to limit this concept to logical coherence and empirical verification alone, so that the truth claim related to the

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drama of a beloved who may still hide even when everything should be most certain, definitively decided" (ibid., 126-127).

<sup>188</sup> ibid., ix-xi.

<sup>189</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 6.

<sup>190</sup> ibid., 11-12.

transfiguring action of fiction can be taken into account.<sup>191</sup>

Indeed, the poetic—explicit poetry or the poetics of prose—challenges “logical coherence and empirical variation”, even if it does not wholly deny the objective.

### **Mayra Rivera’s *Poetics of the Flesh***

Mayra Rivera suggests in *Poetics of the Flesh* that imaginative works transform the world and thus the self: “Flesh become words. Imaginative works can conjure glorified bodies to move us beyond the limits of our earthly flesh without ever separating themselves from it. Through painting or literature, ontology or theology, human creativity may strive to transform the world.”<sup>192</sup> She directs our attention to poetic dimensions of theological texts, texts that are not explicitly poetic, but from which with poetic assiduity the poetic is discovered. This is precisely the task of reading Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics, viz., to uncover the poetic that challenges his own *ratio*, but not necessarily as irrational.

Rivera retrieves the flesh from the Gospel of John, which “places the flesh at the center of Christian corporeal imaginaries,”<sup>193</sup> in order to challenge the abandonment of the flesh performed, she argues, in the Pauline corpus, which separates “the spiritual and carnal bodies” to create a “chasm as wide as the chasm between heaven and earth.”<sup>194</sup> She therefore provides this project with insight, because it is Eriugena’s engagement with the Gospel of John that challenges his dualistic conceptions of the spirit and body; this in turn provides poetic insight into his *Periphyseon*—but yet undiscovered without the Islamic theo-poetics. Rivera suggests that poetry lends itself to enfleshed experiences. Poetic words, with their coiling, twisting, and imaginative permutations that render the invisible visible, become eminently capable of expressing both the supreme joy and hardship of loving *in the flesh*. The superabundance of God perdures in

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<sup>191</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 85.

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

enfleshed encounters, and this excess (Ricoeur's surplus of meaning/being) is reflected in the imagination that produces a poetics of the flesh.<sup>195</sup> But this already goes slightly beyond Rivera, for it is a *theo-poetics* at stake here, not just a poetics.

### **A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh: Eriugena and an Islamic Theo-poetics**

Reading Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics therefore seeks to uncover the poetics of the Irishman's thought, moments of the poetic, the imaginal, and the metaphorical that either emerge when dialectical reasoning fail him, or subvert the conclusions of his *ratio*. By reading Eriugena through the poetry of Ḥāfīz and the theo-poetic commentary by Lāhūrī, the Irishman's imaginary can be uncovered and set free from the anodyne and unchallenging confines of Idealism and instead made flesh, i.e., made into embodied challenges to oppressive ideologies in this world. His Incarnational theology is revealed through the poetic imagination of Ḥāfīz and the larger Islamic tradition in which the Persian lyricist partakes.

The theo-poetics is uncovered by this interreligious exercise in several ways. The theophanic cosmologies inform each other, with the poetic dimensions of theophany in Ḥāfīz uncovering the Incarnational aspects of theophany in Eriugena. In addition to disclosing the poetics of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* otherwise occluded by his dialectical logic, the Islamic theo-poetics attunes my reading of Eriugena to his non-dialectical works, such as his homily and commentary on the Johannine Gospel, his commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*, and his collection of poems, *Carmina*. Together, the formative function of the imaginal, or the imaginary, is explored, and related to the Incarnation to suggest that the flesh is constitutive of our relationship not just to each other and the world, but to God. A theo-poetics of the flesh is an Incarnational imaginary that functions to disrupt and subvert dominant and oppressive social imaginaries that have no relation to the Word made flesh. It is attuned to *how* (...Christ is, ...we are to live) rather than *what* (...Christ is, ...we are to believe). Just as comparative theology transgresses the boundaries of discursive traditions, creates "new visions [that

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<sup>195</sup> See *ibid.*, 109-110.

enable]...transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries,”<sup>196</sup> this interreligious theo-poetics of the flesh seeks to transpose these discursive transgressions into embodied ones, so that new spaces and communities may be created (*poiësis*) that transgress normative, oppressive social imaginaries.

## Chapter Outlines

### Theophany as Analogical Comparand

Theophany, from the Latin *theophania* via the Greek θεοφάνεια, literally translates into “God-appearance”. It is a word used in the Greek Christian tradition to refer to the Incarnation of the Divine Word in the person of Jesus Christ. It is also a term used by both Latin and Greek authors to speak of the divine appearances in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., the burning bush and the pillar of cloud and fire in Exodus, etc.). However, it is also a more specific word used to refer to the process of God’s manifestation in the world. As Eric Perl demonstrates in his short monograph entitled *Theophany*, it is the Pseudo-Dionysius, along with Proclus and Plotinus, for whom “the whole of reality, all that is, is theophany, the manifestation or appearance of God.”<sup>197</sup> Yet as he himself admits in a footnote, it is neither the Pseudo-Dionysius nor Proclus nor Plotinus but rather Eriugena for whom the term is explicitly central in elaborating his theological cosmology. As Christian Schäfer writes in *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*: “‘Theophany’ is a word that we would assign not so much to Dionysius himself as to his *philosophical* tradition following Eriugena, for whom it is cardinal. Yet, it quite neatly expresses what is meant [for Dionysius].”<sup>198</sup> Indeed, as my reading of Eriugena’s corpus suggests, and in agreement with Hilary Anne-Marie Mooney, the term “theophany,” along with the process to

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<sup>196</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, 12.

<sup>197</sup> Eric David Perl, *Theophany: the Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 32.

<sup>198</sup> Christian Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: An Introduction to the Structure and the Content of the Treatise “On the Divine Names”* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 67 fn. 26 (*emphasis mine*).

which it refers, is the “key to interpreting Eriugena’s account of the disclosure of God,”<sup>199</sup> inclusive of the Incarnation of the Word, the revelation in Scripture, and the manifestation of this phenomenal world—it is not merely “philosophical,” much less a disembodied, abstract theory, but constitutive of God’s enfleshment in Jesus, revelation in Scripture, and creation of this concrete, material world.

Theophany in Eriugena commences this project because it is the theological principle in common with both Eriugena’s and Ḥāfīz’s/Lāhūrī’s cosmology. Theophany is the shared feature between these traditions that permits analogical and constructive comparison, not because of genealogical connections, but rather because the function of theophany for all three is to manifest the hidden God in this world. Indeed, theophany is not as central to the theology of any other Christian figure as much as it is for Eriugena; there is thus no other Christian source for which the centrality of theophany is a shared feature. However, in traditions of Ibn ‘Arabī, the School of Love, and the Islamic theo-poetics, theophany remained the structural process and organizing principle of theological cosmology and anthropology, and even eschatology. Eriugena and Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī thus function as viable comparands. These discursive traditions are situated within radically disparate contexts, and their genealogy is related only remotely to the late antique Middle East; the substantial genealogical influence between 9<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, 14<sup>th</sup>-century Persian poetry, and 17<sup>th</sup>-century South Asian commentary is negligible at best. This exercise in comparative theology therefore begins with theophany because, as a species of J.Z. Smith’s analogical comparison, “like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived, how they might be ‘re-described.’”<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, “[Analogical] comparison provides the means by which we ‘re-vision’ phenomena as our data in order to solve our theoretical

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<sup>199</sup> Mooney, *Theophany*, 11.

<sup>200</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

problems.”<sup>201</sup> Eriugenean theophany begins this project because it is a Catholic theological one; but the comparison with Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī enables us to re-imagine theophany in terms of theo-poetics, i.e., to “re-vision phenomena” in Eriugena’s theology through an Islamic theo-poetics. Comparative theology is a poetics, because it interprets *how* bringing together two disparate discursive traditions produces new meaning, just as metaphor brings together words from disparate semantic fields to create new meaning.

### **Outlines**

Chapter One and Chapter Two complement each other: both introduce theophany for each tradition. The first chapter explicates Eriugena’s theophany through a poetic reading of his corpus. It is attuned to his poetics, *how* his text means, rather than in search of a hermeneutics, *what* his text means. As such, it illuminates how his poetic moments disrupt and subvert his *ratio*. Contrary to previous scholarship, I underscore *how* Eriugena explains theophany in terms of love, compassion, desire, *plus-quam* theology, and the Incarnation. If the School of Ibn ‘Arabī transposed and expanded the private experience of a *tajallī*, or an individual divine self-disclosure, into a cosmo-theological principle of perpetual *tajallīyāt* (theophanies), for Eriugena the Incarnation is the concrete, historical theophany that is universally and ahistorically constitutive of the God-world relationship.

The second chapter elaborates on the meaning of theophany for Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī. I connect theophany to a theo-poetics of desire within the human person who is exalted above angels, and to humanity’s poetic vocation to unveil God for others. Two love lyrics are analyzed, after each of which comparative insights into Eriugena’s theophany are also offered: I turn to his reading of the Gospel of John and his own explicitly poetic oeuvre to suggest that being *in the flesh* grants revelatory access to God beyond the knowledge attainable by fleshless angels. God’s *more-than*, God’s superessential nature, is encountered *only* in the flesh.

These two complementary chapters are followed by a pivot intended to connect theophany

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*

to the imagination and metaphor. Chapter Three introduces the constitutive role of the imagination, the Imaginal World, and metaphor in the Islamic theo-poetics. I relate Paul Ricœur's theory of metaphor and the imagination to the Islamic conceptions thereof, especially in terms of nondualism. This chapter contains a general introduction to the import of the imagination and metaphor in the Schools of Love and Ibn 'Arabī, followed by an analysis of two love lyrics that have the imagination as their central topics. I demonstrate how Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī transpose poetic metaphors from text to the world, giving transformative power to the image and the imagination in transgressing the logical limits of the possible by the poetics of the impossible (borrowing Caputo's terminology).<sup>202</sup>

Following this crucial chapter, which provides us with an explicit Islamic theo-poetics through which to read Eriugena, are an additional set of complementary chapters. The fourth chapter uncovers the function of metaphor in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, particularly attuned to his removal of a series of ontological dualisms and then to his use of the Latin adverb *veluti*, "as it were." Learning from Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī (two love lyrics are presented), I argue that Eriugena's metaphor is fruitfully conceptualized in terms of the nondual nature of subsistence (*baqā'*) in God. This provides the human wayfarer a *way* to see the metaphorical nature of the world, to *unsay* what is said to *say all the more*, that is, more than what *ratio* alone can convey, viz., *how* suffering, passionate love reveals the divine. Chapter Five engages the social, psychological, and philosophical theory of social imaginaries to connect the function of the image and imagination to the disruptive and subversive function of the Incarnation. Paul Ricœur and Cornelius Castoriadis employ the concept of social imaginaries to speak of the underpinning and instituting symbols,

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<sup>202</sup> John Caputo himself borrows "poetics of the impossible" from deconstruction. The poetics of the impossible for Caputo's project "describes how things happen in the narrational space of the kingdom, as distinguished from a 'logic of omnipotence,' which belongs to strong metaphysical theology" (John Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*, [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006], 17). More importantly for my project, "in a *poetics* of the impossible, we mean to pose the possibility of something life-transforming, not to report how an omnipotent being intervenes upon nature's regularities and bends them to its infinite will, which is an occurrence, or a super-occurrence, that would transpire on the plane of being, not an 'event' of the call. In the logic of impossibility, the impossible is simply something that cannot be, whereas in a poetics of *the* impossible, we are hailing an event that is otherwise than being" (Ibid., 104),

logics, values, words, metaphors, and principles that bind group of people into a society. They are narratives, myths, ideas, and organizing systems that create the way (*modus*) of any given society in history and presently. They are not necessarily oppressive, but they tend to restrict the radical imagination, and they often marginalize because they force members of any given society to conform to the dominant group's rationality. This project proposes a theo-poetics (a divine way) of the flesh that is ever critical of worldly (dis-Incarnate) imaginaries and that forever seeks to disrupt and subvert them. In this chapter, then, reading Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics draws out the poetic (*creative*) function of the Word made flesh; I do this by attending to the subtleties of Eriugena's *imago Dei* anthropology and theophanic cosmology (all things are *images*). Through comparative insights (one love lyric is presented), I connect the function of the heart in an Islamic theo-poetics to Eriugena's theology of enfleshed images, but attuned to how "broken-heartedness" frees us from the constraints of the intellect. Theology is not just the textual discourse of faith seeking understanding, but the embodied praxis and spatial creation of the Incarnate images of God, because the Incarnation for Eriugena brings together spirit, flesh and God into one. As such, it becomes a way to disrupt oppressive social imaginaries.

Chapter Six constructs an Incarnational imaginary from this interreligious reading, providing the final building blocks of a theo-poetics of the flesh. I argue that the radical apophatic theology of Eriugena moves beyond hermeneutics (*what* texts mean, *what* God is), and instead facilitates a theo-poetics (*how* texts mean, *how* we are called to imagine forth the Incarnation). I further connect the function of the heart and imagination in an Islamic theo-poetics to the function of the Incarnate Word in Eriugena. While I draw extensively from the proximate traditions of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī for comparative insights, no complete love lyric is presented. I suggest how the Incarnation displaces the *reditus*, the *eschaton*, to the present moment, so that the Incarnate Word may become our faculties enabling us to enter into the perpetual subversion of perverse power, now and in the flesh.

In the conclusion, I constructively employ the concept of social imaginaries as explicated

by Paul Ricœur and Cornelius Castoriadis. Using neoliberalism as an example, I demonstrate how the theo-poetics of the flesh constructed in this dissertation functions as an Incarnational imaginary that disrupts and subverts non-Incarnational, worldly imaginaries. In other words, a theo-poetics of the flesh is an embodied *theopoïesis* that is our communal *theosis* of the created order.

### **Note on Gender Pronouns for God**

When translating primary sources, I have elected to alternate the use of masculine and feminine pronouns when referring to God; this alternating occurs within citations and even sentences. If it is jarring or difficult to follow, it arguably recreates the bewilderment (*ḥayra*, in Arabic) of a radically apophatic and nonsubstantialist divinity. I am thus following Denys Turner's argument in *The Darkness of God*: "if we describe God both as male and as female, then we force upon our materialistic imaginations a concrete sense of the collapse of gender-language as such."<sup>203</sup> This occurs far more often in Eriugena's Latin texts than in Lāhūrī's Persian commentary. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that in the Persian language there is no gender, and so the beloved in Ḥāfīz's love lyrics may be either male or female, too; thus, the alternating may occur within his love lyrics. This alternating of gender pronouns in my translations is a small step toward inserting not just the female and feminine in largely male and masculine discursive spaces, but also the non-binary and gender non-conforming; this ultimately forms a species of the nondualism innate to the Incarnational imaginary I am constructing.

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<sup>203</sup> "Let us consider a contemporary example. Rightly, many Christians today regret as inadequate, misleading and as symptomatic of misogyny, that historical tradition whereby God is described exclusively in the language of the male gender. And there can be two quite different reasons why this is right, both of which flow from the logic of Denys' position. The first is that for every ground we have for describing God as male there is another for describing God as female. An exclusive use of male descriptions is therefore a misdescription of God by exclusion, since it rules out the ascription to God of the names distinctive of half her human creation. The second reason why the description of God as male is inappropriate has nothing to do with exclusivity, for it is perfectly obvious that God is not the sort of being who could have a gender at all...if we describe God both as male and as female, then we force upon our materialistic imaginations a concrete sense of the collapse of gender-language as such. For no person can be both male and female. Hence, if God has to be described in both ways, then he cannot possibly be either male or female; and if God is neither, then also she cannot possibly be a 'person' in any sense we know of, for every person we know of is one or the other. It is in the collapse of ordinary language, brought to our attention by the necessity of ascribing incompatible attributes, that the transcendence of God above all language is best approached" (Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 25-26).

# Chapter 1

## Eriugena and Theophany: Disclosing the Poetic

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### Introduction

*For the being of all things is the divinity beyond being.*  
-Eriugena, translating Dionysius the Aeropagite<sup>1</sup>

In Eriugena's *Homily on the Gospel of John*, he prescribes a series of imperatives pertaining to various acts of seeing: "perceive...look closely at...gaze at...see-through...look into...see,"<sup>2</sup> so that his auditors may recognize how all things live and are alive in the Word.<sup>3</sup> He concludes this exercise in perception with Acts 17:28 wherein Paul, at the Areopagus, exclaims, "For in Him we live and are moved and exist." Eriugena, recalling Dionysius who (as tradition has it) followed Paul after hearing his disquisition on "an unknown god" (Acts 17:23), ends this section with the only extra-biblical quote in his homily, one taken from the Aeropagite in *The Celestial Hierarchy (CH)*: "the being of all things is the superessential [*superessentialis*] divinity."<sup>4</sup> This is only one version of Eriugena's translation of the original Greek: τὸ γὰρ εἶναι πάντων ἐστὶν ἢ ὑπὲρ τὸ εἶναι θεότης (For it is the divinity beyond being that is the being of all things).<sup>5</sup> When Eriugena comes upon it in Chapter IV of *CH* in his commentary thereon, he offers

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<sup>1</sup> *CCH*, 69, 133. While there is no complete translation of Eriugena's *Commentary on The Celestial Hierarchy*, Rorem offers some sections in his *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005). In the sections he translates in the appendices, he marks in the margins the page numbers of the *Corpus Christianorum* Latin edition that I cite; one may refer to his translation, when available, to explore the text in context and in English.

<sup>2</sup> The Latin reads: *conspicere...considera...intuere...perspice...inspicere...videre* (*HJ*, 19-20, 16-33 [289AB]).

<sup>3</sup> This follows his interpretation of John 1:3-4 (*quod factum est in ipso vita erat*): "that which was made in [the Word] was life" (*HJ*, 17-19, 16ff [288B]).

<sup>4</sup> *HJ*, 21, 1 (289B).

<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, 20, 16-20, 177D. Luibheid's and Rorem's translation reads "for it is the transcendent Deity which is the existence of every being" (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 156).

a more literal rendering, “*esse enim omnium est super esse divinitas*”<sup>6</sup> (for the being of all things is the divinity beyond being) and then later paraphrases it: “*quoniam esse omnium est divinitas que plus est quam esse*”<sup>7</sup> (since the being of all things is the divinity that is more than being). The *super* and *plus quam* phrases form the backbone of Eriugena’s theology of theophany and therefore of his theology of creation; for the only definition that may be predicated of God is “that [God] is the one who is more-than-being” (*quia est qui plus quam esse est*)<sup>8</sup>. This phrase, “the being of all things is the divinity beyond being,” is likewise a compact, textual enactment of apophasis, kataphasis, and *plus-quam* discourse wherein the being of any given thing is said (it *has* being), unsaid (its being is *not* its own), and drawing one in for more (its essence and subsistence is the very *more-than-being* of God). Here we have a taste of a poetics: *how* these words come together produces superabundant meaning that leaves *what* anything *is* ever out of reach.

Roemer rightfully notes that this statement, which is arguably a parenthetical aside for Dionysius in *CH*, is a central dictum for Eriugena’s theology of creation.<sup>9</sup> This phrase comes to his assistance numerous times in the *Periphyseon*, and is also the first extra-scriptural authority quoted by Eriugena in the opening pages of the dialogue.<sup>10</sup> In this chapter, I will discuss Eriugena’s theology of theophany as explicated in his *Periphyseon*. His commentary on *CH* opens this discussion because it is arguably Eriugena’s encounter with the Dionysian tradition that enabled him to formulate his robust theology of theophany. But more importantly, this chapter opens with Eriugena’s rendering of the Dionysian clause because it condenses in several

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<sup>6</sup> *CCH*, 69, 133.

<sup>7</sup> *CCH*, 70, 195-196.

<sup>8</sup> *PP I*, 63, 1925-1926 (487B).

<sup>9</sup> See discussion in Eriugena, *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy*, 115ff.

<sup>10</sup> *PP I*, 5, 59-61 (443B). Though, for Eriugena, Dionysius was perhaps as scriptural as the Apostle Paul, given that in the 9th century the *Pseudo-Dionysius* was understood to be the *historical* Dionysius in the Acts of the Apostles.

words the core of this exercise in constructive, comparative theology: the *being* of all that we perceive is *more than* being, but *how*? In order to engage this phenomenal world, a dynamic vision, a theo-poetics, is required. Reality is always *more than*, and so we are drawn *beyond*, which is, according to my reading-together of Eriugena and Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, *within* our embodied experience.

### **Poetics and Theophany**

In this chapter, I focus my attention on the relationship of theophany to love, textual enactment of desire, *plus-quam* theology, and the Incarnation of the Word. Eriugena's cosmological concept of theophany in this fourfold relationship is both illuminated and challenged by theophany in the Islamic theo-poetics detailed in the next chapter. I save explicit comparative insights for the next chapter, however the method whereby I interpret Eriugena's corpus, primarily his *Periphyseon*, is already informed by Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī insofar as it is a theo-poetic interpretation that focuses on *how* theophany brings together opposites to create meaning otherwise occluded by a non-theophanic logic. Poetics is *how* texts mean, *how* words come together to produce meaning, while hermeneutics is *what* texts mean. Within the interpretive *what* of hermeneutics is poetics, the *how* of texts; and between the unknown God as *principium* (beginning) and *finis* (end) is the *how* of this phenomenal world: the Incarnation.

Mayra Rivera, in her *Poetics of the Flesh*, suggests that “attention to poetic dimensions of theological notions sheds light on elements of body-words that tend to be occluded by other modes of philosophical inquiry.”<sup>11</sup> In preparation for theo-poetic insights, I read Eriugena on theophany attuned to poetics and not just hermeneutics, to how theophany functions and not what theophany means. I also rely on Rivera's own conceptualization of poetics: it refers to “*modes* of knowing, being, and acting in the world.”<sup>12</sup> It is “a practice of engaging the world, in which one risks being transformed,” and thus poetics is “a stance toward knowledge, a style of writing, and

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<sup>11</sup> Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (*emphasis mine*).

the creative dimensions of thought.”<sup>13</sup> Rivera’s poetics thus emphasizes *modes, praxis*, and *creativity (poiesis)*. Poetics dwells on *how* words come together to produce creative *ways* of being in the world, whereas a too narrow focus on hermeneutics (*what* texts mean) and epistemology (the objective knowledge conveyed) risks relegating praxis to a secondary status. Theophany is explored in terms of love, textual desire, *plus-quam* discourse, and the Incarnation; it is thus a poetic reading of theophany because it is attentive “not only to the conceptual logic” of the *Periphyseon* “but also to [its] literary dimensions and affective charge.”<sup>14</sup> It sheds light on the embodied consequences of theophany explored in words.

Furthermore, I distinguish the poetic from the dialectical (but not the irrational or illogical). Plenty of scholarship has already been published regarding his use of dialectical reasoning, and so in interpreting Eriugena’s texts I aim to uncover poetic moments and dimensions therein, textual events when he strays away from his rigid, dialectical reasoning and syllogistic argumentation and wanders toward, not verses, meters, rhymes, and poems per se, but rather the creative expression of words that force the reader to abandon a rational hermeneutics and assume a poetics, even a “poetics of the impossible,” which disrupts the logic of the impossible.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, a poetic reading of Eriugena foregrounds moments of *disruption*, for disruption constitutes the poetic.<sup>16</sup> As Rivera suggests, “writing and reading about flesh” through a poetics “help me convey the complex qualities of sensation: the silences, disruptions, and opacity that

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>15</sup> See Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 17ff, 104ff.

<sup>16</sup> Deidre Carabine has drawn out the the consequences of Eriugena’s radical apophasis in a similar manner. “From an apophatic viewpoint, the only true knowledge man can have of the divine essence comes from the abandonment of the normal epistemological categories which are the basis for all cognition. If the philosopher of today is left bereft of his tools of rational analysis, in that he is no longer on solid ground with a sure footing in an analytical method of philosophy, either he must admit that a metaphysics which is based on apophasis is absolute nonsense and its advocates insane, or else he is invited to rethink the role of philosophical analysis, keeping in mind that as for the ancients, philosophy is the love of wisdom; perhaps even today it can sometimes lead a man into the presence of the unknown God” (Carabine, “Apophasis and Metaphysics in the Periphyseon of John Scottus Eriugena,” 82).

characterize the body's relation to the world."<sup>17</sup> Poetics attends to how words come together to make meaning disruptive of normative discourses, epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies, ideologies, and taken all together, imaginaries. My reading of Eriugena draws from John Caputo's conceptualization of poetics, which he describes as a discourse with "imaginative sweep and flare", with passion (*pathos*) and desire "beyond reason and beyond what is reasonably possible."<sup>18</sup> The poetics of passionate love, central to Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics, augments this reading.

A non-disruptive static synthesis is expected from Eriugena's use of dialectical reasoning, but I aver that his theology is far more fruitful and constructive when read through the theo-poetic imagination of Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī. Assuming a poetic and imaginative lens to read Eriugena produces, not a static synthesis, but a disruptive, dynamic imaginary. Throughout this and subsequent chapters of this dissertation, I attend to the limits of Eriugena's *ratio* (and thus any restrictive logic) in contrast with the boundlessness of the imagination and poetic metaphor. Eriugena offers brilliant moments of poetic theology—theo-poetics—that are delimited by the synthesis of dialectical reasoning, either in how he has been read by previous scholars or by his own explicit logic. Reading Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics aims to subvert this.

## **Eriugena's Understanding of Theophany in *The Celestial Hierarchy***

In Eriugena's commentary on Chapter IV of Pseudo-Dionysius's *The Celestial Hierarchy* (*CH*), he displaces the technical term "theophany" from a narrow Dionysian signification to a broader, universal principle; in other words, Eriugena expands the concept of theophany from

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<sup>17</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 104. The relation of desire and passionate love to the imagination, which is central to this dissertation, is likewise central to poetics according to Caputo: "We might say that a poetics is a discourse with a heart, supplying the heart of a heartless world. Unlike logic, it is a discourse with *pathos*, with a passion and a desire, with an imaginative sweep and a flare, touched by a bit of madness, hence more of an a-logic or even a patho-logic, one that is, however, not sick but healing and salvific. A poetics of *the impossible* describes the dynamics of a desire beyond desire for the kingdom, a desire beyond reason and beyond what is reasonably possible, a desire to know what we cannot know, or to love what we dare not love, like a beggar in love with a princess, whose desire is not extinguished by the impossible but fired by it" (*ibid.*, 104).

merely referencing prophetic visions to signifying a cosmological principle: the whole world is an unbounded collection of theophanies.

Eriugena introduces the term *theophania*, his transliterated rendering of the Greek, θεοφάνεια, in his commentary on Chapter IV before Dionysius himself even uses this term in *CH*: “[This] supreme Good, which is God, is invisible and hidden in Himself; nevertheless, He manifests Himself in an ineffable way to those participating in Him...Accordingly, every creature, whether visible or invisible, with the approval of reason, both is and is called a theophany, that is, an appearance of God.”<sup>19</sup> *Everything* is a theophany. Even though Dionysian theology implies that all things are an appearance or manifestation of God, as Perl argues in his *Theophany*, the technical term itself is restricted to prophetic visions in the *corpus areopagiticum*.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, later in his commentary, Eriugena follows Dionysius and proposes the narrow understanding of theophany:

Theophanies occur to holy persons through certain unveilings which befit God (i.e., which is proper for God to unveil), and they occur for no one else except for those seeing the visions in proportion to themselves. Nevertheless, [the visions] occur though [the theophanies]; for God has not revealed His theophanies through Himself, but through something subject to Himself.<sup>21</sup>

Theophanies here are unique visions to holy men and women, likely referring to the divine

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<sup>19</sup> *CCH*, 72, 293-299. This is followed by a citation of Romans 1:20: “‘For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world,’ i.e., from the institution [*constitutione*] of the world, ‘are seen [*conspiciuntur*], being understood through the things that are made’” (ibid., 72-73, 299-301).

<sup>20</sup> See Perl, *Theophany: the Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Perl argues that for Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius, the whole of reality is a theophany. However, as he himself points out, it is only in Eriugena that the term theophany becomes central. See, in addition, Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 67. Schäfer agrees with Louth (1989), Gombocz (1997), and Perl (2003), who all aver that theophany is crucial to Dionysius precisely because it avoids the dualism of “creation,” commonly understood as the making of something totally other than, and in addition to, God the Creator. And yet, it is Eriugena who makes the term wholly his own, expanding its definition to include all things and not just visions to holy persons narrated in the Bible (as it was used by Dionysius). See Andrew Louth, *Denys, the Areopagite* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989); Wolfgang L. Gombocz, *Die Philosophie Der Ausgehenden Antike Und Des Frühen Mittelalters* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> *CCH*, 76, 436-441. This is the commentary on Dionysius’s *Celestial Hierarchy* in which Eriugena mentions theophanies. His translation of the Greek: “Theophanies have occurred to holy persons according to prophecies from God through certain sacred manifestations to those seeing the proportionate visions” (ibid., 76, 419-421). This is a translation of the original found at Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, 180C, which Luibhéid and Rorem render as “Of course God has appeared to certain pious men in ways which were in keeping with his divinity” (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 157).

appearances in the Hebrew Bible, but not limited thereto. Eriugena, following his reading of Dionysius, then submits that theology has “beautifully called” the vision that “returns those seeing them unto the divine”<sup>22</sup> a “theophany,” which is “as it were a divine likeness of formless meaning” (*veluti divinam similitudinem informium intellectuum*).<sup>23</sup> Summing up his excursus into theophany in this section, Eriugena concludes: “theophany may be interpreted as though θεου φανια, i.e., the appearance of God or the illumination of God, [for] accordingly all that appears also shines, and it is derived from the verb φαivω, i.e., to shine [*luceo*] or to appear [*appareo*].”<sup>24</sup>

To summarize: In this commentary, theophany is (1) everything, and therefore *how* the being of all things is the divinity beyond being, (2) particular disclosures or revelations to holy persons, e.g., the prophets, and, in what appears to be a recapitulations of (1) and (2), for it embraces both, (3) a divine illumination. Theology is also defined in this section as “a gnostic power innate to both angels and humans and also the divinity itself...[and this power] is not irrationally called theology since it is the font and illumination of the whole gnostic power, which revealed as it led back...those seeing, i.e. the prophets.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, theophany and theology are correlated. Theophany is a divine illumination that permits humans to know God in this world via disclosures and revelations, via *as it were* (*veluti*) divine likenesses of formless meaning that return those seeing them to God. Theology is the gnostic power that permits humans to apprehend *everything* as theophany and therefore as divine illumination. Together, theophany and theology reveal and lead back to God. These correlated conceptualizations of theophany and theology therefore form the superstructure of Eriugena’s project in the *Periphyseon*, and a sound understanding of theophany is necessary in order to grasp any other theological point proffered by the Irishman. This will become evident in the analysis of the *Periphyseon* that follows.

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<sup>22</sup> CCH, 76, 452.

<sup>23</sup> CCH, 77, 467-468.

<sup>24</sup> CCH, 77, 479-482.

<sup>25</sup> CCH, 76, 457-462.

## Theophany and Love

It is perhaps a paradox that Eriugena's primary definition and discussion of theophany construct a direct connection to the Divine Word, love, compassion, and desire. That is, in a text in which *ratio* and dialectical reasoning play the principal role, one would not expect theophany to be defined in these Christological and passionate terms. It is a paradox that remains throughout the *Periphyseon*, in which love, desire, compassion, and the Incarnation persist as its subtext and rarely emerge as its explicit subject. But it is also a paradox that gestures toward *more than* the text alone can offer, and uncovers the poetics of Eriugena's text that are embedded in the rigid, dialectical form; it is also why the turn to the love lyrics of Ḥāfīz is so promising.

Prior to embarking on a closer examination of the first of the fourfold division, the subject of Book I turns to theophanies, or divine manifestations. The Student inquires about the unmediated contemplation of the Divine Essence that is promised to the righteous.<sup>26</sup> The Student—in the first of many attempts to reconcile (synthesize) Augustine with his eastern Christian brethren—asks the Teacher concerning the transparent clarity by which the saints will contemplate God “through bodies that we will bear.”<sup>27</sup> Since God's essence “dwells in inaccessible light” (1 Timothy 6:16) and is therefore “in Itself comprehensible to no corporeal sense, no reason, and no human or angelic intellect,”<sup>28</sup> *what* of God is able to be seen, considered, or even contemplated? Is the promise of seeing God “face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12) contradicted by the negative theology of Dionysius? This is no accidental excursus, for the

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<sup>26</sup> *PP I*, 10, 204-206 (447AB).

<sup>27</sup> The Student asks: “What therefore are we to say about the future felicity that is promised the saints, which we think to be nothing other than the pure and unmediated contemplation of the Divine Essence itself? Thusly does the evangelist John say, ‘We know that we are the sons of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. But when that shall have appeared we shall be like unto Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ (1 John 3:2) Likewise, the apostle Paul [writes,] ‘Now we see through a mirror and enigmatically, but then face to face.’ (1 Corinthians 13:12) Likewise Saint Augustine, in his book *The City of God*, says of the future contemplation of the Divine Essence, as I think it: ‘Through bodies that we will bear, in every body that we see, whithersoever we will turn our eyes of our body, we will contemplate God Himself with transparent clarity’” (*PP I*, 10, 206-215 [447B]). The quote from Augustine is from *De civitate dei*, XXII, xxix, 6 (CCSL 48, 861, 185-197); For English trans., see Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God Books XVII-XXII*, 503-504.

<sup>28</sup> *PP I*, 11, 227-229 (447C).

theophanies are *how* intellectual creatures may contemplate God, whether they be angels, the righteous in the future life, or even those in this life who “suffer an excess of the mind” (*mentis excessum patiuntur*).<sup>29</sup> One may understand this interlude to concern how the incomprehensibility of God coincides with the vision of God.<sup>30</sup> This it is. However, it is also a knot that, left tangled, would preclude all possibility of theology. The text of the *Periphyseon* itself, the dialogue and its composition, presupposes the possibility of speaking the unspeakable. In fact, to the Student’s request to expound upon the details of theophany, the Teacher responds, solemn: “A profound thing you ask, and I do not know what profounder thing there can be for human inquiry.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, without a sufficient answer, the *Periphyseon* ends here, in the opening pages of the first book.

In this first and critical explanation, however, theophany is not linked to theological inquiry, but rather to Divine Love, the condescension of the Word, charity, and compassion. It appears out of place with respect to the rest of the dialogue, which relies so heavily on dialectical logic, and is one of the poetic dimensions of an otherwise overtly rational text, a text that tends to occlude the paradoxical by synthesizing the contradictory.

Theophany is effected by reason of nothing other than God, while it occurs as a result of the condescension of the Divine Word, i.e., of the Only-Begotten Son, who is the Wisdom of the Father, as it were downward unto human nature created and purified by Him, and [as a result of] the exaltation upward of human nature unto the aforementioned Word through Divine Love (*divina amorem*)... Therefore, theophany occurs from the condescension of the Wisdom of God upon human

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<sup>29</sup> *PP I*, 12, 263-264 (448B).

<sup>30</sup> The “bodies” that Augustine says we put on are in fact the theophanies. For the Student, slowly coming to understand the nature of theophanies, answers his own question: “Then we will not see God in Himself, since not even the angels see [God thusly]—for this is impossible for every creature; for as the Apostle says, ‘only [God] possesses immortality and dwells in inaccessible light’ (1 Timothy 6:16)—but we will contemplate certain theophanies made by [God] in us.” To which the Teacher responds, “No, [we will not contemplate God in Himself]. Each, according to the highness of his sanctity and wisdom, will be formed by the one and same Form that all desire (*appetunt*), I mean the the Word. For [the Form] Itself says of Itself: ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions,’ (John 14:2), calling [the Form] the House of Its Father because, while It remains one and the same immutable [Form], It is nevertheless seen multitudinous to those who will be given bountifully to live in It. For each one, as we said, will possess an acquaintance (*notitia*) of the Only-Begotten Word of God in himself, inasmuch as it will be given to him by grace. Whatever number are the elect, as many will be the number of mansions; however many will be the multiplication of holy souls, as much will be the possession of divine theophanies” (*PP I*, 12, 265-280 [448C]).

<sup>31</sup> *PP I*, 13, 288-289 (449A).

nature through grace and from the exaltation of the same nature to Wisdom Itself through love (*dilectionem*).<sup>32</sup>

Early on in the dialogue, Eriugena correlates theophany with the *condescension* of the Divine Word. His wording and explanation approximate to near identity with *how* the Incarnation is understood. Consequently, it seems, he wishes to distinguish theophany from the enfleshment of the Logos: “Here I mean by ‘condescension’ not that which has even now [*iam*] occurred [*facta est*] through the Incarnation, but that which occurs [*fit*] through *theosis* (i.e., through deification) of the creature.”<sup>33</sup> Somehow, the Word “condescends into human nature,” which is our *theosis*. The poetics of this passage contradicts the logic, it seems, so much that Eriugena clarifies in such a way that seemingly obfuscates the passage more. Theophany here is the condescension of the Divine Word that is our *theosis*, and while he distinguishes it from the Incarnation, he does not necessarily disconnect the one from the other. Indeed, the Incarnation, which “even now has occurred,” is what structures our deification. *Theosis* is enabled through the Incarnation, and theophany is itself structured by the *poetics*, the *mode*, of the Incarnation. Theophany here is a simultaneous occurrence of the Divine Word’s condescension and human nature’s exaltation through Divine Love. Anthropologically, this is a recasting of Athanasius’s much referenced phrase from *De incarnationem* 54: “For [God] was made human so that we might *be made God* [θεοποιηθῶμεν, *theopoiethómen*].”<sup>34</sup> *Theopoiesis* is our *theosis*, and so being attentive to *how* God manifests in the world, in the flesh, sheds light on our deification.

Furthermore, the Word condescends so that we may have words with which to speak the unspeakable; without theophany there would be no theology, no *Periphyseon*. Out of Divine Love does God deign to be known and spoken of.

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<sup>32</sup> *PP* I, 13, 294-301 and 303-306 (449AB).

<sup>33</sup> *PP* I,13, 301-303 (449B). However, it must be noted that later in the *Periphyseon*, the nonduality of theophany is the *sine qua non* for the Incarnation; in other words, the Incarnation presupposes theophany, and I argue is effectively if not essentially equated with it. See *PP* III, 86, 2497-2498 (679CD) and *PP* III, 34, 915-917 (641A); these passages will be discussed in detail later in this dissertation.

<sup>34</sup> αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν (Athanasius, *Contra Gentes; And, De Incarnatione*, [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], 268, 11-12).

The Wisdom of the Father, in which and through which all things were made, [which Wisdom] is not created but creating (*quae non est creata sed creans*), comes into being in our souls, by some ineffable condescension of compassion, and also joins our intellect to Itself [i.e., to the Wisdom of the Father], so that in some ineffable way a sort of composite wisdom is made as a result of this descent to us and dwelling in us, and as a result of our understanding which is taken up to Itself (*assumpta*) through love by it and is formed in it...For, as Maximus [the Confessor] says, as far as the human intellect ascends through charity (*caritatem*), so far does the Divine Wisdom descend through compassion (*misericordiam*).<sup>35</sup>

In this passage, the capacity to know God through theophanies increases in direct proportion to the amount of charity one manifests. Theophany occurs through Divine Love, enables an ascent through charity, and effects the descent of Divine Wisdom (another signification for the Divine Word) through compassion. Each of us becomes the site of the Incarnation—or condescension—of the Divine Word through compassion, thereby enabling our *theopoïesis* through *caritatem*.

The way these original definitions of theophany are constructed is at variance with Eriugena's penchant for dialectical discourse. Theophany is a mode of relationship, a movement, an *ineffable* condescension of the Word through love (*amorem* and *dilectionem*), dwelling in us by charity and compassion (*caritatem* and *misericordiam*). He neither offers any proofs through the dialogue, nor constructs a sequential argument from Aristotelian categories or through the grammar, logic, and rhetoric of Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (*On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*), a philosophical source of his. Instead, Eriugena proffers *how* theophany functions, which forces the reader into a poetics. Eriugena does not *explicitly* equate the condescension of the Divine Word effected through theophany to the Incarnation. Nevertheless, it seems the Incarnation is, drawing from David Tracy's *The Analogical Imagination*, that very "originating tensive event releasing its focal meaning" that guides Eriugena's interpretation of the whole of reality.<sup>36</sup> The tensive event of the Incarnation gives

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<sup>35</sup> *PP I*, 13-14, 308-319 (449BC). The first part of this quotation Eriugena claims he has taken from Augustine, however despite the best and most admirable efforts of the editors, the location is not found. The second portion (*PP I*, 14, 317-319 [449C]) was also not found verbatim in any of the works of Maximus the Confessor, though he asserts nearly identical things in the following in his *Ambigua ad Iohannem*. See Maximus the Confessor, *Maximi Confessoris Ambigua Ad Iohannem*, CCSG 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 48-49 (1113BC), 168 (1288A). For Greek-English edition, see Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 162-165 (*Ambigua* 10 to John in Volume 1), 64-65 (*Ambigua* 33 to John in Volume 2), respectively.

<sup>36</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 408.

Eriugena the poetics of this theology, which he endeavors to present dialectically.

## Theophany and Textual Enactment of Desire

While theophany is frequently discussed in Books I and II of the *Periphyseon*, it is Book III wherein the most explicit passage on theophany is encountered, the one routinely cited by other scholars of Eriugena.<sup>37</sup> The passage occurs in the midst of the dialogue concerning the primordial causes, the infinite collection of which is the second division of nature that is created and creates, and which reside in the Word.<sup>38</sup> Eriugena in this section addresses the theological topic of *participation* and intimately relates it to the creative act, universal love, and theophany.<sup>39</sup> “All that exists is either participating, participated[-in], or participation, or both participated-in and participating.”<sup>40</sup> The primordial causes (which participate in God and are participated-in by

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Mooney, *Theophany*, 106ff; Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, 49ff; O’Meara, *Eriugena*, 106ff; Jean Trouillard, “Érigène et la théophanie créatrice,” in John J. O’Meara, *The Mind of Eriugena* (Dublin: Irish University Press for Royal Irish Academy, 1973), 98ff; Werner Beierwaltes, “Negati Affirmatio,” *Dionysius 1* (1977): 127-159; Jean Trouillard, *Jean Scot Érigène: études*, (Paris: Hermann, 2014), 63ff; Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 92ff; Dermot Moran, “*Spiritualis Incrassatio*: Eriugena’s Intellectualist Immaterialism: Is it Idealism?” in Gersh and Moran, *Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition*, 123-150. With a few exceptions (e.g., Trouillard, Beierwaltes), these studies focus on the dialectical, synthesizing nature of these passages. My intention is to draw out the nondual, non-reductive coincidence of opposites that yields a more dynamic imagery than a static synthesis.

<sup>38</sup> Eriugena proffers a finite set of Primordial Causes, drawing from Pseudo-Dionysius’s *On The Divine Names*, at *PP* II, 125, 3168-3178 (616C): “Therefore the primordial causes, which are called the principles of all things by the divinely inspired sages, are Goodness-through-itself, Being-through-itself, Life-through-itself, Wisdom-through-itself, Truth-through-itself, Intellect/Understanding-through-itself, Reason-through-itself, Virtue-through-itself, Justice-through-itself, Salvation-through-itself, Greatness-through-itself, Omnipotence-through-itself, Eternity-through-itself, Peace-through-itself, and all the virtues and reasons which the Father made simultaneously and once and for all, and according to which the order of all things was woven (*textitur*) from the highest to the lowest, i.e., from the intellectual creature which is near to God and after God, down to the lowest order of things, in which bodies are contained.” This list is at the end of Book II, which ends with lengthy citations from Pseudo-Dionysius’s *On the Divine Names*, chapters V and XI. The list occurs elsewhere, such as at *PP* III, 7-9, 133-219 (622B-624A): they are the supreme and true good (*bonitas*), essence/being (*essentia*), life (*vita*), reason (*ratio*), intelligence/intellect (*intelligentia*), wisdom (*sapientia*), power (*virtutem*), beatitude (*beatitudinem*), truth (*veritatis*), and eternity (*aeternitas*). He then supplements these with magnitude, love, and peace. But Eriugena notes that the primordial causes “stretch forth (*protendantur*) unto infinity” (*PP* III, 9, 206-207 [623D]) and that they are in and among themselves unordered and indistinct, even if in contemplating (*theoria*) them the human mind gives them an order and distinguishes them one from the other (*PP* III, 9, 211-219 [624A]). Pseudo-Dionysius, in *On The Divine Names*, proffers a similar though not identical list; see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I, 184ff (Greek) and *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 99ff (English).

<sup>39</sup> The section begins at *PP* III, 18, 475 (630A).

<sup>40</sup> *PP* III, 18, 475-476 (630A).

the created, sensorial universe) dwell within the Word, and form the bond between the uncreated Godhead (which is only participated-in by the primordial causes) and the created universe (which is only participating in God through the primordial causes). It is thus unsurprising that the most celebrated passage on theophany occurs right in the middle of Eriugena's discussion on the God-world relationship, for theophany is the theological principle that explains creation, soteriology, and eschatology, i.e., the universal *exitus* and *reditus*. Theophany is the poetic *how* of the universe, not the unknowable *what* of its beginning or end.

### **Theophany: The Movement of God**

The passage of import can be separated into three sections. The first submits that God alone truly is, and everything other than God is *nothing*:

Accordingly, the movement of the Greatest and Triune, Unique and True Goodness, in Itself Immutable, and Its simple multiplication and inexhaustible diffusion from Itself into Itself and toward Itself is the Cause of all things—more correctly—*is all things*. For if the understanding of all things is all things and It [viz., Goodness] alone understands all things, therefore It alone is all things, since the only gnostic power is that which, before all things exist, knows all things. And outside of Itself it does not know all things, because outside of It is *nothing*, but rather within itself [it knows all things]. For it encompasses all things and nothing is within Itself, insofar as It truly is, except Itself, since It alone truly is.<sup>41</sup>

It must be noted that Eriugena is *not* here equating God and the world; rather, the *movement* of the *immovable God* is not only the cause of all things but *is all things*. This is a fine distinction that simultaneously safeguards this passage from static monism and keeps the tension between God and the world ever taut. Dialectical reasoning produces a static synthesis, but here this danger is explicitly avoided: *all things in this world are the Immovable God's movement, multiplication, and diffusion*. This world is a coincidence of opposites. The second section then further emphasizes that God alone truly is:

*For the other things that are said to be are Its theophanies, which truly subsist in It. God is therefore all that truly is, since He made all things, and is made in all things (fit in omnibus), just as Dionysius the Areopagite has said.*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> PP III, 22, 577-585 (632D-633A).

<sup>42</sup> PP III, 22, 585-588 (633A). Eriugena is likely referring to Pseudo-Dionysius's *Letter Nine* at 1109C: πρόνοια...καί ἐν τῷ παντί γίγνεται; "Providence...comes into being in all things." (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, 202, 8-9). Luibheid and Rorem render it "Thus [Providence] occurs everywhere." (Pseudo-

Everything *other* than God may *be said to be* God's theophanies. The appearances of God (i.e., the theophanies) subsist in God, who alone really exists. But what of this phenomenal, sensorial world? Is it merely nothing? Illusory? Not quite, for the third and final section defines the appearance of God. It is another passage the poetics of which belies Eriugena's strict, dialectical argumentation:

For all that is understood and sensed [i.e., God's theophanies] is nothing but the appearance of the imperceptible (*non apparentis apparitio*), the manifestation of the hidden (*occulti manifestatio*), the affirmation of the negated (*negati affirmatio*), the comprehension of the incomprehensible, the speaking of the unspeakable (*ineffabilis fatus*), the approach of the unapproachable (*inaccessibilis accessus*), the understanding of the unintelligible, and body of the incorporeal, the essence of the superessential, the form of the formless, the measure of the immeasurable, the number of the innumerable, the weight of the weightless, the materialization of the spiritual, the visible of the invisible, the place of the placeless, the time of the timeless, the definition of the infinite, the circumscription of the uncircumscribed, and other things that are both considered and seen-through (*perspiciuntur*) by the pure intellect, and which are unable to be seized by the folds of the memory and which elude the sharpness of mind.<sup>43</sup>

The *movement* of the *Immutable* found in the first section is correlated with the numerous other coincidences of opposites, the affirmation of the negated, the comprehension of the incomprehensible, etc., in this third section. In this tripartite passage, theophany is described as the movement and cause of all things; it is the process whereby the *superessential* nothingness of God is made perceptible in everything. Theophany is described as a process or movement that *is all things*, thereby equating this phenomenal world with the movement of God, so to speak; a little later, for example, the Teacher states that "this ineffable *diffusion* both makes all things and is made in all things and *is all things*."<sup>44</sup> The tension within this phenomenal world is palpable through the poetics—the very structure and words—of the passage, the juxtaposition of affirmation and negation, the subtle nuancing that states *not* that God is all things, but that the movement or diffusion of God is all things. Theophany grants the ability to grasp via the intellect something of the imperceptible which eludes the mind and memory; it is nothing but a revelation-

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Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 286).

<sup>43</sup> *PP* III, 22, 589-598 (633AB).

<sup>44</sup> *PP* III, 23, 624-625 (634A).

in-concealment of this phenomenal world, a coincidence of opposites sustained by the imagination but precluded by the synthesizing of dialectical reasoning, I argue.<sup>45</sup>

### **The *Periphyseon*: Textual Enactment of Theophany**

What does theophany have to do with theology, with textual enactment and speech about God? I submit that this connection between theophany (divine appearance) and theology (speech about God) is made in the *Periphyseon* itself. For the Teacher this relation is apparent, and he continues by immediately offering an example of theophany experienced everyday:

For even our intellect, even though it is in itself invisible and incomprehensible, is manifested and understood by certain signs when it is materialized into sounds, letters, and other physical-gestures, as if these were bodies. And when it thusly appears outwardly, it nevertheless remains invisible inwardly. And when it breaks forth into various figures comprehensible to the senses, it does not abandon the incomprehensible state of its nature; and before it becomes disclosed, it moves itself within itself. And therefore, it is both silent and shouts out, and while it is silent it shouts out, and while it shouts out it is silent. And it is seen invisible, and while it is seen it is invisible. And the uncircumscribed is circumscribed. And while it is circumscribed it continues to be uncircumscribed. And when it wants, it is embodied into voices and letters; and while it is embodied it subsists as bodiless in itself...And when it is moved it remains-at-rest, and when it remains-at-rest it is moved; for it is a moving rest and a resting movement. And even though it unites with another, it does not relinquish its simplicity.<sup>46</sup>

The example the Teacher gives concerns the materialization of the immaterial intellect through the process of forming words, whether in speech or writing, and of enacting gestures. The communication of the incommunicable God finds a human analogy in the communication of the incommunicable intellect, and is explained as a poetics with its series of contrasting verbs; it is *how* intellects communicate via embodied signs. The dialogue between the Student and Teacher is itself an execution of this communication, of theology shouting out from the silent intellects of the interlocutors.

In writing the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena is enacting theophany. The text is entering into the innermost heart of the reader, but only through the medium of the text does the reader have access to the meaning being conveyed by the outward form. The text is itself a revelation-in-

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<sup>45</sup> In this respect, Mooney is completely justified when she connects Eriugena's understanding of 'divine appearance' in the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the understanding of revelation in contemporary theology. See chapter six of Mooney, *Theophany*.

<sup>46</sup> *PP* III, 22, 599-620 (633BCD).

concealment, much like the phenomenal world; the text, a likeness, as it were, of the interior intellect, enacts theophany, for theophany is defined as “as it were (*veluti*) a divine likeness of formless meaning.”<sup>47</sup> This clarifies further just what Eriugena meant in his commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy* when he correlated theology and theophany; theology is the textual enactment of theophany, it is the mirror process of theophany just as theophany is the very process that permits speech about God. Theophany is likewise the cosmological structure established by the event of the Incarnation; just as the silent and invisible intellect becomes audible words and visible gestures in human communication, similarly does the incorporeal Word become flesh in the world.

How should Eriugena’s explication of theophany in terms of love, compassion, and the Divine Word be juxtaposed with his explication of theophany in terms of textual enactment and theological communication? I argue that they are comprehended far more creatively together than in isolation; when brought together, theology as a textual enactment of desire emerges as the correlate to a theophanic cosmos. The discussion over participation that opened this section on theophany should be recalled here. Eriugena writes that “the distribution of the natural order receives the name of ‘participation,’ while the uniting of the distributions receives the name of ‘universal love,’ which gathers together all things into one by a sort of ineffable bond (*amicitia*).”<sup>48</sup> Here, participation, a word that is later defined in terms of theophany, distributes, or creates, while love gathers together. Reading together with Eriugena’s definition of theophany in terms of love in the previous section, a further gloss might be that participation/theophany is compassion (*miser cordia*), while universal love (variably *dilectio* and *caritas*) is the desire that draws things together, in which case the theological structure of the cosmos is moved by both compassion and love.

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<sup>47</sup> *CCH*, 77, 467-468 (*veluti divinam similitudinem informium intellectuum*).

<sup>48</sup> *PP* III, 19, 518-520 (631A).

### Theophany as Productive of Desire

If this is the case, what do we make of the simultaneous exaltation of the human person that occurs in theophany? Eriugena does indeed gesture toward the unity of intellects that is effected by the dialogue between the Teacher and Student, much in a similar way that the human nature is exalted to the Divine Word.<sup>49</sup> However, I argue that something more intimately connected to the theology and cosmology propounded by the *Periphyseon* occurs in the reading of the textual dialogue. As the reader comes to understand the nature of theophany, she engages the phenomenal world with a vision and understanding formed by the text. The process of transformation is partially effected by the text, but becomes enacted in her as she engages the world; the reader becomes exalted unto the Divine Word only after her mind is conformed to perceive theophanically by the text. Perceiving theophanies is a function of the Incarnation, and when in later chapters the poetic metaphors and imaginal practices of Ḥāfīz are read together with Eriugena, a theo-poetics of the flesh may be constructed that shapes enfleshed encounters through the life, passion, death, and resurrection of the Incarnate Word, Jesus. Indeed, for Eriugena the infinite bond (*amicitia*) that unites God with this phenomenal world is the Divine Word, and so our encounter with others in the flesh should be transfigured by the Incarnate Word.

Theophany forces the human subject, via the senses, never to delimit not only the God beyond being, but also the human other qua theophany (whose being is the divinity beyond being). At the end of the first exposition and dialogue on theophany, the Teacher ends with the following: “But let these [words concerning theophany] suffice, if they are beginning to shine [*lucescunt*] clearly for you.”<sup>50</sup> The Student’s response is certainly telling:

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<sup>49</sup> “For even we, as we discuss, are mutually made in each other. Accordingly, when I come to know what you know, I am made your intellect, *and in some sort of ineffable way I am made in you*. Likewise, when you purely understand what I plainly understand, you are made my intellect, and it is made one from two intellects, formed by that which the both of us purely and undoubtedly understand” (*PP IV*, 57, 1578-1584 [780BC]). When I understand one thing, and you understand the same thing, and I understand that you understand, and vice versa, then “I am created in you, and you are created in me, for we are not other than our understanding” (*PP IV*, 57, 1588-1589 [780C]).

<sup>50</sup> *PP I*, 16, 389-390 (451B).

Assuredly they are beginning to shine [*lucescunt*], inasmuch as such things are permitted to shine upon our minds. For concerning the unspeakable who in this life is able to speak so brilliantly such that the ardent desire of seekers yearn for nothing more? (*De re enim ineffabili quis in hac vita luculenter potest fari, ut nil amplius inquiringium appetat desiderium?*)<sup>51</sup>

The words about theophany are “beginning to shine,” thereby recalling Eriugena’s elucidation of the term in his commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy* investigated above: “theophany may be interpreted as though θεου φανια, i.e., the appearance of God or the illumination of God, [for] accordingly all that appears also shines, and it is derived from the verb φατω, i.e., to shine [*luceo*] or to appear [*appareo*].”<sup>52</sup> Theology about theophany shines upon the mind of the Student and the reader. Furthermore, while the straightforward translation of this passage yields nothing overtly erotic, one cannot help but connect Eriugena’s later exposition on Divine Nothingness to these final words exposing theophany. The discussion of theophany, a preamble to the larger discussion of the fourfold division of nature, demands that all explanations yield further desire for the one seeking the unfindable. Speaking (*fari*) the unspeakable (*ineffabili*) produces a desire (*desiderium*) in those seeking (*inquiringium*), a desire for “the more” (*amplius*) that is the superessential *nothingness* (*nil*) of God. The use of *fari* as opposed to the far more common *dicere* mimics the theophanic passage above wherein affirmation and negation were juxtaposed; to speak the unspeakable (*fari ineffabilis*) enacts theophany, as it were. Might it be that the dialogue is itself a prolongation and augmentation of desire? The more the Student and Teacher speak—create speech, *poïesis*—the more God is revealed while remaining hidden, and therefore the more the ardent desire yearns. This is precisely what theophany accomplishes, should we perceive theophanically.

[The] Divine Essence is incomprehensible in itself, however, when [It is] united with an intellectual creature, it becomes manifest in a marvelous way such that It, I mean the Divine Essence, become manifest only in it, viz., an intellectual creature. For the ineffable excellence of [the Divine Essence] surpasses every nature participating in it, such that in all things nothing else except Itself [i.e., the Divine essence] come to meet (*occurrat*) those understanding, while in Itself, as we have said, It is not

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<sup>51</sup> *PP I*, 16, 391-393 (451BC).

<sup>52</sup> *CCH*, 77, 479-482.

manifest in any way.<sup>53</sup>

For Eriugena, two subjects who mutually understand not only the same thing but also each other “are mutually made in each other.”<sup>54</sup> When the object of understanding is the divinity-beyond-being, incomprehensible, then understanding results in a perpetual *theosis*, or *theo(poïe)sis*, for God is made in the human, the human is made God, infinitely. The Divine Essence hastens to meet the one understanding, while remaining concealed in Its Superessential Nothingness. Once again, Eriugena relinquishes his dialectical reasoning and assumes non-dialectical language: ardent desire increases continually in the perpetually unresolved coincidence of opposites. An imaginative poetics can embrace this aporia, while dialectical *ratio* seeks to resolve it; *how* this happens is theophany, *what* is encountered remains a mystery. This sort of language is required in moments when Eriugena is speaking of the Ineffable becoming effable; strictly dialectical discourse cannot express the Inexpressible without creating a static synthesis. Rather, something *more than* dialectical discourse is required. This becomes clearer when theophany is put into relation with Eriugena’s other fundamental principle of his theology. To this end, I now turn to his use and explanation of *plus-quam* theological discourse.

## Theophany and *Plus-Quam* Theology

In this section, I aver that Eriugena’s conceptualization of the *plus quam* and *super* statements about God, what I term *plus-quam* theology, perform theophany in theological discourse. I also submit that *plus-quam* theology, which is a combination of apophatic and kataphatic discourse, is the discursive correlate to the cosmology of theophany. This sort of discourse, I argue later, is eminently suited for not only expressing the imaginary of the Incarnation, but for imagining forth the Incarnation in this world.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *PP* I, 14-15, 341-347 (450B).

<sup>54</sup> *PP* IV, 57, 1578-1579 (780B); see footnote 49 above.

<sup>55</sup> Eriugena likely learned of the theological import of *plus quam* or *super* statement of God from, among other places, the original Greek opening of Pseudo-Dionysius’s *The Mystical Theology*, replete with *hyper-ύπερ-*

### Defining Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology

Let us recall the frequently cited passage on theophany that occurs in Book III:

theophanies are nothing but “the appearance of the imperceptible (*non apparentis apparitio*), the manifestation of the hidden (*occulti manifestatio*), the affirmation of the negated (*negati affirmatio*), the comprehension of the incomprehensible, the speaking of the unspeakable (*ineffabilis fatus*),” etc.<sup>56</sup> In this passage, Eriugena defines theophany through the juxtaposition of affirmative and negative statements. I suggest that his own understanding of affirmative and negative theology as explicated in Book I will give further meaning to this passage. This intratextual, diachronic reading extracts this interpretation from the sequential logic of dialectical reading; it is a poetics, a poetic interpretation of theophany.

After finally entering into a discussion concerning the first of the fourfold division of nature (nature that creates but is not created) in Book I, the subject turns to the *habitu* and *relatione* of and between the three Divine Substances, viz., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Shortly after, the Student brings up not just “relation,” but all of the Ten Categories; he asks whether or not they are “able to be predicated truly and properly of the Supreme One Essence in Three Substances of the Divine Goodness and of the Three Substances of the same One Essence.”<sup>57</sup> This subsequently launches the dialogue into a lengthy excursus on the nature of kataphatic and apophatic theology, which continues for nearly seven pages in the Latin edition. It is one of many explorations on these topics throughout the *Periphyseon*, and is certainly fundamental to the way Eriugena understands theology.

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statements: “Trinity, more than being, more than divinity, more than goodness (Τριάς *ὑπερούσιε* και *ὑπέρθεε* και *ὑπεράγαθε*)...Lead us up to more than unknowing and more than light (*ὑπεράγνωστον* και *ὑπερραή*)...in the more than brilliant (*ὑπέρφωτον*) darkness...Amid the deepest shadow they pour more than light (*ὑπερλάμποντα*) on what is more than manifest (*ὑπερφανέστατον*)...they more than completely fill (*ὑπερπληρούντα*) our sightless minds with treasures [that are] more than beautiful (*ὑπερκάλων*)” (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, 141-142 [997AB]). See Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 135, for the English. I have translated the Greek above to underscore the correlation of Eriugena’s “more than” (*plus quam, super*) with the Greek *hyper-/ὑπερ-* statements.

<sup>56</sup> PP III, 22, 589-598 (633AB).

<sup>57</sup> PP I, 26, 670-673 (457D-458A).

Again, the profundity of the topic is pronounced in the Teacher’s response to the Student’s inquiry: “Concerning this affair (*negotio*) I know no one who is able briefly and clearly to discuss it,”<sup>58</sup> adding that one must either remain silent and merely profess the simplicity of the orthodox faith, or speak according to the two branches of theology, viz., apophatic and kataphatic. The five-volume *Periphyseon* is evidence of the choice taken.

The one, that is ἀποφατική, denies the divine essence or nature to be any of the things that are, i.e., what can be said or understood, and the other, i.e., καταφατική, declares [the divine essence or nature to be] all things that are, and for this reason is called affirmative—not that it asserts positively that [the divine essence or nature] is of those things that are, but rather because it proposes (*suadeat*) that all things that are from [the divine essence or nature] can be predicated about [the divine essence or nature].<sup>59</sup>

This is a simple enough exposition of apophatic and kataphatic theology; however, it belies the immensely deep theological and cosmological issues at play. When apophatic and kataphatic theology are used, they are not meaningless words that we affirm and negate of God, as if we are merely exercising our vocal cords or dexterity in writing when we affirm, God is good, and then deny, God is not good. This becomes clearer when *plus-quam* discourse is understood to unite opposites in God and to be intimately connected with theophany.

### **Bringing Together Opposites: *Plus-Quam* Theology**

The discussion continues, and we are led to declare that the Divine Names properly have contraries, and since nothing can be opposed to God, they cannot properly be predicated of the Divine Nature.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, Scripture assigns names to God, and we are called to speak of God. The Teacher’s solution to this predicament is *plus-quam* discourse.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *PP I*, 26, 674-675 (458A).

<sup>59</sup> *PP I*, 26, 682-688 (458AB).

<sup>60</sup> For this discussion, see *PP I*, 27-28, 713-748 (458D-459D)).

<sup>61</sup> Scholastic theology will later transform this into the *via eminentiae*. Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* I, Q12-13, which concerns the naming of God, establishes the Scholastic understanding of the *via negativa* (apophatic theology), the *via causalitatis* (kataphatic theology), and the *via eminentiae* (analogical predication): “Now from the divine effects we cannot know the divine nature in itself, so as to know what it is; but only by way of eminence, and by way of causality, and of negation, as stated [in *ST I*, Q12, A12].” (*ST I*, Q13, A10, ad. 2) It is unsurprising that *plus-quam* theology for Eriugena offers a bridge to the imagination and metaphor; for Aquinas, it became the *via eminentiae* and a bridge for the *analogia entis*, or the analogy of being. The two are

But since the divine significations (*divinae significationes*), which are predicated of God in Holy Scripture, having been carried across (*translatae*) from creation to the Creator...are innumerable and can neither be discovered nor collected with the paucity of our reasoning, only a few divine names nevertheless must be set forth for the sake of example. [...] Therefore God is called essence, but [God] is not properly essence, for *esse* is opposed to *non esse*. Therefore [God] is ὑπερούσιος, i.e., superessential (*superessentialis*). Likewise, [God] is called goodness, but [God] is not properly goodness, for wickedness is opposed to goodness. Therefore [God] is ὑπεράγαθος, i.e., more-than-Good (*plus quam bonus*), and ὑπεραγαθότης, i.e., more-than-Goodness.<sup>62</sup>

He continues with a rather shocking one, which the copyists of the later manuscript versions redacted, substituting “*plus quam deus*” with “*plus quam videns*,” blunting the acuity of Eriugena’s sharp apophatic theology:<sup>63</sup>

[God] is called God, but not properly is [God] called God, for vision is opposed to blindness, and seeing to not seeing. Therefore [God] is ὑπέρθεος, i.e., More-than-God, for θεός is interpreted [to mean] seeing. However if you have recourse to the other origin of this name, such that you understand θεός to derive not from the verb θεωρῶ (i.e., “I see”), but from the verb θέω (i.e., “I run”), the same reason is present to you. For running is opposed to not running, and slowness to speed. Therefore [God] will be ὑπέρθεος, i.e., More-than-Running, just as scripture has it: “His Word runs swiftly” (Ps. 147:15). For we understand this to be about God *the Word*, who ineffably runs through all things that are, so that they may be.<sup>64</sup>

The Teacher continues, performing the same operation on Truth, Eternity, Wisdom, Wise, Life, and Light. Intriguing is that the Teacher then convinces the Student that “enough has been said”<sup>65</sup> concerning this matter. The Student agrees, and wishes to return to the discussion on the ten categories; but the Teacher rebukes him for his lack of vigilance, apparently unaware of the

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subtly distinct, though genealogically related.

<sup>62</sup> *PP I*, 28, 742-753 (459CD-460A). These Greek *hyper-/ὑπερ-* statements are found in Pseudo-Dionysius’s *The Mystical Theology*. See footnote 55 above.

<sup>63</sup> There are two Irish orthographies in the manuscript tradition, one Eriugena’s and another likely of one of his Students. Given the manuscript tradition and the extant text written in Eriugena’s original hand, it appears evident that he intended *plus quam deus* and that *plus quam videns* falls under the edits of the Irish, but not Eriugena’s, hand. This particular intervention was likely not under the guidance of his master (Eriugena), but one in which he acted in his own interest as a reviser. Indeed, sometimes the second Irish hand is benevolent (likely when he was editing while Eriugena was still alive), and other times he is rather zealous, modifying Eriugena’s style and even thought, acting as a commentator and editor. (see *PP I*, XXIX-XVII) There are also later manuscripts not written in the Irish orthography, and these maintained *videns* as opposed to *deus*. This is a clear case of later authors, be they one of Eriugena’s Students (posthumously) or later copyists, softening Eriugena’s radical apophatic theology. For a history of the manuscript tradition available to the CCSL editors, see their introductory chapters of the first volume. For an even more detailed analysis of the original manuscripts written in Eriugena’s hand, see Édouard Jeuneau and Paul Edward Dutton. *The Autograph of Eriugena* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996).

<sup>64</sup> *PP I*, 28, 753-762 (459D-460A); see *PP I*, 186-189, for the collated versions and the various redactions.

<sup>65</sup> *PP I*, 29, 775-776 (460B).

implications of such a theology.<sup>66</sup> How can “enough [have] been said” when there is always always *more* to say *than* what has been said? There is a subtle affirmation and negation even at play in the dialogue. For when the Teacher explains that there are in fact names that apply to the Divine Nature, viz., the *plus-quam* names of super-eminence (more than, *super-*, ὑπέρ-), the Student is rather embarrassed: “For that which somehow can be spoken of is not ineffable.” (*Non enim ineffabile est quod quodam modo fari potest.*)<sup>67</sup> So *how* is it expressed, what are its poetics?

This is the fundamental problem of theological discourse. If the Divine Nature is wholly ineffable, then no linguistic construct can be said of it. But if *plus-quam* words apply *properly* to God, then this appears to contradict God’s ineffability, for something surely *is* being said of God, and *properly*. One finds the similar predicament in the previous treatment concerning theophany. Theophany was understood as a way to *resolve* the ostensibly dualistic chasm between God, Who alone *truly is*, and other-than-God, which is nothing. To recall: if God alone truly is, and what is not by privation or lack is wholly outside *Natura*, then where does that leave this phenomenal world, humanity included? If God is both nothing by being beyond all essence *and* the “to be” of all things, and if we, as human persons, are nothing until we are restored by, and formed according to, the Word, then what sort of liminal space does that leave this phenomenal world? Theophany addresses this predicament by bringing together opposites, for theophanies are nothing but “the appearance of the imperceptible (*non apparentis apparitio*), the manifestation of the hidden (*occulti manifestatio*), the affirmation of the negated (*negati affirmatio*), the comprehension of the incomprehensible, the speaking of the unspeakable (*ineffabilis fatus*),” etc. Speaking the unspeakable was, in effect, enacting theophany. This is precisely what *plus-quam* discourse is performing, viz., *fari ineffabile*. Discursively, God is ineffable and yet the Student

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<sup>66</sup> See *PP I*, 29, 777-784 (460BC).

<sup>67</sup> The whole statement from the Student: “I, too, am greatly astonished by what I was intending when I passed over this untried inquiry that must not be ignored. For in whatever way the Divine Substance is mentioned (*proferatur*) properly, whether by simple parts of words or by compound words, whether in Greek or in Latin, then it will seem not to be ineffable. For that which somehow can be spoken of is not ineffable” (*PP I*, 29-30, 800-806 [461A], [*emphasis mine*]).

declared that “*somehow* [God] can be spoken of” in *plus-quam* discourse. Ontologically, God is nothing, and yet *somehow* becomes something in theophanic being. Both theophany and *plus-quam* discourse bring together opposites, one ontologically, the other discursively. They both appear to *resolve* contradiction, but they do so dynamically, for no single statement, no single entity, completely synthesizes the contradiction; there is always *more* to be said or revealed *than* has been said or revealed in any given moment. Theophany and *plus-quam* discourse are *modes* of creation and discourse, respectively; they are a poetics and not necessarily a hermeneutics. This is why, despite Eriugena’s penchant for dialectical reasoning, the static synthesis of Idealism does not quite capture his project, and why poetic imagination provides a constructive contrast and corrective.

### ***Plus-Quam* Discourse: A Mirror of Theophany**

Once the Student declares that there can be no greater contrariety than affirmative and negative theology, the Teacher encourages him, redressing this statement:

Strain yourself (*intende*) therefore most diligently! For when you will have reached the contemplation of perfect reasoning, you will sufficiently consider clear that these two [branches of theology] which seem to be contrary to one another, are in no way opposed to each other when they are turned around (*versantur*) the Divine Nature [i.e., when they concern the Divine Nature], but rather through all things and in all things are in mutual harmony with each other...For example: *καταφατική* says “It is Truth”, and *ἀποφατική* contradicts with “It is not Truth.” This appears to be a certain form of contradiction, but when it is inspected more attentively, no conflict (*contraversia*) is discovered. For that which says “It is Truth” does not affirm the divine substance *properly* to be truth, but rather that it can be called by these types of names *through metaphor* [a “carrying across”] from creation to the Creator. *Accordingly, it clothes the divine essence, having been left naked of all proper signification, with these words.*<sup>68</sup>

Kataphatic theology gives form to—“clothes”—the inaccessible, naked meaning of the Divine Nature. This is possible because of theophany, which, let us recall, is the condescension of the Divine Word unto human nature, “so that in some *ineffable way* a sort of composite wisdom is made as a result of this descent to us and dwelling in us, and as a result of our understanding which is taken up to [the Word/Wisdom] through love by [the Word/Wisdom] and is formed in

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<sup>68</sup> *PP* I, 30-31, 823-835 (461BC).

[the Word/Wisdom].”<sup>69</sup> However, it must not stop there, lest God be delimited to that particular Divine Name; God is always *more than*.

It is *plus-quam* discourse that truly penetrates to the heart of theophany, which brings together opposites while giving force to apophatic discourse. That is, in theophany, the concealed Godhead remains so even though the Divine Nature is manifested infinitely and manifoldly in creation. Likewise, even with respect to this phenomenal world, the human mind is forced to reckon with the ultimate unknowability of all essences, no matter how much one perceives *around* the object of perception.<sup>70</sup> Before concluding this section, and heading on to the

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<sup>69</sup> *PP* I, 13, 311-314 (449BC); see footnote 35 for Eriugena’s sources for this passage.

<sup>70</sup> Eriugena propounds a radically apophatic epistemology in Book I, which is taken up often in the subsequent books; he does this when expounding upon the nature of place and time, with his aporetic theology of place contributing to his theo-poetics in how his arguments come together to make meaning beyond the logical, beyond the surface interpretation of individual passages. After lengthy arguments regarding place and time (*PP* I, 53-61 [479C-485D]), and how they, like other accidents, do not define the substance or οὐσία of an essence, but only their spatial-temporal delimitations, he concludes: “No one is able to define οὐσία in itself or say *what* it is (*quid sit*). However, from the things which inseparably adhere to it and without which it cannot be, I mean, from its place and time—for every οὐσία created out of nothing [has a] place and a time (is local and temporal), a place because it is somewhere in a way since it is not infinite, a time because it begins to be what it was not—only that it is (*quia sit*) can be defined. Therefore, οὐσία *in no way is defined what it is, but [only] that it is*. For from place, as we said, and from time and other accidents which are understood to be in itself or outside of it, only *that* it is but *not what* it is given. Not unsuitably is this said of all οὐσία generally, from the most general to the most specific, and the intermediate things. For even the Cause of all things, Which is God, is known only from the things which were created by Him, but by no evidence (*argumento*) from creation are we able to know *what* She is. Moreover, therefore, only this definition is predicated of God: that He is She Who is *more-than-being (plus quam esse)*” (*PP* I, 63, 1911-1926 [487AB]). Eriugena’s bewildering exposition of *place* in various parts of the *Periphyseon*, when brought together, engender further aporias. For instance, “The Divine Nature lacks every place (*loco*), even though within Itself are placed-together (*collocet*) all things that are from It, therefore [*the Divine Nature*] is said to be the Place of all things. Yet, It is unable to place Itself, since It is Infinite and Uncircumscribed, and It permits to no act of understanding, neither to Itself, to be placed (i.e., to be defined and circumscribed)” (*PP* II, 92, 2164-2168 [592CD]). Then, in Book III, he adds: “For who, consulting the truth, would believe or think that God had prepared for Himself places (*locos*) through which She might diffuse Himself? [God] is contained by no place (*loco*), while being the common place of all things; and therefore, the Place of places is captured by no place” (*PP* III, 37, 1022-1026 [643C]). God is the place of all things while being captured by no place. This aporia coheres with the nondual theology Eriugena is constructing, given that the division of nature is really the division of divine nature (as argued later). Finally, in his discussion on defining the human person, Eriugena has recourse to the ultimate unknowability of all essences, challenging those who pretend to offer “ousia (οὐσία)-based” or substantial definitions of things: “And I do not fear those who define the human person not according to what he is understood to be, but rather from those things that are understood around (*circa*) the human person, saying ‘The human person is a rational, mortal, sensible, animal, capable of discipline’; and what is even more astonishing, they call this definition ousia-based (*oysiadem*), even though it is not substantial, but rather around the substance from those things that are accidental to the substance through generation and assumed extrinsically. For and in fact, the notion of the human person in the Mind of God is none of those things. Accordingly, there it is simple, and cannot be called this or that, since it surpasses all definition and collection of its parts, since it can only be predicated of it only that it is, not however what it is. As a matter of fact, a true, ousia-based definition is only that which affirms only that it is, but does not say what it is” (*PP* IV, 40, 88-98 [768C]).

discussion of the ten categories, the Teacher asks whether these *plus-quam* names for God should be considered under the apophatic or kataphatic branches of theology. The Student replies, tentative:

I am not sufficiently bold to discern this by myself...*Therefore, although in pronunciation the word for negation does not occur, hiddenly this very meaning (intellectum), for the ones who contemplate well, does not lie hidden.* Hence, as I think, I am compelled to admit that these aforementioned significations which appear not to lack negation, insofar as it is given to be understood, are consistent more with the negative branch of theology than the affirmative.<sup>71</sup>

The Student nearly has it, it seems.<sup>72</sup> But the Teacher wants to keep the tension between apophatic and kataphatic discourse even tauter. He adds:

These names, which, with the addition of the particles “*super*” or “*plus quam*,” are declared about God, such as “It is superessential, More-than-Truth, More-than-Wisdom,” and other similar [statements], are in themselves *most fully comprehensive of the two aforementioned branches of theology*, such that they obtain in pronunciation the *form* of the affirmative, but truly *in meaning (intellectu)* the force (*virtutem*) of the negative.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, *plus-quam* discourse is a near mirror of theophany. The theological task of speaking the unspeakable God mirrors the cosmological process of theophany that manifests the Unmanifest God. The world is held in tension between being and non-being by theophany; likewise does theology enact that tension as it seeks to find God within the infinite veils of divine manifestations. The tension between being and non-being is in fact palpable in the example the Teacher gives as he concludes this topic of discussion. The Latin deserves to be quoted in full to demonstrate the incredibly powerful and complex passage that puts negations and permutations on the verb *esse* (to be) to great effect. Once again, after careful argumentation, a poetic moment emerges in the dialogue:

*essentia est affirmatio **essentia non est** abdicatio **superessentialis est** affirmatio simul et abdicatio in superficie etenim negatione caret intellectu negatione pollet nam quae dicit **superessentialis est non quid est** dicit sed quid **non est** dicit enim **essentiam non esse** sed plus quam **essentiam** quid autem illud **est** quod plus quam **essentia est non** exprimit dicit enim deus **non esse** aliquod eorum quae **sunt** sed*

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<sup>71</sup> *PP I*, 31, 854-866 (462AB).

<sup>72</sup> “I see that you have responded most carefully and alertly, and I approve greatly how you have examined most subtly that at the pronunciation of the affirmative part is the meaning of the negative” (*PP I*, 32, 867-869 [462BC]).

<sup>73</sup> *PP I*, 32, 870-876 (462C).

*plus quam ea quae sunt esse illud autem esse quid sit nullo modo diffinit*<sup>74</sup>

“It is essence” is an affirmation. “It is not an essence” is a negation. “It is superessential” is simultaneously an affirmation and a negation. Indeed, superficially it lacks the negation, but in meaning it exerts the force of negation. For that which says “It is superessential”, does not say what it is but what it is not. It says that it is not essence but More-than-Essence, but what that is which is More-than-Essence it does not express. It says that God is not one of the things that are, but that [God] is more than those things that are, moreover *it defines in no way what is that which is*.

This is an excellent example of the way the textual structure, the poetics, intends to keep the reader alert at all times, lest she grow weary of the search for God. Precisely *what* God is in this passage remains ever out of reach, leaving the reader enticed and desiring more from the text, from speech, from theology, and from the world qua theophany. A passage that relies fundamentally on Eriugena’s *logical* distinction between *that something is (quia est, knowable)* and *what something is (quid est, unknowable)* is expressed in a discourse that verges on the *aporetic*.<sup>75</sup> Poetics is the engine driving the human subject to the ineffable *what*; between a knowable *that* and an unknowable *what* we have a poetic *how* that brings the two together. *Plus-quam* discourse theologizes theophany so that God is never delimited; God is always *more than*. The *plus-quam* statement that, e.g., “God is *more-than-goodness*,” applied *properly* to the Divine Nature, “limits” God with a boundless delimitation of goodness.

### **The Theophanic World: Always More-Than**

The oft-cited definition of theology is *fidens quaerens intellectum*, and with Eriugena it may be retranslated as “faith seeking meaning” which is perpetually *more than* what is *understood* from one moment to the next. The poetics of this world—*how* this world is structured and exists—is the site in which the hermeneutical task of theology is performed; this implies the necessity of poetics in theological discourse. Combined with theophany, *plus-quam* discourse places this world in a very ambiguous spot. Neither does this phenomenal world fully exist as God does, nor is it entirely nonexistent by privation. Just as *plus-quam* statements bring together

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<sup>74</sup> *PP* I, 32, 876-884 (462CD). I have removed all punctuation to render the passage more faithful to the original ambiguity and aporia of the text.

<sup>75</sup> See footnote 70 regarding how Eriugena’s theology of place, itself bewildering, coheres with this poetics.

contraries—affirmation and negation—likewise does theophany bring together opposites in this phenomenal world—the uncreated Godhead and the created cosmos, of which the human person is the workshop, since “in him universal creation is contained.”<sup>76</sup> In my reading of Eriugena, I contend that the supreme, historical and constitutive enactment of this coincidence of opposites is the Incarnate Word, who is both human and divine. The Incarnation is the “originating tensive event” whose meaning grounds Eriugena’s interpretation of *natura* (the whole of reality).<sup>77</sup> This tensive event, argued in later chapters, is productively understood in terms of metaphorical truth and the imagination, for it brings together opposites, precludes a static synthesis, and produces a dynamic imaginary.

## Theophany and the Incarnation of the Word

This final section regarding theophany is the first of several steps in an argument that avers the Incarnate Word to be the bridge from this created, phenomenal world to the infinitely desirable divine nature *in the flesh*. Eriugena’s concept of theophany grounds the Incarnation, which is an historical act constitutive of theophanic perception effected in human persons whose visions have been restored. This section serves to connect theophany with the Incarnation.

### God is Beyond by Being Within: A Non-Dialectical, Dynamic Conclusion

The Incarnate Word is the consummate, unique, concrete and constitutive act of theophany in the world. As the supreme act of theophany, the generation of the Word is likewise a supreme act of *plus-quam* discourse; in the speaking of the Word—concretely—in Jesus Christ, the *more-than* of God perdures and draws the human person in. This becomes evident at the conclusion of a lengthy discussion in Book III wherein dualities are systematically removed in preparation for the restoration of proper, Christic or theophanic vision (declared in book III, and

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<sup>76</sup> “Not undeservedly is the human person called the workshop of all creatures, since in him universal creation is contained” (*PP* III, 163, 4785-4787 [733B]).

<sup>77</sup> See Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 408.

detailed in book IV). The Word is central because all things are in the Word and the Word is in all things. At this moment, the Teacher declares what was on the tip of his and the Student's tongues for several pages: "Hence, we must not understand God and creation to be two [things] separated from each other but rather *one and the same*."<sup>78</sup> Are Eriugena's later detractors vindicated? Is this not pantheism? Perhaps, were it not for Eriugena's next two steps. First, he recalls theophany, which prevents an utter pantheism from taking hold; all things in this world are *manifestations* of God and not God's invisible, unknowable essence. Second, the discourse shifts suddenly to the topic of the Divine Nothingness; after proclaiming God to be everything, he performs an apophatic turn by negating that statement with "God is nothing."

First, the way God and creation are the same is through theophany:

For even *creation* is subsisting *in God*, and *God* is created in a marvelous and ineffable way in *creation*, manifesting Himself, the Invisible making Herself visible, and the Incomprehensible comprehensible, and the Hidden disclosed, and the Unknown known, and the One lacking form and appearance (*species*) [making Himself] beautiful and attractive [*et forma ac specie carens formosum ac speciosum*].<sup>79</sup>

This echoes the celebrated theophanic passage cited earlier, and so it may be understood as a coincidence of opposites: the Unmanifest becomes manifest. Furthermore, the insertion here of the "beautiful and attractive" is certainly enlightening, for it demonstrates that the theophanic process is intended to bring human persons back unto God via the beautiful manifested in the phenomenal world. Mooney expertly expounds upon this "aesthetic mediation" of the appearance of God in all reality, in Jesus Christ, and in the human created in the image of God.<sup>80</sup> God, "invisible and incomprehensible in Itself, multiplies itself into infinite forms and appearances and becomes subject to the corporeal senses, [even though] God slips away from every keenness of

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<sup>78</sup> *PP* III, 85, 2443-2444 (678C).

<sup>79</sup> *PP* III, 85, 2444-2449 (678C). The section continues, "...the Superessential [making Herself] essential, and the Supernatural natural, and the Simple composite, and the Subject-free-of-accidents subject-with-accidents and accidents, and the Infinite finite, and the Uncircumscribed circumscribed, and the Supertemporal temporal, and the Superlocal local, and the Creator of all things created in all things, and the Maker of all things made in all things" (*PP* III, 85, 2449-2455 [678CD]).

<sup>80</sup> See Mooney, *Theophany*, 201ff, 205ff, and 208ff.

mind when sought.”<sup>81</sup> God “slips away” because the divine nature is both “beyond all things and made in all things.”<sup>82</sup> or, *God is beyond by being within*. Once again, poetic discourse, insofar as it is non-dialectical, is revealed nestled within Eriugena’s dialectical reasoning. The passage, understood through poetics, suggests that *how (quomodo)* all this occurs is at stake, not *what* it reveals (which remains incomprehensible). And the *way (modo)* God is created in creation, God’s *poiësis*, or theo-poetics, is “ineffable.”

### **The Incarnational and the Theophanic**

Recall that the Teacher distinguishes the cosmological process of theophany from the historical act of the Incarnation: “Here I mean by ‘condescension’ not that which has even now [*iam*] occurred [*facta est*] through the Incarnation, but that which occurs [*fit*] through *theosis* (i.e., through deification) of the creature.”<sup>83</sup> Following the blocked passage cited above, Eriugena reaffirms this distinction:

And here I am not speaking of the Incarnation and becoming-human of the Word, but of the Supreme Goodness, which is a Unity in Trinity, of the ineffable condescension in all things that are so that they may be, nay, more correctly, so that It [the Supreme Goodness] may be in all things from the highest to the lowest, always eternal, always made, from Itself and in Itself eternal, from Itself and in Itself made.<sup>84</sup>

In these passages, the reader is being guided from God, to the Divine Goodness, and now to the Son. For while the theophanic process is not equivalent to the Incarnation, it is intimately connected therewith; theophany is the cosmological correlate to the historical Incarnation of the Word. The Student adds, commenting on Genesis 1:1 (“In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth”):

God the Father established the universe of all visible and invisible creatures in God the Son. And what would the Father establish in His Beginning, in His Word, in His Only-Begotten Son that would not be the Son Himself? Otherwise [God] would be establishing not in Him but outside of Him that which He

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<sup>81</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2480-2482 (679B).

<sup>82</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2477 (679B).

<sup>83</sup> *PP* I, 13, 301-303 (449B).

<sup>84</sup> *PP* III, 85, 2455-2460 (678D).

received from elsewhere or made from nothing.<sup>85</sup>

The world is in the Son, in the Word, because otherwise a duality would emerge. What is even more revealing is that this theophanic process and the establishment of all things within the Son, or, rather, of all things *as* the Son, is presupposed in the Incarnation. The Student continues, “How would the Word suffer to be made in Himself what was not [already] consubstantial with Him?”<sup>86</sup> This is indeed a powerful Christological statement that links the Incarnation with creation of the world in some mysterious way. Eriugena does not want to equate the *historicity* of the Incarnation with the *ahistoricity* of theophany, but he cannot avoid understanding theophany without the Incarnation. The *theopoïesis* (*theosis*, deification) the Incarnation grants to humankind is *somehow* logically prior to the *poïesis* (creation) of the world. The Student’s rhetorical question could be rephrased: how could the “the Word be made flesh” unless there was not already a consubstantial existence of the Word and this enfleshed world? Just as the text of the *Periphyseon* itself, the dialogue and its composition—theology—presupposes the possibility of speaking the unspeakable, that is, presupposes theophany, likewise does the Incarnation of the Word presuppose theophany. This is why Eriugena defines theophany as “the condescension of the Divine Word, i.e., of the Only-Begotten Son”, and this is an “ineffable condescension of compassion” which assumes “our understanding...through love” by the Word and in the Word.<sup>87</sup> Precisely *because* of the Incarnation, *the Theophany*, the world *must be theophanic*. Eriugena struggles logically to separate theophany from the Incarnation, and in doing so his own logic self-subverts.

It is easy to read Eriugena here as flattening the Incarnation and eliding it with cosmology, as, for example, Hans Urs von Balthasar has suggested.<sup>88</sup> This is certainly a plausible

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<sup>85</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2493-2497 (679C).

<sup>86</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2497-2498 (679CD), *emphasis mine*.

<sup>87</sup> See *PP* I, 13, 296-301 (449AB).

<sup>88</sup> “The law of nature is therefore formulated [by Eriugena] in a way already implicitly Christian and the law of Christ appears so to speak only as its final consequence” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, A*

interpretation, and one that I seek to challenge in my reading of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, intra- and inter-textually, as well as interreligiously through an Islamic theo-poetics. Furthermore, Mooney challenges Otten's contention that the introduction of the human person (theological anthropology and the exegesis of original sin) in Book IV of the *Periphyseon* signifies a breach in the theophanic cosmos; rather, Mooney suggests that "the revealing of God in the human is embraced within the pattern of theophanic encounter."<sup>89</sup> But I would like to go further than Mooney's response. I submit—especially through this interreligious theo-poetic reading—that the Incarnation brings together both disruption and continuity: the Incarnation, through an Incarnational imaginary, demands continuous, active disruption of patterns of sin in the world, wherein we imagine forth *more than* the restrictions of normative ideologies and systems of oppression. The poetics of his texts and of this interreligious reading suggests that the Incarnation is an historically *disruptive* act that nonetheless a priori and a fortiori constitutes our relationship with others and with God *in the flesh*. We live through a theo-poetics of the flesh.

I began my critical reading of Eriugena on theophany with his *Homily on the Gospel of John*, the gospel in which "the Word was made flesh," and I now bring it to close in showing that the Incarnation of the Word of God, the Son, while not equivalent to theophany, presupposes it. The purpose of the Incarnation—the originating tensive event of the Christian imagination—is to lead human creatures back to theophanic perception, to enable us to "perceive...look closely at...gaze at...see-through...look into...see,"<sup>90</sup> as Eriugena encourages his listeners in the homily, that all things live and are alive in the Word, *in whom we also are moved and exist* (Acts 17:28). In situating theophanic perception within the Incarnate Word, I suggest that what Mooney elaborates as the passive "theophanic encounter with God" or mere "aesthetic mediation"<sup>91</sup> may

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*Theological Aesthetics IV: The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989], 350).

<sup>89</sup> Mooney, *Theophany*, 210. See Chapter 4 of Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 119ff.

<sup>90</sup> *HJ*, 19-20, 16-33 (289AB).

<sup>91</sup> See in particular Mooney's final chapter of her *Theophany*, 186ff.

be reread as an active theo-poetic imagination: passive perception is transformed into an active Incarnational imaginary. The being of all things is indeed the divinity beyond being, but only in the Incarnate Word through whom we are carried beyond in the flesh, theo-poetically, in imagining forth the Incarnation.

### **From the Dialectical to the Poetic and Imaginal**

But the restoration of Christic, theophanic perception in terms of metaphor and the active imagination, as well as the *how*, the poetics of this world, is the subject of later chapters. Having carefully expounded upon Eriugena's conceptualization of theophany, it is opportune to move to the love lyrics of Ḥāfīz and the interpretation of his later commentator. How does an Islamic theo-poetics expand upon Eriugena's theophany? While both traditions presuppose a theophanic cosmos, the methods and faculties involved are quite distinct. Eriugena relies (perhaps to his own detriment) on dialectical reasoning and the rational faculty, while Ḥāfīz, his commentator, and the larger tradition of which they are a part turn to metaphor, imagination, and the heart (which arguably functions as the organ of the imagination). Eriugena, in his *Homily on the Gospel of John*, is able to proclaim: "The (beautiful-)appearances (*species*) of visible things attract the ratiocination of souls toward (re)cognition of invisible things."<sup>92</sup> Likewise, in explaining theophany, we should recall that "and the One lacking form and appearance (*species*) [makes Himself] beautiful and attractive [*et forma ac specie carens formosum ac speciosum*]."<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Ḥāfīz's 17th-century commentator declares: "The concealed and hidden God self-discloses [lit., "does theophany"] [in the] the lovely and beautiful which appear in the veiling garments of the manifested metaphorical beloved [in this world] because it is through the forms of beauty, in reality, that the non-delimited God attracts the hearts of lovers [to Himself]."<sup>94</sup> For Eriugena, God attracts through "ratiocination," for Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, it is through the "hearts of

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<sup>92</sup> *HJ*, 34-35, 11-12 (294A).

<sup>93</sup> *PP* III, 85, 2448-2449 (678C).

<sup>94</sup> *SHI*, #55, 428.

lovers.” In the latter tradition, the whole world is nothing but (a very real) “imagination” (*khayāl*),<sup>95</sup> and metaphor therefore becomes the textual parallel to a theophanic cosmos. In Eriugena’s magnum opus, the *Periphyseon*, he describes in precise, dialectical language, and through apophatic, kataphatic, and *plus-quam* discourse, a world that both is and is not God. If *plus-quam* discourse mirrors theophany for Eriugena, poetic discourse mirrors theophany for Ḥāfīz. And yet, as demonstrated, poetic dimensions are intermittently revealed in the Irishman’s texts. These poetic dimensions necessarily emerge because Eriugena is describing an imaginal, metaphorical—but very real—theophanic world.

David Tracy, in *The Analogical Imagination*, avers that “the Christian knows that ‘only God can speak nondialectically,’” which is why dialectical theologians (such as Eriugena, I add) in their theological language are “alive in its concepts with the tensive power of radical negations.”<sup>96</sup> This may indeed be true, but the coincidence of opposites that form the essence of both the Incarnation and, cosmologically understood, the world, suggests that we live, and are moved, and exist in the nondialectical speech of God—in God’s poetics. One way to understand the imagination and poetic metaphor is that it is eminently nondialectical. The Incarnate Word is conducive toward the employment of the imagination, which leads to an imaginary perception of the world, to imaginary practices of personal and social transformation, and to a “poetics of the impossible” which poses “the possibility of something life-transforming” that moves beyond the logic of the impossible.<sup>97</sup> Grounded in the passion of the Incarnation, learning from the passionate love lyrics of Ḥāfīz, a poetics of the impossible fuels “a desire beyond reason and beyond what is reasonably possible, a desire to know what we cannot know, or to love what we dare not love, like a beggar in love with a princess, whose desire is not extinguished by the

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<sup>95</sup> This is the subject of chapter three. Ibn ‘Arabī and his later commentators inaugurate such a position, especially in his chapter of Joseph in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, or *Bezels of Wisdom*, and later commentaries on that chapter from Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. circa 1350) to Nur al-Dīn Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 1492).

<sup>96</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 415.

<sup>97</sup> Caputo, *Weakness of God*, 104.

impossible but fired by it.”<sup>98</sup> *What* God is remains the impossible desire that fires up our search for *how* God is, and for *how* we should be: a theo-poetics of the flesh.

**Mayra Rivera, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Francis X. Clooney: Shaping Theo-Poetics**

This turn to an Islamic theo-poetics responds to Mayra Rivera’s poetics of the flesh and Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theo-poetics. Rivera suggests that “Flesh become words. Imaginative works can conjure glorified bodies to move us beyond the limits of our earthly flesh without ever separating themselves from it. Through painting or literature, ontology or theology, human creativity may strive to transform the world.”<sup>99</sup> I do not intend to transcend either the flesh or Eriugena in turning to Ḥāfiẓ’s poetry; rather, I contend that Ḥāfiẓ’s poetry will deepen our understanding of Eriugena’s theophany by leading us further *within* both his text and the flesh—and thus ultimately the Incarnation. Balthasar’s theo-poetics suggests that theology demands poetry precisely because of the Incarnation.<sup>100</sup> The Islamic theo-poetics of Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī are engaged in this interreligious exercise because no other Christian figure employed both the term “theophany” and the process it represents to an extent as great as Eriugena did; he takes it to its theological limits before it is dismantled and replaced by the participation metaphysics of Aquinas after the Christian, Latin reception of the Islamic, Arabic Aristotelian corpus.

Carpenter finds in Balthasar’s use of poets a theo-poetics that demands a theology attentive to poetry but not delimited thereto. The desires of poets and theologians “meet at the crossways of authentic transcendence, before the God who redeems all that is and all that we desire.”<sup>101</sup> The *crossway* is the Incarnate Word, the bridge, the enfleshed Word that *carries* us *beyond* (as metaphor does) by drawing us *within* fleshy experience of the divine. The love lyrics

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>99</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 85.

<sup>100</sup> See Anne M. Carpenter, *Theo-poetics: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and The Risk of Art and Being* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 185.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 185-186.

of Ḥāfīz illuminate this theo-poetic: that the Incarnate Word is *beyond* the flesh by being *within* the flesh explodes the static synthesis of dialectical reasoning and demands imaginary, poetic discourse; the coincidence of *beyond* and *within* ruptures the law of noncontradiction, but is comprehensible by the law of metaphor. *How* this is the case demands a poetics.

Finally, I continue the interreligious theo-poetics of Francis X. Clooney in *His Hiding Place is Darkness*, wherein he engages von Balthasar, whose “expansive theological vision shows why and how a theologian can appreciate the beautiful and the good—the poetic and dramatic—that come into play before the work of theory, system, and doctrine..can bear fruit.”<sup>102</sup> Clooney’s theo-poetics (learning from Balthasar) suggests that “works of the imagination” infuse “divine glory into human words,” and that these imaginative practices are “not in competition with theology more strictly understood, but rather a necessary practice of attention that precedes effort to apprehend and state the truth of Christian revelation and tradition.”<sup>103</sup> His theo-poetics is a “dynamic [that] does not undercut the possibility of theological assertion or a community’s desire for doctrinal certainty, but...does cast a harsher light on theologies that have become stagnant.”<sup>104</sup> In constructing a Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics, I, too, attend to the dynamic imaginary that shapes the created world, and that forces us to dwell on the “in-between space of our in-between lives,”<sup>105</sup> never settling for a static conclusion (*what* God is, *what* the Truth is), but being radically open to the impossible *more-than* that compels *action* in this world, that renders theology a theo-poetics as much as a theo-hermeneutics. It is attentive to *how* God is *pro nobis*, *how* the Truth is manifested, and thus *how* we imagine forth the Word in embodied communities.

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<sup>102</sup> Clooney, *His Hiding Place is Darkness*, 16.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 25.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, 25.

### **Towards the Theo-Poetic: Demanding *More Than the Periphyseon* Offers**

This chapter uncovered various poetic dimensions in Eriugena's corpus, i.e., his poetics, but his overt dialectical reasoning demands *more than* it alone can offer; hence I turn to the eminently poetic and imaginative discourse of the Islamic poetic tradition in which Ḥāfiẓ and his commentator partake. The text of the *Periphyseon* instills a desire for *more than* the dialogue alone unveils, and the love lyrics of Ḥāfiẓ uncover the poetics of passion moving through Eriugena's otherwise fastidious performance of dialectical discourse. The theo-poetic is embedded within the *Periphyseon*, particularly in the manner whereby *plus-quam* discourse is a mirror of theophany; a theo-poetics of the flesh is the subtext of the *Periphyseon*, especially in the manner whereby the Incarnation *concretely constitutes* universal theophany.<sup>106</sup> The next chapter leaps into the poetic imagination of Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī concerning theophany, and thereby uncovers comparative insights otherwise occluded by Eriugena's *ratio*. In learning from the *disruptive* nature of theophany in an Islamic theo-poetics, the *disruptive* nature of the Incarnation in Eriugena may be uncovered. This disruption becomes our praxis of the Incarnation—our *theo(poie)sis*.

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<sup>106</sup> In a way, I am transposing Jacques Dupuis's groundbreaking (and controversial—see Jacques Dupuis, William R. Burrows, and the Catholic Church's Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei, *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition* [Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2012]) theology of religions wherein “the historical happening of Jesus Christ...the personal insertion of the Word of God into the history of humanity through the mystery of the Incarnation has, in the development of the history of salvation, a totally unheard-of meaning, as ‘constitutive’ of salvation.” (Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002], 157) The constitutive element of the Incarnation is “the essential meaning of the mystery of the ‘hypostatic union,’ that is, of the union of the humanity of Jesus in the divine person of the Word.” The humanity of Jesus Christ “began to exist in time with the mystery of the Incarnation, being submitted to the conditions of time and space; but it perdures beyond death, in the glorified and risen state, having become henceforth ‘metahistorical’ or ‘transhistorical,’ that is, having reached beyond the conditioning of time and space” (ibid., 158). So while the Incarnation is a disruption, something totally new in the history of salvation, its metahistoric character constitutes our relation to each other and to God eternally, not just *via-à-vis* salvation (as for Dupuis), but for theological anthropology and cosmology (as for a theo-poetics of the flesh). It is a disruption-in-continuity, a disruption that constitutes our very *theo-poetics*, our *theosis*. This will become apparent in chapters five and six of this dissertation.

## Chapter 2

# Hāfiz and Theophany Illuminating Eriugena: Towards a Theo-Poetics of the Flesh

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### Theophany and the Human Person

#### *Ghazal 148*<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Before time, a ray of your loveliness was breathed through theophany.  
Passionate love emerged, and set fire to the whole world.
- 2 Your Face was unveiled, the angel saw it, [but] he didn't have passionate love.  
Because of this jealousy, he became fire itself, and struck Adam.
- 3 The intellect wanted to light a lamp with this flame,  
[but] the flash of jealousy glittered and stirred up the world.
- 4 The pretender wanted to enter into the place wherein the secret is witnessed,  
[but] the hand of the Unseen came and struck the chest of the one not privy thereto.
- 5 The others cast lots of fate wholly for worldly pleasure,  
[but] our heart was afflicted, and so cast [them] for sorrow.
- 6 The beloved asked to manifest his own form.  
So she pitched his tent in the arena of Adam's water and clay.
- 7 The Celestial Soul had a desire for the well of your dimple,  
[so] it lowered its hand to the ring of this ever so curly tress.
- 8 Hāfiz wrote the *Story of the Joy of Loving You*<sup>2</sup> on that day  
when the pen cut off all causes of a joyful heart.

I open this discussion about theophany with this love lyric for several reasons. It is one of the few *ghazals* in which theophany, *tajallī* in Arabic, otherwise translated as divine self-disclosure or self-manifestation, functions as the primary topic; not only is the term encountered

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<sup>1</sup> *DKh* #148, 312; *SH II*, #152, 1,046; *DAv* #148, 201; *DFo* #148, 452. This lyric is also translated by Gray in Hāfiz, *The Green Sea of Heaven*, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Given the the way the genitive functions in Persian, similar to Latinate languages, the translation could read: "the *Story of the Joy of Your Love*."

in the first line of the *maṭla*‘, the opening couplet (*bayt*), thereby placing the theme at the forefront, but the concept is recalled at key moments with the use of various Arabic and Persian synonyms.<sup>3</sup> Both the lyric and the commentary recall Adam, both qua mythical first human and qua microcosmic humanity inclusive of all human persons and the world; the *ghazal* therefore serves as a bridge from theophany and the Incarnation in Eriugena to theophany and the human person in Ḥāfīz. Universal theophany is historically concrete in the Incarnation for Eriugena, and for Ḥāfīz universal theophany is particularized for each individual human person. The love lyric moves from cosmology to anthropology and ends with the standard *takhalluṣ*, the introduction of the poet’s pen name in the final couplet; here, the *takhalluṣ* functions both to follow the established poetic convention of the *ghazal* and to suggest that this anthropocosmic drama is occurring in *this* particular person, viz., Ḥāfīz of Shīrāz. James Morris has made a case for interpreting his pen-name as more than mere literary convention and rather as a multivalent term meant to “*awaken the actual realization*” of “the infinite play of unique, ever-renewed theophanies.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, moving from the universal to the particular, theophany is of import for particular persons, in specific contexts, in *this* phenomenal world. Inasmuch as the lyric guides the audience from cosmology to anthropology, it likewise moves from ontology to ethics. This lyric illustrates the interactive nature of Ḥāfīz’s poetry in which the interpreter is challenged to disrupt the inherent “human tendency—epitomized...by the hypocritical pretensions of the judgmental ‘critic’ and the ‘prosecutor/pretender’ (the *muḥtasib* and *mudda ī*)...—to replace each soul’s unique experience and inalienable individual responsibility [with] careful outward conformity to a safely limited set of shared social conventions.”<sup>5</sup> Like Rivera’s poetics, this lyric

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<sup>3</sup> Leili Anvar makes this lyric the subject of her article for similar reasons. For her reading of this lyric through the lens of Aḥmad Ghazālī, see “The Radiance of Epiphany: The Vision of Beauty and Love in Ḥāfīz’s Poem of Pre-Eternity,” in Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 123-139.

<sup>4</sup> James W. Morris, “Transfiguring Love: Perspective Shifts and the Contextualization of Experience in the Ghazals of Ḥāfīz,” in Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 228.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 230.

keeps knowing and doing mutually co-constituting, for “the poet’s concluding pen-name is at once divine Name, human description and obligation, and *singular* active imperative.”<sup>6</sup> A choice must be made at the end: will you enter into the paradox of joyful sorrow like Ḥāfīz?

### **The *Ghazal*’s Form: Unexpected Disruption**

Before entering into the content of “one of the great spiritual poems of Ḥāfīz,” whose “density of expression is at the apex of the history of spirituality in Iran,”<sup>7</sup> a brief discussion of its meter, the form, reveals an insight into the meaning of this lovely *ghazal*. For while Gray considers it “one of the most cryptic of Ḥāfīz’s *ghazals*,”<sup>8</sup> the meter is a modification of one of the simplest in the tradition.

To begin, the *radīf*, the repeated word at the end of both hemistichs of the first couplet and at the end of the second hemistich of each subsequent one, is *zad*, the preterit of the verb *zadan*, to strike. Its meaning is modified depending on the word(s) with which it is composed and which precede it (e.g., to breath, to set fire, to stir up, to cast, to pitch a tent, to lower, to cross out or cut off). The *qāfiyyah*, the rhyme that precedes the *radīf*, is the ending *-am*. The *ramal sālim makhbūn maḥdhūf* meter surrounds two repeated sets of four syllables with unique openings and closings. The first set of four syllables is the *ramal* foot (long-short-long-long), the two middle sets are the simplified *ramal* foot (short-short-long-long), and the final set is the unique closing of either a simplified *ramal* foot *cut off* by one syllable (whence *maḥdhūf*, “shortened, clipped, cut off”), short-short-long, or two independent long syllables.<sup>9</sup>

The unique opening instantiates at every couplet the singular, creative (but disruptive) act of breathing forth theophany in pre-eternity (*dar azal*), while the repeated middle sets perform the (apparently) steady, forward movement of time (short-short-long-long | short-short-long-long).

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 234.

<sup>7</sup> *DFo*, 453.

<sup>8</sup> Ḥāfīz, *The Green Sea of Heaven*, 157.

<sup>9</sup> The meter reads:  $\bar{\text{u}}\text{---}\text{---}|\text{u}\text{---}\text{---}|\text{u}\text{---}\text{---}|\text{u}\text{---}\text{---}|\text{u}\text{---}\text{---}/\text{---}$



world.”<sup>10</sup> Other bodies—the flesh, the enfleshed Word—disrupt our otherwise sanguine life, compel us to make a choice. A dynamic imaginary supplants the static synthesis. Theophany, despite being universal and continuous, is just as disruptive.

### **Theophany of Loveliness, Passionate Love, and Mercy**

The first couplet elegantly condenses the Akbarian tradition and the School of Love by equating the *tajallī* or self-disclosure of beauty, translated “loveliness” here (for *ḥusn*), with the emergence or manifestation (*paydā*, one of the Persian synonyms for *tajallī*) of passionate love.<sup>11</sup> The singular import of the *tajallī*, the term used in the first hemistich, to the School of Ibn ‘Arabī is made evident in the commentary. By linking the *tajallī* of loveliness with the emergence of *‘ishq*, or passionate love, the couplet asserts what Aḥmad Ghazālī claimed over two centuries earlier: passionate love is not just a means for attaining unto the Divine Essence (*dhāt*), but rather *is the Divine Essence itself*. Aḥmad Ghazālī’s *Savāniḥ*, written in 1114 (well before Ibn ‘Arabī), “presents all of reality as an unfolding of (*‘ishq*) through the complex interrelations of loveliness (*‘āshiqī*) and belovedness (*ma ‘shūqī*), both of which are said to be derived from (*‘ishq*) and ultimately return to this eternal point of origin.”<sup>12</sup> The commentary on the third couplet cites a verse from Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt* and a commentary thereon by Jāmī from his *Ashi ‘‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, the first of whom has been credited with explicitly bringing the School of Ibn ‘Arabī together with the School of Love, and the second with systematizing this coalescence.<sup>13</sup> Lāhūrī’s

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<sup>10</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> The trilateral root *ḥ-s-n* embraces both goodness and beauty, and in the performative verbal form (*iḥsān*) means “doing-the-good-and-the-beautiful.” See footnote 61 in the section “Metaphor, Imagination, the Imaginal World, and Poetry in the Islamic Tradition” of Chapter Three for the import of this word in the Islamic tradition and with regard to the imagination and metaphor. The Persian term *paydā* also and more originally has the meaning of “found,” and thus is correlated to the Arabic *mawjūd*, from *wujūd*, or being. What has being is thus “found” in the world by being a divine self-manifestation.

<sup>12</sup> Lumbard, “From Ḥubb to ‘Ishq,” 348. The Persian word *‘ishq*, ultimately one of the many Arabic loanwords within the Persian language, encompasses a far broader valence than it does in the original Arabic. It embraces the meaning of *rahma* (mercy), *ḥubb* (love), *wadūd* (affectionate love), *ḥayra* (bewildering love), *hawa* (desire), etc. But, this will become apparent as we attend to Lāhūrī’s commentary. I translate the term as “passionate love” throughout.

<sup>13</sup> For a concise introduction to this coalescence, see chapters one and two of Chittick’s and Lamborn’s translation of Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ‘Irāqī’s *Risālah- ‘i Lama ‘āt: ‘Irāqī, Divine Flashes*, 3-66. For a biographical

turn to these texts suggests that, for him at least in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this love lyric was best comprehended and experienced in the intellectual and spiritual context of those authors.

The commentary considers “loveliness” to refer to “the [divine] attributes and the totality of the [divine] names...[which is] the totality of unveiling, that is, the manifestation of the degrees of being and the created loci of theophanies in accordance with ‘these affairs and considerations are distinguished judgements and variegated effects in spirit [*rūḥan<sup>an</sup>*], in images [*mithā<sup>an</sup>*], and in sense perception [*ḥiss<sup>an</sup>*].”<sup>14</sup> In other words, the divine attributes are disclosed at all levels of reality, including this phenomenal world. The loveliness (*ḥusn*) that is breathed through theophany is “the All-Merciful theophany” (*tajallī-i raḥmānī*)<sup>15</sup> of the unbounded collection of divine names and attributes, “which is itself the overflowing of existence upon all of the existent entities according to what their perfections demand, and the entirety of the existent entities in the Unseen and Seen world are attributed noetic existence (*wujūd-i ‘ilmī*) through this theophany.”<sup>16</sup> Lāhūrī here has recourse to the distinction between the two theophanies explicated by Ibn ‘Arabī, who based them off the *bismillah* that opens every *sūra* of the Qur’ān save one: “In the name of God the All-Merciful [*al-raḥmān*], the Compassionate [*al-raḥīm*].” Given that this couplet occurs “before time,” this theophany refers to the coming-into-existence of all reality, i.e., the granting of *wujūd* (existence, being) to all things.<sup>17</sup> Despite the atemporal nature of this

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and intellectual introduction to Jāmī, see Hamid Algar, *Jami* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,047, citing an unreferenced Arabic source.

<sup>15</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,047.

<sup>16</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1047.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Raḥmān* corresponds to the *raḥmat al-‘imtinān* (gratuitous mercy), also termed *al-fayḍ al-aqdas* (Most Holy Emanation) or *al-tajallī al-raḥmānī* (All-Merciful Theophany), and *al-Raḥīm* to *raḥmat al-wujūb* (obligatory mercy), also termed *al-fayḍ al-muqaddas* (Holy Emanation) or *al-tajallī al-raḥīmī* (Compassionate Theophany); the first is ontological, in that it grants existence (*wujūd*) to all things without restriction, while the second is granted according to the acts and disposition of the recipient (it is, as it were, “earned”). For a concise introduction to the two types of mercy, see Chapter 9 (Ontological Mercy) in Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 116-140. The two key chapters in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* are that of Solomon and of Zachariah. For Arabic, see Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 237ff (Solomon) and 296ff (Zachariah); for English, see Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 187ff (Solomon) and 222ff (Zachariah) or Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam: An Annotated Translation*, 114ff (Solomon) and 138ff (Zachariah). Eriugena argues something similar with his interpretation of “Every best grant (*datum*) and every perfect gift (*donum*) is descending up above from the Father of lights.”

theophany, Lāhūrī submits that the manifestation of loveliness, the coming-into-existence of all things in noetic existence, “and the perceptual appearance of the immutable entities,” as well as the emergence of passionate love and the enflaming of the whole world, is “singular” (*wāhid-ast*) or alternatively translated as “unique.”<sup>18</sup> While his reading may suggest a monistic becoming in which all things are subsumed under the annihilating presence of God, the fact that the perceptual manifestation of this phenomenal world of multiplicity persists in this unity points to a tensive nondualism.

This tensive nondualism is indicative of the dynamic imaginary I am constructing through this interreligious reading. Of significance is that the “ray of loveliness” refers to the divine names and attributes of the Undelimited Beauty (*jamīl ‘alā al-iṭlāq*), and that this Beauty is God for Lāhūrī, given the standard epithet “exalted be His affair” that follows. As soon as this breathing of theophany takes place, “passionate love emerged, [because] it has an ancient covenant with loveliness, [for passionate love has said to loveliness], ‘wheresoever you will be, I

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(James 1:17) The *datum* of the Divine Goodness, God, is the coming into existence or substantiation of the universe that all things should be *good*, while the *donum* of the Divine Goodness grants only to the elect that they should be *deified*; the former gives being (*esse*) and the latter well-being (*bona esse*). See *PP* II, 53ff (565C); *PP* III, 20, 542-551 (631D-632A); and especially *PP* V, 61, 1965-2069 (903A-905B), wherein: “Nature is given (*datum*), while grace is granted (*donum*). Nature leads [things] from non-existence to existence, while *donum* carries [some] of the existents beyond all existents unto God Himself. For right reason does not permit that we count those who participate in the Divine Fellowship (*communione*) beyond all things, among all things. For the Truth Itself says of Itself: ‘Where I will be, there will My servant be’ (John 12:26). We unhesitatingly believe the Truth to be beyond all things. Therefore, His servants are beyond all things” (*PP* V, 64, 2062-2069 (905AB)). To this, Eriugena added the following marginalia, which relates the *datum* and *donum* to theophanies, much like the two types of mercy in Ibn ‘Arabī are two types of theophanies (*tajalliyāt*): “However, we say this not [to imply] that there is any creature besides the humanity of the Word who is able to ascend beyond all theophanies, and attain Him ‘Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in inaccessible light’ (1 Timothy 6:16), between Whom is interposed no theophany, but rather [to suggest] that they [His servants] are understood to be exalted beyond every creature, in a contemplation nearest to God, and they are believed to be just as (*velut*) theophanies of theophanies. For God is entirely invisible in Himself to every creature, but is seen and will be seen in the cloud of contemplation (*theoriae*), just as the Apostle says: ‘We will be rapt into the clouds before Christ, and so we shall be ever with Him’ (1 Thessalonians 4:17)” (*PP* V, 64-65, 4-13 [905BC]). Eriugena also discusses the distinction between *datum* and *donum* in his *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy*, which itself begins with James 1:17; see *CCH*, 1, 23, along with Rorem’s chapter five (“Creation”) in Eriugena, *Eriugena’s Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy*, 99-120. In terms of Scholastic theology, with necessary differences, gratuitous mercy is arguably comparable with Aquinas’s gratuitous grace (*gratia gratis data*), operating grace (*gratia operans*), and/or prevenient grace (*gratia praeveniens*), and obligatory mercy with Aquinas’s sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), cooperating grace (*gratia cooperans*), and/or subsequent grace (*gratia subsequens*); see *ST* I-II, Q111.

<sup>18</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,047.

will be.”<sup>19</sup> But in whom does this passionate love reside? This is where Lāhūrī takes an anthropological turn, recalling a key Qur’ānic passage about the creation of Adam.

### **Theophanic Cosmology to Theophanic Anthropology**

In Lāhūrī’s commentary on the rest of this love lyric, an anthropology emerges from this cosmology, which explicitly displaces this love lyric into the School of Ibn ‘Arabī and the School of Love. Not only does Ḥāfiẓ bring Adam into the love lyric by the second couplet, but Lāhūrī draws from these Islamic traditions in which the human person is the only being created by God worthy of “the Trust” (*al-amāna*). Humanity is able to bear the burden of the Trust, mentioned in Qur’ān 33:72, because they alone possess passionate love; though arguably the Trust itself *is* passionate love, which simultaneously produces grief and sorrow—suffering, *passion*—for the human person in this life. A spark of the fire of passionate love struck the “immutable entities,” the collection of realities in eternal, internal existence in God, “and made all things yearn and desire Itself through that loveliness.”<sup>20</sup> However, since the angels, jinn, and other intellects did not possess passionate love, they rejected the burden of the Trust: “but the human person is ‘ignorantly unjust’ (Qur’ān 33:72) on account of their innate disposition, and so they took the Trust on the shoulder of aspiration, and struck the arrogance of ‘Is there more?’ (Qur’ān 50:30).”<sup>21</sup>

Lāhūrī juxtaposes in citation two Qur’ānic passages, thereby giving further meaning to this couplet. “Truly We offered the Trust unto the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were wary of it—yet the human person bore it; truly he is ignorantly unjust.”<sup>22</sup> This is a Qur’ānic verse frequently referenced by the School of Love, interpreted to

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<sup>19</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,048.

<sup>20</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,048.

<sup>21</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,048. The translation from Qur’ān 33:72, “ignorantly unjust,” is mine (*ẓalūmān jahūlān*); Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s translation in *The Study Quran* reads “an ignorant wrongdoer.”

<sup>22</sup> Qur’ān 33:72, my translation.

indicate the concomitant suffering that humanity encounters in their painful, earthly apprenticeship in submission, faith, and love toward God. A fundamental theological position of this tradition is the exalted nature of the human person in her ability both to love and to know God; this capacity exceeds the otherwise restricted love and knowledge of God by the angels, which Lāhūrī mentions later. The second Qur’ānic passage is a reference to humanity’s victory over Gehenna (*jahannam*) through the Mercy of God: “That Day We shall say to Gehenna, ‘Have you been filled?’ And it will say, ‘Is there more?’”<sup>23</sup> Gehenna in Lāhūrī’s commentary is judged arrogant in its insatiable desire for punishment, but by bearing the burden of the Trust, i.e., passionate love, humanity answers Gehenna’s inquiry: there are no more. Through the mercy of God, who “will never be unjust to the servants” (Qur’ān 50:29),<sup>24</sup> humanity overcomes Gehenna.

Ḥāfiẓ in the second couplet enfolds this story of angels and humans into succinct hemistichs while Lāhūrī unfolds it in his commentary. Referring to the traditional *iṣṭilāḥāt*, the technical terms, Lāhūrī opens by recalling the theophanies mentioned above. “‘The Face’ ...alludes to the theophany of beauty [*jamālī*], which is...the merciful theophany, likewise named the theophany of the loveliness of the attributes and the beauty of the names.”<sup>25</sup> The commentary is worthy of complete citation, for it summarizes the tradition regarding humanity’s exaltation over the angels.

The angels saw and witnessed [those theophanies]. However, because they did not possess the predisposition for passionate love, they refused to receive [them]. Consequently, since the angels are incapable of knowing passionate love, they became indignant, became fire itself, [and struck] Adam, by whom is intended ‘humanity.’ [Humanity] becomes in their inwardness the rose garden of recognitions (*ma’ārif*), realities (*ḥaqā’iq*) and allotments (*ta’īnāt*) through their predisposition to receive it. The angels, having witnessed this fortune...that passionate love entrusted to the rose garden of humanity, affirmed their own ignorance and foolishness. “They said, ‘Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, you are the Knowing, the Wise.’” (2:32)...It is said that a group of angels, on the Night of the Ascent of the noble Prophet, came and said: “O Messenger, admonish our God!” He said, “Your admonishment was sufficient, for in God’s court you arrogantly said, ‘Will You place upon [the earth] one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?’” (2:30). All of the angels fell on their faces in shame,

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<sup>23</sup> Qur’ān 50:30.

<sup>24</sup> *The Study Quran* translates Qur’ān 50:29: “With Me the Word is not changed, and I do not wrong My servants.”

<sup>25</sup> *SH II*, #152, 1,048.

and they will not arise again until the resurrection. “Bending their heads” (32:12) alludes to this ignominy.<sup>26</sup>

Lāhūrī is drawing directly from the standard Islamic tradition that understands the reference to “names” in Qur’ān 2:31 to be the Most Beautiful Names of God. The three verses in sequence are as follows:

And when your Lord said to the angels, “I am placing on the earth a vicegerent (*khalīfa*),” they said [in reply,] “Will you place thereupon one who causes corruption and sheds blood therein, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?” [God] said [in response,] “Indeed, I know (*a lamu*) what you do not know (*ta lamūna*).” And [God] taught (*allama*) Adam all of the Names. He then presented them to the angels, and said: “Inform Me of these Names, if you are truthful!” They said, “Exalted are You! We have no knowledge (*ilm*) but what You taught us (*allamtanā*). Indeed, You are the All-Knowing (*al-‘alīm*), All-Wise” (Qur’ān 2:30-32).

In the interpretation of this three-verse Qur’ānic narrative, Adam is taught the Most Beautiful Divine Names, the attributes of God, whether they be the names of Beauty (*jamāl*) or the names of Majesty (*jalāl*). It is evident that God teaches Adam the same knowledge that the angels do not know, given the use of the same verb root in sequence (from *ilm*); therefore, the human person has the capacity to manifest and comprehend the Divine Names, all of them, while the angels can each only manifest certain ones. This is why, elsewhere, the angels prostrate themselves to Adam as the image of God (Qur’ān 2:34, 7:11).<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the earthly human person is the source of corruption and bloodshed, as the angels are right to indicate; yet, it is this very suffering that is concomitant with the experience of love. As Chittick points out: “What distinguishes Adam from all other creatures is the fact that he was created to be a lover. The Qur’ān repeatedly issues commandments to be obeyed—the religious command. If excellence could be achieved by obeying commandments, the angels would be the most excellent of creatures, because they are pure servants.”<sup>28</sup> Lāhūrī places this love lyric squarely within the School of Love when he cites

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<sup>26</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,048-1,049.

<sup>27</sup> “And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate [*asjudū*] unto Adam,’ they prostrated [*sajadū*], save Iblīs. He refused and waxed arrogant, and was among the disbeliever [*kāfirīn*].” (Qur’ān 2:34) “Indeed, We created you, then We formed you, then We said unto the angels, ‘Prostrate yourselves before Adam.’ And they all prostrated, save Iblīs; he was not among those who prostrated.” (Qur’ān 7:11)

<sup>28</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 55.

the verses from the second *sūra* of the Qur’ān in his exegesis of the second couplet and submits that humanity is able to witness the theophanies through the gift of passionate love. Implicit in this tradition is the value given to embodiment: the disembodied angels are unable to manifest the divine names, but embodied humans possess this comprehensive capacity.

### **Suffering Passionate Love: A Way of Knowing Beyond Reason**

The third couplet bridges the anthropocosmic narrative of creation with the soteriological prescription that, in the *embodied* human person, passionate love—not the reason of the *disembodied* intellect—is able to comprehend and perceive theophany. Lāhūrī begins by citing a portion of the second “flash” of ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt* and Jāmī’s commentary thereon from *Ashi ‘‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*.

The Sulṭān of Passionate Love desired to pitch His tent in the desert,  
 open the door of Her storehouse,  
 and scatter treasures throughout the world.  
 Then He raised Her parasol and hoisted His banner  
 And made *wujūd*/being collide with nothingness.<sup>29</sup>

Lāhūrī does not cite more from that flash, but it is helpful to place his citation in its context to understand why he may have been drawn to it in the first place.

Ah, the restlessness of enrapturing love (*‘ishq*)  
 Has thrown the world in tumult!  
 Were it not so, the world would have slumbered on, at rest with existence and nonexistence, at ease  
 in the retreat of witnessing (*shuhūd*) where “God was, and nothing was with Him.”<sup>30</sup>  
 In those days before a trace of the two worlds,  
 no “other” (*aghyār*) yet imprinted on the Tablet of Existence,  
 I, the Beloved, and Love were together  
 in the corner of an uninhabited cell.

<sup>29</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,050, citing Flash II, found in ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-i Lama ‘āt Va Risālah-i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, (Tih-rān: Chāpkhānah-i Firdowsī, 1974), 6 (Persian), and ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 74 (English). Lāhūrī then cites, anonymously, “the commentator of this book,” which is Jāmī’s *Ashi ‘‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*: “That is, nothingness, which refers to the immutable entities, mixes with *wujūd*/being, whose fact-of-existence is known (*ma ‘lūm al-‘anniyya*), but whose modality is unknown (*majhūl al-kayfiyya*)” (*SH* II, #152, 1,050ff, citing Jāmī, *Ashi ‘‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, [Qum: Būstān-i Kitāb-i Qum, 2004], 80) Here, *that* something exists (Eriugena’s *quia est*) becomes known, but *how*, its modality (Eriugena’s *quomodo*), is left a mystery; this *how* correlates to theo-poetics, which I connect in later chapters to the Incarnation.

<sup>30</sup> A version of the ḥadīth: “There is/was God and nothing else before Him, and His Throne was over the water, and He then created the Heavens and the Earth and wrote everything in the Book.” For English, see Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh-Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Pub. & Distr., 1997), volume 9, #7418; for Arabic, see Muḥammad al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath Al-bārī: Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat Dār Al-Salām, 2000), volume 13, #7418. For a discussion on the atemporality of the verb *kān* (is/was) used in the ḥadīth and with respect to the School of ibn ‘Arabī, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 88ff.

But suddenly restless passionate love flung back the veil from the better part, manifested (*jilva*) as the Beloved before the entity of the world, to display (*iẓhār*) His perfection:  
 When Her ray of loveliness (*partaw-i ḥusn-i ū*) emerged (*paydā*)  
 In a breath the world became manifest (*hovaydā*)  
 at once the world borrowed sight from His beauty,  
 saw the loveliness of Her face and became madly-in-love (*shaydā*)  
 borrowed sugar from His lips, and tasting it at once began to speak:  
 “One needs Your Light to see You.”<sup>31</sup>

It is evident why Lāhūrī turned to ‘Irāqī’s second flash: Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyric re-versifies its content. The first couplet of this *ghazal*, “Before time, a ray of your loveliness (*partaw-i ḥusn-at*) was breathed through theophany, / Passionate love emerged (*paydā*), and set fire to the whole world,” nearly verbatim references ‘Irāqī’s “When Its ray of loveliness (*partaw-i ḥusn-i ū*) emerged (*paydā*) / In a breath the world became manifest (*hovaydā*).” The “better part” that is unveiled is the face of the manifested (*jilva*) Beloved in ‘Irāqī’s flash, which renders the world “madly-in-love;” while in the second couplet of Ḥāfiẓ’s lyric, the unveiled face requires passionate love to be seen properly, which the angels do not have but the human person—the world” in ‘Irāqī’s flash—does possess. Passionate love in ‘Irāqī’s flash is the divine essence itself, while in Ḥāfiẓ’s lyric it permits the human person to perceive its theophany. For ‘Irāqī, the restlessness of passionate love, or God, combined with the necessity of passionate love to see the loveliness of the Face, correlates to the *ḥadīth qudsī*, or prophetic tradition in the voice of God (one, in this case, that is unverified but effectively canonical to *ṣūfi* theory and practice), that reads: “I [God] was a hidden treasure, and I loved (*aḥbabtu*) to be recognized/known (*u’raf*); so I created the world.”<sup>32</sup> Finally, the tenor of *disruption* runs through this protology, or theology of creation: being *collides* with nothingness, the world is thrown into *tumult*, and *suddenly* passionate love

<sup>31</sup> ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-i Lama‘āt Va Risālah-i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 7 (Persian, my translation); ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 74-75 (English)

<sup>32</sup> A *ḥadīth qudsī* is a prophetic narration in the voice of God, but not a part of the Qur’ān; some are verified as authentic, and others as inauthentic but effectively canonical to *ṣūfi* piety. For the foundational study on this topic, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Hadīth Qudsī* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977). “Some of the most famous Ṣūfi Divine Sayings are in fact ones that do not occur in the major Hadith collections but have been circulated widely among the Sufis and are variously ascribed to Muhammad, other prophets, or to individual Ṣūfis themselves. A good example is that in which God says, ‘I was a hidden treasure (*kuntu kanzan makhfīyan*) and wanted to be known. Therefore I created the creatures, that they might know Me” (Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word*, 72).

unveils and the world becomes *madly-in-love*. Theophany may be continuous, but it is a continuous disruption, whence the larger cosmological concept of *tajdīd al-khalq*, or the perpetual renewal of creation.<sup>33</sup>

Love is divinely connected to mystical recognition, *ma'rifā*, a rose garden of which humanity becomes according to Lāhūrī; but it is also the source and cause of the genesis of the world. Maybudī, in his Qur'ānic commentary (*tafsīr*), of which Ḥāfiẓ was likely aware,<sup>34</sup> states as much: “I loved to be recognized” is an allusion to the fact that recognition (*ma'rifā*) is built on love. Wherever there is love, there is recognition, and wherever there is no love, there is no recognition.”<sup>35</sup> As such, while lovers in the Islamic spiritual and intellectual tradition have often ridiculed the rationalists, it was not necessarily a judgment concerning the intellect or reason per se, but for their arrogance in assuming that logic and dialectical reasoning *alone, without the assistance of love*, could attain unto—see—God.<sup>36</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, Ḥāfiẓ devalues the intellect in the third couplet and Lāhūrī, in his commentary, values love in contradistinction therewith:

[The intellect] wanted to light the lamp of wisdom with the flame of passionate love (*ishq*) and the light of love (*maḥabbat*), so it pretended (*dam zand*) to possess recognition-by-vision (*ma'rifat-i shuhūdī*) through passionate love and love. Consequently, the flash of Divine Jealousy (*ghayrat*) shined forth, lest the power of the intellectual fetter of reasoning [take hold], enamored as it is with idle chatter, [and] through the intervention of love It escaped (*dam zand*) from recognition-by-vision and placed the power [to recognize] outside the measure of [the intellect's] own limit. The world of the immutable entities collided with the loveliness of the [divine] attributes and the perfection of the [divine] names and mixed together. [...] In this respect, the blurry eyesight of the intellect remains

<sup>33</sup> The School of Ibn 'Arabī in fact explicated the perpetual, divine self-disclosure (theophanies) in this world with the concept of *al-khalq al-jadīd* or *tajdīd al-khalq*, viz., the renewal of creation at every moment, based on Qur'ān 50:15: “Did We weary after the first creation? Nay, rather they are in ambiguity (*labs*) over a new creation (*khalq jadīd*).” For an overview of the theory of the perpetual renewal of creation in the School of Ibn 'Arabī see Isutzu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 205ff, or Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 18ff, or William Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, 57ff.

<sup>34</sup> For the intertextual study of Ḥāfiẓ and Maybudī, see Dāryūsh Āshūrī, *'Irfān Va Rindī Dar Shi'r-i Ḥāfiẓ: Bāz'nigaristah-yi Hasī'shināsī-i Ḥāfiẓ* (Tihārān: Nashr-i Markaz, 2000). For an insightful monograph on Maybudī's Qur'ānic commentary, see Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics*.

<sup>35</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 19; citing Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, *Kashf Al-asrār Wa-'uddat Al-abrār* (Tihārān: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihārān, 1952-1960), volume 6, 477.

<sup>36</sup> For a concise summary of this position, see William Chittick, “Rūmī and the Wooden Leg of Reason,” in *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2012), 201-209.

prohibited from recognition-by-vision, which comes together by the intervention of essential love, because unless the eyes are covered with the collyrium of the light of illuminated love, it does not witness the unity in multiplicity, and it is unable to speak about it through the eyes of [intellect's] station.<sup>37</sup>

Eliding the angel of the second couplet with the intellect of the third, Lāhūrī understands these verses in terms of the traditional juxtaposition of the intellect and love.<sup>38</sup> Both the angel and the intellect are disembodied realities, and the embodied human outstrips their knowledge of God through the exercise of love. The jealousy of the angel is surpassed by the Divine Jealousy and places recognition-by-vision beyond the capacities of the intellect. Love is required to witness the unity-in-multiplicity that emerges from theophany in the first couplet. When the immutable entities mingle with the loveliness of the divine names and attributes, only passionate love is able to witness the cosmological structure of reality (recalling the ancient covenant it has with loveliness). The blurry-eyed, *disembodied* intellect is blind to the divine self-disclosures, while passionate love, embodied in the human person, experiences those theophanies immediately.

The nondialectical language of God here is passionate love in the form of poetic metaphors. The dialectical reasoning of the intellect attempts to analyze, to distinguish logically the various experiences and aspects of this world, and then aims to synthesize its components into a static resolution. This process thereby tends to preclude and occlude paradox, contradiction, *disruption*, and difference in the world. Instead, passionate love here enacts the dynamic imaginary that permits paradox and contradiction, and *produces disruption*. As *passion* it endeavors to enter into the suffering of this world to live this imaginary. Indeed, the Trust is given to humanity precisely because of their capacity to suffer, which is attendant with passionate

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<sup>37</sup> SH II, #152, 1,050.

<sup>38</sup> In the story of the *mi'raj*, the Prophet Muhammad's ascent into heaven to encounter God, he is led by Gabriel. After journeying through the seven levels of heaven, and meeting a prophet at each level, Muhammad abandons Gabriel to meet directly with God. Gabriel in the Islamic philosophical tradition represents the First Intellect, and so it is no surprise that in the later tradition this event comes to represent the inability of the intellect to encounter God; entering into the presence of God is reserved to Muhammad, who represents love, especially in later *ṣūfī* and Shi'a devotional literature. The story of the *mi'raj* is referenced in Qur'ān 17:1, 60; 53:13-18, and in the *ḥadīth* literature (various versions occur, for instance, in Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, volume 1 [*Kitāb al-Īmān*] [Bayrūt: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmīyah, 1994]).

love. The contradistinction between the angel/intellect with the human/passionate love implies a preferential option for embodiment over disembodiment, for passionate love over intellection, for suffering over idealism, for allusive images over illusionary abstractions. This capacity to suffer results from embodiment, which the angel/intellect lacks: the disembodied intellectual and rational assent to the Divine Names is qualitatively inferior to the embodied experience of the Divine Names, and of *the* Divine Essence, which is passionate love.

### **Multiplicity and Separation: Fruitful Suffering, Perpetual Desire**

The fourth couplet references the “pretender” (*mudda ʿī*), otherwise translated as a pretentious person or a [false] claimant, or “Satan (*Iblīs*) who [comes] with deception (*talbīs*)...and has a claim (*idd ʿā*) against Adam.”<sup>39</sup> *Iblīs*, who refused to prostrate himself before Adam and was consequently punished (Qurʾān 7:11-13), falsely claims access to the “place of witnessing the secret,” which is according to Lāhūrī the interactions between the lover and the beloved, or cosmologically between “the Real Beloved and [humanity] at the time of the theophany of the [divine] attributes and the beauty of the [divine] names.”<sup>40</sup> Lāhūrī then inserts the *ḥadīth qudsī*, once again unverified but canonical to the Islamic mystical tradition, “the human person is My [God’s] secret and I am his secret,”<sup>41</sup> as a commentary on this couplet, and then refers to another commentary on this love lyric: “The place of witnessing the secret is an expression for the heart of the human person, which [heart] contains and encompasses the world, and is called a microcosm.”<sup>42</sup> The commentator is alluding to the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*: “My [God’s] earth and my heaven do not encompass me, but the heart of my faithful servant does encompass me.” While frequently cited by *ṣūfī* authors, it is unverified by the professional class

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<sup>39</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,049.

<sup>40</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,049.

<sup>41</sup> See Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word*, 72ff.

<sup>42</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,050.

of *ḥadīth* scholars; nonetheless it markedly shaped the School of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>43</sup> Cosmological theophany mirrors anthropological theophany with the result that the human heart perceives the divine self-disclosures whereas the intellect is blind thereto.<sup>44</sup> Satan, disembodied, attempts to understand what only embodiment, the human heart, can live. In this poetics of the heart, there is no knowing without embodied doing.<sup>45</sup>

The fifth couplet draws the interpreter into the practical, ethical consequences of taking on the burden of “the Trust of love.”<sup>46</sup> Rejecting the Trust of Qur’ān 33:72 represents a fantasized, delusional election for worldly pleasures absent of sorrow; whereas humanity’s acceptance of the Trust—which is “of love” according to Lāhūrī—is a rejection of the illusional life of pleasure. By assenting to love, humanity concomitantly consents to suffering. This affliction is not despairing, however, for the sixth couplet teaches that the beloved (God), in manifesting his own form, dwells within the human person. This couplet is found in Lāhūrī’s version but is not attested in any of the trustworthy manuscripts of Ḥāfiẓ’s *dīvān* which Khānlari used in his edition.<sup>47</sup> Its inclusion here certainly serves Lāhūrī’s perspective, given how it draws on the images found in ‘Irāqī’s flash cited above. In that flash, “The Sulṭān of Passionate Love desired to pitch his tent (*khayma zanad*) in the desert,” and in this couplet, the beloved “pitched his tent (*khayma zad*) in the arena of Adam’s water and clay.” When read together, being collides

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<sup>43</sup> See, in particular, the chapter on Shu‘ayb in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, and the later commentarial tradition on this *faṣṣ*. Chapter 5 and 6 of this dissertation engage this discourse concerning the heart.

<sup>44</sup> In later chapters, I expand on the function of the heart vis-à-vis both theophany and the imagination. For the contemplative import of the heart to the function of spiritual perception for Ibn ‘Arabī, see Chapter Two (“Listening: Contemplation and the Purified Heart”) of Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 46-100. Indeed, as in this case, the heart enables the miraculous transformation of “perception into contemplation, everyday experience into theophany, the words and movements of ritual into the ineffable reality of prayer” (ibid., 47). For a full treatment of “heart” in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* literature, see ibid., 47-53.

<sup>45</sup> For a concise article on the function of the heart in Persian *ghazals*, and with respect to Ḥāfiẓ’s, see Michael Glünz, “The Poet’s Heart: A Polyfunctional Object in the Poetic System of the Ghazal,” in Michael Glünz and J. Christoph Bürgel, *Intoxication, Earthly and Heavenly: Seven Studies on the Poet Hafiz of Shiraz* (New York: P. Lang, 1991), 53-68. Chapter Two of Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 46-100, is likewise helpful in elucidating Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics of the heart.

<sup>46</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,051.

<sup>47</sup> See *DKh* #148, 313.

with nothingness *in the human person*; cosmological theophany is at once anthropological. Lāhūrī’s commentary reminds the reader that the microcosmic human person serves as a mirror in which the divine names are reflected through theophany. “The human person recognizes (*‘arīf*) the totality (*jamī’*) of the [divine] names on account of their all-comprehensiveness (*jāmi’iyat*).”<sup>48</sup> None of the other creatures is able to be in “complete servitude” (*‘ibādat-i tāmma*), but rather is a servant of a single divine name, and therefore incomplete. The non-etymological correlation between passionate love “pitching a tent” in humanity and the Word of God “pitching a tent” among us in John 1:14 (ἐσκήνωσεν) gestures towards a deeper connection: the *disruptive* nature of theophany/Incarnation.

Moving to the penultimate couplet, Ḥāfiẓ places desire at the center of the movement from God and back to God, and Lāhūrī seizes this move with a perspicacious commentary that draws out the perpetual desire in which the human person lives. Physically, in order to kiss the well of a dimple on a face, one must go through the curly tresses hanging from the head, covering it over. This admittedly gendered trope, familiar to Persian poetry, forms the foundation for the human person’s desire for the inaccessible Divine Essence. The celestial soul stands for the human person, and Lāhūrī refers to the technical terms to interpret the other poetic images. The dimple “refers to the difficulties of the secrets of witnessing,” while the tress “refers to the multiplicity and the coming into being of individual entities;” the curliness expresses “the manifestation of the [divine] names and attributes.”<sup>49</sup> The core of the commentary necessitates full citation:

The theophany of the [Divine] Essence, which is equal in every atom [of existence], is covered over and hidden by the warp and weft of the tresses. The way of the seeking, passionate lover comes from [this theophany] and into its twists. The “ring of its tress” refers to the knots and judgements of multiplicity. Meaning: even though our celestial soul was always in the presence of the divinity (*ulūhiyyat*), [which divinity] is satiated by the sweetness of witnessing (*mushāhada*) the [Divine] Essence, without the intermediary of the loci of manifestation of the beings, overflowing with the delight of vision (*dīdār*), unobstructed by other existents, it [i.e., our celestial soul, humanity] possesses the desire (*havas*) and yearning (*ishtiyāq*) for contemplating (*muṭāla‘a*) the difficulties of the secrets of

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<sup>48</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,052.

<sup>49</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,053.

witnessing the [Divine] Essence in a perpetual manner, and it is never satiated. This is because the lover is within the quintessence of yearning. Then at Your command [the human person] becomes bound by bodily fetters, struck into knots and multiplicities replete with warps and wefts. He becomes satisfied to contemplate the difficulties of the secrets of witnessing through the intermediary of the loci of manifestation of beings and the loci of theophany of existents. This is because [the human person] knows that Your will is dependent on this, viz., that the contemplation of the difficulties of the secrets of witnessing is by an intermediary, and they have recourse to the command of the beloved [Muḥammad]: “Consider deeply the blessings of God, but do not consider deeply God’s Essence.”<sup>50</sup>

The infinite multiplicity of theophany is precisely that which permits contemplation of the Divine Essence and also that which keeps it hidden. Humanity in pre-eternity, as it were, was in the presence of divinity but unable to contemplate the secrets of witnessing the Divine Essence. Once emerging into this phenomenal world, humanity is satisfied to remain in yearning, as it were, for this love is the quintessence (‘*ayn*) of desire; given the structure of the universe, the human person is never satiated. Witnessing the Divine Essence is always through the intermediary of theophany, which are the “blessings” referenced in the prophetic *ḥadīth* that closes the citation above.<sup>51</sup>

### A Theo-Poetics of Desire

Cosmological passionate love emerges in the human person, who ceaselessly desires God through the theophanic images; but this takes us to other topics. For now it is sufficient to point out that Ḥāfiẓ concludes this love lyric with a transition from desire to sorrow. The *Story of the Joy of Loving You*, that is, Ḥāfiẓ’s story, *our story*, begins when we cut off the cause of a joyful heart, i.e., when we leave the presence *in divinis* (a static, disembodied synthesis) and enter into this phenomenal world as the love lyric and Lāhūrī’s commentary suggests (a dynamic, embodied imaginary). “The station of passionate love is the workshop of the distressed and grief-stricken heart, the heart that flees the station of gladness and happiness.”<sup>52</sup> The joy must be cut off just as the syllable of the meter is intermittently cut off; the audience thus expects one *more* syllable

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<sup>50</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,053.

<sup>51</sup> “Consider deeply the blessings of God, but do not consider deeply God’s Essence” is a *ḥadīth*: see *Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsaṭ* #6489, found in Sulaymān Ibn Aḥmad Ṭabarānī, *Al-Baḥrayn Fī Zawā‘id Al-mu‘jamayn: Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsaṭ Wa-al-Mu‘jam Al-Ṣaghīr Lil-Ṭabarānī* (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār Al-Kutub Al-‘Ilmīyah, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,054.

throughout the love lyric, leaving them in desire. Theophany in Eriugena correlates with *plus-quam* discourse, and here theophany correlates with the poetic structure of the love lyric that leaves us seeking *more than* what is received.

The love lyric and its commentary suggest that the human person knows *more than* the angels; humans contemplate the completeness of the divine life—inclusive of suffering—through the exercise of passionate love. This recognition is obtained by foregoing the (alleged, false) joy of a bodiless unity, represented by the disembodied angels and Satan, for the embodied sorrow and suffering of multiplicity in this phenomenal world, represented by humans who have a heart. In the commentary, Lāhūrī constructs a theo-poetics of desire in which theophany plays a constitutive role. The multiplicity of the world into which the human person was voluntarily cast is a theo-poetic world in which meaning emerges as form (Word becomes flesh) to produce desire. This theo-poetics of desire is productive of passionate love, which is concomitant with suffering. It is constituted by disruption, which is a fundamental feature of Rivera’s poetics of the flesh.

## **Comparative Insights: The Choice for Love and Suffering**

Three constructive, comparative insights may be discovered from interreligious reading of this love lyric: (1) recognizing the elevation of love above our limited human reason, (2) the movement of suffering love that imbues both Incarnational theology and anthropology, and (3) the ethical demand to make a choice, here and now, for what kind of love to enact. Together, these insights begin to construct a theo-poetics of the flesh in which entering into suffering is constitutive of imagining forth the Incarnation.

### **The Elevation of Love above Reason**

Arguably, the angels and other intellects were being eminently rational in decrying God’s selection of the human person as His vicegerent, for humanity is “ignorantly unjust” (33:72) and “causes corruption [on earth] and sheds blood” (2:30); but the angels did not have passionate love

and so were unable to imagine the divine gift of corporeal existence being granted to humanity. They did not accept the burden of the Trust because they reasoned that suffering such a covenant with God was not worth it; it was irrational. The human heart in which the trust between the lover and the Beloved occurs, wherein God dwells and whereby the human person is able to perceive theophany, is at once the locus of a knowledge attained through love and the mirror reflecting all of the divine names. The angels are commanded to prostrate themselves before Adam because humanity, unlike any other creation, has a heart capacious enough for God, and is created in the form of God.<sup>53</sup> This capacity for God is also a capacity for suffering, which the angels do not have to undergo; but this suffering is also the experience that exalts embodied humanity above the disembodied angels.

This love-knowledge is more comprehensive than intellect-knowledge according to Lāhūrī, and he is likely drawing from the School of Ibn ‘Arabī. Not only does the experience of love disclose knowledge beyond the exercise of reason, but the exercise of the faculty of the heart (*qalb*) discloses knowledge beyond the constraints of the intellect/reason (*‘aql*). Ibn ‘Arabī proclaims that reason (*‘aql*) delimits our knowledge of God, “for ‘reason’ (*‘aql*) is a ‘delimitation’ (*taqyīd*), the word *‘aql* being derived from [the word] ‘fetter’ (*‘iqāl*),”<sup>54</sup> and Lāhūrī is likely aware of this discourse on the intellect, given his reference to the “power of the intellectual *fetter* of reasoning.”<sup>55</sup> However, the heart (*qalb*) “possesses fluctuation (*taqlīb*) from one state to another”<sup>56</sup> and “fluctuates (*taqallub*) in the varieties of forms and [of God’s]

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<sup>53</sup> The *ḥadīth*, central to the Islamic tradition, reads: “Verily, God created Adam in [God’s] form/image.” Another version reads, “...in the form of the All-Merciful.” For an extensive survey of the sources and history of this *ḥadīth*, which is similar to Genesis 1:27, see Christopher Melchert, “God Created Adam in His Image,” in *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2011): 113-124.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.198.35 (Chapter 348 “Concerning the Recognition of the Station of Two Secrets among the Secrets of the Heart of Gathering-Together and Existence”). For an introduction to this “heart knowledge”, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 106ff.

<sup>55</sup> Lāhūrī, v. 2, p. 1050.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.198.34 (Chapter 348).

attributes.”<sup>57</sup> In both the *Futūḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ‘Arabī reminds us that God said “Surely in that there is a reminder to him who has a heart (*qalb*)” (Qur’ān 50:37) and not “to him who has reason/an intellect (‘*aql*).”<sup>58</sup> He furthermore offers an understanding of the heart’s suffering, relevant here, that correlates with the School of Love. Commenting on the *ḥadīth*, “The hearts of the children of Adam are like a single heart between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful,”<sup>59</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

In the *ḥadīth* of the fingers there is divine glad tidings, since [Muḥammad] attributed the fingers to the All-Merciful. [God] does not make [the heart] fluctuate except from mercy to mercy, even though there is affliction (*balā’*) in the various types of mercy. There is in the fold of affliction a mercy concealed from [Adam] and recognized by God, for the two fingers are the fingers of the All-Merciful. So understand!.<sup>60</sup>

Taken together, the heart is able to recognize that affliction and suffering are required for a love that seeks to be God’s mercy. Lāhūrī’s and Ḥāfiẓ’s conceptualization of the relationship between love and reason subjects Eriugena’s praise for dialectical reasoning to critical judgment; but it also demands underscoring conclusions from the previous chapter. The first definitions of theophany in the *Periphyseon* is at variance with Eriugena’s penchant for dialectical discourse: it is an *ineffable* condescension of the Word through love (*amorem, dilectionem*), dwelling in us by charity and mercy (*caritatem and misericordiam*). These definitions must be foregrounded in any

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<sup>57</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 174 (Arabic); *ibid.*, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 150 (English); *ibid.*, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 88 (English). From the *faṣṣ*/Chapter of Shu‘yab.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 174 (Arabic); *ibid.*, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 150 (English); *ibid.*, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 88 (English). From the *faṣṣ*/Chapter of Shu‘yab. He adds in a section in the *Futūḥāt* that “whosoever explains ‘heart’ [in ‘surely in that there is a reminder to him who has a heart’] as ‘intellect’ has no recognition (*ma‘rifā*) of the realities.” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.198.34-35 [Chapter 348]).

<sup>59</sup> Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, volume 9, Book 46 (*kitāb al-qadar*), *Ḥadīth* 29.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.199.5-7 (Chapter 348). He continues, connecting affliction, mercy, and the fluctuating of the heart together with the “confusion as to a new creation [*khalq jadīd*]” (Qur’ān 50:15): “If you should learn what we have said, then you will learn what is the heart of being/*wujūd*, whose form expands the world, which has a heart and all other parts, even though the heart that gathers together (*qalb al-jam’*) is that which brings together this essential form (*al-ṣūra al-wujūdiyya*) from the manifest and unmanifest (*al-zāhira wa al-bāṭina*) realities. So when ‘each day God is upon some affair’ (Qur’ān 55:29) that is the transmutation (*taqlīb*) of the cosmos, which is the form of this the One who Turns (*qālib*) from one state to the next according to the Breaths. For the cosmos is never fixed in a single state for a moment, since God is Ever-creating constantly. Were the cosmos to remain in a single state for two moments, it would be described by independence from God. But people are ‘in confusion as to a new creation’” (*ibid.*, III.199.7-11 [Chapter 348]).

theo-poetics of the flesh.

But more can be uncovered that is otherwise occluded by Eriugena's *ratio*, his fetter. In the *Periphyseon* there is a moment of the dialogue in which the Student suffers bewilderment when he is "hemmed in" (*coartor*) by the "aggressiveness of this rational argument" (*ratiocinationis*).<sup>61</sup> The argument in question concluded that "God neither is nor subsists," a radically apophatic statement (a disruption, a silence characteristic of a theo-poetics of the flesh attentive to the nondialectical speech of God) that is "overwhelmed by the many, great, and numerous spears of holy scripture" (i.e., authority).<sup>62</sup> *Ratio* in this case led the Student to the total mystery and unknowability of God, which "hems him in" much like how the intellect/reason (*'aql*) is restraining, binding, and confining in Ibn 'Arabī's etymological conceptualization. The Teacher responds, patiently reassuring the Student that *ratio* must be followed because it "investigates the truth of all things and is overthrown by no authority."<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, it is not to be believed that, when [holy scripture] pushes us into the divine nature (*divinam nobis naturam insinuans*), it always uses the proper meanings of verbs and nouns. Rather, it uses certain parables and metaphors (*translatorum*) of verbs and nouns in various ways, *condescending toward our weakness* and, by simple doctrine, stimulating (*erigens*) our senses, hitherto undeveloped and infantile.<sup>64</sup>

The Teacher guides the Student in recognizing that when *ratio* contradicts *auctoritas* qua holy scripture, especially concerning the divine nature, then the words of holy scripture must be

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<sup>61</sup> The Student states: "I am hemmed in by the aggressiveness of this rational argument. For if I say it is false, perhaps *reason* itself will deride me...If true, it will necessarily follow that what I have conceded concerning acting and suffering I likewise will concede concerning other active and passive verbs, no matter of what type of verbs they may be, i.e., God neither loves nor is loved, neither moves nor is moved, and a thousand other things, and consequently to an even greater extent that God neither is nor subsists. And if this is the case, do you not see how I will be *overwhelmed by the many, great, and numerous spears of holy scripture* [i.e., authority]? Everywhere they appear to roar against and shout out that this is false! Nor does it escape your notice, I suppose, how arduous and difficult it would be to suggest this to simple souls, seeing that those who are seen to be wise are horrified when they hear it!" (*PP I*, 92, 2856-2868 [508CD]).

<sup>62</sup> *PP I*, 92, 2862-2864 (508CD).

<sup>63</sup> "Refuse to be frightened. Now reason must be followed by us, for it investigates the truth of things and is overthrown by no authority. In no way is it impeded from publicly disclosing and divulging that which it both studiously investigates by the cycles of reasonings and also laboriously discovers. Accordingly, the authority of the holy scriptures must be followed in all things, since the truth takes possession therein as in a certain hidden habitation of its own" (*PP I*, 92, 2869-2875 [508D-509A]).

<sup>64</sup> *PP I*, 92-93, 2875-2880 (509A).

interpreted non-literally. *Translatorum* is the perfect, passive participle of the verb *transfere*, which is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *metaphero*. As such, the words of scripture are condescensions toward our weakness, in much the same way that the Word condescended in an act of divine love to be enfleshed in Jesus Christ. The authority of holy scripture never contradicts reason so long as we recognize the condescension of words in terms of metaphor, which condescension “stimulates our senses,” thereby triggering our desire for more. *Ratio* must defer to this poetics to make sense of contradiction.

One could argue that Eriugena is casuistically privileging *ratio* over *auctoritas* in instances like this merely to accomplish his own goals, i.e., that he is eisegetically rather than exegetically reading scripture. Furthermore, this would be a classic instance of Eriugena’s synthesizing method; the contradictions between *ratio* and *auctoritas* are synthesized by metaphor. This may be, but I suggest that, in reading alongside Ḥāfīz, this static synthesis, and the bodiless idealism concomitant therewith, is transformed into a dynamic, Incarnational imaginary attentive to enfleshed suffering. I aver that Eriugena is being consistent with respect to his theology of revelation that sees words and the Word as instances—albeit exceptional ones—of the cosmology of theophany. In learning to interpret holy scripture in terms of condescensions, we learn to perceive the world in terms of theophany, which is, among other things, “a result of the *condescension* of the Divine Word...and the exaltation upward of human nature unto the...Word through Divine Love.”<sup>65</sup> Put otherwise, we are to read scripture in the same way we perceive the world: theophanically, which for Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī is *theo-poetically*.

The concrete, constitutive theophany is the condescension (Incarnation) of the Divine Word. Furthermore, let us recall that “the Wisdom of the Father...comes into being in our souls, by some ineffable *condescension* of compassion, and also joins our intellect to Itself, so that...a composite wisdom is made as a result of this descent to us and dwelling in us, and as a result of our understanding which is taken up to Itself through love by It and is formed in It...for as far as

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<sup>65</sup> *PP* I, 13, 297-301 (449AB).

the human intellect ascends through charity, so far does the Divine Wisdom descend through compassion.”<sup>66</sup> The structure of theophany informs *ratio* and its methods, and the Student is “hemmed in” only when he fails to recognize the condescension of the Divine Word in him through love. In my reading, Eriugena appears to keep *ratio* in check through the encompassing superstructure of theophany, itself ahistorically constituted by the historical Incarnation.

There is a sense in which the images and metaphors of holy scripture (*auctoritas*) are ultimately to be discarded, that there is a certain hierarchy that leads from the material to the spiritual. This hierarchical dualism ever looms on the horizon of not only Eriugena’s thought but also later scholastic theology. As Voss Roberts has indicated in her *Body Parts*, this overflows into a sacramental theology that, while *essentially* valuing the material world, ultimately views it as a stepping stone toward the immaterial.<sup>67</sup> But there are undercurrents of nondualism flowing through Eriugena’s writings, and these undercurrents value materiality (including the words and metaphors of holy scripture) because it constitutes our relationship with the Incarnate *Word*.

For example, the divine words of scripture, and ultimately the Word Himself, form the starting point for Eriugena’s theological investigation. Hence, toward the end of the final book of the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena petitions the Lord Jesus, seemingly reminding the reader of what fueled the entire investigation in the first place, “to understand Your Words,” for “You are not sought more fittingly anywhere other than in Your Words, likewise are You not found more manifestly than in them. *There You dwell and therein do You lead those seeking and loving You.*” The Lord Jesus dwells in the words of scripture, wherein He “serves those crossing over (*transiens ministras eis*) into them.” This crossing-over is “nothing but an ascent through infinite degrees of Your contemplation.” Eriugena then continues the prayer, but elides “words” with “theophanies,” apparently equating them in some way.

For you always make a crossing-over in the intellects of those seeking and finding You. For You are

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<sup>66</sup> *PP I*, 13-14, 308-319 (449BC). See footnote 35 in Chapter One for a discussion of Eriugena’s sources here.

<sup>67</sup> Michelle Voss Roberts, *Body Parts: A Theological Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 146ff.

always sought by them, and You are always found and not found. For You are always found at least in Your Theophanies, manifoldly in which, as it were in certain mirrors, You run to meet the minds of those understanding You in a manner whereby You permit Yourself to be understood: not what You are, but what You are not and that You are. You are not found, however, in Your Super-Essentiality, by which You cross over and surpass (*transis et exsuperas*) every intellect desiring and ascending to comprehend You. Therefore, You grant to Your own Your Presence through an ineffable manner of Your Manifestation, You cross over them (*transis ab eis*) through the incomprehensible excellence and infinity of Your Essence.<sup>68</sup>

Relying on his logical distinction between *quia est* (that something is) and *quid est* (what something is), he suggests that Jesus is made available to us in this phenomenal world of theophanies, but *surpasses the intellect of those encountering Him*. The material order gives us access to the Incarnate Jesus in such a *way* that transcends the intellect.

A theo-poetics emerges, for it seeks *how* God reveals and *how* we seek God, and not *what* God is. Those seeking and loving Jesus “cross over” the divine words in order to attain the Divine Word, and the Divine Word “crosses over” their intellects in order to lead them unto Himself. “Crossing over” therefore becomes a significant theme in how the faithful obtain knowledge of God; it also coheres with the theology of *metaphero* and *transfero* that is attuned to the poetics of Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*, and serves as the bridge to the metaphorical poetry of Ḥāfiẓ (*majāz*—metaphor in Arabic—etymologically means “a crossing or passing over or beyond”). Eriugena is exposing *how* the created, material world exists in tension with the uncreated, immaterial God, but not *what* God is, *what* the world is, or *what* the human is. The relationship among scripture, the Word of God, and the cosmological principle of theophany emerges as the poetics through which one perceives and interprets the world, and consequently engages alterity. Scripture for Eriugena is the divine revelatory source of theological thinking; however, given that the whole world becomes revelatory of meaning via theophany, other sources become available to the interpreter. *Ratio* functions as the lens through which to read scripture *only because its method is grounded in, or encompassed by, theophany, i.e., the condescension of the Divine Word—the ultimate Authority*. *Ratio*, grounded in theophany, is thus stimulated by the condescension of the Divine Word on account of divine love.

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<sup>68</sup> *PP* V, 211, 6830-6841 (1010CD).

This interreligious engagement has revealed the subtle though forceful undercurrent of love motivating Eriugena's project, which he explicitly unfolds in terms of a dialectical reasoning that is arguably useless without the original, compassionate divine condescension, viz., the nondialectical language of the Incarnation understood imaginatively. The imagination via poetry does not resolve contraries into a synthesis, but maintains the coincidence of opposites of the imaginal metaphor. This will become clear in later chapters, but of import now is that Ḥāfīz's poetry uncovers the dynamism of Eriugena's theology occluded by the static synthesis of his dialectical reasoning. Eriugena's theo-poetics shines forth as theophany, and theophany disrupts *ratio*; or, theophany forces *ratio* to conform to the appearing of God. *Ratio* accesses God only through theophany, the concrete and constitutive instantiation of which is the Incarnation of the Word. God both dwells in words (scriptural revelation) and in the material order but surpasses the *ratio* of the intellect. Eriugena's penchant for *ratio* is belied by his reliance on theophany, and the originating tensive event of the Incarnation.<sup>69</sup> In other words, Incarnational, theophanic *ratio* is not Aristotelian or Neoplatonic *ratio*.

### **The Movement of Suffering**

Note the infinite degrees of crossing-over in the act of contemplation and the new meaning given it when read together with the faculty of the heart in Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī and the larger Akbarian tradition. The embodied human heart, and not the disembodied angelic intellects, attains unto God precisely because it is able to witness the perpetual "transformation in the varieties of forms and attributes"<sup>70</sup> of the cosmos through theophany (*tajalliyāt*). This tradition gives new meaning to the infinite degrees of crossing-over in Eriugena, which is too a product of theophany. Ḥāfīz

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<sup>69</sup> Otten gestures towards this when she writes that, for Eriugena, "the universe, by which is indicated the complete span of its dialectical development, is essentially tailored to the scope of man's rational capacities." (Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 118). Later, she argues that "[humanity's] constitutive rational contribution, however distinctive it may be, can never be abstracted from this dialectical universe." (ibid., 119). I am suggesting however that it is not the universe that conforms *ratio*, but a theophanic logic that becomes the logic of *ratio*. This *ratio* now permits a coincidence of opposites, a nondual logic of the Incarnation, the concrete, constitutive theophany.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 174 (Arabic); ibid., *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 150 (English); ibid., *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 88 (English). From the *faṣṣ*/Chapter of Shu'yab.

recalls that this human heart is “afflicted,” and this coheres entirely with the larger tradition as elaborated above and in Lāhūrī’s commentary. But this affliction, this suffering or *passion*, is missing from Eriugena’s project.

Love is elevated above reason in Ḥāfīz, and suffering love is emphasized as the *sine qua non* for real human existence and experience. To be *really* human is to suffer love, a passionate love that results in affliction. A fundamental principle of the School of Love and Ḥāfīz, it seems to be lacking in Eriugena’s text. While the anthropological demand to suffer love in the poetic words of Ḥāfīz mirrors Christ’s passion and death out of love for humanity in Christian theology in general, the explicit exposition of this Christology of the passion lacks in Eriugena’s œuvre.

However, those poetic words do find a comparative counterpart in Eriugena’s exposition of the compassionate event of the Incarnation of the Word. This exposition is found in a *hexaemeron* that extends from Books III to V, offering a metaphorical reading of the Genesis story of the creation and fall of humanity: “the πᾶν ξύλον (i.e., the All-Tree) is the Word and Wisdom of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Fruit-Bearing All-Tree planted in the middle of the paradise of human nature, and in two ways.”<sup>71</sup> Paradise is human nature, and Jesus Christ is within the human person first “according to His Divinity, by which He creates, contains, nourishes, vivifies, illuminates, deifies, moves, and makes to be our nature: ‘In Him we live, are moved, and exist.’”<sup>72</sup> But more pertinently, the All-Tree in our human nature is Christ because of the Incarnation in which “He united our nature unto Himself in the unity of substance so that He may save it and recall it into the pristine state.”<sup>73</sup> Eriugena later understands the divine statement regarding the All-Tree of Life to be not a negative imperative, but a hopeful subjunctive.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *PP* IV, 116, 3482-3485 (823B).

<sup>72</sup> *PP* IV, 116, 3485-3489 (823BC), citing Acts 17:28.

<sup>73</sup> *PP* IV, 116, 3489-3493 (823C).

<sup>74</sup> The first words of Book V of the *Periphyseon* are “Now therefore may he not perhaps put forth (*Nunc ergo ne forte mittat*) his hand, and take also from the Tree of Life, and eat [of it], and live in eternal life?” (Genesis 3:22) Eriugena makes it a point to read the particle “*ne*” in “*ne forte mittat*” not as a negative, but rather as an “interrogative and as it were dubitative” (*PP* V, 3, 25-26 [861A]). He does this by referencing the Septuagint, which he translates as “And now, God said, may he not finally/at some time (*aliquando*) extend his hand, and

Offering his interpretation of “And now therefore [*nunc ergo*], may he not perhaps [*ne forte mittat*] put forth his hand, and take also from the Tree of Life [= Christ], and eat [of it], and live in eternal life?” (Genesis 3:22), he writes:

As if the Divine Mercy and Infinite Goodness—always ready to be kind and merciful—*sighing* over the fall of the Divine Image and *mercifully condescending* and *patiently suffering* the arrogance of the human person, should plainly say, “Now therefore.” That is: I see now the human person to have been expelled from paradise and made miserable [after having been] blessed...[and therefore] *I suffer greatly with him (condoleo)*. For [the human person] was not made for this end. Accordingly, he was created for the possession of eternal life and beatitude...*Do you not see how much the divine pathos encompasses*, even though it is established in the smallest place from one temporal adverb, i.e., “now” [*nunc*], and from one causal conjunction, i.e., “therefore” [*ergo*]? However, as it were afterwards, the same Divine Mercy converted the lamentation of the human person into a consolation for human nature itself...and promises the return of the human person unto paradise under a certain ambiguous and interrogative form of speech.<sup>75</sup>

Here Eriugena deals with human sin, which Otten contends “distorts the intended course of

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take of the Tree of Life?” (PP V, 3, 19-21 [861A]). He adds, “For the ones who judge this particle, which is ‘*ne*’, in this passage to obtain the meaning of the negative, and not of the interrogative and as it were dubitative—they do not seem to me to be diligently examining it, for they also judge that the human person was expelled from paradise so that he *not* be able to take of the Tree of Life and live eternally. For by what possibility could human nature, after having sinned, take of the Tree of Life and eat thereof and live eternally, when it was not yet liberated from sin and death, which is the punishment for sin, when before the sin [human nature] had not even taken of this same Tree or eaten thereof, as a diligent investigation of scripture would demonstrate. For had [human nature] taken and eaten [of the Tree of Life], surely he would have neither sinned nor fallen, but rather would have lived felicitously in eternity” (PP V, 3-4, 21-33 [861AB]). For Eriugena, the Tree of Life is the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, and so glossing “*ne*” as an absolute negative would preclude liberation and salvation of human nature, and ultimately the return of all things. Had human nature taken of the Tree of Life, i.e., of the Incarnate Word, they would have lived felicitously. Indeed, it seems that this verse is not referencing a punishment, but hope for future liberation and salvation. The French introduction to Book V says as much: “If the particle *ne* were to be interpreted as a negative, the dialogue would be short. This would signify that, in effect, after the original sin God placed a cherub at the gate of paradise to prevent the human person from reentering it. God Himself, in this case, would oppose the return of all things into the *Nature that is not created and that does not create*. It goes without saying that Eriugena cannot bring himself to such a solution. To get out of this difficulty, it is enough for him to observe that, according to grammarians, the particle *ne* does not always have a negative meaning; it occasionally has a dubitative or interrogative value” (PP V, vii). It would seem that by the ones who are not “diligently examining it” Eriugena intends Augustine, at least implicitly. Augustine’s reading of Genesis 3:22: “And now, God says, *what if he should ever stretch out his hand and take of the tree of life and eat, and should live for ever. And the Lord God sent him away from the paradise of pleasure to work the earth from which he had been taken* (Gn 3:22-23). First we have God’s words, then the action that followed on the words. Adam, you see, had not only estranged himself from the life he was going to have received with the angels had he kept the commandment, but also from the one he had been living in Paradise in a privileged kind of bodily condition. So he naturally had to be barred from the tree of life, whether because it would enable him to continue in that privileged bodily condition through some invisible virtue in a visible thing, or because it was also a visible sign or sacrament of invisible Wisdom. In any case he certainly had to be cut off from it” (Augustine of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustine* [Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1990], volume 13, 460). For Latin, see Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI, xl, 54, in CCSL 28, 374, 23 - 375, 10).

<sup>75</sup> PP V, 5, 73-94 (862BC).

events and thus...poses definitely the most difficult problem for Eriugena's anthropology."<sup>76</sup> Sin does appear to disrupt the continuity of theophany, and thus to "[inhibit] the execution of the return...[thereby preventing] the universe from reaching its final resolution."<sup>77</sup> But an alternative reading, attentive to Eriugena's poetics, suggests that the human lapse into sin is at once confronted by the suffering and all-encompassing divine pathos. His reading of certain particles and words, viz., *ne*, *nunc*, and *ergo*, suggest that God is promising salvation rather than punishment.<sup>78</sup> The moment of sin is simultaneous with its conversion by Divine Mercy from lamentation to consolation. In fact, it is only *as it were* (*veluti*) *afterward* that this occurs *now* (*nunc*). There is a continuity in disruption here that theophany brings together: mercy confronts sin at once, or there is mercy in sin, the *felix culpa* (happy sin/fault) that violates the law of noncontradiction nondually, theo-poetically.<sup>79</sup> Human sin is no match for God's poetic mercy.

In these passages, read together, Eriugena interprets the Genesis story to be indicative of God's co-suffering (*condoleo*), that is, of God's suffering with humanity through Jesus Christ who is within the paradise of human nature. To be humanity "in pristine state" is to be the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, and to be Jesus Christ is to condescend mercifully, to suffer patiently with humanity. The theo-poetics of suffering inherent to Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī underscores the passion of the Incarnate Word often overlooked in Eriugenean scholarship. It is not so much that Eriugena bends over backwards to resolve the "caesura" of sin, to use Otten's words,<sup>80</sup> but rather that Eriugena's theophanic logic of the Incarnation is a priori and a fortiori the continuity-in-

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<sup>76</sup> Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 122.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 122.

<sup>78</sup> See footnote 74 above for how this is a reading at variance with Augustine's.

<sup>79</sup> By *felix culpa* I am referring to the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation sung during the Easter Vigil each year in the Roman Catholic Rite: "*O certe necessarium Adæ peccatum, quod Christi morte delatum est! O felix culpa, quæ talem ac tantum méruit habere Redemptorem!*" / O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned for us so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" The theodicy of the *felix culpa* is variously elucidated by Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>80</sup> Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 123.

disruption that transcends linear logic: God's passionate love confronts sin.

### **Making a Choice: Suffering Love or Idealistic Love**

The human experience of suffering and affliction highlighted by the poetic words of Ḥāfīz demanded a closer reading of Eriugena's text, searching for elements of passionate love in his understanding of the Incarnation. While the Irishman is unarguably more metaphysical, rational, and removed from bodily experience in his discourse, the poetic words of Ḥāfīz thrust us into the visceral suffering that love demands of the complete, embodied human person, but not of the disembodied intellection of the angels. We find in the Incarnation the enactment of what is demanded of the human in Ḥāfīz: an afflicted heart whose lot is cast for sorrow (fifth couplet), who enters into "bodily fetters" and is "struck into knots and multiplicities replete with warps and wefts,"<sup>81</sup> which are the enfleshed experiences of this life: this is a theo-poetics that disrupts in continuity. The divine pathos confronts the disruption of sin and suffers with humanity in the Incarnation; in other words, it enters into disruption to subvert the lapse of human sin.

As Rivera reminds us in *Poetics of the Flesh*, human survival, flourishing, and vulnerability are all bound up in the flesh, which "is a constitutive relation to the world."<sup>82</sup> The suffering demanded of the human by Ḥāfīz gives poetic meaning to enfleshed encounters, to the ultimate "poetic/creative justice" of the choice to enter into affliction so that we may be exalted above the angels.

In Christian texts, God is the initiator and model for such an embrace of flesh. Infusing earth with love, God *creates*. Becoming flesh, in birth and suffering, God *re-creates*. Christians are called to remember these stories, to see themselves in the transformations that they depict, to imitate God and be born again.<sup>83</sup>

In the final couplet, Ḥāfīz effectively asks his audience: do you want a love that only receives or a love that, in giving also receives, and in suffering with others also flourishes with others. To elect

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<sup>81</sup> *SH* II, #152, 1,053.

<sup>82</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 154 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 154.

the station of passionate love in this phenomenal world means to reside in “the workshop of the distressed and grief-stricken heart, the heart that flees the station of gladness and happiness.”<sup>84</sup>

The poem thus takes the audience from ontology to epistemology and ethics, from cosmology to anthropology. If flesh “is a constitutive relation to the world,” then the Enfleshment of the Word is a constitute event of *how to be fully human* with an eye to the *more-than* (the fully divine) that enfleshed experience conveys; the Lord Jesus dwells within theophanies of this material world, and thereby surpasses disembodied intellection.

The choice demanded of us is for a love that imagines Incarnational living and consequently gives flesh to those images in entering into spaces of suffering; *this* defines the Incarnation, and it should define our dynamic imaginary, too. Clooney underscores the theo-poetic role of suffering in his Hindu-Catholic theo-poetics, but it is one fueled by divine absence.<sup>85</sup> Finding God in divine absence, in moments of suffering, is certainly one version of the theo-poetic paradox; however, in the theo-poetics of the flesh I am constructing, I am attentive to how divine presence in the flesh demands co-suffering with others.<sup>86</sup> To elect the station of gladness and happiness is to flee spaces of suffering (to remain *in divinis*, as it were, uncreated,

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<sup>84</sup> *SH II*, #152, 1,054.

<sup>85</sup> See, in particular, “Act Two: Spiritual Exercises in Times of Absence,” in Clooney, *His Hiding Place is Darkness*, 49ff.

<sup>86</sup> This theo-poetics of divine presence is central to von Balthasar’s Incarnational demand on Christians: “For this reason, the ‘least’ encounter, or the encounter with the ‘least of these brethren’, has a place in the seriousness of judgment. If Christ has borne this least one and taken away his guilt, then I have to see him, through my faith in love, as he looks in the eyes of my Father in heaven; this image alone is true, and the one that I have, which seems so clear to me, is false. The Christian encounters Christ in his neighbor, not beyond him or above him; and only in this way does the encounter correspond to the incarnate and suffering love of the one who calls himself ‘Son of God’ without the article (Jn 5:27), and who is the nearest to us in all those who are near” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, Tr. D. C. Schindler [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004], 113-114). Balthasar continues in a way that disrupts dualities and seems to construct a nondual relationship: “The duality between ‘any particular man’ and ‘Son of Man’ in the encounter can be resolved in faith only by seeing human sin where it truly belongs, in the Son of Man, who ‘was made to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor 5:21), and thus by seeing Christ’s righteousness in this man himself, as the truth that has been given to him and toward which his existence is ordered. In other words, this twofold unity is in fact to be read ‘through the Cross’. But when we read it thus, the Cross eliminates guilt by transforming it, through love, into love. The eyes required to see my neighbor in this way are given to me only in faith, in the faith that I myself live in God only because Christ died for my sake, a fact that therefore obliges me to interpret all things according to what this love demands” (*ibid.*, 114-115).

unincarnated) in search of an idealistic, secluded community that offers no challenge to the ideologies that oppress. It is to search for disembodied utopia that ignores suffering, rather than one that engages, challenges, and perpetually undermines sin (by “suffering greatly with [*condoleo*] humanity”). In response to sin’s disruption, the Incarnation compassionately disrupts and subverts.

## **Theophany and Unveiling God for Others**

The commentarial tradition avers that the human person is the locus of the tryst of passionate love between lover and beloved, that God resides in the heart of the human person, which heart fluctuates according to the beat of affliction embraced by the two fingers of God’s mercy. In this section, I intend to offer a reading of another love lyric that shifts our attention away from the human person and toward the simultaneity of unveiling and concealing that theophany enacts. Bringing Eriugena’s terminology into the analysis, unveiling may be understood as kataphasis, and concealing as apophasis, while the coincidence of the two in *plus-quam* discourse emerges in Lāhūrī’s commentary as the possibility of witnessing God’s attributes and the impossibility of witnessing God’s essence. The divine attributes leave the human subject in perpetual search for more *in this phenomenal world, in the flesh*. The contours of how theophany relates to metaphor (carrying-beyond), perception (seeing-through), and compassionate action to construct a theo-poetics of the flesh become clearer throughout this dissertation.

For now, I turn to another aspect of theophany central to the School of Love, and poetically expressed in the following love lyric and its commentary: revealing God for self and others.

## **Ghazal 22<sup>87</sup>**

- 1 Tangled curls, sweaty, laughing, and drunk.  
Ripped shirt, reciting *ghazals*, and with a goblet in hand.
- 2 His narcissus-like eyes seeking a quarrel, her lips saying, ‘Alas! What a pity!’ (*afsūs*)  
At midnight last night, he came to my pillow and sat.<sup>88</sup>
- 3 She bent his head behind my ear and whispered with sweet-sadness:<sup>89</sup>  
“My lover of yore, are you asleep?”
- 4 The ‘*arīf*/real-knower<sup>90</sup> to whom they give such a night-stealing cup  
hides [himself from] passionate love (*kāfir-i ‘ishq*) unless he become a wine-worshipper.
- 5 Be gone, oh ascetic, and don’t cavil the dreg-drinkers,  
For on the Day of *Alast*, they gave nothing but this choicest gift<sup>91</sup> to us!
- 6 We drank what he poured into our goblet,  
whether the moonshine of heaven or intoxicating wine.
- 7 The laughter of the wine in the goblet and the tangled curls of the beautiful one  
have broken oh-so-many a vow of repentance, just like the vow of Ḥāfīz.

### **The Choice to Unveil or Conceal God from Self and Others**

This *ghazal* is both more typical of Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics in terms of characters and also rather atypical in terms of their behavior. There is a beloved and a lover situated within the context of a tryst; however, instead of the lover seeking and coming upon the beloved, who is typically coquettish and harsh with his admirer, the beloved approaches him who is found asleep.

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<sup>87</sup> *DKh* #22, 60; *SHI*, #55, 425; *DAv* #22, 51; *DFo* #22, 159. This lyric is also translated by Gray in Ḥāfīz, *The Green Sea of Heaven: Fifty Ghazals from the Dīwān of Ḥāfīz*, 58.

<sup>88</sup> This hemistich is *Dkh*’s version; *SHI* (Lāhūrī) has instead “In the middle of the drunken night, he came to my pillow and sat” (*SHI*, #55, 425).

<sup>89</sup> I am translating *ḥazīn* (an Arabic loanword in Persian) as “sweet-sadness” in combining two possible meanings. The term typically intends sadness, grief, or melancholy. However, lexicons also suggest that, when used to describe a voice, it intends “a soft or gentle, easy, slender, plaintive, and melodious voice” (Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* [London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1863], *q.v.* *ḥazana*). Ḥāshim Jāvīd’s modern commentary suggests translating it as gentle, sweet, or pleasant (*narm, khwush, dil-nishīn*); see Ḥāshim Jāvīd, *Hafiz-i Jāvīd: Sharḥ-i Dushvārīhā-yi Abyāt Va Ghazalīyāt-i Ḥafīz* (Tihārān: Farzān, 1995), 317.

<sup>90</sup> *DKh* reads *arīf* (gnostic, recognizer) while *SHI* (Lāhūrī) has *‘āshiq* (passionate lover). However, in the commentary Lāhūrī glosses this couplet as if it reads *‘arīf*, implying perhaps that a passionate lover is the real-knower (see *SHI*, #55, 428).

<sup>91</sup> The choicest gift (*tuhfa*) seems to refer back to “the Day of *Alast*”, that is, that day when humanity made a covenant with God. The covenant was the gift, and this covenant encompassed even the dregs of life.

Fouchécour is right to suggest that the fourth couplet acts as the pivot of the love lyric (though he doesn't expand):<sup>92</sup> the beloved, though holding a goblet of wine, is the very wine that is the subject of the final three couplets. The beloved becomes the wine that must be consumed by the lover in order that she become a "recognized/realized one" (*'ārif*). Recalling that, according to Lāhūrī, humanity is a "rose garden of recognitions (*ma 'ārif*),"<sup>93</sup> it becomes apparent that the subject of this love lyric is theophany, for God is infinitely unveiling God's self to the human person. This love lyric is representative of what James Morris observes is the "characteristic progression of metaphysical and existential shifts in perspective" innate to Ḥāfīz's *ghazals*. These shifts are "revealing, and then potentially transforming each reader's love, desire, will and self-understanding."<sup>94</sup> The beloved in this lyric is the initiator of such self-disclosure, and so the subject of this love lyric is more properly cosmological, concerning creation. In my reading, with the help of Lāhūrī's commentary, I aim to illuminate in this section how this love lyric deepens our understanding of the concurrence of unveiling/kataphasis and concealing/apophasis. The realization of such a concurrence is demanded of the audience precisely at the pivot of the love lyric, in the fourth couplet when Ḥāfīz effectively asks: are *you* going to hide (*kāfir*) the Real from yourself and others, or reveal it?

### **Theophany's Enticing Discord**

The second couplet illustrates the contradictory approach of the beloved, who is for Lāhūrī the theophany of "the Exalted Beloved."<sup>95</sup> His drawing near to sit next to his lover's pillow is an ostensible act of kindness, a condescension to his admirer that is at variance with the manner of his approach. His eyes, "which the *ṣūfīs* have called...a 'sedition-seeker' (*fitna-jūy*),"<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *DFo*, 160.

<sup>93</sup> *SH II*, #152, 1,048.

<sup>94</sup> Morris, "Transfiguring Love," in Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love*, 227.

<sup>95</sup> *SH I*, #55, 426.

<sup>96</sup> *SH I*, #55, 426.

are seeking a quarrel on account of the haughtiness and needlessness of the beloved, in accordance with the saying, “What does the Lord of lords have to do with dirt?”<sup>97</sup> The transcendence (*tanzīh*) of God renders the divinity beyond all earthly matters. However, in this very act of transcendence the beloved approaches with his lips saying, “Alas! What a pity!”, a term that translates the Persian, *afsūs*, which expresses “grief and regret for the state of a person.”<sup>98</sup> In vocalizing *afsūs*, the lips, which signify “the encompassing benevolence (*lutf*) of the beloved,”<sup>99</sup> must be puckered as though preparing for a kiss during the final, long vowel demanded by the meter.<sup>100</sup> The benevolence of the beloved is augmented by the puckered lips, attracting the lover, and together this may be interpreted as God’s immanence (*tashbīh*). The transcendence of quarrel-seeking eyes manifests alongside the loving-kindness of his lips, instantiating in the beloved’s countenance the coincidence of opposites: unveiling and concealing, apophasis and kataphasis.

Lāhūrī then offers an eminently insightful commentary on this couplet:

“His narcissus-like eyes” and “her lips” refer to the manifesting face (*rū-yi zāhir*) of this beloved with tangled curls. However, since these dear [realized] ones gaze at reality (*ḥaqīqa*) in this very same metaphorical invocation (*dhikr-i majāz*), [the manifesting face of this beloved] refers to the Theophanic Beloved—may His affair be exalted—in the locus-of-manifestation of that beloved with the tangled curls, drunk, independent and without need. The meaning: The eye of that beloved [expresses] a malevolent and bellicose regard, [but] the lips are in the station of compassion and kindness (*dil-jū’ī*), [and this is] for the sake of instructing the passionate lover, who is between fearfulness and hopefulness, lest he lose discipline (*adab*) and, by way of drunkenness and afflicting-love (*walah*), lest he imagine that the locus-of-manifestation is exactly the same essence of the Manifest[ing One], lest he fall in prostration (*sajda*) before the locus-of-manifestation, lest he fall into the abyss of sheer union (*jam*).<sup>101</sup>

Three observations are worth unpacking in this commentary. First, the metaphorical beloved in this phenomenal world is an invocation, or remembrance, of God whereby the lover perceives

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<sup>97</sup> *SHI*, #55, 426.

<sup>98</sup> *SHI*, #55, 427.

<sup>99</sup> *SHI*, #55, 427.

<sup>100</sup> See Michael C. Hillmann, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafiz*, 59-60.

<sup>101</sup> *SHI*, #55, 427.

reality, the Real. Theophany makes this possible. Second, the theophany of the face unveils through compassion and kindness of the lips, but conceals in the provocative bellicosity of the eyes; this is perhaps a reference also to the contrasting divine names of Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*). Third, it is evident that the eyes are intended to keep the lover at a distance, lest he be accused of absolute immanence (*tashbīh*) or union (*ittiḥād*), while the lips are intended to attract the lover, lest he be accused of absolute transcendence (*tanzīh*) or separation (*farq*) from God, thereby considering God totally other than, and separate from, creation, without any relationship therewith. The simultaneity of unveiling and concealing instructs the passionate lover. God is neither the same as creation, nor totally other than, but rather always *more than*. The beloved approaches the sleeping lover, and disrupts her life, as it were.

The discipline the lover must undergo is more explicitly addressed in the first couplet of another *ghazal* worth referencing at this juncture.

Whenever I follow his path, he provokes enticing discord (*fitna*).  
But when I break from seeking her, he rises up with a vengeance.<sup>102</sup>

*Fitna* is used once again, but I have elected to translate it as “enticing discord.” While the Persian word of Arabic origin is a common one that means sedition, riot, or discord, Lāhūrī reminds us that “*fitna* is [also] temptation, disgrace, punishment, the smelting of gold and silver, and seduction.”<sup>103</sup> It also refers to attractiveness, enchantment, and enticement, hence my interpretive translation: “enticing discord,” a species of poetic *disruption*.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *DKh*, #151, 318. Also in this *ghazal*, *afsūs* plays a similar role in the third couplet: “When I seek out half a kiss, a hundred no-no’s [*afsūs*] / from the jewell-box of his mouth, like sugar, spill down.” (Ibid.) I have chosen to translate *afsūs* here as “no-no!”, since this is the beloved’s way of refusing even half a kiss. Yet, by the very act of denying the lover a kiss, the beloved puckers his lips with the lengthened reply, *afsūs*. In other words, here we have a concentrated and concrete example of the simultaneous concealing and revealing of the beloved; here, coquetry is given a linguistic form. That is, *afsūs* both refuses the lover, escaping from him, while at the same time seducing him further with his enticing, puckered lips. For translations of this particular love lyric, see *DFo*, #151, 560 (French); *DAv*, #151, 206; Ḥāfīz, *The Green Sea of Heaven*, 95. Lāhūrī’s commentary is at *SH* II, #108, 776.

<sup>103</sup> *SH* II, #108, 777.

<sup>104</sup> The point of the *fitna*, as the commentator suggests, is to test out one’s purity, disposition, and merit. “That is, should you seek out and follow the path of this beloved who is without need, then he will provoke various types of enticing discord, temptation, and trials such that, with a certain purity, disposition, and merit, you may follow [him]” (*SH* II, #108, 777). If the lover is prepared, then he will only continue to seek him out, and with further desire. Yet even if the lover is unprepared and thus ceases to seek him out, the beloved will not give up;

In all this, theophany is the means whereby the lover is enticed to act, to make a choice that responds to the divine self-disclosure, be it of Majesty or Beauty. Theophany disrupts the normative conceptions of the world, of life, of one's ethical duties. There is an unveiling that nevertheless keeps concealed *more than* what is revealed. The disruptive revelation may induce fear, but it can be transformed into hope, too, or even desire for more. When in the third couplet the beloved asks, "My lover of yore, are you asleep?," Ḥāfiẓ prepares the audience for the pivot at which a choice *must* be made. The question may be rephrased: are you asleep, unaware of God, blind to the theophanies? Or, are you awake, a realized one who recognizes (*ʿārif*) God in the theophanic cosmos and therefore is ready to act in hope instead of fear, with unbounded imagination as opposed to constricted intellection?

### Revealing God for Others

The pivot of this love lyric, along with its commentary, thrusts us deep into the perplexing paradoxes of the School of Ibn ʿArabī and the radically love-centric cosmology of the School of Love. On the surface, Ḥāfiẓ submits that the real knower, the *ʿārif*, is an infidel (*kāfir*) toward passionate love *until* he become a wine-worshipper. Lāhūrī himself brings Ibn ʿArabī, Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī, and Maḥmūd Shabistarī into his commentary in order to explain this couplet.

According to technical terms, most of the realized ones call the wine cup (*bāda*) the light of theophany, *which is in matter*... And the *kāfir*, according to the technical terms of Shaykh Muḥyiddin Ibn ʿArabī—may his secret be blessed—is the one who is veiled over (*mastūr*) by the existence of the loci-of-theophany and by the attributes and acts of the Real *from* the existence of the Real. The intended [meaning] of passionate love is the Essence of the Real—may His affair be exalted (as it is explained by the author of the *Lama ʿāt*, [Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī])... The meaning: this sublime beloved said that the *ʿārif* who is privy to secrets and acquainted with the reality is granted the affair of the cup, [which] means loveliness and beauty in the garment of the veil of the metaphorical manifested beloved; if [this *ʿārif*] does not become a worshipper of loveliness, then he is concealing (*sātir*) and covering the theophany of the Real. This is because the Absolute Real attracts to reality the hearts of passionate lovers through the forms of loveliness.<sup>105</sup>

Lāhūrī lays the groundwork for this section by immediately averring that the light of theophany *is in matter*; he refuses to create an absolute duality between this phenomenal world, the *majāz* or

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he will manifest his jealousy and rise up with vengeance.

<sup>105</sup> SH I, #55, 428.

metaphor, and the Real, the *ḥaqīqa* or reality. He then turns to Ibn ‘Arabī’s conceptualization of *kufr*, which is often translated as infidel or unbeliever. Etymologically, the root meaning of this term pertains to covering or concealing (*kafr*), and Ibn ‘Arabī often has recourse to this. For example, in the chapter on Jesus in his popular *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, he interprets Qur’ān 48:25, “They are the ones who are unbelievers (*kafarū*),” in terms of veiling (*sitr*).<sup>106</sup> Infidels are the ones who conceal themselves from the Real, or conceal the Real Itself, who is manifest in and through all things even in this phenomenal world via the theophany of the divine names and attributes.<sup>107</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, in his *Futūḥāt*, offers concise verse that gets at the heart of this:

Whosoever veils (*satarā*) the Real and doesn’t disclose Him,  
 That person is the one who is an infidel (*kafara*).  
 God is not hidden from the one’s gazing  
 at Her, whether with the eye of intelligence or with eyesight.  
 Blessed is God who never ceases  
 to manifest in every form that has appeared,  
 For [God] is always their generator

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<sup>106</sup> This exegesis is performed in the context of expositing Ibn ‘Arabī’s idiosyncratic Christology, referenced in the introduction of this dissertation: “Bewilderment would come upon the one gazing at [Jesus]...[which] led some of them to profess divine indwelling, and [to profess] that he is God...and therefore they are attributed with unbelief (*kufr*), which is concealment (*satr*), because they conceal God...in the human-skin of Jesus...But [Christians are not in error and unbelief] in their saying ‘Jesus is God,’ and not in their saying ‘Jesus is the son of Mary,’ rather they deviated in enclosing God into the mortal, human form [of Jesus]...[That is why] disputes take place among the various [Christian] communities concerning Jesus, [for they ask], ‘What is He?’” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 214-215; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 177-178; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 106-107). Ibn ‘Arabī also discusses the relation between *kufr* (unbelief) and *satr* (concealment) in his chapter on Noah in the *Fuṣūṣ*.

<sup>107</sup> Qayṣarī’s gloss on this section from the *faṣṣ* of Jesus is insightful, if not enigmatic, and it follows: “As [God] said, ‘They are the ones who are unbelievers,’ (Qur’ān 48:25) using the pronoun of hiddenness, for hiddenness concealed [*satr*] them from what is meant by the Witnessed One Who is present. And [later God] said, ‘If you punish them’, [again] with the pronoun of hiddenness. E.g., ‘them’ in ‘If You should punish them [—indeed they are Your servants—] but if You forgive them’ (Qur’ān 5:118), a pronoun of hiddenness; and ‘he’ in ‘He is God the One’; and ‘he’ in ‘He is the One who is God in the heavens and God in the earth.’ (Qur’ān 112:1) and ‘He is God, other than Whom there is no God.’ (Qur’ān 59:23) [He, them] and other similar pronouns are pronouns of hiddenness, and the hiddenness to which the pronouns ‘he’ and ‘them’ refer are curtains and veils [covering] them from what is meant by the Witnessed One Who is present. Just as when [God] said, ‘They are the ones who are unbelievers’ using the pronoun ‘they’ while attributing to them unbelief which is veiling...The meaning of ‘Witnessed One Who is present’ is the Real who manifests through His All-Merciful breath and becomes witnessed at the levels of the World of Spirits that are purely luminous forms and in the World of Images and Sense-Perception in sensible forms. Though, remember also and often that the entities never smell a whiff of existence, and all that is in existence are phenomenal-entities and forms newly from existence, as images and reflections thereof. For the entities are not witnessed except in the mirror of existence, and existence is the Real, and the witnessed in the Real, nothing else. And it is the very veil [*ḥijāb*] in which they are [concealed] from the Real. That is, this veil [*sitr*] is the very veil [*ḥijāb*] that veils them from the Real. That is, that hiddenness to which the pronoun of hiddenness refers is the very veil [*ḥijāb*] in which they are [concealed] from the Real, for the hiddenness insofar as it is hiddenness is a single thing, and it is the hiddenness of the Real in which his speaking servants are at the time of their annihilation of themselves from their attributes, and it is the hiddenness that is obtained when [God] draws near during the supererogatory works” (Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 900-901).

in all that manifests or has manifested.<sup>108</sup>

Given this brief foray into Ibn ‘Arabī, it becomes more evident what Lāhūrī means: someone who is a *kāfir* perceives only the forms, attributes, and acts of the phenomenal world *severed from the Real*, and therefore is veiled *from* the Real qua theophany. This person does not recognize the theophanic cosmos in which, as Qayṣarī, a foremost expositor of the School of Ibn ‘Arabī, contends, “the Real...manifests through his all-merciful breath and becomes witnessed at [all] levels, [from] the World of Spirits...[to] the World of Images and Sense-Perception in sensible forms.”<sup>109</sup>

This is precisely why this person “hides himself” from passionate love, or alternatively translated, “hides passionate love.” Lāhūrī asserts that passionate love *is* the Essence of the Real, and refers to ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt*. This theological point pervades this abstruse, markedly poetic text, but Lāhūrī is likely referring to ‘Irāqī’s Flash VII, given how it explicitly speaks of the “the manifestation of *‘ishq* through Its non-delimitation in all of the loci-of-manifestation and Its emergence in the garments of Belovedness for all [kinds of] perceptions and recognitions.”<sup>110</sup>

Following Lāhūrī’s allusions, the opening to ‘Irāqī’s flash along with Jāmī’s commentary provides fruitful insight into this couplet (**bold is ‘Irāqī’s original**, around which is Jāmī’s commentary):

**Passionate love** through Its own essential non-delimitation **pervades [sārī] all existent things**, whether noetic and hidden or of phenomenal existence; this is because the first of Its essential affairs was to self-disclose (*tajallī*) to Itself [whereby] the immutable entities, which are the quiddities of all things, become entities at the [divine], noetic level, and the second was to become tinted with the commands and effects of the immutable entities in the [process] of manifesting [whereby] they became manifest as external existent things. The meaning of [passionate love’s] pervading all things is Its universal theophany of the existent things, outwardly and inwardly, since nothing at any level can be realized without [passionate love]. Consequently, **nay, [passionate love] is all things. How can one deny passionate love when nothing is in existence without It?** Meaning, how can we remain

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<sup>108</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.375.29-32 (Chapter 369 “Concerning the Recognition of the Station of the Keys to the Treasuries of Generosity [*jūd*]”).

<sup>109</sup> Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 901.

<sup>110</sup> This is the title given to ‘Irāqī’s Flash VII by Jāmī in his commentary. See Jāmī, *Ashī ‘‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, 109. For Chittick’s commentary on this Flash, for which he draws from Jāmī’s own *Ashī ‘‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, see ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 139, and for his translation of Flash VII, see *ibid.*, 84. Original Persian is in ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-‘i Lama ‘āt Va Risālah-‘i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 15.

ignorant of passionate love and Its state when in existence there is nothing but passionate love? [...] **Were it not for It, what has appeared would not have appeared.** Meaning, if passionate love did not exist, that which has appeared would not have appeared. This is because the realities of things are forms of Its theophanies, for all that has appeared are their appearances through [passionate love's] existentiating theophany after having attained the provisions, which themselves are even among the forms of [passionate love's] theophanies.<sup>111</sup>

The link between the School of Love and Ibn 'Arabī is explicitly formalized by 'Irāqī and later cemented by Jāmī. For Ibn 'Arabī, the Real manifests and courses through all things, while for 'Irāqī and Jāmī, the Real becomes equated with passionate love. Lāhūrī draws from these traditions and asserts that the cup is the light of theophany within creation; the *'arif* must therefore grasp the loveliness and beauty that is the theophanic cosmos, otherwise she will conceal (*sātir*) the theophany. Recalling the covenant that passionate love (the Real) has with loveliness (creation), Lāhūrī glosses that “the Absolute Real attracts to reality the hearts of passionate lovers through the forms of loveliness.”<sup>112</sup> Theophany requires engagement with the tensive reality of this phenomenal world, which both conceals and unveils the Real, God, who is Passionate Love. In other words, the theophanic coincidence of opposites of unveiling-and-concealment, or a continuity of disruption, is *how* passionate, suffering love courses through reality; theophany becomes the mode whereby the phenomenal world exists. In Eriugena, this can be re-imagined as the co-suffering of the Divine Pathos that confronts the disruption of sin in his exegesis of the Genesis creation narrative.

Lāhūrī ends his citational exegesis by quoting three couplets from Shabistarī's famous *Rose Garden of Mystery*, a profound and highly influential didactic poem (*mathnawī*) of roughly 1008 couplets unfolding mystical doctrine; this 14<sup>th</sup>-century text was formative of later Persian intellectual and spiritual traditions and prompted many commentaries.<sup>113</sup> Lāhūrī here cites the following verses from Shabistarī's poem to explain how theophany functions in the phenomenal

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<sup>111</sup> Jāmī, *Ashi 'āt al-Lama 'āt*, 109-110.

<sup>112</sup> *SH I*, #55, 428.

<sup>113</sup> For an excellent monograph on Shabistarī, see Leonard Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995).

(metaphorical) world:

What is this beauty in a lovely face?  
Not lovely is that [face] alone: say, what is it?  
Being ravished-of-heart comes only from the Real,  
for there is no association (*shirkat*) for the person *in divinis*.  
How can lust ravish a person's heart?  
For the Real rarely appears in vain/illusory (*bāṭil*).<sup>114</sup>

Given Lāhūrī's commentary just before this citation, it is evident he was steeped in Lāhījī's 15<sup>th</sup>-century commentary on the *Rose Garden of Mystery*, entitled *Maḡāṭīḡ al-i 'jāz fī sharḡ-i Gulshan-i Rāz*, a veritable textbook on mystical doctrine in the Persian-speaking context of South Asia; Lāhūrī's conclusion in his commentary on the fourth couplet is similar to the commentary Lāhījī offers for these three verses. Therein, Lāhījī reminds us that "nothing in reality can be effective save the Real,"<sup>115</sup> which means that all *real* attraction is from the Real's theophany in the world: "the Undelimited Beautiful, which manifests in the beautiful forms of the loci-of-manifestation, ravishes, controls, and attracts hearts, and is subject over all things."<sup>116</sup> Lāhūrī even references the Arabic verse from a *ḡadīḡ*, also cited by Lāhījī: "The most veracious speech said by the Arabs was the following from Labīd: 'Behold! Everything except God is vain/illusory (*bāṭil*).'"<sup>117</sup> (The previous line of this poem from Labīd is "Indeed! Whosoever has a heart is desiring God!").<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *SH I*, #55, 428; citing lines 629-631 of the poem. See Mahmūd Shabīstarī, *Gulshan-i Rāz* (Tehran: Manūchīhrī, 1992), 66. For an English translation of this poem, refer to Robert Darr's book: Mahmūd Shabīstarī, *The Gulshani-i Raz of Shabistari* (Cambridge: Archetype, 2007). Alternatively, see Mahmūd Shabīstarī, *The Rose Garden of Mystery: Shabistari*, Tr. Paul Smith (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).

<sup>115</sup> Muḡammad ibn Yaḡyā Lāhījī, *Maḡāṭīḡ Al-i 'jāz Fī Sharḡ Gulshan-i Rāz* (Tīhrān: Zavvār, 1992), 409 (line 11).

<sup>116</sup> Lāhījī, *Maḡāṭīḡ Al-i 'jāz Fī Sharḡ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 409.

<sup>117</sup> *SH I*, #55, 428. Also cited in Lāhījī, *Maḡāṭīḡ Al-i 'jāz Fī Sharḡ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 409 (lines 7-8). According to the *ḡadīḡ* in *Ṣaḡīḡ Muslim*, there are three variations of this tradition. (1) "The best poetic speech spoken by the Arabs was the following words belonging to Labīd: 'Behold! Everything except God is vain [*bāṭil*].'" (2) "The most veracious speech said by a poet was the speech belonging to Labīd: 'Behold! Everything except God is vain [*bāṭil*].' And Umayya b. Abu al-Ṣalt was almost a muslim." (3) "Indeed, the most veracious speech said by a poet are those belonging to Labīd: 'Behold! Everything except God is vain [*bāṭil*].' [And nothing was added after this]." See Muslim, *Ṣaḡīḡ Muslim, Kitāb al-shi'r* in volume 7. The line of poetry is from Labīd Ibn Rabī'ah's *ḡhazal* 60: "I see the people unaware of the extent of their command / Indeed! whosoever has a heart [*lubb*] is desiring God / Behold! Everything except God is vain/illusory [*bāṭil*] / and every comforting-ease [*na'im*] most certainly passes" (Labīd Ibn Rabī'ah, *Dīwān Labīd Ibn Rabī'ah* [Bayrūt: Dār Al-Kitāb Al-'Arabī, 1993], 144-149).

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

Within the Qur’ān, what is the Real (*ḥaqq*) is often contrasted with what is *bāṭil*, *un-real* or false.<sup>119</sup> Lāhūrī’s “[the ‘*ārif* who] does not become a worshipper of loveliness...is concealing (*sātir*) and covering the theophany of the Real” expands on the Qur’ānic juxtaposition of what is Real with what is fake, and succinctly encapsulates Lāhījī’s arguments in the three-page commentary on these three verses, in which he ends by quoting Shabistarī’s *Risālat-i Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*:

Metaphorical passionate love, which is an excessive love (*maḥabbat*), acquires form only from a loveliness that is within a human locus-of-manifestation, for the mirror of the [human] heart, which is attributed the capaciousness of [the *ḥadīth*] “My [God’s] heavens and My earth do not encompass Me, but the heart of My faithful servant does encompass Me,” is immersed in nothing but the form of complete loveliness. This is the very same passionate love that, from the predominance of the form [of loveliness], burns on account of the metaphorical passionate lover and his becoming a phenomenal entity, and without the obstruction of consideration (*i’tibār*) [and] the veils of its own rivals, plays the game of passionate love with itself, and is then called *real* [passionate love]. [‘God loves them and they love God’ (Qur’ān 5:54).] ‘Metaphor is a bridge to reality’ alludes to this meaning.<sup>120</sup>

Passionate love in this phenomenal world is ignited by the flame of loveliness that takes form in the divine encounter with the human person (and *only* a human person, i.e., not a disembodied angel). The covenant between passionate love and loveliness, already mentioned, may be kept only because the nature of the human heart “encompasses God”, as stated by the *ḥadīth qudsī* Lāhījī cites. Joining Lāhūrī and Lāhījī, it may be said that the ‘*ārif* possesses a heart that completely reflects loveliness and therefore passionately loves in the world. This ‘*ārif* then aims not to conceal (*satr*, *kafīr/kufīr*) the theophanies of the Real from others, but to be the means whereby others become more perfect theophanies themselves.

Having travelled outward from the middle of this love lyric to explore the many authors and concepts Lāhūrī calls to our attention, we are now able to return better prepared to

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<sup>119</sup> “That is because those who disbelieve [*kafarū*] follow falsehood [*al-bāṭil*] and because those who believe follow the truth [*al-ḥaqq*] from their Lord. Thus does God set forth for mankind their likenesses” (Qur’ān 47:3); “Say, ‘Truth [*al-ḥaqq*] has come, and falsehood [*al-bāṭil*] has vanished. Truly falsehood [*al-bāṭil*] is ever vanishing” (Qur’ān 17:81); “...so that He may verify [*yuhiqqa*] the Truth [*al-ḥaqq*] and proof falsehood to be false [*yubṭila al-bāṭil*]” (Qur’ān 8:8). For other examples of this juxtaposition, of which there are many, see Qur’ān 34:49; 40:5; 2:42; 18:56; 22:62; 31:30; 13:17; 21:18; 40:78.

<sup>120</sup> Lāhījī, *Mafātīḥ Al-i ‘jāz Fī Sharḥ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 409-410, citing Shabistarī’s *Risālat-i Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, found in Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Shabistarī, *Ḥaqq Al-yaqīn Fī Ma ‘rifat Rabb Al- ‘ālamīn* (Tihārān: Asāṭīr, 2001), 67. The bracketed Qur’ānic verse is in Shabistarī’s original, but missing from Lāhījī’s citation.

comprehend Ḥāfīz’s final three couplets.

### **The Fake Ascetic: Fleeing the World**

Upon realizing that passionate love demands engagement with the theophanic, phenomenal world, the ascetic (*zāhid*) enters the antepenultimate couplet as the foil to the ‘*ārif*. The figure of the ascetic in Ḥāfīz’s lyrics is a pointedly public recluse, one who *formally* renounces the world. He often serves as the antagonist in Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics because of either his hypocrisy or his superficial, self-righteousness; the ascetic behaves pretentiously and flaunts his fasting and prayer life for self-aggrandizement, only to renounce his asceticism privately. Ḥāfīz’s “tone of...parody or sarcasm, voicing reproach, contempt, disdain or scorn” toward the ascetic does not betray the otherwise “ascetic eschewing of worldly materialism [that] permeates [his] poetry.”<sup>121</sup> Rather, “Ḥāfīz’s criticism of asceticism is directed at the lifeless formalism and the desiccated loveless piety of its headless ‘Muslim’ practitioners...[who], being insensible to *Eros*, [profess] a philistine ignorance of the paradoxes of erotic spirituality and the passions of apophatic theology.”<sup>122</sup> Just as the *fake* ascetic may *formally* renounce the world, he likewise perceives only the *forms* of the world, blind to their theophanic meaning, and Lāhūrī suggests as much:

The careless ascetic...gazes at the expression and form and does not arrive at a scent of the meaning through his sense of smell, and so consequently he scolds the metaphorical [phenomenal] passionate lovers with rebuke, caviling, and reproach. But in response to him, [Ḥāfīz] says... ‘Don’t cavil and rebuke the lovers and contemplators of metaphorical [phenomenal] loveliness!’ Because in pre-eternity, at the time of destiny, [God] neither gave nor made [our] fortune [to be] anything but this

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<sup>121</sup> Leonard Lewisohn, “The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Ḥāfīz’s Anti-clericalism,” in Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion*, 160.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 160. That chapter offers a good introduction to Ḥāfīz’s anti-clericalism and the very real character of the libertine (*rind*). See also Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 32-43; and also Daryush Shayegan’s introduction (“The Visionary Topography of Ḥāfīz”) in Gray, *The Green Sea of Heaven*, 28ff. The *rind*, or the “inspired libertine,” possesses a “provocative, scandalous attitude” that “shocks the narrow-minded, breaking the barren charm of conformity with which people called ‘rational’ hem themselves in.” But “as seen by the interpreter of the ‘science of the gaze’ (*‘ilm-i-naẓar*), this art will be the magical art of ‘the one who is possessed of the art of the gaze’ (*ṣāhib-i naẓar*).” (Shayegan in Gray, *The Green Sea of Heaven*, 29). The *rind* and his ways certainly parallel the way in which this dissertation counterposes the shock of metaphor and the nondualism of the imagination against the restrictive logic of *ratio*.

choicest gift, viz., the careful-contemplation (*muṭāla‘a*) of metaphorical [phenomenal] loveliness.<sup>123</sup> The Day of *Alast*, referenced in the second hemistich, refers to Qur’ān 7:172: “And when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants and made them testify against their own souls: ‘Am I not your Lord?’ (*alastu bi-rabbikum*) They said, ‘Verily (*balā*), we testify [to this].’” *Ṣūfī* commentators read this verse as the “day” of the primordial covenant when humanity committed to a compact of love with God. Lāhūrī avers that this covenant granted humanity the choicest gift: the ability to contemplate and truly appreciate loveliness *in this world*, something denied to the loveless ascetic. However, this covenant sealed by “Verily!”, *balā*, is a source of great affliction, *balā’*, a homophone of the affirmative answer given in the Qur’ān. Once again, suffering is concomitant with love. Rejecting the cup of the phenomenal world implies fleeing passionate love; refusing to drink the dregs implies avoiding “the melancholy [*saudā*] of the passionate beloveds.”<sup>124</sup> This is what the disembodied angels elected to do.

In the penultimate couplet, Lāhūrī interprets the “what he poured into our goblet” to be our predisposition, our capacity (*ḥauṣala*) for loving granted to each human person in pre-eternity. Goblet or cup in other parts of Lāhūrī’s commentary refers to the human heart, as well as the created world, given the anthropocosmic nature of theophany. Lāhūrī asks “the squinty-eyed ascetic, ‘what’s my sin?’”, for, quoting the Qur’ān 6:96, “That is the determination (*taqdīr*) of the Exalted in magnificence, the All-Knowing,” whether it be the moonshine of heaven, i.e., *real wine*, or intoxicating wine, i.e., *metaphorical wine of this world*.

Lāhūrī’s commentary on the final couplet definitively displaces this love lyric into the discourse of theophany; each object refers to some process of theophany culminating in the assertion (echoing Lāhījī) that “the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds, with regard to their

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<sup>123</sup> *SH I*, #55, 429.

<sup>124</sup> *SH I*, #55, 429.

being loci of theophany, attract the hearts of the recognizing ones (*'ārifān*).<sup>125</sup> The broken vow of repentance belongs to the antagonist, the ascetic scorned by Ḥāfīz, because “the vow of repentance of someone like this does not find its source in veraciousness and certainty, but is rather continually broken as soon as it is taken.”<sup>126</sup> Ḥāfīz admits that he himself took such a weak, false vow at one point, but “repented from this repentance:”

The manifestation and theophanic-splendor (*jilvā*) of the [theophanic] light [is] concealed and made-an-entity [in] the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds [that are] loci of the theophany of Real Loveliness (*ḥusn-i ḥaqīqī*). Many vows of repentance have been broken like the vow of ascetics. The helpless ascetic, because of his lack of recognition (*ma 'rifāt*) of the reality of the affair, is forbidden from the careful-contemplation of beauty through the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds. But if he were to witness the theophanic-splendor of beauty through the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds, then certainly he would repent from the formal repentance, and he would repent of his own deeds.<sup>127</sup>

In the *takhalluṣ*, Ḥāfīz makes repentance from pretentious repentance the sine qua non for the witnessing of theophanic beauty. The false, affected ascetic is veiled from theophany, and thus a *kāfir*. Furthermore, the ascetic, who struts around town castigating others who may be engaging the world's beauty, himself veils the theophany of passionate love *from them*; in this way, he is the *mudda 'ī*, or pretender and complaining critic (of God, no less), who endeavors to enter harshly and oppressively into the “place of witnessing the secret” to prevent or conceal “the theophany of the [divine] attributes and the beauty of the [divine] names.”<sup>128</sup> Just as theophany unveils and conceals simultaneously, the subject of the first three couplets, likewise may our response unveil and conceal theophany, the subject of the final three couplets. The choice

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<sup>125</sup> The full excerpt: “The ‘goblet of wine’ alludes to the very same theophanic light which was interpreted as such in the above couplet by *bāda*, which is the locus of manifestation and the locus of theophany of those metaphorical beloveds. The ‘laughter of the wine’ alludes to the manifestation of the theophanic-splendor of that theophanic light, which becomes manifest [*jilvā*] to the eye of the passionate lover in the garment of the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds. The ‘tresses’ alludes to the entification and individualization of the metaphorical beloveds; these tresses are said to be ‘tangled’ [like chains] because of the fact that the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds, with regard to their being loci of theophany, attract the hearts of the recognizing ones [*'ārifān*]. The intended meaning of ‘beautiful one’ are the metaphorical [phenomenal] beloveds” (*SH I*, #55, 429).

<sup>126</sup> *SH I*, #55, 429.

<sup>127</sup> *SH I*, #55, 430.

<sup>128</sup> *SH I*, #55, 430.

depends on whether we choose to take the cup offered in the pivotal, fourth couplet, as Ḥāfiẓ did, or reject it.<sup>129</sup> Electing to *seize the cup of passionate love* results in a voluntary self-suffering in the world in response to the pre-eternal covenant of love humans have with God; electing to *reject the cup of passionate love* results not only in oppressing others by concealing God’s love from them, but also in fleeing suffering in seclusion and delusion (while actually maintaining one’s deeper attachment to materiality).

### **Humanity’s Vocation: To Reveal the Divine Names**

Concealing love is a subjective choice to refuse humanity’s vocation, which is to recognize and to be the divine names and attributes in the world. It is rather apposite that the relationship between *kufṛ* (infidelity) and *sitr* (concealing) to which Lāhūrī refers is seminally explicated within the tradition in the Chapter on Jesus in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikām*. There is a serendipitous link to the Incarnation within the tradition from which Lāhūrī draws. In that chapter, Ibn ‘Arabī versifies the constitutive relationship humans have with the divine names and attributes:

Were it not for Him, and were it not for us,  
That which is would not exist.  
For we are servants in truth,  
and God is our Master.  
But we are Her Essence, so understand [that]

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<sup>129</sup> Lāhūrī interprets several couplets in other love lyrics as referencing an experience Ḥāfiẓ underwent in which he encountered Khidr, Moses’s guide in Qur’ān 18:65-82, and who becomes in *ṣūfi* tradition the being who initiates individuals into the mystical path and conveys divine revelation directly to them (in contradistinction to sufis who are initiated into a *ṭarīqa*—one of the many sufi brotherhoods—via an earthly *shaykh* or *pīr*). For example, Lāhūrī’s gloss of the following *maṭla‘* is informative: “Last night, at the break of dawn, they granted me deliverance from suffocating-sorrow [*ghuṣṣa*] / and in the darkness of the night, they granted me the water of life” (*SH* II, #175, 1196; *DKh*, #178, 372; *DAv*, #178, 237; *DFo*, #178, 509). Lāhūrī explains that Ḥāfiẓ, heartbroken by a coquettish beloved of the city, spent much time in supplicatory prayer at the *Chil-sutūn*, a famous place of pilgrimage outside the city of Shīrāz, in order to attain his worldly desire for the beloved. However, one time in contemplation, he received a vision of Khidr who offered him “the cup of the wine of recognition and love, the goblet of the wine of ardor” and told him to drink it. “When he woke up from the dream, he saw that very cup of wine in his hand, [and] he began to drink it, and [thereupon] realities and recognitions descended upon his heart and he attained the rank of God-Friendship [*walāyah*]” (*SH* II, #175, 1198-1199). Worth noting is that the cup of wine in the dream-vision (imagination) physically appears in the phenomenal world; this underscores the fact that the distinction between the imaginal, dream world and this phenomenal world is not impermeable, but rather porous, and as such the “two worlds” are not unrelated, neither one nor two, but rather nondual. For related stories of Khidr in Lāhūrī’s commentary, usually in reference to his conversion *from* so-called “formal sciences” (Qur’ānic *tafsīr*, *fiqh*/jurisprudence, theology, philosophy), superficial asceticism, and rational knowledge, *to* love and recognition, see the following pages in Lāhūrī’s commentary: *SH* I, 5 and 496; *SH* II, 1,430; *SH* III, 1,592; *SH* IV, 2,453. The love lyrics in *DKh*, *DFo*, and *DAv* are, respectively, #1, #18, #107, #124, and #314.

when I say “Human” [*insān*],  
 do not be veiled by “Human”,  
 for He has given you a proof.  
 So be the Real and be a creature,  
 and you will be compassionate through God.  
 Nurture Her creation from Him,  
 and you will be the Spirit and the Breath.  
 We have given [God] what is manifest  
 through Him in us, and She has given us.<sup>130</sup>

In these verses, humanity is called to be God’s Breath and Spirit, to be the Divine Mercy in the world. Understood alternatively—and admittedly with a Christian lens—these verses exemplify an Incarnational cosmology, it seems, and likewise an Incarnational anthropology. While this may be describing an existential reality regarding the God-World relationship for Ibn ‘Arabī, it is also prescribing a way of being-in-the-world illuminated by the poetic tradition that follows him. We should not be *veiled* by our own superficial humanity, but rather be unveiled to the divine attributes and our role in *unveiling them*. Or, as Qayṣarī glosses: “For creation is the nourishment of the Real insofar as [creation] manifests [the Real’s] commands, names, and attributes, since through creation the [divine] names are made manifest, and the [divine] names endure through [creation], for were it not for creation, [the Real] would not possess names and attributes.”<sup>131</sup> In this tradition, the Divine Breath becomes the means whereby the divine names manifest in the world.

The false ascetic or pretender segregates himself from the suffering of the world because he lacks *passionate* love. He does not possess the imaginative capacity to perceive theophany and, held hostage by reason’s conclusion of transcendence/apophasis alone, consequently judges that the forms of the world are all threats to his salvation. He secludes himself and others from partaking in the divine life. The recognized one, contrariwise, enters into the phenomenal world of suffering because she possesses *passionate* love. Through her imagination she perceives theophany and recognizes that engaging in the suffering of the phenomenal world constitutes the

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<sup>130</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 218-219; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 179; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 108.

<sup>131</sup> Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 874.

telos of human life, which is the manifestation, recognition, and appreciation of the divine life. The recognized one attains to this action through the Divine Breath and lives a life disruptive of the social order (the “veils” of habits and customs) in order to recreate it, just as theophany disrupts cosmologies of radical transcendence/apophasis and immanence/kataphasis because it intrinsically brings the two together nondually.

## **Comparative Insights: Entering Within for More-Than**

Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī provide an Islamic, theo-poetic reading of Eriugena that demands we seek from the Irishman how theophany functions as a cosmological process that forces engagement with the phenomenal world, viz., in the earthly forms accessible to the senses. Encountering theophanic forms in the world unveil and conceal. It is already evident how Eriugena’s *plus-quam* theology mirrors theophany in that all that appears in the world is both unveiling the divine nature and concealing *more than* what is manifest. Eriugena explicitly states that “the other things that are said to be are [God’s] theophanies”<sup>132</sup> and “every creature, whether visible or invisible...both is and is called a theophany, that is, an appearance of God.”<sup>133</sup> The human subject, in encountering (and mirroring in the cup of the heart) “the cup of the world,” which is both other, individual human persons and the various, particular forms of the world, engages an unveiling that draws her into the *infinite surplus* that is concealed. Lāhūrī’s explication of the relationship between the theophany of the divine attributes and the theophany of the divine essence deepens this understanding. When the human subject is “content” to contemplate the theophany of the divine attributes in creation, it is not the result of desire’s fulfillment, but rather of the recognition of one’s human destiny (*qadr*) to love God passionately (in suffering) through creation.

This interreligious reading gives an opportunity to draw out from Eriugena three

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<sup>132</sup> *PP* III, 22, 585-586 (633A).

<sup>133</sup> *CCH*, 72, 297.

significant points about theophanic forms in the phenomenal world, points often overlooked by previous scholarship so attentive to “the theophanic structure of the *cognitive* encounter between God and the human.”<sup>134</sup> The cognitive reading of Eriugena inserts modern idealism or rationalism into his theology, something that this interreligious reading with the imaginative poetry of Ḥāfiẓ and the commentarial tradition aims to redress. In concluding, I bring Book II and V of the *Periphyseon* together with the *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy (CCH)*. Book II shows how the recognition of *the Real* is attained in *infinite* contemplation of theophanies; *CCH* demonstrates how material things elevate our mind to immaterial things; and Book V establishes that the Incarnation is the salvific act that renders necessary the contemplation of material things in theophany. The passion of Jesus, who is the unique and perfect theophany in history, compels us to enter deeper into the world rather than to abandon it like the self-righteous, pretentious ascetic or *mudda ī* (pretender) of Ḥāfiẓ’s *ghazals*. Like the various moments of poetic disruption analyzed in the preceding love lyrics, the Incarnation compels a poetic disruption of predominating social imaginaries that coalesce into ideologies that oppress rather than liberate—in the modern world as in the past.

### **Infinite Contemplation of Theophanies**

An Islamic theo-poetics compels us to uncover moments of infinite search in Eriugena. Toward the end of Book II of the *Periphyseon* in which the dialogue begins to conclude a discussion over the nature of the Trinitarian relations, itself a digression from the primary topic of the Primordial Causes, the Teacher delimits the capacity of human cognition: “For these [Trinitarian relations] are pondered (*cogitantur*) *more* profoundly and *more* truly *than* they are advanced by words, and they are understood *more* profoundly and *more* truly *than* they are pondered, and they [simply] exist *more* profoundly and *more* truly *than* they are understood; accordingly, they surpass all understanding.”<sup>135</sup> Despite the failure of human cognition to

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<sup>134</sup> Mooney, *Theophany*, 209 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>135</sup> *PP* II, 122, 3081-3084 (614BC).

understand, ponder, and speak the Trinity, such cognitions “are certain vestiges and theophanies of the Truth, though not the Truth Itself.”<sup>136</sup> This is because the Truth, God, surpasses all contemplation (*theoria*); any sort of image or phantasy, be it in the world or in the mind, fails to encompass perfectly the Truth, “for all these things are deceptive *so long as the finis* of contemplation is placed in them.”<sup>137</sup> The goal, aim, or limit (*finis*) of contemplation *should not be* placed in the theophanies themselves, but in the *more than* that the theophanies unveil. In other words, theophanies do not provide a hermeneutics that uncovers *what* lies ever hidden (God), but rather a poetics that displays *how* the world relates to God. Contemplation thereby becomes a poetics of *how we engage the world* rather than a hermeneutics for *what we seek*; hermeneutic contemplation seamlessly proceeds to poetic action.

“Purified humans” therefore “always and incessantly desire to gaze upon [the Trinity], which they are unable to contemplate in Itself...for that which they *seek* is *infinite*, that which they *desire* is *incomprehensible*, and that which they *ardently desire* [1 Peter 1:12] is *beyond* all understanding and exalted *above* all creation.”<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, Eriugena continues, the Divine Unity moves Itself within human intellects so that they may perceive the Trinity.<sup>139</sup> Following this digression, they return to discussing the Primordial Causes, Eriugena’s counterpart to the Divine Attributes and Names in Lāhūrī, according to which Primordial Causes “all things were woven (*textitur*) together from the highest to the lowest, i.e., from the intellectual creature...down to the lower order of things in which bodies are contained.”<sup>140</sup> In other words, the theophany of the Primordial Causes in the bodily, phenomenal world draw the human subject to contemplation

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<sup>136</sup> *PP* II, 122, 3085-3086 (614C).

<sup>137</sup> *PP* II, 122, 3091 (614C).

<sup>138</sup> *PP* II, 123, 3105; 3109-3111 (615A). In between this passage (lines 3108-3109), Eriugena cites a version of 1 Peter 1:12: “*in quem concupiscunt angeli prospicere*” or “at whom [God, the Holy Spirit] the angels ardently desire to look.” The Vulgate uses *desiderant* instead of *concupiscunt*. Eriugena reuses the verb in the lines that follow his citation (“that which they *ardently desire* is beyond...”).

<sup>139</sup> *PP* II, 123, 3111ff (615AB).

<sup>140</sup> *PP* 125, 125, 3175-3178 (616C).

of the Truth, the Real. The forms of the world, to the exclusion of their theophanic source, should never, however, be made the *finis* of our desire; rather, they are the *modus* (way) of our desire for God.

### **The Ray of the Flesh: The Material Uplifting Toward the Immaterial**

Lāhūrī comments: “The light of theophany is in matter.”<sup>141</sup> The invisible is rendered visible, which is a unique function of the theo-poetic; if poems are “thought made visible,”<sup>142</sup> then the theo-poetic world is the Divine Word made visible. The materialization of the immaterial, the Incarnational, is uncovered in Eriugena’s non-dialectical text, his *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy*. In the *Periphyseon*, Mooney rightly indicates that the *cognitive* encounter is itself structured by theophany; but I additionally aver that the theophanic structuring of cognition implies an Incarnational structuring for Eriugena. The meritorious use of material things, the forms of the world, and more importantly the enfleshed encounter therewith, is clarified in Eriugena’s *CCH*. In a six-page section of his commentary on chapter one, Eriugena carefully guides the reader from the Father, to the Son, to the flesh and creation, and back, all through the theophanic encounter with the Enfleshed Word. Eriugena first submits that the Ray of the Father is the Son, “who is uniform beyond all things, and is the form of all things, and multiform in all things, and the multiformity of all things, especially in angelic and human minds.”<sup>143</sup> As the form of all things, the Ray/Son “comes forth beautifully and is multiplied...and stretches forth those gazing at It” while remaining immutable within Itself.<sup>144</sup> The Ray/Son,

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<sup>141</sup> *SH I*, #55, 428.

<sup>142</sup> Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking*, 9.

<sup>143</sup> *CCH*, 10, 338-340,

<sup>144</sup> *CCH*, 10, 343; 345-346. Here Eriugena is translating Pseudo-Dionysius’s Greek: “Of course this ray never abandons its own proper nature, or its own interior unity. Even though it works itself outward to multiplicity and proceeds outside of itself as befits its generosity, doing so to lift upward and to unify those beings for which it has a providential responsibility, nevertheless it remains inherently stable and it is forever one with its own unchanging identity. And it grants to creatures the power to rise up, so far as they may, toward itself and it unifies them by way of its own simplified unity. However this divine ray can enlighten us only by being iplitingly concealed in a variety of sacred veils which the Providence of the Father adapts to our nature as human beings” (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 146). For Greek see Pseudo-

incomprehensible in Itself, “wished to manifest itself in some way to us, as yet constituted in the flesh,” and did so through “certain veils con-natural to us.”<sup>145</sup> Eriugena advances that it was through ineffable divine love that the Ray/Son was veiled in the flesh and became comprehensible to us for the sake of uplifting (*anagoge*) human beings.<sup>146</sup>

Of note is that Pseudo-Dionysius, in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and also in *The Divine Names*,<sup>147</sup> assigns these veils to scripture, the various sacraments, and the liturgy; but Eriugena, for whom all creation is a theophany, considers these veils to be all creation. “The veils of the Ray are the Primordial Causes of all things...And, to put it briefly, all visible and invisible appearances of creation...are veils of the Paternal Ray, and this very Ray, according to its flesh itself and according to its deity, is the greatest veil con-natural with us.”<sup>148</sup> In this passage, the Enfleshed Word is the greatest veil that unveils the Ray through theophany. This is demanded because the human mind “is unable to be raised...unto the contemplation of the highest Cause of all things through theological grace, *unless it first make use of the guidance of material things* so that it may arrive thereto.”<sup>149</sup> Eriugena concludes this section of his commentary:

Visible forms...are not made for their own sake, and are not to be desired for or made known to us for their own sakes, but rather that they are images of invisible beauty, through which [images] human souls are called back by divine providence into that pure and invisible beauty of that Truth which everyone who loves, whether they know it or not, loves, and unto which [everyone who loves] stretches.<sup>150</sup>

Like Lāhūrī’s interpretation of Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics, the visible forms, the metaphorical beauty, are theophanies of the attributes enticing us toward the divine essence. “The light of theophany is in

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Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, 8, 5-13 (121BC).

<sup>145</sup> *CCH*, 10-11, 365-367.

<sup>146</sup> See *CCH*, 11, 373-379.

<sup>147</sup> See *On The Divine Names* at 592B: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 52; and for Greek see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I, 592B.

<sup>148</sup> *CCH*, 12, 417-425.

<sup>149</sup> *CCH*, 14, 498-505.

<sup>150</sup> *CCH*, 15, 510-518.

matter.”<sup>151</sup> The false ascetic fails to realize the theophanic structure of the cosmos and vainly renounces the world, or worse yet secretly attaches himself to it. Ḥāfīz instead demands that the human subject recognize that all love is directed to the Real, “whether they know it or not.”<sup>152</sup>

Once again, in Eriugena’s theology it is easy to read the eventual abandonment of the material world for the superior immaterial world. However, a poetic and intertextual reading of some key passages assist in salvaging the material world as constitutive of theophany, especially given that the Incarnation is the concrete theophany in history.

### **The Incarnational Structuring of Theophany**

This “recognition” of the theophanic structure, for Eriugena, is made explicitly possible by the Incarnation of the Word. In Book V, the Teacher rhetorically asks, “Why did [the Word of God] descend?”<sup>153</sup> His own response is rather divorced from sensible forms and the flesh: “so that He might save...recall...and preserve the effects of the [Primordial] Causes.”<sup>154</sup> The effects for Eriugena are the phenomenal and temporal theophanies in this world. But the student adds more substance to this answer:

The Word was incomprehensible to every visible and invisible creature...before He was made incarnate, since He was withdrawn and concealed beyond all that is and is not, beyond all that is said and understood. However, having been made incarnate, descending in some way by a marvelous,

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<sup>151</sup> *SH I*, #55, 428.

<sup>152</sup> This passage from Eriugena’s *CCH* echoes a famous one from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*: “[God], on account of his generosity, made this reality [of love] pervade every contingent entity ascribed with existence (*wujūd*), [and] connected to it a delectation above which there is nothing more delectable. Parts of the world love each other with a love qualified with the reality of unqualified love. Thus, when it is said, “So-and-so loves so-and-so” or “So-and-so loves a certain thing,” this is nothing but the manifestation of God in a certain entity loving the manifestation of God in another entity, whatsoever that may be. For the lover of God does not deny any lover the love of what he loves; [rather, the lover of God] does not see any lover except [as] God in a locus of manifestation. Whosoever does not have this divine love denies the lover” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.113.23-27. This is from the section of Chapter 73 in which Ibn ‘Arabī is responding to the 155 questions concerning God-friendship/sainthood (*walāyah*) of Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. *circa* 905-910), a Sunni jurist and one of the earliest and most celebrated authors of sufism. The questions are part of his *Sīrat al-awliyā’* (for an annotated translation of this text, see Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī ; an Annotated Translation with Introduction*, Trs. Bernd Radtke and John O’Kane [Concord, MA: Curzon Press, 1996]). Ibn ‘Arabī is responding to question 116: “What is the Cup of Love?” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.111.2).

<sup>153</sup> *PP V*, 74, 2354 (912A).

<sup>154</sup> *PP V*, 74, 2356-2369 (912AB).

ineffable, and manifoldly infinite theophany, [the Word] appeared (*processit*) within the recognition of angelic and human nature; and unknown beyond all things, [the Word] assumed a nature from all things in which [the Word] might become recognized (*cognosceretur*), uniting the sensible and intelligible world in Himself through an incomprehensible harmony; and the Light Unapproachable (*inaccessibilis*) to all intellectual and rational creature made [Itself] approachable (*accessum*) [to all creation].<sup>155</sup>

In this passage, Eriugena connects the Incarnation with theophany, even reusing the phrase from his definition of theophany in Book III: “the approach of the unapproachable (*inaccessibilis accessus*).”<sup>156</sup> Indeed, the Incarnation renders the Word approachable in the flesh, just as the beloved in the first love lyric comes to the human subject to see if he is awake. In both cases, the aim is to awaken the human subject to theophany in the world so that she may recognize the Word.

But recognition alone is not enough. Eriugena does not explicitly move toward the practical and ethical demands of such a recognition, whereas Ḥāfīz does. Often through pivotal couplets in love lyrics, Ḥāfīz demands a choice from the human subject, and Lāhūrī expands on this ethical demand.<sup>157</sup> The role the human person has in unveiling the divine for others, in being God’s compassion in the world, is the anthropological corollary to cosmological theophany; the covenant of passionate love is the source of this human destiny. Theophany unveils while concealing, and the human person’s role is to unveil perpetually the *more than* that is concealed in suffering. Again, Eriugena does not dwell on the significance of the passion of Jesus, but in conversation with Ḥāfīz’s passionate love, I submit that the *more-than* that remains concealed in theophanic creation draws us into compassionate action in imitation of Christ’s life. Rather than

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<sup>155</sup> *PP* V, 75, 2376-2388 (912D-913A).

<sup>156</sup> *PP* III, 22, 591-592 (633A).

<sup>157</sup> James Morris makes this structuring evident with two love lyrics, wherein he demonstrates how “these progressive dialogical perspective shifts are part of a carefully crafted process designed to elicit from Ḥāfīz’s readers both new relevant experiences and contrasting interpretive alternatives.” The aim of the love lyrics is the “reader’s gradual movement from an opening state of one-sided egoistic desire and associated emotions (needfulness, anxiety, longing, nostalgia, despair; or transient sensual distraction from that deeper suffering) to the potential transfiguration of that desire in the active reciprocity of true mutual love and spiritual awareness; that is, in all the states and actions of the divine *Ḥāfīz*—and His or Her human mirrors—which are so pointedly and instantly recalled in each *ghazal*’s concluding line” (Morris, “Transfiguring Love,” in Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love*, 234).

abandon this life as the fake ascetic does, we are to enter deep into its suffering so that we may unveil God's love for others.

Theophany understood in terms of the Incarnation precludes the reduction of Eriugena's cosmology to an immaterial idealism. In conversation with Ḥāfīz's poetic imagination of passionate love, we are reminded of the ultimate, constitutive, and historical theophanic act of disruption that constitutes reality: the Incarnation of the Divine Word, and His consequent *passion*, death, and resurrection. Eriugena's dialectical reasoning facilitates the potential reduction of his theology to a passionless, imageless, and fleshless idealism; indeed, this is the danger of any Christian idealism that settles on knowledge and belief to the exclusion of being and action. But a theo-poetic reading unites epistemology with ontology, and ways of knowing with ways of being and acting.

## Theophany and Theo-Poetics of the Flesh

*For just as we we say, "The Word became flesh",  
likewise may we say: "And flesh became the Word."  
-Eriugena, Commentary on the Gospel of John<sup>158</sup>*

Immersed in theologies of theophany, this interreligious reading exercise underscores the unique ways Eriugena and Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī disclose and unfold their theophanic cosmologies and anthropologies, the former primarily through dialectical reasoning and the latter through poetic imagination. Given their distinct genres, I suggest that Ḥāfīz's love lyrics uncover the underlying poetics of Eriugena's corpus. I am following the line of thinking offered by Rivera: "Attention to poetic dimensions of theological notions sheds light on elements of body-words that tend to be occluded by other modes of philosophical inquiry."<sup>159</sup> These elements are illuminated in conversation with poetry, so that not only a poetics but a *theo-poetics* of the flesh may be constructed. In this conclusion, I suggest that reading Eriugena after encountering Ḥāfīz sharpens

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<sup>158</sup> *CJ*, 48, 27 (298A).

<sup>159</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 4.

our focus on how the Incarnation functions as the constitutive, theophanic and revelatory act, thereby transforming the corporeal encounter with the human other into an encounter with the Enfleshed Word that leads us to the *more-than* of the Word in the flesh and of the human other in the Word. These conclusions are at the end of this chapter put into conversation with Hans Urs von Balthasar, himself no stranger to a Catholic theo-poetics, to which I am contributing.

In my review of Eriugenian studies, I noted how previous scholarship interpreted Eriugena either as pure philosopher, even an Idealist, devoid of theological, Christological, and thus Incarnational insights, or as a thinker guided entirely by an omnipotent *ratio* capable, without revelation, of untying the knot of the mysterious universe. Hilary Anne-Marie Mooney, however, in her *Theophany*, most recently brings a much-needed “Christological heart” and “anthropological centering” to Eriugenean scholarship.<sup>160</sup> She is right to suggest that theophany is the *sine qua non* for proper comprehension of Eriugena’s theology of divine self-disclosure. Mooney also argues that Eriugena’s engagement with New Testament stories of encounters with Jesus Christ in the *Periphyseon* are not mere “pious padding but rather...intrinsic parts of [his] understanding of the appearing of God.”<sup>161</sup> Just as metaphor and poetic form are not mere ornaments to syllogistic reasoning in Ḥāfīz, likewise are Eriugena’s interspersed commentaries on the parables and miracle narratives of Jesus not superfluous piety. Theophany is “‘sublated’ to a higher level, namely, that of endowed encounter with Christ,”<sup>162</sup> and so Eriugena is in effect proposing a theophanic Christology.

In this section, I expand specifically upon Mooney’s astute analysis of the appearance of

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<sup>160</sup> Mooney, *Theophany*, 11. Mooney gestures towards the aims of my own project, viz., “An investigation of the subjective side of the manifestation of God must include some treatment of themes such as the possibility of union with God in this life in contrast to the situation of the blessed in the next life; and, the mutual relationship of cognitive union and moral discipleship” (ibid., 11). It is her thesis that theophany structurally unites the subjective and the objective, the cognitive and the moral, this life with the next. I take her work not necessarily several steps further, but rather several degrees into the flesh, as it were, situating the Incarnation as the concrete, constitutive nondual theophany that brings together these ostensible opposites.

<sup>161</sup> ibid., 172.

<sup>162</sup> ibid., 172.

God in the human created in God's image.<sup>163</sup> By suggesting that "the human...[is] a signpost...referring to the Other who God is" and thus that "the human encounters God as Other," she contends that "the human can make progress in its perception of God as imaged in the human creature."<sup>164</sup> I wholeheartedly agree with this interpretation, but aim to take it a few steps further. It is not so much that the human is a mere cognitive or aesthetic signpost—this she is—but that the human encounter *in the flesh* is constitutive of our relationship with both the world *and God*; we are not to look past the flesh toward the signified God, but in the flesh—with all the suffering and affliction a life of *compassionate love* entails—for the meaning of the Enfleshed Word. Theophany is likewise "sublated" to the level of endowed encounter with the *human other* qua Christological theophany. This proposal is possible when we bring Eriugena's own poetic insights into conversation with Ḥāfīz's love lyrics. They are "poetic" because they *disrupt—in continuity*—both his dialectical reasoning and humanity's lapse into sin; this disruption re-creates—*poiesis*—the disruption of the fleshless God entering into the world as flesh: the Incarnation.

### **The Sublation of Theophany to the Incarnation**

This sublation of theophany to the Incarnation is reflected most patently in Eriugena's final works, viz., his commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy (CCH)* of Dionysius, and his commentary and homily on the Gospel of John. As I pointed out above, in his *CCH* he elaborates on the Ray of the Father, the Word, being constituted in the flesh, and extends the veils of the revealing Ray/Word to include not only the liturgy and the sacraments, but all phenomenal creation. Furthermore, Eriugena's hermeneutical engagement with the Johannine gospel in his commentary and homily "stands in contrast with those of his predecessors in Ireland," who preferred Matthew's gospel and were often far less speculative and far more exegetically

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<sup>163</sup> For Mooney's treatment of the appearing of God in the human created in the image of God, see *ibid.*, 207-209.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, 209.

conservative than Eriugena.<sup>165</sup> In Eriugena's Johannine commentary and homily, topics such as the appearance of the Word of God, the elision of the books of nature and of scripture in terms of theophany and revelation, and the theophanic Incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ all take center stage.<sup>166</sup> In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Eriugena explicitly contends that *fleshless* angels benefited from the *enfleshment* of the Word:

For even the angels were unable to (re)cognize their God, Who surpasses every intellect, in their own nature, since He is invisible and unknowable; but once the Word was enfleshed (*verbo vero incarnato*), they understood their Lord, viz., the Son of God, and in Him and through Him [they understood] the Trinity which is completely removed from all things.<sup>167</sup>

In this passage, Eriugena submits that the enfleshment of the Word is intrinsic to the revelatory nature of the Word; one cannot fully know the Word without the flesh (even if “fully” implies an infinite knowing).<sup>168</sup> The enfleshment of the Word somehow conveys knowledge of the invisible Trinity; this disruption is a poetic feature of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is the Trust of passionate love in Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī that exalts humanity above the angels.

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<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, 30. For detailed discussion of this, see Joseph E. Kelly, “Hiberno-Latin Theology,” in Heinz Löwe (ed.), *Die Iren Und Europa*. Volume 2. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982): 549-567.

<sup>166</sup> The following compact passage neatly expresses how all things are theophanies, and how theophanies are divine manifestations to those who seek and love God. “Therefore, [God] will appear in His theophanies. i.e., in Divine Manifestations in which God will appear according to the degree of purity and virtue of each one. Moreover, theophanies are all visible and invisible creatures through which and in which God frequently has appeared, appears, and will appear. Likewise, the powers/virtues of the most purified souls and intellects are theophanies, and in [theophanies] God manifests Himself to those seeking and loving Him, and in [theophanies], as it were in some sort of clouds, the saints are rapt in front of Christ, just as the Apostle says: ‘We will be rapt into the clouds in front of Christ’ [1 Thess. 4:17], here calling the gleaming heights of Divine Contemplation ‘clouds’, in which they will always be with Christ. Hence Dionysius says: ‘And if one should say that he has seen Him (viz., God), He has not seen Him, but something made by Him.’ For He is entirely invisible, ‘and is known better by not knowing’, and ‘the ignorance of Him is true wisdom.’” (*CJ* 55-56, 77-92) Here Eriugena is citing Pseudo-Dionysius's *Letter One*; see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, 156-157 (1065A) for Greek, and for English see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 263. The line “and is known better by not knowing” (*qui melius nesciendo scitur*) is from Augustine's *De ordine* (*qui scitur melius nesciendo*); for Latin, see Augustine of Hippo, *De Ordine*, II, xvi, 44, in *Saint Augustine: Opera Omnia CAG*, Part 1, 177/25-26. For English, see Augustine, *On Order = De Ordine* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 109.

<sup>167</sup> *CJ*, 53, 16-20 (300D-301A).

<sup>168</sup> Elsewhere in his *CCH*, Eriugena contends that the movement of the Seraphim around God is incessant and infinitely increasing in rapidity, heat, and love. He then avers that the inferior orders, down to the human, in fact burn with the same divine love as an “assimilative exemplar” (see *CCH*, 95-96). Finally, he suggests that there are seraphic orders in human minds, too, perpetually circling around God, and this power is called “theological” (*CCH*, 156, 152-176).

In search of poetic dimensions in Eriugena’s philosophical discourse, turning to his own poetic œuvre, *Carmina*, provides us with additional insights into the poetics of the Incarnate Word. Herren, in his introduction to his Latin edition and English translation to Eriugena’s poetry, avers that the writing of poetry should “no longer be viewed as a ‘leisure-activity’ in the life of a busy philosopher/theologian and teacher.”<sup>169</sup> Rather, and especially for Eriugena, “poetry and philosophy are highly compatible entities.”<sup>170</sup> One particular poem intensifies the Incarnational theology of his Johannine commentary:

The Mysteries of Christ are no less beneficial in the heavens  
than on earth, and rightly so since God is One in all things.  
There, [Christ] has made angelic minds open to the Light,  
and He has revealed the darkness of His Power to them.  
No angel was able to discern purely  
Whom the Father, concealing in His bosom, was veiling in the dark.  
*But now the Word was made flesh—what a marvelous statement!—*  
Brightly, [Christ] has unrolled himself to all as both human and God  
(*Clare se cunctis hominemque deumque revoluit*).  
Both intellect and reason (νοῦς τε λογος τε) seize what no one had seen before:  
For the Divine Rays (*divinas...αυγας*) proportionately mingle with fleshy (σαρκικα) nature (φυσισ).<sup>171</sup>

This excerpt succinctly fleshes out the most material and substantial conclusions obtained from the poetic dimensions of the *Periphyseon*’s dialectical reasoning, as well as from the more and more poetic style that emerges in his *CCH*, his homily and commentary on the Johannine gospel, and ultimately in the poetic genre of *this poem*. “But now [*nunc*] the Word was made flesh!” “And now therefore [*nunc ergo*], may he not perhaps...live in eternal life?” (Genesis 3:22) “Do you not see how much the divine pathos encompasses...in the...temporal adverb...*now* [*nunc*]?”<sup>172</sup> The disruption unveils the invisible in the visible world. Fleshy nature mingles with the Divine Rays to reveal the Word, the divine pathos, in the veil of the flesh—*now*. If the enfleshed Word reveals something of God that is otherwise inaccessible to fleshless nature, then

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<sup>169</sup> Michael W. Herren, in *Ca*, 11.

<sup>170</sup> Herren, in *Ca*, 42.

<sup>171</sup> *Ca*, 86-87; I have modified the translation (*emphasis mine*). The Greek is in the original (Eriugena often interspersed Greek words in his Latin poems).

<sup>172</sup> *PP V*, 5, 88-90 (862C).

there is something about being *in the flesh* that constitutes not only *how* humans are as theophanic creatures, but *how* God is as theophanic Creator, something inaccessible to angels but otherwise beneficial thereto. Intellect and reason comprehend something of the Divine Word *in the flesh*—in embodied being and doing—otherwise inaccessible to the disembodied angels.

### **The Theo-Poetics of the Flesh in the Gospel of John**

It is no accident that the poetic dimensions of Eriugena's thought are found in his hermeneutical engagement with the Gospel of John. Rivera, in her *Poetics of the Flesh*, illuminates the poetic and fleshy nature of this gospel in which "spirit and flesh flow into each other; the figurative turns into the literal, and vice versa."

Through the confluence of the literal and the symbolic, the gospel [of John] conveys the intertwining of the material and spiritual—word and flesh, life and light, and so on [flesh, blood, bread, water, wine, etc.]. The most metaphysical statements rely on the most concrete material dimensions of corporeality, which often escape the boundaries of individual subjects. Its poetics also escape the boundaries of this theological text, appearing elsewhere, creatively transformed.<sup>173</sup>

Likewise, the metaphorical in Ḥāfīz's poetry is imagined as the phenomenal, what we perceive in everyday life, leading us into the Real. It is also no accident that poetry illuminates the revelatory nature of encountering the human other *in the flesh*. Poetry disrupts, and so does the flesh of the Word.

This concluding section's epigraph, from Eriugena's Johannine commentary, demonstrates how the Word and the flesh—all flesh—are poetically interlaced but not identical, not two but not one: the Word *becomes* flesh and the flesh *becomes* Word. Eriugena's powerful statement exemplifies Rivera's suggestion that "the gospel [of John] conveys the intertwining of the material and spiritual." Poetic words, with their coiling, twisting, and imaginative permutations that render the invisible visible, become eminently capable of expressing both the supreme joy and hardship of loving *in the flesh*. The *more-than* of God perdures in fleshy encounters, and this excess is reflected in the imagination that produces a theo-poetics of the

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<sup>173</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 26-27.

flesh.<sup>174</sup> Another layer of sublation may then be added: theological *discourse* is sublated to theophany, which is sublated to the Incarnation. Eriugena avers that theology is the verbal elocution of a silent intellect, just as theophany is the appearance of the imperceptible God, the concrete event of which is the Incarnation wherein the incorporeal Word becomes flesh in the world. The constructive relation between words and flesh is established: the Word/words thicken into the flesh, and a theo-poetics of the flesh emerges in which both words and the flesh reveal the Word. Theology conduces to a theo-poetics of the flesh entailed by Incarnational living.

Of course, God self-discloses, historically, as the flesh of a particular human person; the uniqueness of the theophany of Jesus of Nazareth is not to be discarded. However, the historical Incarnation of the Word is grounded in a theological cosmology and anthropology, and so flesh is also the Word; the divine revelatory act of the Incarnation continues in our perception of this material, phenomenal world. Eriugena, in his Homily on the Gospel of John, commenting on “[and the Word] was in the world” (John 1:10), writes: “For just as when the one who is speaking ceases to speak, his voice ceases to exist and disappears, likewise the heavenly Father, were He to cease speaking His Word, the effects of the Word, i.e., the created universe, would not remain (*subsistet*).”<sup>175</sup> For Eriugena, the revelation of the Word is perceived in the effects, which are manifest in this created universe, this phenomenal world. As such, our perception of enfleshed human persons and the material world therefore has the possibility of being transformed through the Word, and through words, the speaking of which is the basis for Eriugena’s analogy. Continuing his homily to comment on John 1:14, “and the Word became flesh,” he explicitly speaks to the transformative power of the flesh:

the Word descended into the flesh, so that the flesh...*believing through the flesh* in the Word, may ascend unto Him...The Word did not become flesh for His own sake, but for our sake, we who could not have been transformed into sons [and daughters] of God *except through the flesh of the Word*.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> See Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 109-110.

<sup>175</sup> *HJ*, 33, 6-9 (293C).

<sup>176</sup> *HJ*, 39-40, 23-28 (295C).

Eriugena here suggests that we are to believe through the flesh in the Word; the flesh, in other words, is not to be discarded for the sake of the Word. In all this, the inaccessible Word is made accessible through words, flesh, and the material world. This theo-poetics of the flesh may consequently be fruitfully conceptualized as an Incarnational *imaginary*. A social imaginary is “the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life.”<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, the social imaginary informs the constitutive relation between language and ideology. The Incarnation *should* be the creative, imaginary activity that constitutes our relationship with others and with the world. In later chapters, I enter into Paul Ricoeur’s and Cornelius Castoriadis’s theory of the social imaginary to construct a theo-poetics of the flesh.

### **Incarnational Living and Suffering Love**

Flesh and words are revelatory of the divine nature, which in Ḥāfīz and the larger poetic and spiritual tradition of the School of Love, is equivalent to passionate love. Drawing from Ḥāfīz and his commentator, affliction is concomitant with this passionate love, and thus suffering and passionate love reveal what it means to be, and what constitutes being, an enfleshed human in the Word/world. Suffering is the poetic disruption of love, and passionate love poetically disrupts suffering. While suffering and grief are lacking in Eriugena’s philosophical corpus, carefully reading through his poetic *œuvre* (*Carmina*), one finally encounters Christ’s affliction, i.e., His passion on the way to the Cross, and His death thereon.<sup>178</sup> This is where we find a theo-poetics of the flesh explicitly lacking in Eriugena’s overtly philosophical texts, but drawn out through our interreligious reading of Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics. The affliction that is concomitant with passionate

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<sup>177</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 6.

<sup>178</sup> For example, see the first poem in *Ca*, 58-61, in which “Christ [is] bathed (*perfusum*) in blood” (lines 8-9), “the wood of the cross embraces the four corners of the globe” (lines 19-20), we are told to “behold the pierced palms, shoulders, and feet” of Christ (line 23), and Christ’s “blood makes gods of us mortals” (line 28). Likewise, the second poem (*Ca*, 64-67), which is effectively a hymn to the glory of the “Cross of Salvation” (line 2) that “shines beyond (*supra*) Seraphim and Cherubim” and which is worshipped by “all that is, is not, and is more than (*super*)” (lines 7-8). Nearly every poem references, if not dwells upon, the Cross and the Pascal Mystery.

love in Ḥāfīz’s *ghazals* finds its counterpart in Eriugena’s own poetry. The suffering love central to Ḥāfīz’s poetry and the exaltation of the human person above angels are discovered in the more poetic dimensions (implicitly) and discourses (explicitly) of Eriugena’s corpus. Furthermore, a poetic reading of Eriugena sought moments of disruption in his own *ratio* by being attuned to his poetics rather than his hermeneutics and *ratio*.

While it may be counterintuitive to comment on the Christian Incarnation after reading the Muslim Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, it is not so much the hermeneutics of his *ghazals* (*what* they mean) as the poetics thereof (*how* they mean) that I suggest facilitated our re-encounter with passion and affliction in Eriugena’s œuvre. As suggested by Rivera, poetry lends itself to embodied, enfleshed experiences. Ḥāfīz often requires the human subject to enter deeper into the phenomenal world in search of the Real, but he presents it poetically as a choice to be made within the couplets of his love lyrics, often at pivotal moments. As consistently stated, the constitutive doctrine of the Islamic school of love is that there is no passionate love (*‘ishq*) without concomitant suffering. Disruption demands a choice.

James Morris has suggested that the *ghazals* of Ḥāfīz demand a choice from the reader. His poetry acts as a stage on which the drama of creation unfolds, and in which the interpreter is forced to make “the *apparent* human choice...between [on the one hand,] wanting what *is*, [viz.,] the ever-renewed plenitude of created Being; and [on the other hand,] desiring an imagined illusion, while ignoring or even deprecating what actually is (and its Creator).”<sup>179</sup> What actually *is* is suffering co-mingled with beauty *in the flesh*, and what one vainly fantasizes is an *idealistic* world free of suffering, *free of the flesh*, in which one is able to obtain salvific freedom without affliction, grief, and struggle—without poetic disruption. Both Ḥāfīz’s poetry and the passion of Christ falsify that pretentious claim.

To desire a disembodied idealism or a static synthesis of this world and God is effectively to refute the Incarnation and the (com)passionate love it requires of us, *in the flesh*; this is to flee

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<sup>179</sup> Morris, “Transfiguring Love,” in Lewisohn, *Hafiz and the Religion of Love*, 246.

suffering in search of secluded spaces of momentary, superficial joy. This is the approach of the fake, pretentious ascetic whom Ḥāfiẓ criticizes for being paradoxically materialistic. A desire to flee suffering is in effect a desire to bypass the theo-poetics of embodiment, which constitutes our relationship to God; it is to demand *what* God is without living *how* God is *pro nobis*: the Word Incarnate, concomitant with the his passion, death, but ultimate resurrection. This is to practice a hermeneutics without a poetics, to seek our *finis* without experiencing our *modus*, who is the Incarnate Word.

### **Theophany from *Ratio* to *Ishq*: Towards a Catholic-Islamic Theo-Poetics of the Flesh**

Theophany is conceptualized as disruptive in an Islamic theo-poetics. *Ishq*, passionate love, is restless in confinement; it suddenly unveils and throws the world into tumult when being collides with nothingness. The poetic tenor of theophany in Ḥāfiẓ is one of *disruption*. Passionate love comprehends this poetic disruption because it is concomitant with suffering; additionally, it is never satisfied but perpetually increases in desire. The intellect for Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī is binding; it restricts God to a *what* (either everything or nothing). Passionate love keeps God ever out of reach while being the engine driving the human wayfarer to God.<sup>180</sup> It refuses to confine God to a *what*, but becomes the *how* of living in this phenomenal world. It pitches a tent in Adam’s water and clay, i.e., in this world. Passionate love is elevated above reason in this Islamic theo-poetics because it experiences suffering, which constitutes *how* to be embodied humans.

“And the Word became flesh and pitched a tent [*skēnoō*] among us” (John 1:14). The Incarnation, too, suggests that the suffering of love in the flesh constitutes how one truly lives embodiment in this world. This Islamic theo-poetics challenges the radical apophatic theology of Eriugena and his dialectical *ratio*. It draws out the *how* of the Incarnation rather than the *what* of God. While theophany is reasoned by Eriugena as the underlying principal of *natura*, it can be

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<sup>180</sup> This Arabic term to describe this perpetual desire for “joining with” or “arriving at” God is *wiṣāl* (signifying a being-together or communion of lovers) or *ittiṣāl* (signifying a connection between two people), both from *w-ṣ-l*; the term is never variations of *ittiḥād* (to make one, a unity, or a oneness), from *w-ḥ-d* (one, singular, unique), The former implies a nondualism, while the latter a monism.

poetically linked to the Incarnation, which is *disruptive* of normative ontologies. Passionate love pitches his tent in humanity; the Word *is* this passionate love. To incarnate passionate love is to disrupt, and the Incarnation becomes the *how* of our everyday living. This is nothing short of a theo-poetics of the flesh that does not seek to settle, but that is driven by a *mode* of desire for *more than what* is present. It is the poetic *how* of living, not the hermeneutical *what* that restricts God, that separates God from this world. Theophany, the Incarnation, disrupts normative epistemologies and ontologies that segregate the divine from the human, God from this world. While it may be the organizing principal for Eriugena’s cosmology, it remains disruptive for how the God-world relationship is conceptualized by dominant theological imaginaries. It is no longer dualistic, but nondual.

This theo-poetics is not foreign to modern Catholic theology. Hans Urs von Balthasar, according to Carpenter, “presents us with a *theo-poetic* rather than a sheer systematic theology.” Balthasar affirms poetic expression, for “when God speaks to us in the Incarnation, *all* qualities of human language—even being itself—are employed as a created ‘grammar’ by which highly developed uses of analogy and symbol have a role to play in God’s self-expression in human attempts to discuss God.”<sup>181</sup> In his theological aesthetics, *The Glory of the Lord*, Balthasar understands the whole world, eschatologically at least, as a sacred theophany. Given that the cosmos as a whole is created in the image of the appearing God, the Incarnate Word, then the whole world expresses God “on the basis of the principle not of pantheistic but of hypostatic union.”<sup>182</sup> The hypostatic union itself is, I argue later, the supreme nondual event of theophany, especially as I interpret Eriugena’s texts. This event is grounded, as Eriugena states, in divine love, and theophany is the means whereby we encounter the Incarnate Word daily. This is, in Balthasar’s words, the “majesty of absolute Love that approaches the human person in

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<sup>181</sup> Carpenter, *Theo-poetics*, 3.

<sup>182</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form* (New York: Ignatius Press; Crossroads Publications, 2009), 659.

revelation” and that “goes out to meet him, invites him, and elevates him to an inconceivable intimacy;”<sup>183</sup> this recalls Eriugena’s conception of theophany as the approach of the inaccessible and as the Divine Essence coming to meet (*occurat*) those seeking God. Balthasar warns against a negative theology that constructs a Wholly-Other inaccessible to the human person or only accessible in pure identity mysticism. Instead, “once we see that the figure of revelation remains unintelligible unless it is interpreted in light of God’s love, then the Wholly-Other and Ever-Greater *appears tangibly* and surprises us in the ultimate and unsurpassable incomprehensibility of divine love.”<sup>184</sup> Indeed, the Wholly-Other becomes rather the *semper maior*, or Ever-Greater God that appears *in the flesh* (“tangibly”) and with poetic *disruption* (“surprises us”). The constructive parallels between Eriugena’s *plus-quam* discourse and Balthasar’s theo-poetics of the Incarnation emerge in conversation with the Islamic theo-poetics of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī.<sup>185</sup>

Furthermore, the form of revelation, viz., the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, cannot be discarded in the search for God in the world and in the flesh. To ignore suffering in love is to ignore Christ’s suffering in love for us, and this is to one’s own detriment and to the detriment of one’s neighbors. The interconnectedness of love, suffering, and Christ’s passion is inseparable for Balthasar:

And thus whoever simply refuses to shut his eyes to the abyss of hatred, despair, and depravity that can be seen in the life of men on earth, and thus who refuses to close himself off from reality, will find it difficult to contrive his own escape from this damnation through a purely individualistic conception of salvation, and to abandon everyone else to the grinding wheels of hell. Just as God so loved the world that he completely handed over his Son for its sake, so too the one whom God has loved will want to save himself only in conjunction with those who have been created with him, and he will not reject the share of penitential suffering that has been given him for the sake of the whole.<sup>186</sup>

In this passage, Balthasar suggests that one’s salvation is, in *essence*, dependent on the human

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<sup>183</sup> Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, 57.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, 57-58.

<sup>185</sup> One need only recall that Muslims the world over and since the 7<sup>th</sup> century have continued to proclaim in times of exceptional joy and hardship, *Allahu akbar*, “God is greater [than].”

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

other. To add several layers from this exercise in comparative theology, one's salvation is dependent on the human other, because the human other is an enfleshed theophany of the Word.

The exercise in comparative theology suggests that theophany and the Incarnation are expressed singularly as a theo-poetics, and that the revelatory import of the flesh in engaging the Word in this phenomenal world is drawn out from Eriugena's corpus via the poetic imagination of Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī. Eriugena focuses on explicating the appearance of God in theophanies in Book V of the *Periphyseon*, the book wholly apportioned to the *reditus*, or the eschatological state. Through Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics, however, we are enabled to begin construction of a theo-poetics that understands the *reditus*, the eschatological state, to be present *now* in and through the Incarnation. By entering into suffering love, the *more than* of the other in the Word and of the Word in the other is made manifest—both *in the flesh*.

The reason why a theo-poetics assists in doing this is because the world, according to Ḥāfiẓ, Lāhūrī, and their proximate sources, is understood to be a metaphor (*majāz*), but not in the fake, fanciful, or pretend sense, but in the real, theophanic sense. “Metaphor is a bridge to reality”, the famous Arabic literary axiom, informs this conceptualization of the cosmos. Reading Eriugena after Ḥāfiẓ uncovers how the Irish theologian is describing this phenomenal world, too, as a metaphor, just like the larger Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition in which Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī are situated. As such, metaphor is the discursive *method* readily able to facilitate the perception of this world as the eminent locus of encountering Christ in the flesh. This is what I intend by a theo-poetics of the flesh; for metaphor is a *mode* of speech, *how* words come together to produce meaning, and this world is structured by the Incarnation, *how* God relates to us. From this theo-poetics we can now proceed to construct the meaning of imagination, imaginary, and the imaginal in terms of metaphor. The next chapters will disclose the metaphorical-but-real nature of the cosmos by continuing to read Ḥāfiẓ and Eriugena together. Consequently, substance will be given to the meaning of the dynamic imaginary of Incarnational living. By understanding the role of the imaginal and the imaginary in Ḥāfiẓ and Eriugena, the Incarnation will be re-interpreted for

the sake of constructing an Incarnational imaginary of ideological disruption.

## Chapter 3

# From Theophany to Metaphor and the Imaginal in Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī

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### Introduction

In chapter one, I anticipated a theo-poetics of the flesh by exploring Eriugena's theophany attuned to poetics (*how* he unfolded theophany) and not hermeneutics (*what* theophany *is*). I was attentive to *how* theophany brings together opposites to create meaning otherwise occluded by *ratio*. Theophany is *how* God relates to the world, and not *what* God is. In chapter two, I explicated the role theophany plays in Ḥāfīz. Theophany in this Islamic theo-poetics structures a movement of suffering (passionate) love, extends desire, and compels us to reveal rather than conceal God for others. The Incarnational structuring of theophany for Eriugena was unveiled by interreligious light: the Incarnation is a concrete theophany that manifests the (poetic) *disruption in continuity* woven into the fabric of creation; it constitutes the theophanic structure of the world. It remains to be seen how the Incarnation, viz., the life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, is the warp and weft weaving the texture of reality, precisely because it is the *poetics* of universal theophany.

In this chapter I remain with Ḥāfīz, Lāhūrī, and the larger School of Ibn 'Arabī and School of Love to flesh out the import and meaning of metaphor and the imaginal vis-à-vis theophany. Reading Ḥāfīz through Lāhūrī, I explore the function of poetic metaphor, the imagination, and images/forms (sg., *ṣūra*). I argue that this Islamic theo-poetics may be interpreted as an imaginary that aims to subvert normative, dominant ideologies that occlude God from others.

In later chapters, reading Eriugena explicitly through this Islamic theo-poetics, I endeavor to draw out constructive insights into Eriugena's theology of the image, imagination, and

metaphor vis-à-vis the Incarnation. The psychological, sociological, philosophical, and literary concept of “imaginary,” employed by Jean-Paul Satre, central to French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan as “social imaginary,” and then variously deployed and expanded upon by Cornelius Castoriadis and Paul Ricœur, is useful here: recall that a social imaginary is “the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life.” The social imaginary is the bridge between discourse and action:

For in using language we are constantly engaged in a creative, imaginary activity. We are constantly involved in extending the meaning of words, in producing new meanings through metaphor, word-play and interpretation; and we are thereby also involved, knowingly or not, in altering, undermining or reinforcing our relations with others and with the world.<sup>1</sup>

I adapt the concept of the imaginary because it suggests that *words* constitute (by altering, undermining, or reinforcing) our relations with others and the world. When they restrain the creative potential of the person and society, they are productive of an ideology, which is not “a pale image of the social world,” but “a creative and constitutive element of our social lives.”<sup>2</sup> Although the imaginary may often constitute the collective, ideological constraints of a society (say, neoliberalism, white supremacy, patriarchy), it does not preclude the possibility of imaginative practices creating a critical imaginary that may subvert the normative, social imaginary qua oppressive ideology: Castoriadis terms this the radical imagination, and Ricœur utopia.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Ḥāfiẓ’s critique of the pretentious ascetic or the oppressive legalist is an instance

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> For an application of Castoriadis’s theory of social imaginaries and the radical imagination in terms of innovation and creativity, see Christian De Cock, “For A Critical Creativity: The Radical Imagination of Cornelius Castoriadis,” in *Handbook of Research on Creativity*, edited by Kerry Thomas and Janet Chan (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2013), 150-161. Social imaginaries do indeed hold societies together, and indeed the “history of humanity is the history of the human imaginary and its works,” for the radical imaginary “appears as soon as there is a human collectivity.” These imaginaries, however, also restrain the creative imagination, viz., “the radical imagination of the singular human being” (Cornelius Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007], 123) For Ricœur’s engagement with the theory of the social imaginary, see Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 186ff, and also Ricœur, “The Creativity of Language,” in *A Ricoeur Reader*, 475ff.

of the modes, mechanisms, epistemology, poetry, metaphors, and images of passionate love functioning as an imaginary critiquing dominant ideologies. Ricœur, and even more so Castoriadis, suggest that the imagination has the creative, radical potential to free itself from the limits of the (onto)logically possible to create new ways of being in the world that disrupt and subvert instituted social imaginaries.<sup>4</sup> In particular, I draw out the creative (*poïesis*) and subversive tactics of passionate love through this Islamic theo-poetics. Later, my reading of Eriugena in terms of the metaphorical and imaginal demonstrates how the logic of his adored *ratio* is subverted by the Incarnation. A Christian imaginary attuned to the liberating praxis of Incarnation will be constructed, and this imaginary is precisely what I intend by a theo-poetics of the flesh.

To that end, I first situate this study of metaphor, imagination, and the image within Paul Ricœur's theories. I then briefly establish the centrality of the imagination, the Imaginal World, and poetry with some key texts from Ibn 'Arabī and his later interpretive tradition. This initial grounding will relate theophany to imagination and metaphor, and consequently to poetry, and thereby provide necessary context for understanding the love lyrics and their commentaries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Castoriadis considers the imagination and the social imaginary as *poïesis*, as creation and ontological genesis *ex nihilo*; but this *ex nihilo* is not absolutely from nothing because there *are* some *constraints* when the imagination is ineluctably confined to the socio-historical world. "In so far as they are neither causally producible nor rationally deducible, the institutions and social imaginary significations of each society are free creations of the anonymous collective concerned. They are creations *ex nihilo*—but not *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo*. This means, in particular, that they are creations *under constraints*" (Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader*, Ed and tr. by David Ames Curtis [Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997], 333). George Taylor summarizes Castoriadis's position succinctly: "Creation does not occur as a matter of a blank slate. 'Neither in the social-historical domain nor anywhere else does creation signify that just anything can happen just anywhere, just any time and just anyhow.' The creation is not motivated by external factors but is conditioned by them; something already in existence is utilised. The creation *ex nihilo* of the classical Greek *polis*, for instance, made use of existing Greek mythology... Castoriadis identifies four kinds of constraints on creation *ex nihilo*. First, external constraints include biological and natural factors and instrumental uses of language. These are the products of material life. Second, internal constraints include psychological factors that affect how the psyche becomes socialised. Third, historical constraints relate creation to a past; it exists within a tradition. Finally, creation also facts intrinsic constraints; social imaginary significations must present a general sense of coherence (even if faced with internal tension and contradiction) and must also be complete. These factors do impose important restrictions on what creation *ex nihilo* may produce" (George H. Taylor, "On the Cusp: Ricoeur and Castoriadis at the Boundary," in *Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Discussion: On Human Creation, Historical Novelty, and the Social Imaginary*, ed. by Suzi Adams [New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017], 40). See Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader*, 333-336, for further elaboration upon these points.

<sup>5</sup> I analyze the literary technique of metaphor (*majāz*) in the Persian poetic tradition when necessary for further illumination. However, the scope of this project would become unmanageable were a complete foray into the

Following this primer, I analyze and interpret two love lyrics that illuminate the functional role of the image, imagination, and poetry in one's enfolded existence in the world. Contrary to previous scholarship on the technical terms (*işlahāt*) of Islamic mystical poetry, I argue that Lāhūrī does not displace Ḥāfīz's poetic metaphors into some disincarnate meaning in order to disambiguate their ambiguities; he does not negate the embodied impact that poetic language has on constituting action, but rather transposes poetic metaphors into *this phenomenal world* of metaphor. As such, the theo-poetics remains an imaginary that constitutes our embodied relationship with others. This displacement of the poetic from the text to the world provides a comparative theological entry point into the Incarnation, i.e., the Word's becoming flesh, and the flesh's becoming Word.

## Paul Ricœur's Theory of Metaphor

“...the philosopher relies on this capacity of poetry to enlarge, to increase, to augment the capacity of meaning of our language.” —Paul Ricœur<sup>6</sup>

In Paul Ricœur's *Rule of Metaphor, Interpretation Theory, and From Text to Action*, the French philosophical hermeneut proposes a theory of metaphor and a conceptualization of metaphorical truth that, when applied to larger tradition in which Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī partake, and to Eriugena's theological discourse, assists in uncovering *how metaphor conveys the reality* of this theophanic world. Ricœur does not relate his theory of metaphor to apophatic and kataphatic discourse; nevertheless, it enables a novel understanding of how Eriugena's conceptualization and use of apophatic, kataphatic, and *plus-quam* discourse sketches the God-world relationship with tensive, nondual meaning that seeks to transform perception and effect action. This is all possible because of theophany, the feature shared between the Christian and Islamic discursive

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literary tradition to be executed. See Chapter 8, “Ornament: Metaphor and Imagery”, in Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, 319ff, for a superb introduction. The intricate details of the Persian, and ultimately Arabic, theory of *majāz* did not necessarily enter into the Islamic commentarial traditions on poetry in its every minutiae; rather, it appears the single takeaway was that this world, as *majāz*, was a bridge (*qanṭara*) to the real world.

<sup>6</sup> Ricœur, “Poetry and Possibility,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 440.

traditions of this project.

The most succinct exposition of Ricœur's theory of metaphor is offered in his

*Interpretation Theory*:

[Metaphor] implies a *tensive use of language* in order to uphold a *tensive concept of reality*[.] By this I mean that the tension is not simply between words, but within the very copula of the metaphorical utterance...*Here 'is' signifies both is and is not.* The literal 'is' is overturned by the absurdity and surmounted by a metaphorical 'is' equivalent to 'is like...' Thus poetic language does not tell how things literally are, but what they are like.<sup>7</sup>

The copula "is" in a metaphorical statement condenses the tension between "is" and "is not" into a single utterance; the poetics of metaphor destabilizes language, but in fact represents more veridically the tensive, disruptive nature of reality. The tenor (subject) of a metaphorical statement both is and is not the vehicle (predicate). For example, in interpreting the Shakespearean metaphor spoken by the character Jacques de Boys in *As You Like It*, "All the world [is] a stage," one would have to enumerate all the ways in which a "stage" is and is not the "world." "It was and it was not'...contains *in nuce* all that can be said about metaphorical truth,"<sup>8</sup> which "preserves the 'is not' within the 'is'."<sup>9</sup> This is what Ricœur calls the "split reference" of the metaphorical copula (Study 7, *Rule of Metaphor*).<sup>10</sup> A connection can be made between metaphorical discourse, on the one hand, and apophatic and kataphatic discourse, on the other, even though Ricœur explicates no such relation. Placing "metaphorical tension right within the copula of the utterance,"<sup>11</sup> he continues: "*Being as...* means being and not being. In this way, the dynamism of meaning allowed access to the dynamic vision of reality which is the implicit ontology of the metaphorical utterance."<sup>12</sup> That poetic metaphor conveys ontology is a central

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<sup>7</sup> Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 266.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 294.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, 265ff.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 351.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 351.

argument in Ricœur's theory of metaphor. The tension between the "is" and the "is not" emerges in "the dynamism of meaning" which allows access to "the dynamic vision of reality." This tension, then, is not reduced to a static synthesis whereby the metaphorical statement can be reworded in terms of syllogistic reasoning. Rather, I argue, it produces a dynamic imaginary.

In his *Rule of Metaphor*, Ricœur begins with the presupposition that the use of metaphor is not merely an ornament of rhetoric, but actually conveys unique meanings and truth.<sup>13</sup> He argues for a "theory of metaphor that will conjoin poetics and ontology."<sup>14</sup> *How* words mean constitute *what* words signify; *mode* of being constitutes *what* being is. While metaphor has often been linked with poetry, Ricœur argues in Study 8 ("Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse") for the deep connection between philosophical discourse and poetic discourse. Nevertheless, in his close analysis of St. Thomas's *analogia entis*, he concludes that the "difference between speculative discourse and poetic discourse [is preserved] at the very point of their greatest proximity."<sup>15</sup> Ricœur certainly does not intend to abolish the distinction between speculative discourse and poetry; but he does aver that poetry and metaphor are constructive of ontologies, of realities with physical and *metaphysical* truths unimaginable through strict dialectical discourse, and not merely ornamental or inessential.

Metaphorical truth is "tensional." Again in Study 8 of *Rule of Metaphor*, Ricœur proposes that poetic metaphor sums up all the forms of "tensions" exposed by semantics: "tension between subject and predicate, between literal interpretation and metaphorical interpretation, between identity and difference."<sup>16</sup> These tensions emerge in the very copula, itself (I suggest) a sort of *coincidentia*

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<sup>13</sup> This leads Ricœur to appreciate the poem as *icon*: "The poem is an icon and not a sign. The poem is. It has an 'iconic solidity'...Language takes on the thickness of a material or a medium. The sensible, sensual plenitude of the poem is like that of painted or sculptured forms. The combination of sensual and logical ensures that expression and impression coalesce within the poetic thing. Poetic signification fused thus with its sensible vehicle becomes that particular and 'thingy' reality we call a poem" (*ibid.*, 265-266).

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 330.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 381.

*oppositorum*, which Ricœur elects to call “the paradox of the copula,”<sup>17</sup> that brings together being and nonbeing in terms of *being-as*. Ricœur suggests that poetry, through its use of the metaphorical copula, “articulates and preserves the experience of belonging that places man in discourse and discourse in being.”<sup>18</sup> The human person is enabled by metaphor not only to describe the tension of this phenomenal world, placed as it is between the fullness of being and the emptiness of nonbeing, but to be prescribed to perceive that tension and be *carried beyond* it: “And so, whether we speak of the metaphorical character of metaphysics or of the metaphysical character of metaphor, what must be grasped is the single movement that carries words and things beyond, *meta*.”<sup>19</sup> Herein the constructive connection between metaphor and *plus-quam* discourse begins to emerge. The metaphorical is beyond the dialectical; it remains dynamic and tensional, and is never reduced to a static synthesis. For Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, the engine driving the movement beyond/*meta* is passionate love.

## Metaphor, Imagination, Nondualism

In *From Text to Action*, Ricœur also addresses the role metaphor and imagination play in forming perception productive of ethical actions; this is the power of discourse, especially eminently imaginative discourse, to transform or even disrupt social imaginaries. Linking metaphorical truth to perception and nondualism will further establish the constructive impact that metaphor has on action *in this theophanic world*. Detailed in *From Text to Action* is Ricœur’s interpretation theory: “the world of the text necessarily collides with the real world in order to ‘remake’ it, either by confirming it or by denying it.”<sup>20</sup> But later in this volume, Ricœur focuses narrowly on the “transfiguration of reality” that is expressly attributed to “poetic language,”

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 381.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 381. The fact that, for Ricœur, discourse impacts one’s being-in-the-world, reveals the power of imaginaries to produce restrictive ideologies. Shared narratives and even logics become social imaginaries that congeal into ideologies when they restrain the possible. But, engaging discourse creatively and with the imagination—with utopia as the engine driving creative praxis in the world—enables disruption of these restraining ideologies.

<sup>19</sup> Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 341.

<sup>20</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 6.

which “implies that we cease to identify reality with empirical reality.”<sup>21</sup>

Poetic language draws from its capacity for bringing to language certain aspects of what Husserl called *Lebenswelt* [Lifeworld] and Heidegger *In-der-Welt-Sein* [Being-in-the-World]. By this very fact, we find ourselves forced to rework our conventional concept of truth, that is to say, to cease to limit this concept to logical coherence and empirical verification alone, so that the truth claim related to the transfiguring action of fiction can be taken into account.<sup>22</sup>

The poetics of Eriugena’s otherwise dialectical text emerges precisely when words come together in ways that subvert his *ratio*. In other words, “logical coherence and empirical verification” are insufficient in expressing Truth, whereas poetic metaphor permits more than logic alone can divulge, viz., the tensional concept of reality, the coincidence of opposites that the metaphorical copula contains, and not the static synthesis of dialectic.<sup>23</sup> The text collides with the world and *does not synthesize them*; rather, the text *remakes the world*. This is the *disruptive* nature of poetry, foregrounded in Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics in chapter two, and underscored in Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* after comparison. The poetic undercurrent of Eriugena’s otherwise dialectical text will rush to the foreground in chapter four; moments of terror and stupefaction break forth precisely when *ratio* reaches otherwise unreasonable conclusions via Eriugena’s poetics, consequently and thereby disrupting previously unchallenged (and unchallenging) ontologies (and ideologies).

The first seven chapters of the second part of *From Text to Action* is apportioned to explaining Ricœur’s hermeneutics; it is the eighth chapter that is of particular relevance now: “Imagination in Discourse and in Action.”<sup>24</sup> Ricœur asks how imagination can transition from theory to practice.<sup>25</sup> He aims to develop a theory of imagination from his theory of metaphor,

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> Theologically, when dialectic succumbs to idealistic synthesis, it yields pantheistic monism; nondualism yields disruption in continuity, or continuous disruption.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 168-187.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.*, 168-169.

displacing the former from its historical source in philosophy and inserting it into discourse and semantics. Imagination or images, for Ricœur, is no longer an “appendix to perception” or a mere “shadow of perception.”<sup>26</sup> This sort of conceptualization reduces images or imagination to a less true, or weak version of perceptual reality (termed “empirical” in the modern sciences). Instead, Ricœur suggests that the images, specifically of metaphors, “consists in the coming together that suddenly abolishes the logical distance between heretofore distinct semantic fields in order to produce the semantic shock, which, in its turn, ignites the spark of meaning of the metaphor.”<sup>27</sup> Imagination in this way becomes “the apperception, the sudden glimpse, of a new predicate pertinence, viz., a way of constructing pertinence in impertinence.”<sup>28</sup> Metaphor qua coincidence of opposites shocks, and this shock has perceptual effect on the person. The various moments of shock and stupefaction of the Student in Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* and the “flash of the essential theophany” frequently mentioned by Lāhūrī, which gives the human wayfarer recognition and a renewed vision of the theophanic world, are both instances of this semantic shock—this poetic disruption. These bewildering moments happen precisely when the conclusion that “God *is* the world” is very nearly established, only to be prevented by “God *is not* the world”; divine immanence and transcendence meet at the crossroad called metaphor: “God *is/is not* the world.”

Imagination is “the free play of possibilities” in which “we try out new ideas, new values, and new ways of being in the world.”<sup>29</sup>

But this “common sense” attached to the notion of imagination is not fully recognized as long as the fecundity of imagination has not been related to that of language, as exemplified by the metaphorical process. For we then forget this truth: we see images only insofar as we first hear them.<sup>30</sup>

Ricœur reminds us that the while imagination emerges from our experience of the world and the

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 172.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 172-173.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 173.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 174.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 174.

*images* we perceive, our very perception of the world is itself shaped by the *imaginal discourse* (my phrase) we first hear, and therefore can continue to be reshaped by poetic discourse (or otherwise) that we read, hear, and interpret. “This new reference-effect (of metaphor) is nothing but the power of fiction to *redescribe reality*,” which is “the capacity to open and unfold new dimensions of reality by means of our suspension of belief in an earlier description.”<sup>31</sup>

Encountering poetic discourse, in terms of metaphor grounded in imagination, prescribes for the interpreter ethical action that begins to redescribe—transform—the world. The “world” here is ontological, even epistemological and experiential, it is “the horizon of possibilities which constitute an environment for people.”<sup>32</sup> The horizon of possibilities is determined by social imaginaries, be it empiricism, positivism, Aristotelian logic, or even racist imaginaries such as white supremacy and economic-political imaginaries such as neoliberalism.

It is here that the worst of philosophical traditions concerning the image offers bitter resistance; this is the tradition that holds the image to be a weak perception, a shadow of reality. The paradox of fiction is that setting perception aside is the condition for augmenting our vision of things.<sup>33</sup>

Is this not what apophatic and *plus-quam* discourse perform in Eriugena’s theology? The apophatic act sets both empirical perception and social imaginaries aside so that our vision of

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 175.

<sup>32</sup> Ricœur, “Poetry and Possibility,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 453.

<sup>33</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 175. Castoriadis goes further than Ricœur in his critique of the philosophical tradition. Rather than the imagination working on predetermined forms of the (Platonic, Aristotelian, or Neoplatonic) created order, for Castoriadis it *creates this order* from nothing and in this creative imaginary act constitutes the world in terms of *quid* and *quomodo*, what and how all things are. This is Castoriadis’s radical imagination that “makes a ‘first’ representation arise out of a *nothingness* of representation, that is to say, out of *nothing*” (Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* [Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997], 283 [emphasis mine]). The imaginary capacity “presupposes the capacity to see in a thing *what it is not*, to see it *other than it is*...[to posit or present] oneself with things and relations that *do not exist*” (Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution*, 127 [emphasis mine]). Note the negative character Castoriadis gives to the social imaginary. This is why Suzi Adams sees in Castoriadis a pursuit of “a negative cosmology: To the extent that he deconstructs positive cosmologies, it is loosely analogous to the procedures of negative theology” (Suzi Adams, *Castoriadis’s Ontology: being and Creation* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2011], 203). Given Eriugena’s nonsubstantialist God, there is a constructive connection to be made between Castoriadis’s “image of *nihil*” and his conception of the imagination as *creatio ex nihilo* and the radical apophatic theology of the Irishman: we are, too, images of God *who is the nothing-beyond-being*, therefore freeing up our own imaginative capacities. Yet, as I will argue in my final chapter and conclusion, this nonsubstantialist God is made flesh in the person Jesus Christ, and so the Paschal Mystery gives us images to follow, images radically subversive of the power of sin.

things may be augmented in terms of *plus-quam* discourse: what we see is always *more than*. For Ricœur, “poetry goes right to the essence of action precisely because it ties together *muthos* and *mimēsis*, that is, in our vocabulary, fiction and redescription.”<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, disclosing the poetics of Eriugena and engaging the poetry of Ḥāfīz together illuminate how images, imagination, and metaphor augment perception of the world and prescribe action in terms of that redescription. Images and imagination are no illusion, they are not false, less true, or weak perception; they are very real because they prescribe *real* action in this *phenomenal* world. It is not only empirical, quantified, and positivist perception, devoid of imagination, paradox, and coincidences of opposites, that is in fact less real, but also perception constituted by restrictive social imaginaries. Put otherwise, empirical perception and normative social imaginaries reveal *less than* reality, whereas metaphorical perception reveals *more than* reality, because it is restricted by the unrestricted Divine *Nihil*, the God-beyond-being, of which we are images.

Ultimately, Ricœur links his theory of imagination in discourse and action to a critique of the social imaginary that ineluctably yields *ideology* or *utopia*. The theory of the social imaginary can be adapted and fruitfully employed through a Christian theo-poetics of the flesh. For now, his theory of metaphor, imagination, and poetic discourse thus forms the framework through which I will be reading my primary sources in this chapter and the next. In this interpretation, I suggest that Eriugena sketches *natura* in terms of *metaphor*. Rather than reality being a *dialectic* between being/God and non-being/not-God, as previous Eriugenean scholarship suggests, I argue that it is in *dynamic tension* between being/God and non-being/not-God (the split reference of the metaphorical copula ‘*is*’ for Ricœur).<sup>35</sup> The difference is subtle, but substantial. A dialectic

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<sup>34</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 176.

<sup>35</sup> The monograph by Moran (*The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages*) and the volume edited by Gersh and Moran (*Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition*) are illustrative of this reading of Eriugena as idealist. Hans Urs von Balthasar reads Eriugena in a similar way, too (Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. 4*, 343-355). From Balthasar’s short treatment of Eriugena, it may be inferred that he adjudged Eriugena guilty of subsuming the Incarnation into a theological cosmology in a manner that rendered the historical enfleshment of the Divine Word superfluous to salvation. Indeed, in Eriugena where I read the the experience and “originating tensive event” (Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 414) of the Incarnation as *concretely constituting* the theophanic cosmology, which is then dialectically explained in the *Periphyseon*, Balthasar reads the reverse: “The law of nature is therefore formulated [by Eriugena] in a way already implicitly

implies an eventual reduction to a static synthesis (e.g., the post-mortem *reditus* of all things at rest in God, or that *what* is really real is the immaterial, the disembodied), while a dynamic tension suggests a perpetual movement; *natura* is the field through which humanity perpetually— indefinitely—crosses, across which humanity is carried (μεταφέρω in the original Greek means “to carry across or through”). The created world is often equated with God, only to be apophatically denied in other moments; this is a consequence of theophany. Later interpreters would accuse Eriugena of pantheism, but this may be because they read his pantheistic statements in isolation from his *plus-quam* statements; there is always the *more-than* of God that is within the “is not” of *natura*/metaphor, which carries us infinitely beyond. Theophany permits this *more-than* of God to be witnessed in embodied encounters.

### **Retrieving Nondualism as Dynamic Imaginary**

A term given to this type of cosmology is “nondual”, which entered the English vocabulary in full force with the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century encounter of the Advaita (*a-dvaita*, not-two) Vedānta school of Hindu philosophy, culminating with Rudolf Otto’s 1926 study of Śaṅkara’s “mysticism” in conversation with Meister Eckhart (*Mysticism East and West*).<sup>36</sup> In retrospect, one may apply the term to several Western authors, from the neoplatonic Plotinus to the Christians Pseudo-Dionysius, Marguerite Porete, Meister Eckhart, and Nicholas of Cusa, as well as the Islamic School of Ibn ‘Arabī and the School of Love. Many of these posthumously termed nondualists were and are accused of being monistic or pantheistic, and they also happen to be— *paradoxically*—authors who performed apophatic discourse to great (*too* great, for some) effect. As Hugh Nicholson has demonstrated, Otto’s comparison of Eckhart with Śaṅkara rests on an

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Christian and the law of Christ appears so to speak only as its final consequence” (Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol 4*, 350). Balthasar concludes, gesturing toward idealism: “In these aspects of [Eriugena’s] doctrine the whole philosophy of the Renaissance up to Bruno, the whole of Idealism up to Schelling, is already perfectly transparent; so much are they branches springing from the roots of Western thought, that they must spring forth by a kind of natural necessity. The paths to a valid distinction between philosophy and theology have now been clearly marked out in intellectual history, in a process which has not even today come to an end” (Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol 4*, 354).

<sup>36</sup> See Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West: a Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932).

essentializing, dichotomous view that makes Western Christianity dynamically theistic, world affirming, and ethically activist, and Eastern religions as statically pantheistic, world denying, and ethically quietist.<sup>37</sup> But this reductive understanding of both traditions rests on Otto's apologetic goal to vindicate Eckhart of the charge of pantheism while using Śāṅkara as a straw man for his project. Nicholson demonstrates that, by "re-describing Śāṅkara in terms of Eckhart," one is able "to highlight the theistic and realist aspects of the former that have been suppressed by the orientalist characterization of his teaching as illusionistic pantheism."<sup>38</sup> In my interreligious exercise, I execute a similar project: reading Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī together in order to "ambiguate" them, or, to transfer the ambiguity of the poetic images into the ambiguity of this phenomenal world, retrieving from this particular Islamic poetic and mystical tradition its dynamically theistic, world affirming, and ethically activist character. Subsequently, I read Eriugena through this newly constructed Islamic theo-poetics, and consequently not only the dichotomy between West and East is called into question, but also the negative appraisal of nondualism as a constructive term to understand aspects of Christian theology.

I retrieve the term nondualism not merely because I think it applies to Eriugena and Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, but more constructively because I think it should be defended as applicable to the Christian tradition.<sup>39</sup> Nondualism does not necessarily imply static pantheism, denial of the world, and/or quietism. Here, Ricœur's theory of metaphor is helpful, given the poetics of the texts I am reading. The metaphorical copula 'is', after all, signifies both is and is not; and thus, I argue, metaphorical truth is nondual truth. The absolute unity that yields to pantheism or monism is, I aver, prevented from taking hold in this project precisely because, within the metaphorical truth, the beyond, the *meta*, perpetually keeps words, things, and ultimately persons in a perpetual

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<sup>37</sup> See Hugh Nicholson, *Comparative Theology*, 122-128.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 198.

<sup>39</sup> For a constructive exercise in comparative theology that draws from the Advaita Vedānta school in conversation with the Christian theology of Paul Tillich, see John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

conveyance, the *fero*, to the *more-than* of God in the world and of the world in God. This *more-than* is imagination's creative capacity, spurred on by a passionate love for *more*. The theo-poetic nondualism I am constructing via this interreligious reading exercise produces a "dynamic vision of reality"<sup>40</sup> and thus a dynamic imaginary, and not a static synthesis.

One final word before proceeding: despite the refutations of "nondualism" proffered by Christian writers, be it historically and institutionally in the Roman Catholic Church's condemnations of, say, Eriugena, Porete, and Eckhart (though argued in terms of so-called pantheism or monism), or in present-day scholarly and theological rebuttals of Christian materialism,<sup>41</sup> the principal doctrine upon which Christian theology is based is, in *essence*, a nondual one. Conciliar Christology says as much. Included in the canons of the Council of Ephesus, Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) writes to Nestorius (d. *circa* 450) that "the *one* [μόνος/*unus*] and only Christ is *not dual* [οὐ...διπλοῦς/*non...duplex*], even though he be considered to be from *two distinct realities* [δύο νοῆται καὶ διαφορῶν/*ex duabus diversisque rebus*], brought together into an unbreakable *union* [ἐνότητα/*unitatem*]."<sup>42</sup> The one is not two but two in one. The Council of Chalcedon, relying heavily on *Leo's Tome*, professes "*one and the same* (ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν/*unum eundemque*) Christ...acknowledged in *two natures* (δύο φύσεσιν/*duabis naturis*) which undergo *no confusion, no change, no division, no separation* (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως/*inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*); [...] the property of *both natures* (ἐκατέρας φύσεως/*utriusque naturae*) is preserved and comes together into a *single person* (ἓν πρόσωπον/*unam personam*) and a *single subsistent being* (μίαν ὑπόστασιν/*unam...subsistentiam*)."<sup>43</sup> Christ is not two (no separation), but

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<sup>40</sup> Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 351.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., Keith R. Loftin, Joshua R. Farris, and Thomas H. McCall. *Christian Physicalism?: Philosophical Theological Criticisms* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> This is from Cyril's third letter to Nestorius: Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Sheed & Ward; Georgetown University Press, 1990), volume 1, 55. This is merely one of manifold examples of not-two-but-not-one statements in Cyril's letters to Nestorius.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, volume 1, 86.

not one (no confusion). Maximus Confessor takes conciliar Christology, arguably nondual, and transposes it into a cosmic Christocentrism in which “Jesus begins the end, the final integration (union-in-difference) of all things and inauguration of a ‘new creation.’”<sup>44</sup> Even Thomas’s “grace perfects nature” is arguably a nondual theological anthropology: nature and grace are not two (in which case grace would *destroy* nature) and not one (in which case nature and grace would be the same). Similar to how John Thatamanil, in his constructive comparison between Paul Tillich and the Advaita Vedānta theologian Śaṅkara, argues that “the antidualistic character of Tillich’s theology remains largely underappreciated,”<sup>45</sup> I suggest that the nondualist tendencies in Christian theology remain occluded by dominant discourses that equate nondualism with Eastern religions and adjudge Eastern religions as consequently inferior to Christianity.<sup>46</sup>

In my view, this constructive reading of Eriugena’s theology in terms of Ricœur’s theory of metaphor and in an interreligious reading with the poetic metaphors of Ḥāfīz will illuminate how nondualism can be fruitfully salvaged in the Christian tradition. In this respect, I follow Thatamanil’s project that seeks to recover Christian nondualism; contrary to Thatamanil but rather drawing from Eriugena, however, I place Jesus the Incarnate Word at the center of this

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<sup>44</sup> Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 146. Blowers extends Hans Urs von Balthasar’s own reading of Maximus; see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: the Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine*, 19.

<sup>46</sup> For an astute critique of these discourses, see Nicholson, *Comparative Theology*. I follow in the footsteps of other scholarship in comparative theology that critically but constructively engages nondualist anthropologies and cosmologies, such as Francis X. Clooney’s extensive exercises in comparative theology with the nondual religious philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, as well as the work of Michelle Voss Roberts and Brad Bannon. See, for example, Francis X. Clooney, *Theology after Vedānta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Francis X. Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); *Beyond Compare: St. Francis De Sales and Śrī Vedānta Desika on Loving Surrender to God* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008); Michelle Voss Roberts, *Dualities: A Theology of Difference* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); Michelle Voss Roberts, *Body Parts: A Theological Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017); John Thatamanil’s aforementioned book, *The Immanent Divine*; and R. Brad Bannon, “Apophatic Measures: Toward a Theology of Irreducible Particularity” (ThD diss, Harvard Divinity School, 2015). Of note is the scholarly focus on the Hindu religious tradition when it comes exercises in comparative theology that engage nondualist theologies, anthropologies, and cosmologies.

nondualism.<sup>47</sup>

To make sense of this relationship between images and the Incarnation, in this chapter I take a constructive turn to Ḥāfīz’s eminently metaphorical love lyrics in which images and imagination impact perceptual practices. I am taking a cue from Keshavarz’s reading of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s (d. 1273) *ghazals*. In her *Reading Mystical Lyric*, she contends that “ambiguity inherent in poetry corresponds to the ambiguous nature of indescribable experiences,”<sup>48</sup> viz., of the mystic. She suggests that “the incomprehensible is rendered comprehensible through poetic transformation.”<sup>49</sup> However, she does not connect metaphor (*majāz*) to her astute analysis of paradox, coincidence of opposites, and “the power of illogical tropes” to create meaning through the impossible.<sup>50</sup> I tune Keshavarz’s arguments into a reading of Ḥāfīz in terms of poetic metaphors and images as understood not only by Ricœur but by the larger Islamic tradition that deals directly with the coincidence of opposites inherent to *majāz*. In this case, the expression of the inexpressible in the *ghazals* is not merely a reflection of the mystical *experience*, but a mirror of *this* theophanic, *majāzī* (metaphorical-phenomenal) *world*. As the previous chapter argued, there is a connection between poetic metaphors and theophany in that they both disrupt, just as Keshavarz avers regarding “the productive instability of paradox,” which “not only textualizes the instability of mystical experience and expands the poetic horizons, but...disrupts the

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<sup>47</sup> I agree with Thatamanil that dominant Christian discourses have presented “naïve accounts [of Christianity] that depict God as a supranatural deity who inhabits another world and only subsequently enters into the human world by supranatural means in a singular, exceptional, and once-for-all moment of radical immanence” (Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine*, 22). However, despite Thatamanil’s Christian project, Jesus the Christ enters into the picture only a handful of times in his entire book. Jesus is the exception to “transitory dualism” that proofs the rule of cosmological, anthropological, and theological nondualism (see, e.g., Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine*, 199-201). For Eriugena, and ultimately for my own project, the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus the Christ, is at the center of nondualism precisely because of the glorified flesh of the resurrection.

<sup>48</sup> Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> See chapter three, “The ‘Footless’ Journey in ‘Nothingness’: *The Power of Illogical Tropes*”, for her discussion of the prominent role of paradox and other similar literary devices in medieval Persian literature in general and in particular in Rūmī vis-à-vis his mystical experience (*ibid.*, 31-48).

anticipated flow of the narrative.”<sup>51</sup> This disruption is part of the very structure of the theophanic word, and Lāhūrī assists in this transposition of poetic metaphors from lyric to world.

Moving from theophany to metaphor and then imagination, I continue to construct a theo-poetics of the flesh via this interreligious reading. Before encountering the love lyrics, however, I turn to the larger Islamic tradition to demonstrate how it anticipates Ricœur’s theory of metaphor and the imagination.

## **Metaphor, Imagination, the Imaginal World, and Poetry in the Islamic Tradition**

### **Metaphor: The Poetics of Speaking and Being**

*Al-majāz qanṭara al-ḥaqīqa*, “metaphor is a bridge to Reality,” is unarguably the single most important Arabic, theological and linguistic axiom appropriated by the Islamic mystico-poetic tradition.<sup>52</sup> This axiom gives meaning to how poetic metaphor elides with the cosmology of divine self-disclosures (theophany) via the imagination and the Imaginal World (*‘ālam al-khayāl* or *al-mithāl*). A seminal Arabic text defines *majāz*, with respect to Qur’ānic exegesis, as “everything that goes *beyond* the strictly logical application of language.”<sup>53</sup> Reality, as it were, is beyond the logical. Shahab Ahmed, in his groundbreaking *What Is Islam?*, adduces copious texts from the Islamic tradition carefully and cogently to demonstrate that contradiction was the *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* of the Islamic. This contradiction was discursively expressed in terms of metaphor and paradox precisely because of the semantic capaciousness these techniques possessed to manifest coherent contradiction.<sup>54</sup> As such, I add that these techniques constituted

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>52</sup> See Wolfhart Heinrichs, “Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of Majaz,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (Jan 1, 1991): 253-284.

<sup>53</sup> From *Ta’wīl mushkil al-Qur’ān* (Interpreting the Difficulties of the Qur’ān) of Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), in Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Isti’āra in Arabic Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Ges.; Steiner [in Komm.], 1977), 30-31.

<sup>54</sup> Ahmed. *What Is Islam?*, 389.

what Michel de Certeau called a "modus loquendi and/or modus agendi" for the specifically mystical (*ṣūfī*) tradition.<sup>55</sup> As *modus*, it was *how* the Islamic functioned, akin to an Islamic imaginary. Through a veritable tour de force of textual evidence and analysis thereof, Ahmed argued that metaphor (and paradox) is the *way* Muslims made meaning, found value, discovered t/Truth, and ultimately *lived* and *existed* in the world.<sup>56</sup> It was an Islamic poetics, an *imaginary* that understood reality in terms of metaphor.

It is not merely that Muslims used metaphor to convey some sort of meaning that was otherwise un-conveyable, but also that this world *was* the metaphor, at least as conceptualized by a large swath of Islamic traditions from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

In the case of metaphor in the literary discourses of Muslims, the two kinds of things that are understood and experienced in terms of each other are the truths and meanings of the Seen material world of forms, on the one side, and the truths and meanings of the Unseen transcendental world-beyond-forms, on the other. These worlds were identified precisely in the discourses of Muslims as the Unseen World of Real-Truth (*'ālam al-ḥaqīqah*) and the Seen World of Metaphor (*'ālam al-majāz*). . . . [The] Seen world itself stands in relation to the Unseen world as metaphor does to Truth. *The Seen world is itself a metaphor*: it is the World of Metaphor the experience of which evokes and alludes to the Real-Truth of the Unseen world—the World of Real-Truth, the *'ālam al-ḥaqīqah*. Real-Truth is *configured* and *delimited* in the forms of the Seen World: the True Meaning(s) of Real-Truth lie beyond and behind this configuration—by *means* of which Real-Truth may, nonetheless, be reached.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 14. The mystics and mystical texts that are the subject of De Certeau's groundbreaking work "institute a 'style' that articulates itself into *practices* defining a *modus loquendi* and/or *modus agendi*. . . . What is essential, therefore, is not a body of doctrines (which is the effect of these practices and above all the product of later theological interpretation), but the foundation of a field in which specific procedures will be developed: a *space* and an *apparatus*. The theoreticians of this mystical literature placed at the heart of the debates that at that time opposed them to 'theologians' or 'examiners' either the 'mystic phrase' ('manners of expression,' turns of phrase,' ways of 'turning' words) or 'maxims' (rules of thought or action for 'saints,' that is, mystics). The reinterpretation of the tradition is characterized by an ensemble of processes that allow language to be treated differently—the entire contemporary language, not just the separate domain concerning theological knowledge or patristical and scriptural corpus. Ways of acting organize the invention of a mystic body" (ibid., 14-15). I seek a connection between *modus loquendi*, *agendi* (Certeau), *operandi*, and *vivendi* (Ahmed) and the *mode* of our relation to the Divine, which is the Incarnation; this is a theo-poetics of the flesh.

<sup>56</sup> "Metaphor and paradox are, in other words, of key semantic and existential significance to Muslims' meaning-making. We need, then, to take seriously Muslims' mode of saying (which are also modes of doing) when we seek to understand Muslims' modes of being. . . . We need to understand that metaphor and paradox are not merely ornaments; they are also uses (that is, means) and meanings of Islam" (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 392-393).

<sup>57</sup> ibid., 394. Later, related to the "is and is not" of the metaphorical copula, Ahmed writes: "In this spatial economy of Truth, the Seen world, in the one meaning, corresponds to the Unseen but, in the other meaning, differs from it: the forms of the Seen World are informed by Real-Truth, but are not the direct form of Real-Truth. Muslims engaging with the spatiality of Revelation thus lived in an intimate consciousness of and relationship with Truth characterized by ambiguity of meaning and ambivalence of value" (Ahmed, *What Is*

Ahmed's aim in underscoring the qualitative and quantitative import of metaphor in Islamic discourses is to give further weight to his conceptualization of Islam as hermeneutical engagement with Revelation that authorizes exploration, ambiguity, ambivalence, wonder, aestheticization, diffusion, differentiation, polyvalence, and contradiction. In the remainder of this section, I will expand upon the role of metaphor and its relation to the imagination, the Imaginal World, and poetry within the narrower tradition of Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters.

The goal is not to repeat Ahmed's arguments, but to offer context necessary to shed light on an Islamic theo-poetics. Indeed, Ahmed argues that "hermeneutical engagement with Revelation"<sup>58</sup> defines "the Islamic." This is true, but this project implicitly reorients his conclusion: the exploration demanded of a revelation that is ambiguous, contradictory, and ongoing is grounded in a *poetics* of revelation. *How* the world exists drives us in perpetual search, or desire, for *what* God is (and *what* we are); it inspires *how* we are to live. As *modus loquendi* and *agendi* it produced a *modus operandi* and *vivendi*: *how* the poets discoursed impacted *how* one lived. They created a theo-poetic *imaginary* that configured the relationship among self, others, and God. First, I will demonstrate the centrality of imagination and poetry in the Akbarian tradition, and thus why reading poetry as *theological* is at least acceptable to, and at most demanded by, the tradition; second, I will illustrate how Akbarian theories of imagination, interpretation, and revelation anticipate Paul Ricœur's related theories, viz., that textual

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*Islam?*, 396).

<sup>58</sup> "Human and historical *Islam* is nothing other than the hermeneutical engagement with Revelation in all its dimensions and loci—that is, the hermeneutical engagement with the Revelatory Phenomenon comprising both Revelatory Premise and Revelatory Product—which is to say (at this stage in the development of our thesis), hermeneutical engagement with Revelation as Text and Pre-Text. This hermeneutical engagement takes place by a wide spectrum of means and produces a wide spectrum of meanings. Islam is the full array of these means and the full field of these meanings: it is *means and meanings*" (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 355-356). The field of Islamic studies has often focused on legal and creedal discourses as normative, as opposed to other discourses (poetic, mystical, philosophical, artistic, and so on), to such an extent that "when Muslims act and speak exploratively—as opposed to prescriptively—as they seem to have spent a very great deal of their historical time doing, they are somehow not seen to be acting and speaking in a manner and register that is representative, expressive and constitutive of Islam" (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 303). Furthermore, modern discourse, both popular and academic, tends to reduce the Islamic revelation to the Text of the Qur'ān, whereas in practice various Islamic discursive traditions (for example, the Sufi or the philosophical) have understood the Textual revelation of the Qur'ān as just one of three aspects of revelation: the Pre-Text, Con-Text, and actual Text; see footnote 121 of the Introduction.

interpretation redescribes reality and transforms action. This foray into Akbarian thought ultimately provides a more explicit explication of the theo-poetics that grounds Lāhūrī's commentary.

### **The Imaginal in the School of Ibn 'Arabī**

The Imaginal World, imagination, and the so-called imaginal faculty all play central roles in both the cosmology and anthropology of Ibn 'Arabī; in the former, the whole world is nothing but imagination, and in the latter, imagination permits us to perceive God *in this phenomenal world*. Hence, poetry, itself a product of imagination, effects in the interpreter a vision transformed to perceive God. It must also be noted that the source of the Qur'ān and the source of poetry are the same: the Imaginal World. The rational faculties are able to render proofs unto the intellect that demonstrate the existence of a transcendent God (*that* God exists, Eriugena's *quia est*); if this were enough, however, the beautifully poetic imagery of the Qur'ān, divine revelation itself, would not have been necessary (*how* God exists in relation to the world, Eriugena's elusive *quomodo*). This presents as a theo-poetics of revelation, grounded in the imaginal.

Ibn 'Arabī designates the *faṣṣ*/chapter on Joseph in his most popular text, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, for an explication of the imagination; he does this on the basis of Joseph's capacity to interpret dreams, another product of the Imaginal World. He states rather straightforwardly that "the cosmos is an imagined thing (*mutawahham*) that does not possess real existence (*wujūd ḥaqīqī*) [in itself], and this is the meaning of imagination (*khayāl*)."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, for Ibn 'Arabī,

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<sup>59</sup> "For if the situation is as we have [described] it to you, then the world is imaginal [*mutawahham*], and it does not have real existence [*wujūd ḥaqīqī*]. This is the meaning of imagination [*khayāl*]. That is, you *imagine* that [the world] is something superadded [to the Real] and subsisting in itself, outside of the Real, but this is not the case" (Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 135-136 (Arabic, my translation); for English, see Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 124, and *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 71). To this Qayṣarī adds the gloss: "For real existence is the Real, and relational [existence] returns to Him, for the world does not have an existence different in reality from the existence of the Real, even though it is an imagination [*mutawahham*] of [the Real's] existence" (Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 698). Jāmī, commenting on the same chapter (of Joseph) from Ibn 'Arabī's *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, versifies that "Being is only imagination / And it is real in reality / All who understand this / Possess the secrets of the path" (Jāmī, *Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, [Tihārān: Mu'assasah-'i Muṭāla'āt Va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1991], 180). That all of reality can be both an imagination and very real suggests a thicker conception of the imagination than it is generally given today.

“Existence (*wujūd*), all of it, is an imagination within an imagination (*khayāl fī khayāl*).”<sup>60</sup> The opposite of “real existence” is not “fake” or “false,” but rather existence that manifests the Unmanifest, i.e., manifest existence that both is and is not the Unmanifest Existence.

Given the poetic nature of this world, viz., that it is an imagination of meaning into forms just as poetry gives form to invisible meaning (Vendler’s “thought made visible”), poetic interpretation plays a key role in perceiving God in creation. Poetic metaphor is the textual corollary to cosmological metaphor. In analyzing a portion of the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, “Worship God *as though* [*ka-inna*] you saw Him,”<sup>61</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī states that the *kāf* of “as if” represents the power of the imagination (reminiscent of Ricœur’s “being as”). The opening poem of chapter 63 (“Concerning the Recognition of the Subsistence of the People in the *Barzarkh*/Liminal Space Between this World and the Resurrection”) of the *Futūḥāt* suggests as much:

Between the next world and this world adheres vision,  
 The degrees of liminal spaces possess *suwar* [Qur’anic chapters].  
 [...]
 Were it not for the Imagination, today we would be nonexistent [in nothingness]  
 a goal would not be accomplished through us, and no purpose

Its authority is “As though/*ka-inna* [you saw Him]”, if you understand it  
*revelation has come through it, and understanding and consideration*

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<sup>60</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 138; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 125; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam*, 72 (*fāṣṣ*/chapter of Joseph).

<sup>61</sup> The *ḥadīth* of Gabriel is the source of the classical theological distinction among submission (*islām*), faith (*īmān*), and “doing the good-and-beautiful” (*iḥsān*). In the narration, Gabriel comes in the form of a man in white clothing and questions the Prophet about his religion (*dīn*). The first part of the *ḥadīth* reads: “‘Umar ibn al-Khattab said: One day when we were with God’s messenger, a man with very white clothing and very black hair came up to us. No mark of travel was visible on him, and none of us recognized him. Sitting down before the Prophet, leaning his knees against his, and placing his hands on his thighs, he said, ‘Tell me, Muhammad, about submission (*islām*). He replied, ‘Submission means that you should bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God’s messenger, that you should perform the ritual prayer, pay the alms tax, fast during Ramadan, and make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to go there.’ The man said, ‘You have spoken the truth.’ We were surprised at his questioning him and then declaring that he had spoken the truth. He said, ‘Now tell me about faith (*īmān*). He replied, ‘Faith means that you have faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and that you have faith in the measuring out, both its good and its evil.’ Remarking that he had spoken the truth, he then said, ‘Now tell me about doing-the-good-and-the-beautiful (*iḥsān*).’ He replied, ‘*Iḥsān* means that you should worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you.’ This is the version cited in William Chittick and Sachiko Murata, *The Vision of Islam* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1994), 18, with some modifications. The *ḥadīth* is verified to be sound, and is found in Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, volume 1 (*Kitāb al-Īmān*), as well as in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Iman 37, as per the reference format given in A.J. Wensinck, *Concordance Et Indices De La Tradition Musulmane* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1992).

Among the particles is the like (*kāf*) of the attributes  
you are not separated from the [one set of] forms but that you reach [another set of] forms.<sup>62</sup>

The final couplet refers to the constant process of interpretation involved in deciphering the various signs of God from one set of forms to another; the beginning of the poem suggests that this whole world is nothing but a collection of Qur’ānic chapters, or *suwar*, and the final three lines relate this fact to the imagination. The imagination is the *barzakh*, an in-between, liminal space; the whole world is nothing but an Imagination. Indeed, this world, the *barzakh*, is between “the known and the unknown, the nonexistent and the existent, the denied and the affirmed,”<sup>63</sup> which is reminiscent of Eriugena’s definition of theophany (i.e., the affirmation of the negated, the understanding of the unintelligible, and ultimately the existence of the nonexistent). We live in the liminal space between hermeneutical beginning and end, between which is poetics. Thus, it is the poet’s responsibility to reveal the symbolic nature of reality that the world, as imagination, reveals. For poetry, too, is a *barzakh*, or an isthmus; it reveals something in between the structured method of logical reasoning and the silence demanded by pure, formless meaning, and employs metaphorical copulas that lie in between *is* and *is not*. In order to witness theophanies, the metaphorical nature of the cosmos, a certain imaginary vision is required; I argue that many of Ḥāfiẓ’s *ghazals* are attempting to effect this vision.

The importance of interpretation is made evident by Ibn ‘Arabī’s line: “There is nothing in the world but interpreter/interpreting (*mutarjim*), if it is translated from divine new-Speaking. So understand that!”<sup>64</sup> This perpetual process of interpretation suggests an ongoing poetics; if we are

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<sup>62</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, I.304.6; 12-14.

<sup>63</sup> The whole cosmos is nothing but a collection of levels of *barzakh*, in fact. Ibn ‘Arabī connects the *barzakh* with imagination in the same chapter (63) of the *Futuhat*: “Since the *barzakh* is the thing dividing between the known and the unknown, and between the nonexistent and the existent, and between the denied and the affirmed, and between the intelligible and unintelligible, it is known technically as a *barzakh*. But it is intelligible in itself, and it is nothing but the Imagination (*al-khayāl*)” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, I.304.20-22).

<sup>64</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.333.11 (Chapter 366 “Concerning the Recognition of the Station of the Ministers of the Mahdī Who Will Appear at the End of Time”). In the passage the precedes this line, Ibn ‘Arabī is demonstrating that the People of Unveiling and Existence (*ahl al-kashf wa al-wujūd*) are able to perceive that all things in the world are alive and speaking, too; those blind to the theophanic nature of the world

always situated in the liminal space between the beginning and ever un-finished (*in-fini*) end of the hermeneutical act, we thereby dwell in the poetics of this world. *What* God is remains forever *more-than* any description, the engine of our infinite desire. But *how* God relates to this world informs *how* we are to be: a theo-poetics. The imagination qua *barzakh* faculty means that it is situated between two things, “but it is not identical to any of the two things, though it possesses the power (*quwwa*) of both.”<sup>65</sup> Is this not *plus-quam* theology for Eriugena, which is “most fully comprehensive of the two aforementioned branches of theology,”<sup>66</sup> viz., apophatic and kataphatic? The imagination allows us to see *more than* the empirical, *more than* the possible.

### Poetic Creation, Poetic Interpretation: Text and World

Ibn ‘Arabī understands the creation of the world by God in terms of poetic creation. Of import is how imagination, for the larger Akbarian tradition, is required for the construction of poetry, and how this imaginal faculty is the anthropological corollary of the cosmological presence of the Imaginal World. Chittick singles out an important passage in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūhāt* wherein this connection is made explicit.<sup>67</sup> In this passage, Ibn ‘Arabī is discussing the various spheres traversed by the soul’s ascent, or *mi‘rāj*, to the divine presence.<sup>68</sup> The third sphere is Venus, which is inhabited by the master of the imaginal faculty himself, Joseph, the interpreter of dreams:

When the traveller reaches the planet Venus, Venus takes him before Joseph, who casts to him the sciences which God had singled out for him, that is, those connected to the forms of imaginalization (*tamaththul*) and imagination (*khayāl*)...God never ceased teaching him the corporealization of meanings within the forms of sense perception and sensory objects, and He gave him the knowledge of interpretation (*ta’wīl*) in all of that. This is the celestial sphere of complete form-giving (*al-taṣwīr al-tāmm*) and harmonious arrangement (*al-niẓām*). From this sphere are derived assistance (*imdād*) for

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are “veiled by the thickest of veils” (III.333.11).

<sup>65</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūhāt Al-Makkīyah*, I.304.20 (Chapter 63 “Concerning the Recognition of the Subsistence of the People in the *Barzakh*/Liminal Space Between this World and the Resurrection”).

<sup>66</sup> *PP* I, 32, 873-874 (462C).

<sup>67</sup> See William Chittick, “The World of Imagination and Poetic Imagery According to Ibn Al-Arabī,” *Temenos* 10 (1989): 99-119.

<sup>68</sup> An individual’s personal ascent to the divine presence is of course modeled after the Prophet Muhammad’s *mi‘rāj*; see footnote 38 in Chapter Two.

poets.<sup>69</sup>

The arrangement of words is poetics. Just as meaning is given form in this phenomenal world, likewise do poets, drawing from the Imaginal World via their imagination, give form to meaning in their poetry. Cyrus Zargar, in his *Sufi Aesthetics*, demonstrates that poetry within the Akbarian tradition and School of Love is uniquely suited for expressing mystical truths outside the bounds of reason and within the experience of love; this is possible because just as poetic metaphor expresses contradiction, paradox, and ambiguity, similarly “love combines opposites”<sup>70</sup> in the tension between separation and union. Indeed, should passionate love or *eros* obtain the object of its desire, it would be self-destructive; instead it thrives on always seeking *more* from the infinite profundity of its beloved.<sup>71</sup> The coincidence of opposites constitutive of both love and poetry is a

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<sup>69</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.275.13-14;17-18 (Chapter 167 “Concerning the Recognition of the Alchemy of Happiness”), cited by Chittick, “The World of Imagination and Poetic Imagery According to Ibn Al-Arabī,” 114.

<sup>70</sup> Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 137. Zargar is quoting Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*. The entire selection, which is from Chapter 178, “Concerning the Recognition of the Station of Love,” is of import, and my translation follows: “The one connected to love is attributed with being concealed and non-existent, for every concealed thing is relatively non-existent. It is among the attributes of love that the lover, in his love, bring together opposites, so that his being, through his choice, become according to the form [of God]. This is the difference between natural love and spiritual love. Yet, humankind brings together [both natural love and spiritual love] into one, while animals love but do not bring together opposites—only humankind [does this]. Only humankind brings together opposites in his love, because he is made in the form [of God], Who described himself with opposites when He said [in the Qur’ān]: ‘He is the first and the Last, the Manifest and the Unmanifest.’ [An example of the] form of love that brings together opposites [follows]. One of the necessary attributes of love is the love of union with (*ittiṣāl*) the beloved, and [another] necessary attribute of love is the love of whatever the beloved loves. But, [what if] the beloved loves separation (*hajr*, i.e., not *ittiṣāl*)? If the lover should love separation [too], then he would not be acting according to what is necessary of love, for love demands union. But should [the lover] love union, then he would likewise not be acting according to what is necessary of love, for the lover should love what his beloved loves. The lover does not act, and he is confuted (*mahjūj*) in every state. The goal is to bring together both [of the two states mentioned above], i.e., [the lover] should love the love the beloved has for separation, and not separation itself, [all while] loving union [as well]. There is no better solution to this predicament than this. This is just like someone being satisfied with the Divine Decree (*qaḍā’*), for he may be described with being satisfied with the Divine Decree (*qaḍā’*) even though he may not be pleased with that which is decreed (*muqḍī*), such as infidelity (*kufr*). Just as [a predicament in] religious revelation has appeared, likewise in the predicament of love. The lover loves union with the beloved and he loves the love the beloved has for separation, and not separation in itself, because separation is not the same as the love the beloved has for separation. Just as that which is decreed is not the same as the Divine Decree, for the Divine Decree is the decision (*ḥukm*) of God concerning that which is decreed, and not that which is decreed itself; one is well-pleased with the decision (*ḥukm*) of God (and not necessarily with that which is decreed)” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.327.14-24). This chapter is translated into French by Maurice Gloton; see Ibn Al-‘Arabī, *Traité De L’amour* (Paris: A. Michel, 1986).

<sup>71</sup> This is why *eros*, *ishq*, that is, passionate love, is essentially God, a point investigated by various authors in the volume *Toward a Theology of Eros*. “[Eros] is the power or process of divine self-othering through which creation is ever emerging—that which at once differentiates and joins, orders and disrupts. A God in and of between-spaces, then, and also a God always incarnating, always subjecting itself to becoming-flesh. Thus, a

disruptive *poetics*.<sup>72</sup> Imagination is capable of bringing together opposites just as God is the supreme coincidence of opposites (“the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward” Qur’ān 57:3).<sup>73</sup> To interpret poetry one needs to exercise imagination, too, and so this imaginal perception is trained for the sake of perceiving theophanies.

In the chapter pertaining to the “bezel of the wisdom of light in the Josephine Word” in *Naqd al-nusūs fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*,<sup>74</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī’s commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s own summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*, the prolific *ṣūfī*, who is versed in Avicennan philosophy, Akbarian thought, and the teachings of the School of Love, extensively explicates the relationship among the World of Imagination (or Image-Exemplars = *mithāl*), the capacity to interpret, and perception.

Since the World of Image-Exemplars (*mithāl*) is a luminous world, and since the unveiling (*kashf*) of Joseph was exemplary (*mithālī*), and also [since] there manifested in [Joseph] the luminous, cognitive power related to the unveiling of imaginal and exemplary forms, [which power] is the knowledge of interpretation in a perfect way, [it follows that] everyone who comes to understand this knowledge after him understands from his rank and benefits from his spirituality; [this person] ascribes the luminous wisdom [he has] to the Josephine Word.<sup>75</sup>

Jāmī suggests that anyone who is able to interpret forms (*ṣūra*, which suggests both cosmological

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God who is a Christ—ever incarnating, but also ever withdrawing seductively, eluding even the grasp of words that must (according to the logic of a “negative” theology) be unsaid as soon as they are said. If theology gestures toward a God-who-is-eros, that gesture itself partakes of the erotic. Like prayer—or perhaps as prayer?—theology cannot grasp God but it can hope to seduce and be seduced by God” (Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller, *Toward a Theology of Eros: transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2006], xxi). God as passionate love implies that God is found and not found, encountered in the flesh but always more than the flesh alone, and experienced most passionately in between union and separation. The Incarnate God loves union with the flesh, and as enfleshed persons, we love union with God by encountering divinity in the flesh (as opposed to fleeing the flesh for a disembodied union with God).

<sup>72</sup> “Thus, considering the contradictions and combination of opposites faced by the lover, the most accurate word that describes his situation is perplexity (*al-hayrah*). Herein lies the importance of poetry, especially amorous poetry that can portray perplexity and a crisis of self-will, without the burdens of logic and continuity found in discursive prose. This is one reason that imaginative and emotive poetry stands as the language of all loves, whether gnostic or otherwise” (Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 138).

<sup>73</sup> For an extended argument, see Zargar’s Chapter Six (“The Amorous Lyric as Mystical Language”) in his *Sufi Aesthetics*, 120-150.

<sup>74</sup> Jāmī, *Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 177.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

and textual) in a complete fashion is granted this capability through the illumination of the Josephine Word; this person inherits, as it were, Joseph's gifts of dream interpretation. He becomes an interpreter of the world's infinite theophanies.

As he continues, he delineates Real Light (*al-nūr al-ḥaqīqī*) from brightness (*al-ḍiyā*) and from darkness (*al-zulma*): "Since...Real Light...is that through which one perceives while it is not perceived, know that darkness is [also] not perceived, though it is not that through which one perceives; but brightness is perceived and it is that through which one perceives."<sup>76</sup> Here, "brightness" is the liminal space between Real Light and darkness. Real, or Pure Light is no different from the Real's (God's) Existence, and it is apprehended only through its encounter with nonexistence, even though nonexistence "possesses an individuation merely in the ratiocinative thought"<sup>77</sup> (i.e., "nonexistence" has no extra-mental existence).

Mental nonexistence is not realized in the encounter with [extra-mental] existence without ratiocinative thought. It is not possible to perceive Pure Existence. So the level of nonexistence qua its mental encounter with existence is like a mirror to it, and the individuated entity between the two sides is the reality of the World of Image-Exemplars, with brightness being an essential attribute thereof.<sup>78</sup>

In this excerpt, Jāmī suggests that what comes into existence or manifestation *between* Real Light (or Existence) *and* nonexistence is the reality of the World of Image-Exemplars, which includes *this phenomenal world*. This world is characterized by "brightness", which permits us to perceive the forms of the world as intended by God. Note, then, that between Real Existence and the nonexistence conceptualized by ratiocinative thought is the Imaginal World, inclusive of this phenomenal world; on either side of the Imaginal World are two imperceptible realities: the Real and nonexistence, the former by being pure light, and the latter by being pure, conceptual nonexistence (in the mind). *The intellect, left alone to its devices, is fettered to nonexistence.*

Interpretation is directly related to the perception of forms in the dreaming state, and while

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, 178.

<sup>77</sup> Jāmī, *Nur al-Dīn Abd al-Rahmān. Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 178.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, 179.

these forms vary, so do their interpretive meanings. The variegation in meanings interpreted from a single form has to do with the disposition and the context of the individual, as Jāmī explains.<sup>79</sup>

In any case, all that pertains to the dreaming state pertains to the waking state:

*So know that everything that appears in [this world of] sense-perception is like all that appears in dreaming; but the people are negligent of perceiving the realities and their meanings which comprise the forms manifesting them, just as the Prophet said, “People are sleeping, and when they die, they wake up.” And just as the real-knower [‘arīf] recognizes, through interpretation, the intention of the forms that are seen in dreaming, likewise, does the real-knower recognize the intended realities of the forms manifesting in [this world] of sense-perception; for [in each case the real-knower] interprets/crosses over from [the forms] to the [meaning] intended by the forms...The following was said concerning this station: “Indeed, all things that takes place in the world are messengers [rusul] from God [sent] to the servant; [these messengers] transmit the messages of their Lord; the one who recognizes them recognizes them, and the one who is ignorant of them turns away from them.” God said, “How many signs are there in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, turning away from them” (Qur’ān 12:105—from the *sūra* of Joseph) because of the lack of perception and the persistence of their negligence.<sup>80</sup>*

The word used for “messengers” [*rusul*] above is the title given to the Prophet Muḥammad and all of the other prophets who came bearing a new revelatory text (e.g., Moses and the Torah, Jesus and the Gospels). Just as these texts require interpretation, so do all the forms of this phenomenal world, and just as the revelatory texts come from the Absolute Unseen World, likewise do the forms of this world come from the Absolute Unseen World in a process of “descent” through five divine presences.<sup>81</sup> Jāmī then avers that the “highest presence is the

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<sup>79</sup> In the below commentary, the **bold** text is Ibn ‘Arabī’s original, while the rest is Jāmī’s commentary: “The Shaykh expresses brightness as light when he says, **Light**, or other than Real, Existentiating Light—which is the Essence of the Real—is **unveiled**, i.e. perceived in essence, **and through it** [occurs] **unveiling**, i.e. perception of other things. **And the most complete of lights** that are unveiled and through which unveiling [occurs] in the act of unveiling **and [the lights] that are the greatest in penetrating** things through the unveiling of their realities is **the complete light** pertaining to knowledge [*ilmī*] **by which is unveiled** and perceived **that which God intends through the imaginal forms seen** in dreaming, and, having been changed from what they were in the World of Image-Exemplars, they become witnessed in the World of Sensory-Perception through the free activity of unrestricted power [*bi-taṣarruf al-quwa al-mutaṣarrif*]. **This**, i.e., the unveiling of that which God intends through [the forms], **is the knowledge of interpretation** [*ilm al-ta’bīr*]” (ibid., 179).

<sup>80</sup> ibid., 180.

<sup>81</sup> These five divine presences are: 1) the Absolute Unseen (*ghayb muṭlaq*), 2) the Divine Names (the Real qua divinity), 3) the World of Spirits (the Real qua lordship), 4) the Presence of Image-Exemplars and Imagination (the Real qua “imaginalized forms indicating meanings and realities”), and 5) the Presence of Sense-Perception (the Real qua “individuated forms of being”); see ibid., 181.

Absolute Unseen and the most revealed/descended<sup>82</sup> is [this world of] absolute witnessing.”<sup>83</sup>

All of this is not intended as a mere description of reality, but rather so that the wayfarer may come to recognize just *how* to see. In the last bit of prose from the chapter on Joseph, before Jāmī concludes with a poem, we are given just how to follow a “reverse path” back to the Real *in this world*:

You are to return by a reversing path from this presence, which is the most revealed and the lowest presence, so *see* that everything in the World of Sense-Perception is an image and a form reflecting something that is in the World of Image-Exemplars, and [see that] everything in the World of Image-Exemplars is a form and image-exemplar of the things in the Presence of Lordship, [see that] everything in the Presence of lordship is a form of one of the Names of God, and [that] each [Divine] Name is a form of a [Divine] Attribute, and [see that] each [Divine] Attribute is an aspect of the transcendent [Divine] Essence Itself, through which aspect [the Divine Essence] appears and comes forth into being. Thus the real-knower knows that everything [that] becomes manifest in the World of Sense-Perception is a form of a meaning [that is] hidden and an aspect of the Real, even though [the Real] becomes manifest and comes forth through that [World of Sense-Perception].<sup>84</sup>

We are to *see* the very cosmological process as we gaze at every form in the world. Now, given that the source of meaning both in this world and in the Qur’ān is the one and the same Absolute Unseen realm, and given that this very same author, Jāmī, is the one who bestowed upon Ḥāfīz the honorific *lisān al-ghayb*, or Tongue of the Unseen, it may arguably follow that, upon reading the Shīrāzī’s love lyrics, Jāmī considered him to be endowed with this very perception to recognize *how* this world exists vis-à-vis God: a poetics.

Suffice it to say, I suggest that in reading his love lyrics, the *poiesis* of which results from a strong imaginal faculty able to receive form and meaning from the Imaginal World, one who is receptive to *transformation* may be trained to perceive, at least in part, the world according to this vision, thereby cultivating a theo-poetics. The interpreter cultivates this imaginary vision and acts accordingly. By awakening to *how* the world exists in relation to God, one learns *how* to act

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<sup>82</sup> The term used is *anzal*, whose valence embraces both “descent” and “revelation”, especially given that the textual revelation of the Qur’ān is said to have been revealed or descended using this very term. E.g., “Indeed, We sent it down/revealed it [*anzalnā-hu*] during the night of power” (Qur’ān 97:1). The verbal root *anzala* (fourth form of *nazala*) occurs 183 times in the Qur’ān, often in reference to revealing scripture, signs, messages, a remembrance, or otherwise.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 181.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 181.

accordingly: never seeking the *what* of the Absolute Unseen (which leads to idolatry or even oppressive ideology), but the *how* of theophany (which leads to exploration that values paradox, contradiction, and ambiguity).

### **Qur'ānic Revelation and Poetic Imagination**

It must be noted that the Akbarian tradition did not invent this connection between poetry and revelation. Rather, the literary context in which Muḥammad, divinely inspired as he was, recited the Qur'ān was one replete with a rich poetic, oral tradition. As Shahab Ahmed has noted in his *Before Orthodoxy*, Muḥammad's immediate audience recognized “two well-known categories of ‘inspired’ individuals in society, the poet (*shā'ir*) and the soothsayer (*kāhin*).”<sup>85</sup> Not only was the literary form of the Qur'ān recognized by the Islamic scholarly tradition as being poetic *saj'* (rhymed and rhythmic prose),<sup>86</sup> but “the early Muslims viewed some of the physical processes that accompanied the revelation of the Divine Word as similar to those that accompanied the poets' search for inspiration in the composition of oral poetry.”<sup>87</sup> All this is to suggest that the *poetic* nature of the Divine Word revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad in the form of the oral recitation (= the Qur'ān) has as its nearest contemporaneous parallel the poetry of the pre-Islamic *shā'ir* and *kāhin*.<sup>88</sup> Just as poets recited aloud their artistic production, likewise did the Prophet recite aloud upon receiving divine inspiration, hence the earliest and original meaning

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<sup>85</sup> Shahab Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 295.

<sup>86</sup> See Devin J. Stewart, “Saj' in the Qur'an: Prosody and Structure,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 2 (1990): 101-39.

<sup>87</sup> Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy*, 202. This appears in Ahmed's argument suggesting that the “Satanic verses incident [was] a momentary breakdown in this process” (ibid.). For the precise argument concerning the early context of the Qur'ānic revelation vis-à-vis the poetic practices of 7th-century Arabia, see Michael Zwettler, “Mantic Manifesto,” in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, edited by James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 75-119.

<sup>88</sup> “In other words, as far as the early Muslims were concerned, while Muḥammad was certainly neither a *kāhin* nor a *shā'ir*, but was undoubtedly a Prophet, his Prophethood—that is, his defining quality of receiving verbal inspiration—was understood as being something ‘between seer and poet’” (Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy*, 297). Here Ahmed references Angelika Neuwirth, “Der historische Muhammad im Spiegel des Koran—Prophetentypus zwischen Seher und Dichter?,” in *Biblische Welten: Festschrift Für Martin Metzger Zu Seinem 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Wolfgang Zwickel (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 83-108.

of *qur'ān*: “a reciting aloud.”<sup>89</sup>

The later Islamic, mystico-poetic tradition recognized that poetry was the Pre-Text of divine revelation, to utilize the theory of divine revelation proposed by Shahab Ahmed, who defines Pre-Text as follows:

The Text of the Revelation requires [a Pre-Text] as its premise an Unseen Reality or Truth that *lies beyond and behind the Text of the Revelation-in-the-Seen* and upon which the act, Text and truth of Revelation are contingent. This Unseen Reality is *ontologically prior to* and *alethically* (that is, as regards truth) *larger than* the textual product of the Revelation [= the Qur'ān]: it is the source of Revelation.<sup>90</sup>

The classical and post-classical Islamic poetic and *ṣufī* tradition did not have to take such a large step to consider imagination and poetic metaphor as the human faculty and literary genre, respectively, for continued access to, and presentation of, divine revelation, a dynamic process that perdured (for them, at least) even after the historical moment of Muḥammad's reception of the Qur'ān had passed: a Pre-Text. A *ḥadīth* of the Prophet even suggests as much: “God hath treasures beneath the Throne, the keys whereof are the tongues of poets.”<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the Muslim poet Niẓāmī Ganjavī (d. 1209), arguably the greatest romantic epic poet in Persian literature, asserts that “Poetry is the mirror of the visible and the invisible...the curtain of mystery, the shadow of the Prophetic veil.”<sup>92</sup> The Akbarian tradition built on this already firm foundation that asserts the unity of poetry and revelation and explicates a cosmology, anthropology, and epistemology that considers the poetic and metaphorical as eminently revelatory: a theo-poetics.

### **Imagining Discourse and Action Together**

The Arabic literary axiom that opened this section, “Metaphor is a bridge to Reality,” when

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<sup>89</sup> See William Graham, “The Earliest Meaning of ‘Qur'ān,’” *Die Welt des Islams* 23-24 (1984): 361-377 (especially 365-368). As Ahmed argues in *Before Orthodoxy*, if the *shā'ir* and *kāhīn* were understood to rely on a *shayṭān* or *jinnī* as their companion (*qarīn*) conveying poetic inspiration, it is but a small step to take that the Prophet was understood to rely on the angel Gabriel; see Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy*, 295-299.

<sup>90</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 346.

<sup>91</sup> Abdullah Al-Mamun Suhrawardy, *The Sayings of Muhammad* (New York: Books for Libraries, 1980), 104. Once again, this narration is unverified but effectively canonical.

<sup>92</sup> Peter J. Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 9.

combined with the Akbarian tradition, imaginatively integrates the segregated spaces between text and cosmos, self and cosmos, self and text, and ultimately discourse and action. The Persian School of Love and the rich poetic tradition that it contains likewise share with the Akbarian tradition the qualitative and formative import of poetic metaphor in its anthropology, cosmology, and theology. This is so much the case that in authors such as Lāhūrī, the term *majāz* is employed to indicate “phenomenal.” For example: “The concealed and hidden God self-discloses [in the] the lovely and beautiful which appear in the veiling garments of the manifested *metaphorical/phenomenal (majāzī)* beloved because it is through the forms of beauty (*ṣuwar-i ḥusniyya*), in reality, that the non-delimited God attracts the hearts of lovers [to Himself].”<sup>93</sup> Likewise elsewhere: “The adept should not seek the grace of anyone but the *metaphorical/phenomenal (majāzī)* beloved and *metaphorical/phenomenal* love since she is a vehicle by means of which one attains union to the True (*ḥaqīqī*) Beloved and True Love; by the intermediary of the *metaphorical/phenomenal* beloved and *metaphorical/phenomenal* love one may unite oneself with the True Beloved and experience True Love—for ‘metaphor is a bridge to Reality.’”<sup>94</sup> Now in both these cases, *majāzī* should be glossed and translated as “phenomenal”, i.e., the love and beloved manifested in this phenomenal world; it would be nonsensical to comprehend *majāz* in these cases as metaphorical in the fake, pretend, or fictitious meaning employed in discourse as mere ornament.

The connection between metaphor, the imagination, and the Imaginal World is summed up in the poem that ends Jāmī’s chapter on Joseph, the exemplary interpreter of forms and meanings:

All that is in being is a fantasy or an imagination [*khayāl*]  
or the reflection in a mirror or shadows

The guiding sun emerges in the shadow of otherness,  
[so] do not be bewildered in the desert of going-astray.

Who is the human person [*ādam*] but a reflection of the light that does not fade?  
What is the world but a wave of the sea that does not recede?

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<sup>93</sup> SH I, #55, 428.

<sup>94</sup> SH IV, #404, 2,566.

What is the reflection [if] cut off from the light?  
How is there a wave [if] separated from the sea?

The essence of the all-containing light and sea is the reflection and the wave.  
Since duality here becomes impossible, impossible.

The *wayfarers of passionate love* see that, since  
the one is an altered state [of the other],

that One in its entirety is the atoms of the world,  
having seen the solar radiance that does not fade.

Whereas the other one is the entities of the mirror of being,  
having seen the beauty of that which is hidden in the entities.

The other is in both as that otherness,  
having seen without veiling and without deficiency.<sup>95</sup>

This phenomenal world, the human person eminently so, is an imagination (*khayāl*), reflection, wave, and mirror of “the guiding sun,” of “the light that does not fade,” of “the sea that does not recede,” and of being. Wayfaring through this world is like traveling through the “desert of going- astray,” bewildered. But who is especially attributed with the ability to see this world without duality, to witness the theo-poetics of this phenomenal world? According to Jāmī, it is “the wayfarers of passionate love.” Imagination’s link to passionate love is not arbitrary: “Desire is the creative human capacity that brings into existence that which does not yet exist...[it] is therefore the instrument of freedom, seeking to bring into being a new reality.”<sup>96</sup> The desire for new *ways* of being in the world jumpstarts the imagination, fuels and drives it. Is this not what poets do, imagine forth unrealities that nonetheless transform reality? A desire for *more than* what present, restrictive social imaginaries provide—this spurs the imagination to create and embody new realities.

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<sup>95</sup> Jāmī, *Nur al-Dīn Abd al-Rahmān. Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 181-182.

<sup>96</sup> James Walters, *Religious Imaginations: How Narratives of Faith Are Shaping Today's World* (London: Gingko Library, 2018), 6.

## Poetic Imagination as Unveiling

### *Ghazal 297*<sup>97</sup>

- 1 I smelled the scent of affection, and looked out for the flash of union.<sup>98</sup> [Arabic]  
Come! for by your scent I am dying, O gentle breeze from the north.
- 2 Urging forward with your singsong the camels [*jimāl*] of the beloved: halt and descend!  
[Arabic]  
For in yearning for beauty [*jamāl*], patience is not beautiful [*jamīl*] to me.
- 3 Better to neglect the story of the night of separation,  
[and] give thanks that the day of union has removed the veil.<sup>99</sup>
- 4 When the beloved has peace in mind and desires forgiveness,  
one is able to overlook the injustice of the guardian in every state.
- 5 Come! For the rose-scattering veil of the seven partitions of the eye  
we have removed with elegant writing from imagination's workshop.
- 6 If not for the imagination, your mouth would not be within my constricted heart.  
May no one be like me, in search of the impossible image.
- 7 We are afflicted by the affair of the beloved,  
for no one is truly afflicted with the beloved herself.
- 8 I have become a prisoner, with neither heart nor life, because of the tress's tip.  
By God! Remain madly-in-love and drunk because of that cheek and freckle.
- 9 Ḥāfiẓ the stranger was killed by passionate love for you, however,  
pass by our grave, because our blood is lawful to you.

This love lyric provides a segue from the crucial and general role the imagination plays in the larger tradition to the central and particular function it executes in Ḥāfiẓ's oeuvre. I will first analyze some literary details regarding the construction of this *ghazal*. Then, I will transition to some of the theological implications thereof; this second portion will rely on Lāhūrī's

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<sup>97</sup> *DKh* #297, 610; *SH* III, #330, 2,089; *DAv* #297, 369; *DFo* #297, 775.

<sup>98</sup> "I smelled" is the Arabic *shamamtu* while "I looked out" is the Arabic *shimtu*, but they do not share the same trilateral root (the first is *shīn mīm mīm* and the second is *shīn yā' mīm*). The word for "scent" is glossed as *rawḥ*, though it is etymologically related to *rūḥ*, spirit. The word for "love" is the Arabic, Qur'ānic *widād* (Qur'ān 11:90; 85:14), which etymologically conjures love, affection, and attraction; it is a love that attracts and draws others near.

<sup>99</sup> I have translated Khānlarī's version in his critical edition. However, Lāhūrī's version possesses slight variations: "Dismiss the completion [over] the night of separation, O heart! / [and] give thanks that the morning of union has removed the veil." The meaning is similar: be glad that the night of separation is over, and rejoice that the morning of union has arrived.

commentary to draw out the meaningful import of the image, the imagination, and the revelatory effects of Ḥāfīz’s poetry.

### **Ḥāfīz’s Poetics**

Ḥāfīz opens this *ghazal* with two couplets the first hemistichs of which are both in Arabic; the first four lines alternate from Arabic and Persian before the remainder of the love lyric continues completely in Persian. The literary term given to such a poetic construction is *mulamma‘*.<sup>100</sup> Given the exalted status granted to the Arabic language by Muslim theologians and Qur’ānic exegetes—it was the language of God, after all—“Arabic has always enjoyed privileged status among both the highly educated and the less educated, as well as the totally illiterate.”<sup>101</sup> Interspersing Arabic lines into a Persian poem was often intended to showcase the author’s mastery not only over Persian poetic diction, but also over the sacred speech of God; harmonizing Arabic and Persian poetics demonstrates literary and imaginative expertise. Furthermore, the employment of Arabic within a Persian lyric demands exploration of meaning by the reader or auditor. “[A *mulamma‘*] liberates the reader from the tyranny of the constraints imposed by one language, setting her free to explore the ambiguity of a multilingual text by filling in the blanks that the various rhetorical devices, or foreign language insertions, evoke for a monolingual reader or listener.”<sup>102</sup> The poetics of a *mulamma‘* is disruptive and opens the poem up to more *meaning*, and a fortiori for a monolingual auditor: it requires active use of her own imagination creatively to fill in the gaps left by the absence of comprehension.

In this lyric, the nuance is augmented by Ḥāfīz’s use of a second poetic technique, *ishtiqāq*, or paronomasia, which is “the use of words which are formed out of the same root or

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<sup>100</sup> For a succinct summary of this literary technique in Islamic literature, see Nargis Virani, “Mulamma‘ in Islamic Literatures,” in *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms*, ed. by Beatrice Gruendler (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008) 291-324.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 306.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 308.

which contain the same three Arabic root consonants in different sequence.”<sup>103</sup> This device “allowed poets to combine languages” in creative ways, such as “in instances where two words look as if they were derived from the same root but belong in reality to different roots; or in cases where one word is Arabic and the other Persian.”<sup>104</sup> In the opening two couplets, Ḥāfiẓ employs two sets of paronomasia. The first is the ostensibly shared root between “I smelled” and “I looked out for”: *shamamtu* and *shimtu*. These two Arabic words *seem* to share the same trilateral root, but they do not.<sup>105</sup> The second paronomasia is the threefold repetition of words from the same root: *jīm*, *mā’*, *lām*. Camel (*jimāl*), beauty (*jamāl*), and beautiful (*jamīl*) are all used in the second couplet, the first hemistich of which could just as well be glossed, “Urging forward with your singsong the beauty [*jamāl*] of the beloved: halt and descend!”

Ḥāfiẓ continues to demonstrate his poetics with two uses of another technique: *ihām*, “literally meaning ‘making one suppose,’ a term applied to a rhetorical figure..., also known as *tawriya* (disguising) and *takhyīl* (making one imagine), a kind of play on words based on a single word with a double meaning (cf. amphibology, double entendre).”<sup>106</sup> In the first case, *rawḥ* for “scent” could legitimately be glossed as *rūḥ*, spirit, thereby giving additional meaning to the single utterance, depending on how it is voweled. More cleverly, however, is Ḥāfiẓ’s *ihām* that is achieved through a sort of meta-*ishtiqaq*. “Yearning for beauty” reads *ishtiqaq-i jamāl*. Now the literary technique of *ishtiqaq* literally means “derivation,” because one is deriving multiple words from the same letters. In this case, *ishtiqaq*, yearning, *appears* to be etymologically related to the very technique he is using throughout the two opening couplets, *ishtiqaq*, deriving; in fact, the roots differ (*shīn*, *qāf*, *qāf* and *shīn*, *wāw*, *qāf*, respectively). Nevertheless, misinterpreting

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 313.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 313.

<sup>105</sup> See footnote 98 above.

<sup>106</sup> N. Chalisova, “*Ihām*,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, ed. by Elton Daniel (2012), last modified December 15, 2004, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iham> (accessed on March 5, 2019). See also S.A. Bonebakker, “*Tawriya*,” in *Encyclopædia of Islam*, Second Edition, ed. by P. Bearman, et al. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_7460](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7460) (accessed on March 5, 2019),

*ishtiyāq* on account of the specious *ishtiqāq* (derivation) produces a humorous pun. Repeating three derivations of *jīm*, *mā*, and *lām*, the misinterpreted final hemistich reads: “I have no patience in ‘deriving’ [permutations of] *jamāl!*” Ḥāfiẓ, having demonstrated his brilliant imaginative, poetic techniques, concludes with a joke before ending the *mulamma* ‘ portion of this love lyric and returning to monolingual couplets. In all this, Ḥāfiẓ is demonstrating his poetics; within the Islamic theo-poetics of revelation, he is demonstrating his prophetic, revelatory techniques.

### **Imagining the Impossible, Poetics of the Impossible**

The term *mulamma* ‘ literally means “to make flash or glitter,” and it is not improbable that Ḥāfiẓ references the very technique he is using in the first hemistich when he uses a near exact (Persian) synonym for the term, *barq*, in “flash of union.” This flash of union produces an eminently creative use of his poetic imagination in the construction of the poem, which as I have detailed above, employs overlapping and sequential poetic techniques. The imagination is, in other words, exercised in order to conjure the image of the Beloved through the poem. The flash is a revelation—an unveiling—granted through the imaginal faculty (the “semantic shock” from the coincidence of logical opposites in Ricœur’s theory of metaphorical truth). The flash is disruptive but liberating. This will become clearer with the help of Lāhūrī’s commentary, to which I now turn.

The overarching theme of this love lyric is that of the *(im)possible* union with the beloved after separation. The union is obtained, however, through the imagination, both poetic and cosmological. The “flash of union” is an allusion to “the essential theophany which...[is called] the flashing theophany by the glimpse of which the essential theophany manifests to the wayfarer like a dazzling flash and then vanishes.”<sup>107</sup> Lāhūrī contends that the essential theophany would destroy the composite form of the wayfarer were it to remain for even two moments.<sup>108</sup> This is an

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<sup>107</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,090.

<sup>108</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,090.

allusion perhaps to Qur’ān 7:143 wherein God’s theophany levels the mountain to which it was revealed.<sup>109</sup> The other metaphor utilized in this couplet is the “scent of affection,” which Lāhūrī connects to the perfume of an esteemed guest that precedes his arrival to the household.<sup>110</sup> The momentary flash and the scent of affection are both theophanies that “attract the heart and give it desire, [and after which] the lights of essential beauty are seen.”<sup>111</sup> These theophanies entice the lover, who demands from the northern wind that his beloved come. This yearning is further expressed in the second couplet wherein the camel driver of the beloved’s caravanserai is addressed: “halt and descend!” Lāhūrī comments that “the yearning lover is not satisfied with the delight and pleasure of witnessing the essential theophany, which passes like a swift flash of light and vanishes in the next moment.”<sup>112</sup> The lover, impatient, complains.

But then suddenly the lover realizes that the essential theophany, even though it flashes momentarily and therefore leaves him in search for more, in fact is the means whereby the curtain or veil is removed. The continual theophanies, or unveilings, are interrupted by momentary veilings. This disruption-in-continuity renders unstable interruption constitutive of the otherwise stable, phenomenal world. Lāhūrī then gestures toward the import of the liminal space (i.e., *barzakh*) between the two: “the witnessing of the pious occurs between unveiling (*tajallī*) and veiling.”<sup>113</sup> Lāhūrī then folds the poetic terminology of the guardian, or *raqīb*, encountered in the fourth couplet, into the cosmological veils between the wayfarer and God. “*Raqīb*... means a watchman, someone keeping guard over something, [and] in terms of poetic terminology it is

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<sup>109</sup> “And when Moses came to Our appointed meeting and his Lord spoke unto him, he said, ‘My Lord, show me, that I might look upon Thee.’ He said, ‘Thou shalt not see Me; but look upon the mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then thou wilt see Me.’ And when his Lord manifested Himself [*tajallā*] to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. And when he recovered, he said, ‘Glory be to Thee! I turn unto Thee in repentance, and I am the first of the believers’” (Qur’ān 7:143).

<sup>110</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,090.

<sup>111</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,090.

<sup>112</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,091.

<sup>113</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,092.

someone who hinders the union with the beloved. Here it refers to the curtains and the sublimity of majesty that covers and veils the flashing, essential theophany.”<sup>114</sup> The beloved, merciful nonetheless, desires that the veils of majesty be removed from the flashing, essential theophany; given the ultimate mercy of the beloved, the lover converses with his own heart, advising him to overlook the “the injustice and hindrance of the curtains and sublimity of majesty in every state.”<sup>115</sup>

The tension between the beloved’s majesty and transcendence, on the one side, and the mercy and immanence, on the other, is poetically expressed in the fifth and sixth couplets in terms of the imagination. The desire, subject of the lyric thus far, produces witnessing, which is directly correlated with the *imagination*. The coincidence of apophasis and kataphasis increases desire, which in turn is the fuel that ignites the imagination:

5 Come! For the rose-scattering veil of the seven partitions of the eye  
we have removed with elegant writing from imagination’s workshop (*kār-gāh-i khayāl*).

6 If not for the imagination, your mouth would not be within my constricted heart.  
May no one be like me, in search of the impossible image (*khayāl-i muhāl*).

In these couplets, Ḥāfiẓ considers his own poetic artistry capable of removing the veils of the eyes. Lāhūrī translates the fifth couplet into prose as follows: “We have purely removed...the rose-scattering veil, along with the seven veils of the eye, by the elegant writing from the workshop of imagination...so that your image and exemplar may always be in these formations.”<sup>116</sup> “These formations” appears to refer to both the form of the poetry *and* the form of the beloved witnessed through the seven veils (according to ophthalmology of the time, the

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<sup>114</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,092.

<sup>115</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,092. The sections reads: “This couplet...offers advice to the heart...The one peaceful of character [the beloved in the caravanserai] is covered over, such that [Ḥāfiẓ]...began to complain to the camel-drivers carrying [the beloved], and presented himself without forbearance and without patience. Consequently, [the beloved] has mercy for the sake of comforting the distressed lover, and says that our custom is established in this, viz., that this flashing theophany is excessive and does not stop, for ‘[This is the way (*sunna*) of God which has occurred before] and never will you find in the way (*sunna*) of God any change.’ [Qur’ān 48:23]. So he...converses with the heart, saying, O heart, since the beloved...—may His majesty be exalted—has peace and tranquility in mind, and desires the hasty forgiveness of the veiling of the flashing, essential theophany, you are able to overlook the injustice and the hindrance of the curtains and sublimity of majesty in every state.”

<sup>116</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,094.

biological eye had seven layers to it).<sup>117</sup> Lāhūrī then adds that the “continual yearning and desire for the flashing, essential theophany” (that is, a theophany without form) is to be passed over, “for separation is your lofty custom.” That is, despite perceiving the beautiful form of the beloved, the beloved is still separated from the lover. Furthermore, in commenting on the sixth couplet, Lāhūrī writes:

The intention of “image” here is also the figure and exemplary form of the beloved; this is said in the second hemistich as “impossible image” in view of the fact that its immutability and fixity in the eyesight of the heart of the lover is impossible and impermissible through [the lover’s] own choice; however, through the choice of the beloved [it is possible and permissible]...[then, paraphrasing the couplet,] without the imagination and figuration, you do not exist in the eyesight of my constricted heart; I have cast away from my constricted heart the perpetual desire for the essential theophany. And so, let no person, like me, be in search of the imaginal form and figure *of your essence*.<sup>118</sup>

Up until this point, the lover was endeavoring to witness the essential theophany through his own effort, and as such was alternating between a veiling and unveiling of the essential theophany. In his striving, he was his own *raqīb*, that is, the guardian hindering union with the beloved. In these two couplets, however, Ḥāfiẓ’s voice speaks forcefully, claiming that *his* imaginal faculty, inspired by the Imaginal World whence the beloved emerges, enables the perpetual perception of the beloved—the object of desire. It is through the imagination that Ḥāfiẓ is able both to perceive and to welcome the beloved and to enable others to do the same. His poetry permits listeners and readers to perceive the beloved, the Divine Essence self-disclosing in perceptible forms, because the “impossible image” of the formless, Unmanifest Essence is imaginalized through the imagination.

This sudden apperception of the “impossible and impermissible” is constructively characterized in terms of Caputo’s poetics of the impossible, which he distinguishes from the logic of the impossible. The “event,” which for Caputo is beyond being, “an irruption, an excess,

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<sup>117</sup> Lāhūrī explicates the “seven enfolded veils” of the eye by referencing Naṣr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. “Know that the eye has seven enfolded veils. Just as Shaykh Naṣr al-Dīn Ṭūsī has explained: ‘The first veil is the *julbī* ...the second veil is the...*mashīma*...the third veil is the *shabakī*...the fourth veil is the *‘ankabūt*...because it resembles the weaving of a spider...the fifth veil is the *‘inab*...the sixth veil is the *qarn*...and the seventh [and outermost] veil is the *mulḥam*’” (*SH* III, #330, 2,093-2,094). Fouchécour also explains this in his commentary (see *DFo*, #297, 776-777).

<sup>118</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,094-2,095.

an overflow, a gift beyond economy, which tears open the closed circles of economics,”<sup>119</sup> is encountered as an *advent* of the impossible. The event “belongs to what philosophy calls (the) impossible, constituting an experience of *the* impossible.”<sup>120</sup> Because poetics is the “non-literalizing description of the event that tries to depict its dynamics, to trace its style, and to cope with its fortuitous forces by means of felicitous tropes,”<sup>121</sup> poetry is suited to be an “evocative discourse” enabled to articulate the impossibility of the event, while “logic is a normative discourse governing entities (real or possible), which can or do instantiate its propositions.”<sup>122</sup> For Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī, the imagination functions as the faculty capable not only of receiving the advent of the event, the image of the Beloved in this phenomenal world, but also of producing the poetics of the impossible. The desire for the impossible drives the imagination to *poëisis*, a poetic creation of the impossible image in this world, despite the logic of the impossible.

### **Imagining Affection in Affliction**

After forcefully asserting that his poetic imagination enables the perpetual presence of the beloved, Ḥāfiẓ completes the lyric with three more couplets. The affliction with the *affair* of the beloved as opposed to with the beloved himself refers to the suffering and pain the lover incurs from the phenomenal world, i.e., the created world of action, the forms of the world. The beloved does not cause the affliction, but the lover’s perception or interpretation of the events that he experiences. Unable to witness “the hidden divine ipseity” of the tress, the lover remains captive by “the tip of the tress,” which is “the exemplar and exemplary form of the essence of the beloved.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, the lover seeks the beloved within the Imaginal World, this phenomenal world, while nevertheless remaining “madly-in-love and drunk” from the cheek and

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<sup>119</sup> Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>123</sup> *SH* III, #330, 2,095.

freckle, “which allude to the point of unity qua its hiddenness,”<sup>124</sup> once again impossible to perceive. As such, the lover is “left in the hands of the mutability and instability of the imagination and figuration of your essence.”<sup>125</sup>

In this love lyric, the poetic imagination is enabled to unveil the beloved precisely because the Divine Beloved is revealed imaginally in this phenomenal world. By creating poetry, Ḥāfīz enables others to perceive the Divine Beloved through his metaphorical and highly imaginative constructions. He demonstrates his expertise in the opening couplets, the *mulamma* ‘ itself *effecting the flashing* theophany to be witnessed by the imagination of the auditor or listener. The imaginal form of the beloved that *is* this world is the scent of affection drawing the lover to God. The Arabic *widād*, which I glossed as “affection,” is not accidentally the only Divine Name in the Qur’ān referring to love and tenderness (Qur’ān 11:90; 85:14).<sup>126</sup> This imaginal, phenomenal world, despite the majesty of the veils, is a Divine Mercy permitting human subjects to perceive God; without imaginal perception, the veils are affliction instead of Divine Affection. This theo-poetics enables imagining forth affection in the midst of affliction—logically impossible, poetically possible. Divine Mercy, in concert with the lover’s imagination,

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<sup>124</sup> SH III, #330, 2,095.

<sup>125</sup> SH III, #330, 2,095.

<sup>126</sup> See footnote 98. That is, it is the only Divine Name for love in its *maṣḍar*/verbal-noun form found in the Qur’ān (aside from the oft-repeated *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* for mercy, compassion, or loving-kindness that begins all but one chapter/*sūra* in the Qur’ān). “And seek forgiveness from your Lord; then turn unto Him in repentance. Truly my Lord is Merciful, Loving-Affection [*wadūd*]” (Qur’ān 11:90). “And [thy Lord] is Forgiving, Loving-Affection [*wadūd*]” (Qur’ān 85:14). The other Qur’ānic word for love, *ḥubb*, is found as a conjugated verb with God as its subject often in the Qur’ān. It is used either in the negative, such as “God does *not* love corruption” (2:205) or “does *not* love the unbelievers” (3:32), or in the affirmative, such as “God loves those who do-the-good-and-the-beautiful [*muḥsinīn*]” (2:195), “God loves the patient ones” (3:146), or “God loves the righteous” (9:7); both lists could be protracted. The verse that has been “extensively discussed among theological and mystical commentators because of the mutual and reciprocal nature of love between God and His sincere servants” (Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 305, commentary on 5:54) is “O you who believe! Whosoever among you should renounce his religion, God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him” (5:54). Notably, God is never proclaimed to be *al-ḥubb* or *al-maḥabba*, except ambiguously in recounting the story of Moses in 20:39: “‘Cast [Moses] into the ark and cast it into the sea. Then the sea will throw him upon the bank. An enemy unto Me and an enemy unto him shall take him.’ And I cast upon thee a love [*maḥabba*] from Me, that thou lightest be formed under My eye.” The commentaries are at variance regarding the meaning: it “can either mean that God loved Moses, or that God caused Moses to be beloved to His servants in general or to Āsiyah and Pharaoh in particular. According to [one commentary], these interpretations are not mutually exclusive, for, as [it] asserts, ‘Whoever God loves, people will also love’” (Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 795-796).

renders possible the impossible image of the Beloved in this world. After comparison, this Islamic theo-poetics of the impossible will itself facilitate a re-imagination of the Incarnation as permitting the nondual, coincidence of opposites in this world. The world's affliction is confronted by the Incarnate Word's affection through his very own passionate affliction.

**Ghazal 349**<sup>127</sup>

In the following love lyric, *seeing* the Face of God in the imaginal forms of this phenomenal world is a function of the imagination. The refrain (*radīf*) is the repeated *mi-bin-am*, “I see”, and I have emulated it in my own translation.

- 1 In the Magi's wine tavern the Light of God I see.  
See what a marvel this is! What a Light and whence I see!
- 2 Who is the dreg-drinker of this wine tavern, O Lord, in which  
the *qibla* of need and the *miḥrāb* of petitioning I see?<sup>128</sup>
- 3 Don't act cute and flirty with me, O leader of the Ḥājj, for you  
see the House, but the Master of the House I see.
- 4 I want to open the musk-bag of the idol's tresses.  
Long is [this] thought—[from it] surely China/error<sup>129</sup> I see.
- 5 Burning heart, flowing tears, sighing at dawn, lamenting at night:  
all this because of your graceful gaze I see.<sup>130</sup>
- 6 The position of being in passionate love, of libertinage, of contemplative gazing:  
all from the cultivation of your grace I see.<sup>131</sup>
- 7 A single drop in the ocean causes more or less no disparity,  
for this problem without when and why I see.<sup>132</sup>
- 8 The path of my imagination is cut off at every instant by a figure of Your Face.  
To whom should I tell what things in this veil I see?

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<sup>127</sup> *DKh* #349, 714; *SH* III, #365, 2,308; *DAv* #349, 429; *DFO* #349, 886.

<sup>128</sup> This couplet is not included in Khānlarī's edition of the *Dīvān*, but he notes that it is attested in one of the manuscripts; Lāhūrī does include it.

<sup>129</sup> *khaṭā*: this is both a homophone and homograph shared between “China” and “error”. See discussion below.

<sup>130</sup> This is Khānlarī's version, whereas Lāhūrī reads: “all this as a rank [*martaba*] of your grace I see.”

<sup>131</sup> This couplet is not included in Khānlarī's edition of the *Dīvān*; Lāhūrī does include it.

<sup>132</sup> This couplet is not included in Khānlarī's edition of the *Dīvān*; Lāhūrī does include it.

9 No person has seen from the musk of *Khotan* and the musk-bags of China (*chīn*)  
that which every morning from the dawn breeze I see.

10 Friends! Don't reproach Ḥāfiẓ for his amorous glancing,  
because him among your lovers I see.<sup>133</sup>

In this *ghazal*, the imaginal faculty transforms even the most libertine locations, individuals, and acts into sacred theophanies. By a theo-poetics of the impossible, affection and mercy is imagined forth in these locales, deemed afflicted by the theo-logic of the pretentious ascetic and moral legalist, two principal antagonists in Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics.<sup>134</sup> The Light of God is discovered in the wine tavern, the direction of prayer (*qibla*) and the niche (*miḥrab*) whereby the direction is indicated in a mosque is the dreg-drinker in the wine tavern, the visitor to the wine tavern sees more than the leader of the Ḥājj—not just the *ka'ba*, but the Master of the House, God—and other variously scandalous acts are instigated by the beloved's gaze and grace. The lover is able to encounter the graces of the beloved every morning in the dawn breeze; traveling to China (*khaṭā*) to retrieve the musk and perfume there produced is both unnecessary and an error (*khaṭā*: here Ḥāfiẓ makes use of a homophone and homograph).<sup>135</sup> In the commentary, the wine tavern is both an elevated mystical station and this phenomenal world experienced *with proper imaginal perception* and within the station of unicity; the magus is the complete human person who subsists (*bāqī*) in God and is endowed with such imaginal perception. Ḥāfiẓ, in the closing couplet, is the one who engages in this perception and acts in ways reprimanded by others (such as the sanctimonious *mudda'ī*, or pretender, encountered in chapter two, and those of

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<sup>133</sup> This is Khānlarī's version, whereas Lāhūrī reads: "because this [as a part] of the lovers of God I see."

<sup>134</sup> See footnote 122 in Chapter Two of this dissertation for discussion regarding the libertine's antagonists in Ḥāfiẓ's *ghazals*.

<sup>135</sup> As Fouchécour notes, this love lyric employs all at once four terms that are often associated one with the other in poetry: *khaṭā* (error or China), *chīn* (China), *zolf* (tresses, hair), and *khotan* (the country of *khotan*, associated with China). "In medieval texts, *khaṭā(y)* is a term for Northern China, including the Turco-Mongol country, and *Chīn* is a term for central and eastern China. The words *khaṭā*, *chīn*, *zolf* ("hair"), and *khotan* ("the country of Khotan") are willingly associated in poetry: *khaṭā* and *chīn* for the historical topography, *chīn* and *zolf* because *chīn* also means "wavy" when describing hair, *khaṭā* (or *khaṭā*) and *khotān* because of their phonic similarity of words, *khotan* finally because this country is famous for its production of musk, the perfume and color (black) of which evokes the hair (*zolf*)" (*DFo*, #359, 888).

“religious fanaticism [*ta‘ṣṣub*] and censure [*tawbīkh*],”<sup>136</sup> as Lāhūrī comments).

### **Neither Self-Annihilation Nor Self-Attachment: Imagining Subsistence in God**

Carefully tracing Lāhūrī’s sources, from Shabistarī’s *Rose Garden of Mystery* to Lāhījī’s commentary thereon and to Jāmī’s *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, I will demonstrate how the tension between the total annihilation of the self in God, on the one end, and the inordinate attachment to this phenomenal world, on the other, is expressed and mediated through the imaginal perception and experience of this phenomenal world. The in-between space is a poetics between total veiling and complete unveiling. Lāhūrī’s commentary explores citations from texts that suggest a totally formless, bodiless, and imageless apperception of Divine Unicity, but then offers conclusions averring that this experience has real, effective, and transformative impact on corporeal sense perception in this phenomenal world and one’s engagement therewith. A theo-poetics keeps the wayfarer grounded in this world even while having undergone an otherworldly state of annihilation (*fanā’*) in God. Worded theologically, the intellect takes the wayfarer to an apophatic theology and anthropology, whereat the imagination takes over so that this phenomenal world is perceived and experienced while subsisting (*baqā’*) in God.

In the first couplet, Lāhūrī refers the reader to the opening couplet of the preceding lyric in order to explicate the metaphor of the wine tavern: “Were I once again to pass into the Magi’s wine tavern / I would at once lose the benefit of the [*ṣūfī*] cloak and prayer mat.”<sup>137</sup>

The wine tavern according to technical terms is said to be the station of unicity (*waḥdat*)...given that the wayfarer has annihilated and effaced all of [her] acts, attributes, and essence in the Essence of the Real, for “unto [God] are all matters returned” (Qur’ān 11:123) and “Unicity (*al-tawḥīd*) eliminates attributes (*iḍāfāt*)” [citing *The Rose Garden of Mystery*].<sup>138</sup> [...] [The magus] in Persian connotes the wine seller, but according to technical terms he is said to be the perfecting complete person who has become free from the entirety of the acts, attributes, and essence, given that he has become annihilated in God and subsists in God...Such a wine tavern is the aforementioned station of the magi, who are bound by no formal fetters (*quyūd-i ṣūrī*), and pass-through/interpret (‘*ubūr*) every phenomenal fetter into which they come, since this is an undelimited station...This is because in this station, there is no

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<sup>136</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,316.

<sup>137</sup> *DKh* #327, 670; *SH* III, #364, 2,300; *DAv* #327, 406; *DFo* #327, 839.

<sup>138</sup> Shabistarī, *Gulshan-i Rāz*, 87, v. 840. The couplet reads: “They gave to you a sign of the wine tavern / and so unicity eliminated attributes.”

capacity for duality and otherness.<sup>139</sup>

In the final three lines above and in the rest of the commentary, Lāhūrī paraphrases, without acknowledgement, Lāhījī’s commentary on the verse from *The Rose Garden of Mystery* that he cites.<sup>140</sup> The paradox of the station of unicity is that it is without figure or forms, totally imageless, and yet it manifests phenomenally in passionate lovers who are able to pass through or interpret all experiences (fettors) through this station. The wayfarer has annihilated the self, only to act subsisting in God in this world.

### Acting Radically Within the World

Lāhūrī closes his commentary with three more lines from Shabistarī’s *Rose Garden*.

He drinks existence in one gulp,  
and obtains freedom from affirmations and negations.  
Free from dry and vainglorious asceticism,  
he grasps the cloak of the wine tavern master.  
To frequent wine taverns is to be released from the self,  
[for] selfishness is unbelief (*kufīr*), even if the self is pious.<sup>141</sup>

The radical apophatic anthropology of these lines does not manifest as radical asceticism and flight from the world; rather, this experience of unicity (*waḥdat*) with the Divine compels the wayfarer to act radically *in* the world and without regard to self. Lāhījī’s commentary on *kufīr* is pertinent here, and connects with Lāhūrī’s own conceptualization thereof, as explicated in the previous chapter: “Unbelief is the concealing of the Real by the phenomenal-existence and being of the self and of the other in such a way that existence, attributes, and acts are attributed to *other* than the Real, so this conceals the Real and [the Real’s] appearance in the other.”<sup>142</sup> The

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<sup>139</sup> *SH* III, #364, 2,302-2,303.

<sup>140</sup> “The meaning of wine tavern is the station of unicity, because it is the degree of effacement and annihilation of figures (*nuqūsh*) and formations (*ashkāl*), which is from the imageless world, i.e., free from (*munazzah*) all forms (*ṣuwar*), be it sensorial, imaginal (*mithālī*) or imaginative (*khayālī*); this is because conceptualizing (*tawahhum*) otherness and duality in the station of *tawḥīd* is impossible and misguided. This wine tavern is the station of passionate lovers of unrestrained venturesomeness who are bound by no formal or meaningful fettors, and without fear they pass-through/interpret whatever phenomenal fetter they encounter, and they do not settle on any way station” (Lāhījī, *Mafātīḥ Al-i’jāz Fī Sharḥ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 525-526).

<sup>141</sup> *SH* III, #364, 2,303; citing Shabistarī, *Gulshan-i Rāz*, 87, vv. 837-839.

<sup>142</sup> Lāhījī, *Mafātīḥ Al-i’jāz Fī Sharḥ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 525.

experience of radical unicity with the Divine results, not with a blindness to the world, but rather in a perception of the world as an appearance of the Real (image, theophany). In other words, what is philosophically described as an imageless apperception of the Divine in the station of unicity effectively prescribes an imaginal perception of the Real in and through all things, whence Ḥāfiẓ’s poetic imagination. The wine tavern grants the visitor the light of God through which imaginal perception is obtained. Lāhūrī, ending his commentary on this first couplet, says as much: “the wine tavern...is the station of unbounded unicity (*waḥdat*) of the essence in which every light is God and that’s all—so consider this deeply!”<sup>143</sup>

Ḥāfiẓ’s poetic metaphor forces the audience to enter into the images in order to *see* this world as the metaphorical wine tavern. The second couplet, along with the commentary, presents the hermeneutical relationship between the (realized) human wayfarer and the world. In the wine tavern of the world, the dreg-drinker perceives sacrality (the *qibla*, the *miḥrāb*) in all directions; each thing is more than it appears through metaphor. Lāhūrī comments that the dreg-drinker is the one who is disciplined and striving spiritually; this person is “the completing perfecting [*kāmil-i mukammil*] one who is annihilated in God and subsisting in God.”<sup>144</sup> He goes further to suggest that the dreg-drinker herself is the *qibla* and *miḥrāb* for all created beings. Then, by citing from the chapter on Adam in Jāmī’s *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, he attaches to the dreg-drinker the meaning of the Complete Person (*al-insān al-kāmil*), who represents both Adam qua humanity, viz., all individual humans as a collective, and the particular realized human individual who sustains the existence of the world:

The Real...self-discloses (*tajallī*) upon the mirror of the heart of the Complete Person, who is God’s vicegerent, and they radiate the reflections of the lights of self-disclosure from the mirror of their heart upon the world, and the world remains subsisting through the attainment of that radiation. So long as that Complete Person is in the world [they seek aid from the Real’s theophanies of the Essence, of the Compassionate Mercy, and of the Merciful by means of the Names and Attributes of which the

<sup>143</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,310; Arguably, Lāhūrī’s short commentary unfolds Ḥāfiẓ’s couplet as an extended commentary on Qur’ān 18:103-104: “Say, ‘Shall I inform you who are the greatest losers in respect to their deeds? Those whose efforts go astray in the life of this world, *while they reckon that they are virtuous in their works.*’”

<sup>144</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,310.

existents are the manifestations and the loci upon which they are “seated” [Q:20:5]. So the world is preserved through this seeking of aid and by the radiation of the theophanies] so long as this Person remains in the world. [So] no meaning of the inwardness (*bāṭin*) is obtained from the outwardness (*ẓāhir*) except through his command, and nothing from the outwardness is discovered through the inwardness except through his assistance. [...] For he is the isthmus (*barzakh*) between the [two] sea[s] of existence (*wujūd*) and possibility, [and the partition between the two worlds.] The following words of God refer to him: “He released the two seas, meeting [together], [and] between them there is a *barzakh* that they do not transgress.” [Q 55:19-20]<sup>145</sup>

The centrality of the Complete Person in the theological cosmology that Lāhūrī inherited, and through which he interprets Ḥāfīz’s love lyric, constructs an anthropocosmic theology in which the human person “is a book, the epitome and summary of the Mother of the Book [in which the realities of all creation are inscribed], which consists of the [Divine] presence of the comprehensive Unity of the name ‘Allah.’”<sup>146</sup> In other words, the human person is God’s book, and has therefore been singled out to be created in God’s form/image (*ṣūra*), according to a *ḥadīth* central to the Akbarian tradition.<sup>147</sup> In this theo-poetics, the human person is a book of poetry, *how* God is manifested in the world.

### **The World is the Metaphor: Imaginary Perception and the Inversion of Reality**

In the same section of Jāmī’s *Naqd* that Lāhūrī quotes, there is a passage of eminent import for this discussion on metaphor. Jāmī contends that, according to “exoteric scholars,” the application of *ṣūra* to God is *majāz*, or metaphorical; that is, “form or image” (*ṣūra*) only applies to bodies, and since God is bodiless the form/image of God is really God’s attributes. Whereas exoteric scholars properly apply the term *ṣūra* only to sensory beings, “according to realized ones, *ṣūra* refers to that without which the unseen and immaterial realities cannot be intellected or manifested.”<sup>148</sup> He then continues:

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<sup>145</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,310-2,311; the text in brackets occurs in Jāmī’s original (*Jāmī Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 89-90), after which section Jāmī discusses the *ḥadīth* “I [God] loved to be recognized, so I created the world,” in relation to the Qur’ānic narrative of God’s offering the Trust to humanity (Qur’ān 33:72).

<sup>146</sup> Jāmī, *Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 93.

<sup>147</sup> “Verily, God created Adam in [God’s] form/image.” Another version reads, “. . .in the form of the All-Merciful.” For an extensive survey of the sources and history of this *ḥadīth*, which is similar to Genesis 1:27, see Melchert, “God Created Adam in His Image.”

<sup>148</sup> Jāmī *Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 94.

For our [realized] group, since the world in all its spiritual, corporeal, substantial, and accidental parts is the particularized *ṣūra* of the Divine Presence, and the Complete Person is the comprehensive *ṣūra*, the attribution of *ṣūra* to God is real (*ḥaqīqa*), and to all other than God it is metaphorical (*majāz*).<sup>149</sup>

This foray into Lāhūrī’s sources unfolds the implications of his reading. This world *is* the metaphor that conveys us to the Real, and humanity acts as the liminal space that reads the self and the world as metaphor through proper, “realized” poetics—or imaginary perception. If humans and the world are properly images or forms of the Real, i.e., metaphors through which meaning is conveyed (and that without which formless meaning cannot be obtained), then perceptual practices must be adjusted to make sense of this reality that inverts the common conceptualization of the God-world/-human relationship. What we see is not what we get, but something *more than* that. A theo-poetics is demanded not just for textual interpretation, but for phenomenal perceptual practices and embodied praxis. This world as metaphorical is the non-dialectical speech of God, and here Rivera’s insights are of import: “spirit and flesh flow into each other; the figurative turns into the literal, and vice versa.”<sup>150</sup>

The wine tavern in which sacrality is discovered *is* the metaphor that conveys *the metaphorical nature* of the world. The world is a place of injustice, oppression, temptations, and iniquity, but this demands neither a flight away therefrom in an ascetic withdrawal, nor an inordinate attachment thereto in which this world is perceived materially; both these options stem from a radical dualism. Instead, this world *is the image or form of God*, it is *how* God is revealed and thus a theo-poetics emerges. By praising the wine tavern, equating it both to a mystical station and to this phenomenal world, Ḥāfiẓ in effect suggests that God is most present in the locales most condemned, disregarded, and discarded by the hypocritical authorities, secular, religious, or otherwise. At the risk of glossing over major variances between traditions, I cannot but compare praise for wine taverns and dreg-drinkers with Jesus’s own bodily engagement with prostitutes, tax collectors, unclean persons, and other marginalized members of 1<sup>st</sup>-century

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<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, 95.

<sup>150</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 26.

Palestine. In both contexts, the Complete Person is praised for “subvert[ing] and unmask[ing] the pretensions of the entire materialist mentality in both its religious and secular forms.”<sup>151</sup> Just as the imaginably perceptive person, awakened to the theo-poetics of the world, recognizes the Real and the metaphorical in an entirely inverted way vis-à-vis the materially or rationally perceptive person, likewise does she subvert social systems of oppression by unveiling God for those, and in places, most in need of mercy and compassion, which are divine attributes reflected in the human person. Indeed, social imaginaries today function similarly; we do not question the “reality” or “facticity” of various *created* imaginaries, considering them to be absolutely true, until and unless we invert what is real and what is not.

### **Interpreting Metaphor, Perceiving Reality—Nondually**

In the third couplet, Lāhūrī cites *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* of ‘Alī al-Hujwārī (d. *circa* 1072) and a saying from Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. *circa* 848) to contend that the heart of the human person is itself the Ka‘ba, “the real (*ḥaqīqī*) House of God.”<sup>152</sup> It can be extrapolated that the human person may properly interpret the *majāz* of the world only through the *ḥaqīqa* that resides in the heart of the human person. Access to poetic interpretation may be found within the Real residing in the abode of the heart. This proper interpretation is examined in the following four couplets.

According to Lāhūrī, the idol is the “desired goal, sought-after object, and intention of all beings,” while the tresses refer to the particularized existents and “loci-of-manifestation” of the divine attributes in this phenomenal world, which are manifested through the “perfume” of the

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<sup>151</sup> Leonard Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfiẓ: 2 - The Mystical Milieu: Ḥāfiẓ’s Erotic Spirituality,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love*, 36. It should also be recalled that “many of Ḥāfiẓ’s most bitterly anti-clerical *ghazals* were composed under the fundamentalist dictatorship of Mubārīz al-Dīn (reg. [1353-1357]) immediately following Abū Ishāq Īnjū’s tolerant reign ([1342-1353])” (Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon 2,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love*, 34). As such, “Ḥāfiẓ’s *rind* [libertine] is neither tricky politician, shameless opportunist, confidence man nor political crook. Such worldly con-men are in fact ‘uninspired libertine’, who lack the sacred dimension which is the soul of the *rind*; their fibbing and fabulation but expose the depths of their merely mundane deceit. The inspired libertine on the other hand reveals the world’s deceit: ‘wise-to-the-bait’ of its charms, his actions serve to subvert and unmask the pretensions of the entire materialist mentality in both its religious and secular forms” (ibid., 36).

<sup>152</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,315.

theophany of the attributes.<sup>153</sup> This “long thought” is both expansive, immense (stretching as far as China) and prone to error, whence the homonym/homograph. The error occurs when one merely assents to the theophanic, metaphorical, and imaginal nature of the world discursively or rationally (dualistically), without realizing and experiencing it imaginatively through the Real (nondually); the former results in tragic consequences of injustice and self-absorption.

Nonetheless, the suffering and affliction that is concomitant with passionate love, detailed in chapter two, is the subject of the “burning heart, flowing tears, sighing at dawn, and lamenting at night” of the following couplet. The Beloved’s gaze draws the lover into this affliction, now interpreted as a grace and a benefit from God; the affliction is the consequence of entering the wine tavern of the world. The grace of the Beloved demands libertine, subversive acts from the lover, whose “gaze [is cut off] from the deeds and customs of herself and of [other] creatures,” i.e., from the established judgments of a materialist, dualistic society (the normative logic of the impossible). Instead, the lover becomes realized “in accordance [with the *ḥadīth*], ‘O God, make us to see things *as they are*.’”<sup>154</sup> *As they are*, not *what they are*: this is a theo-poetics that keeps the unknowability of God ever on the horizon of increased desire.<sup>155</sup> “In this couplet there is a response to the dualists who say that the creator of goodness and light is Yazdān and the creator of evil and oppression is Aharman. [But] the Real...is known to be transcendent from good and evil.”<sup>156</sup> In this passage, Lāhūrī draws from pre-Islamic (Zoroastrian or even pre-Zoroastrian) deities as symbols for dualistic vision. Nonetheless, to posit a sharp ontological separation between this world and God would remove the imaginal, metaphorical, and formal nondual

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<sup>153</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,311.

<sup>154</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,312. This desire is constituted by the famous prayer of the Prophet, a *ḥadīth* of various authenticity, but whose historical and discursive impact on the larger Islamic tradition is uncontested: “O my God, make us to see (*‘ārinā*) things as they really are (*kamā hiya*)!” See ‘Alī ibn ‘Usmān Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-mahjub*, ed. by V. Zhukovsky (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1957), 231.

<sup>155</sup> This person comes to understand all things, repulsive and attractive, as “good according to the wisdom of the Creator” (*SH* III, #365, 2,312).

<sup>156</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,312.

relationship between the two; this is the intractable problem of the second hemistich in which dualists are entangled.

Instead, the imagination functions in the antepenultimate couplet as receptive to the figure of God's Face, something from which the intellect is veiled. Only an imaginal perception attains to the vision of the world as image, theophany, and metaphor. The commentary is lengthy, and Lāhūrī quotes from a certain *Jawāhir al-Asrār* (likely the Kubrawī commentary on Rūmī's *Mathnawī* by Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan Sabzavārī, also known as Ḥusayn al-Khwārazmī [d. *circa* 1436]) and one unreferenced *Tahqīqāt*. This imaginal perception is explicitly connected to the dreg-drinker—human person—who is the isthmus able to obtain from the outward (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the inward (*bāṭin*) and from the inward meaning of the outward.

“Face”...is the formal theophany (*tajallī-i šūrī*), and this is also called the...experiential theophany. [The meaning of “figure” in “figure of Your Face”] is the figures and forms of the loci-of-manifestation in whose forms the formal and luminescent theophanies manifest upon the wayfarer...All the figures of beings and all the forms of existents...are this single [“Face”], viz., that in the form of everything that has become manifest there is likewise something hidden within that form, for “praise be to [God] who manifests in [Her] inwardness (*buṭūn*) and conceals in [His] outwardness (*zuhūr*).” For this reason, each figure and form in which the undelimited Beloved becomes self-disclosed cuts off the [path of] wayfarer and throws him into obscurity [ambiguity = *ishtibāh*], for he is unable to differentiate between the loci-of-manifestation and the Manifesting One. Imagination (*khayāl*) is understanding (*fahm*) and estimation (*wahm*) and also the formation of forms in the mind, whether they be sensorial forms or spiritual forms. [...] On account of [this formal] theophany, all figures of beings and forms of existents cuts off the path of my formation and thinking (*taṣawwūr u tafakkur*), and throws me into the abyss of obscurity...[for] I am unable to explain the modality [*kaiḫiyat*] [of these forms and figures] out of fear of *tashbīh* (immanence) and *ittiḥād* (unity).<sup>157</sup>

In this commentary—effectively a commentary on “Whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God” (Qur’ān 2:115)—the image or form of God meets the wayfarer at the intersection of her imagination and sensory perception. Unprepared, she is confused by the ambiguity (*ishtibāh*) of the theophanies, and incapable of discursively or logically explaining *how* God both is and is not the forms of the world, lest she commit *tashbīh*, equating God to the world in a simple unity (*ittiḥād*). The connection between the obscurity and the radical immanence of God is etymologically revealed by the shared Arabic roots of *ishtibāh* and *tashbīh*. *Logically* explaining the modality reduces God to the world; evoking the modality poetically with the imagination

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<sup>157</sup> SH III, #365, 2,314.

keeps the relation dynamic and nondual. The commentary ends with a fear of emulating the famous *ṣūfīs* of old, Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (“I am the Real!”) and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (“There is nothing in my garment but God; Praised be me, how magnificent my affair!”)<sup>158</sup> in which a radical, though simple, unity is declared and subjectivity and distinction is lost. In later love lyrics, the relegation of *fanā’*, or self-annihilation, to a secondary status vis-à-vis *baqā’*, subsistence in God, will be explored; the former suggests a dangerous, false, and static monism (via *ittiḥād*) while the latter a fruitful, real, and dynamic nondualism (through *wiṣāl*, divine “communion”).

### **The Real Effect of the Imagination on Physical Senses**

The penultimate couplet connects the physical senses with the perception of the merciful (*rahmānī*) breaths coming from the Divine Throne in the metaphorical dawn wind.<sup>159</sup> The confrontation of the Face of God by the imagination has a real effect on physical perception: “Know that each individual human person has five [corporeal] external senses from whose action various [things] occur. Whosoever makes the mirror of their own heart purer from the rust of attachment to other [things], through the polishing of spiritual-discipline and spiritual-struggle, renders his own [corporeal] senses more powerful in their action.”<sup>160</sup> This is an incredibly nondual assertion in which spiritual discipline augments the physical senses so that the Merciful God may be truly perceived therewith. This is possible because the world is *majāz*, and one needs to enter into the images provided by Ḥāfīz in order to see the theo-poetics of this phenomenal world.

In the final couplet, the “exoteric folk who stand up in religious fanaticism (*ta ṣṣub*) and censure (*tawbīkh*),”<sup>161</sup> the same hypocrites so often rebuked by Ḥāfīz, are refuted for their

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<sup>158</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,314.

<sup>159</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,313.

<sup>160</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,313.

<sup>161</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,316.

unimaginative vision. The “amorous glancing” (*naẓar-bāzī*) is referred to as “the art of passionate love with phenomenal (*majāzī*) beloveds,”<sup>162</sup> made possible by the “formal theophanies and the witnessing of the divine light in the sensorial [corporeal] loci-of-manifestation.”<sup>163</sup> The exoteric scholars, perceiving dualistically, blame Ḥāfiẓ for considering this phenomenal world to be the Real through an absolute unity between the human and the divine, thereby granting created entities the same ontological value as God.<sup>164</sup> But this is not the case, given imaginal vision, as Lāhūrī explains in the person of the narrator: “I see Ḥāfiẓ among the lovers of God and the seekers of God’s Beauty, and I never see him turning to the sensorial loci-of-manifestation, except insofar as the sensorial loci-of-manifestation are mirrors of the Undelimited Beauty, and so necessarily he loves the sensorial loci-of-manifestation, for he loves the mirror insofar as it is displaying [that] Beauty.”<sup>165</sup> Historically, this love lyric is a response to one of Ḥāfiẓ’s contemporaries, Khwāju Kirmānī, “who reproached Ḥāfiẓ for [alleging] the ability to adore God outside of an ascetic retreat house.”<sup>166</sup>

The first love lyric in this chapter explored the theo-poetics of the impossible in terms of *seeing* the event of God in this world. Apperception of the divine is a function of the imagination. In this love lyric, the theo-poetics of the impossible facilitates *doing* the impossible. Performing

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<sup>162</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,316.

<sup>163</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,316.

<sup>164</sup> Within the context of this love lyric and the larger tradition, one of the contested practices was *shāhid-bāzī*, translated in the sixth couplet as “contemplative gazing”. Historically, this practice consisted of gazing at beautiful youth, either boys or girls, in contemplation of divine beauty. I do not wish to enter into the historical debates over this practice among classical and post-classical Muslim scholars. For a concise overview of this discipline within sufism, see Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 85-119 (chapter five).

<sup>165</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,316.

<sup>166</sup> *DFo*, #349, 888; see Jāvid, *Ḥāfiẓ-i jāvid*, 335-339. Jāvid provides some intertextual correlations from some of Ḥāfiẓ’s other lyrics, among which: “Everyone is seeking after a friend, whether sober or drunk / Everyplace is a house of passionate love, whether mosque or temple” (*DKh*, #78, 173; *DAv*, #78, 118); “Were the Master of the Magi to become my Guide, what’s the difference? / [For] no one thinks that secrets don’t come from God” (*DKh*, #70, 156; *DAv*, #70, 107); “In passionate love, there is no difference between the *ṣūfī* retreat house and the wine tavern / Wherever it is, there the ray of the beloved’s face is // There wherein the affair of the monastery is given splendor / there is the rule of monks and the name of the cross // The cry of Ḥāfiẓ is after all not totally in vain / It is both a strange tale and a wondrous *ḥadīth*” (*DKh*, #64, 144; *DAv*, #64, 101).

the theo-poetics of the impossible is imagining forth the Beloved, or revealing the Beloved for self and others. This corresponds with Caputo's *facere veritatem* (doing the truth) that characterizes the ethical effect of the advent of the event onto the human subject: "A poetics is true with the truth of the event; it wants to become true, to make itself true, to make itself come true, to be transformed into truth, so that its truth is a species of truth as *facere veritatem*."<sup>167</sup> The metaphors, images, and poetics of the love lyrics are transposed, in other words, into this phenomenal world.

### **Transposing Metaphors, Translating Poetry**

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I suggested the Lāhūrī is transposing or displacing the metaphors of Ḥāfīz's poetry from the text and into the world. True, Lāhūrī relies on mystical glossaries and technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), but this is not equivalent to reducing poetic metaphors to allegorical, one-to-one correspondences in the Unseen Realm. Instead, Lāhūrī is transposing metaphors and translating poetry from the text to the world. In the above sections, Lāhūrī's theo-poetics endeavors to disrupt normative theological anthropologies, ontologies, and thus social orders. This theo-poetics suggests the constitutive and formative role the imagination and metaphors play in configuring human perception and activity, in shaping and disrupting social imaginaries. This role is central both to Akbarian cosmology and anthropology and to the "imaginative rationality" proposed by Lakoff and Johnson.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the tensive nature of metaphors reflects the tensive concept of reality for Ricœur; Lāhūrī transposes nondual metaphors into the nondual cosmology of the phenomenal world.

While he does turn to the mystical glossaries that have been criticized by Persian literary scholars for reductively decoding metaphors into metaphysical, abstract concepts, I submit that this reductive understanding of the *iṣṭilāḥāt* (technical terms) is belied by the nondual relationship

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<sup>167</sup> Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 118.

<sup>168</sup> See the Introduction to this dissertation.

between the physical, phenomenal world and the metaphysical, noumenal world.<sup>169</sup> This nondual relationship grounds the cosmology Lāhūrī inherits. Interpreting this particular love lyric with the assistance of Lāhūrī’s commentary, and reading around his own sources for additional insight, the role the imagination plays in unveiling the nondual, theophanic and imaginal nature of this phenomenal world is underscored. The imagination engages the theo-poetics of this world, and augments one’s reception of mundane reality.

The transposition of poetic metaphors into the world of metaphor produces a theo-poetic imaginary disruptive of normative, dominant ideologies. These ideologies are social imaginaries that shape and constrain societies, and are often held together by dominant interests. “The central imaginary significations of a society...are the laces which tie a society together and the forms which define what, for a given society, is 'real'.”<sup>170</sup> Social imaginaries may be neutral or even pragmatic, but more often than not they tend to oppress by marginalizing a particular subset of members of a society; the force others to conform to their rationalities that are only as “real” as society, as a group, judges them to be. A theo-poetic imaginary provides the tools to subvert the marginalizing aspects of social imaginaries because the poetic is disruptive. In Lāhūrī’s theo-poetics, this emerges in imagining the impossible, imagining affection in affliction, subsisting in God, inverting reality, and perceiving nondually. For Ḥāfiẓ, it emerges in, inter alia, his persistent lambasting of the sanctimonious authorities and pretensions ascetics, his unveiling of the sacred in even the most profane of spaces, and his encounter of “the Islamic” even in the “non-Islamic” (finding God in Christian monastery, for example). A theo-poetic imaginary aims to unveil God from the occluding effects of normative, dominant ideologies. Indeed, inverting reality today is the uncovering of the false logic of social imaginaries that oppress rather than liberate. The

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<sup>169</sup> For Meisami’s critique of technical terms, broadly understood, see Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Lyric Poetry: Orient Pearls*, 48-50 and 387-403. For Keshavarz’s critique vis-à-vis Rūmī’s lyrical poetry, see Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 18-22. For Stetkevych’s critique vis-à-vis Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary on his own *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*, 92ff in particular. For Zargar’s analysis of Persian *ṣūfī* glossaries, see Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 132ff.

<sup>170</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 24.

unquestioning *ratio* of, say, a neoliberal market economy is considered *the Truth* of a global order; challenging it is akin to being Ḥāfiẓ's protagonist, the libertine rogue.

By transposing metaphors from text to world, Lāhūrī is not statically explaining the poems, removing all ambiguity. Rather, I submit that he is transposing the poetics of the text to the poetics of the world. *How* Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics create meaning and compel action is transposed into *how* the world manifests the Real. The poetics of the text becomes a theo-poetics of the world: *how* the phenomenal world relates to God, humans relate to God, and humans relate to others. The *modality* of theophany, unable to be explicated logically, is encountered through metaphor and its nondual coincidence of opposites that reflects the dynamic, tensive nature of reality. Translating the poetry from text to world correlates with Caputo's poetics of the impossible. Apperception of the Divine—the impossible, unknowable essence—is followed by doing the impossible, or *facere veritatem*, doing the Truth. This *Islamic theo-poetics is attuned to the modality of God's relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, and thus disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate*. It is concerned with *how* God nondually manifests through theophany in the world, and not with *what* God is; it compels the human subject to perform this divine modality of theophanic disruption-in-continuity. Desire drives the imagination.

### **Dynamic Imaginary and the Desire for the Impossible**

Dialectical reasoning precludes the violation of the law of noncontradiction without a reductive synthesis, while imagination “makes contradictories accessible and perceivable.”<sup>171</sup> Poetic metaphors born from the imagination concentrate the imaginal, phenomenal world into the text. Subsequently, the hermeneutical act, at the center of which is a perpetual poetics, takes place between the text and the interpreter; the textual hermeneutics effects the perceptual practice that takes place between the interpreter and the world, at the center of which once again is a *theo-*

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<sup>171</sup> Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 149.

poetics. The nexus through which theophanic perception and poetic interpretation both meet and occur is the imagination. The poetic text, interpreted by Lāhūrī through the Akbarian tradition and the School of Love, produces a theo-poetics that augments apprehension of reality and renders the invisible visible in the forms or images of the world—in bodies, flesh, and human experiences of passionate love.

Images, far from being “less real”, are that through which the Real appears and are therefore *more than* containers of meaning, but *are manifold meaning*.<sup>172</sup> This is precisely the dynamism of meaning that effects a dynamic vision of reality. This is nothing less than a dynamic imaginary that draws humans into the phenomenal world of metaphor. There is no space here for stable rest in God, either in worldly asceticism or post-mortem synthesis. Rather, this dynamic imaginary keeps desire for the impossible ever on the increase. The *telos* of human interpretation in this world is not uncovering a static conception of *what* God is, but a dynamic perception of *how* God is and is not the world, and our role in unveiling God. This dynamism produces an imaginary attendant with embodied praxis. Poetry, when conceptualized as the Pre-Text of divine revelation within the Islamic tradition, draws the human subject into its discourse, and the discourse into the world, similar to Ricœur’s theory of poetry and the metaphorical copula that “places man in discourse and discourse in being,”<sup>173</sup> as introduced in the beginning of this chapter. The interpenetrating nature of poetry and the world—*poïesis* and creation—constitutes a strong relation between theo-poetics and theological cosmology and anthropology. As such, “these texts are solicitations that call for a response, appeals coming from I know not where about a way to be, a style of existence, about a poetic possibility that we are invited to transform into existential actuality,”<sup>174</sup> as Caputo suggests regarding scripture.

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<sup>172</sup> Keshavarz, regarding Rūmī’s mystical lyrics, is correct to suggest that “the poems themselves are the mystical experience and the meaning, not a container holding them” (Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, 19).

<sup>173</sup> Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 381.

<sup>174</sup> Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 117.

Given the fundamental role images and the imagination play in this Islamic cosmology, a coherent theo-poetics of the flesh constructed from this interreligious project necessitates a turn to Eriugena's texts to uncover the imaginary in his theology. Indeed, the function of metaphor, imagination, and images is an aspect of his theology that is underappreciated and underdeveloped. If the metaphorical, image, and imagination are constitutive of this Islamic cosmology, then fleshing out Eriugena's understanding thereof would uncover otherwise occluded aspects of the Irishman's work. Specifically, I seek to uncover an Incarnational imaginary that is a theo-poetics of the flesh.

## Chapter 4

### "As it Were": The Liminal Space of Metaphor

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#### Introduction

In chapter one I read Eriugena concerning theophany attentive to his poetics. In chapter two, in search of comparative, constructive theological insights into Eriugena's theology, I explicated the role theophany plays in Ḥāfiẓ's love lyrics and his commentator. In chapter three, I interpreted Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī to illuminate the functional and constitutive role of the image, imagination, and poetic metaphor in one's embodied existence in the world; I explicitly constructed an Islamic theo-poetics in which the theo-poetics of the text are transposed into a theo-poetics of the world. The phenomenal world is *majāz*, or metaphorical, but in such a way that challenges normative ontologies and social orders, and augments reality. The *majāzī* or metaphorical constitution of the world permits the impermissible because it is a theo-poetics of the impossible. In this chapter, motivated by the power of imagination in Ḥāfiẓ, I engage Eriugena's *Periphyseon* in search of the function of metaphor in his theophanic cosmology.

This chapter and the next contain central, constructive insights from this interreligious reading in which I apply to Eriugena's *Periphyseon* an Islamic theo-poetics: I interpret the division of nature with an eye *attuned to the modality of God's relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, and thus disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate.*

Eriugena is hesitant to proclaim *quomodo*, or *how*, all things are eternal and created, *how* God is in the world and the world is in God.<sup>1</sup> He does not reveal the mysterious *way* of our *nondual*

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction is between *how*, in Latin *quomodo*, and *why*; Eriugena uses other terms such as *modus* (way, manner) and *quemadmodum* for *how*, and *qua ratione* (by what reason) or *cur* to indicate *why*. I consider arguments for *why* this is the case to be included under "the right reason whereby we are compelled" to admit, to say, or to declare. That is, the reasons *why that* this is the case (*not* how this is the case). For example, the Students says, "I am not seeking the reason (*rationem*) of the creation of the universe in the Word and its

relationship with divinity: this is beyond *ratio*, *more than* the logic of the impossible. In other words, the theo-poetics of his text remains concealed by his own logic. Attentive to poetics (*how* texts mean) rather than hermeneutics (*what* texts mean), I seek from Eriugena that which he assiduously refuses to give up: *how* God relates to the world.

To this end, I propose a reading of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* attentive to the functional role of metaphor detailed in the previous chapter, i.e., I draw out how Eriugena sketches theophanic reality (*natura*) as, first, nondual, and second, metaphorical. But given the paradox of the metaphorical copula, the one implies the other. In this chapter, I elaborate how Eriugena meticulously removes a series of binaries or dualities that, at each removal, leaves the Student bewildered by the poetics of the impossible, precisely because of his logic of the impossible.<sup>2</sup> This is the semantic shock of metaphor poetically expressed in the flash of union in Ḥāfīz's love lyrics. Second, he describes creation of the world with an increased use of the Latin adverb *veluti* (as though, as it were); in this constructive reading, I borrow Michael Sells' method of reading the *Enneads* and his interpretation of Plotinus' use of *hoion* (οἷον) to be an apophatic marker.<sup>3</sup>

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eternity. For no one is able to say how (*quomodo*) they are both eternal and made. [For no rational or intellectual creature is able to know the *way* of the creation (*modum conditionis*) of things in the Word. Accordingly, it is accessible only to the gnostic power.] But I do seek that right reason (*vero ratione*) whereby we are compelled to *admit* that eternal things are made in the Word of God, if it can be discovered" (PP III, 74, 2093-2096 [(16)123-125] [670BC]). Later in the same disquisition, the Student adds, "nothing else remains but that it is sought not how (*non quomodo*) they are eternal and made, but why (*qua ratione*) they are *said* to be both eternal and made (*dicuntur et facta et aeterna [esse]*)" (PP III, 74, 2118-2120 [670CD]).

<sup>2</sup> Caputo distinguishes the logic of the impossible from his poetics of the impossible. "St. Paul...counseled us not to conform to the world. But if, under the pressure to conform to the world of the philosophers, I were forced to cough up the 'logic' of a theology of the event, then I would have to insist from the start that this is a divine logic that is outright madness from the point of view of the 'world,' which is supposed to be as sane as Kansas, a logos that is a folly (*moria*) (1 Cor. 1:18). From the point of view of logic, for logic is the light of the world, the 'kingdom of God' is impossible. But, to be quite precise, we must insist that it is not *simply* impossible—remember, nothing is simple and nothing is impossible—but rather, remembering the Derrida link, *the* impossible. By this Derrida does not mean a simple logical contradiction, like '(*p* and *~p*),' which would be a little boring, but something unforeseeable that shatters our horizons of expectation, which is quite exciting. That is why he says that the least bad definition of deconstruction is 'an experience of the impossible,' a way of calling ('*viens*') for the possibility of the impossible, where the impossible is the event that shatters the horizons of the possible. So in the place of a 'logic' of *the* impossible I have chosen instead to speak here of a 'poetics,' like the 'poetics of obligation' I defended in *Against Ethics*" (Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 103).

<sup>3</sup> See Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 14-33 (Chapter One).

I then return to an Islamic theo-poetics to connect the liminal reality of this world of metaphor to the liminal space in which the self subsists. The ambiguity of metaphor, which expresses the tensive nature of reality (*natura*), elides with the ambiguous space the self occupies as “subsisting in God,” but in the world; the self itself becomes disruptive in its capacity to imagine forth the impossible. From theological cosmology to anthropology, the self resides in the world and in God, who resides in the self and the world; this is a nondual paradox comprehensible only to the imagination. In the next chapter, I explore the function of the image and imagination in Eriugena’s theophanic cosmos in conversation with an Islamic theo-poetics. Together, these two chapters propound the Incarnation as the *quomodo*, the *how*, of nondual relationship with God and others: a theo-poetics of the flesh.

## **Natura Understood: The Removal of Dualities in the *Periphyseon***

The Teacher opens the *Periphyseon* with a proposition that is itself full of paradox, it seems: “the first and highest division of all things that are able to be perceived by the mind or that surpass its thought (*intentionem*) are into those things that are and those things that are not.”<sup>4</sup> *How* something that is nonexistent and therefore incomprehensible to the human mind is able to be included within a division itself conceived by the human mind is a paradox that pervades both the text of the *Periphyseon* and *Natura* itself. The Teacher expands upon this division and offers a more versatile one, and one that is the explicit subject of the five books. From twofold to fourfold division, the Teacher guides the Student:

Nature that

- (1) creates and is not created  
(God the *principium*/beginning of all things “that are and that are not”);<sup>5</sup>
- (2) is created and creates  
(the primordial causes)
- (3) is created and does not create

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<sup>4</sup> *PP* I, 3, 2-4 (441A).

<sup>5</sup> The phrase “that are not” was subjoined by a copyist of a later manuscript tradition. It is not incorrect to add it here, for later in the *Periphyseon* God is explained to be the Cause not only of things that *are*, but also of things that *are not*.

(those things that “are recognized in generation, time, and places,”<sup>6</sup> i.e.,  
this phenomenal world)  
(4) neither creates nor is created<sup>7</sup>  
(God as *finis*/end of all things)

The Teacher rightly points out that the first opposes the third in affirmation and negation, the second opposes the fourth likewise, and that the fourth is “*placed among the impossibles*, whose being is unable to be” (*esse est non posse esse*).<sup>8</sup> Additionally, each division possesses either activity or passivity or both, except the fourth, which transcends action and passion; God’s surpassing of action and passion greatly disturbs the Student later in Book I.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena intended to apportion a single volume for each division of nature, but at the end of the fourth admits that “the prolixity of this volume” precluded discussion of the fourth division, viz., “the return of the nature into the Primordial Causes and into that nature which neither creates nor is created (which is God [as *finis*]).”<sup>10</sup> The loquaciousness of the fourth book is not the only reason, however; Books II-IV each contain multiple “recapitulations” of other divisions, to which Eriugena often refers in the Greek, ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις. The interpenetrative, or even co-constitutive, relationships among the divisions force the dialogue to dwell on all four throughout the volumes, even though the primary topic of any given volume is intended to be a single one. In Book II, Eriugena prepares the reader for precisely this.<sup>11</sup> The procession recapitulates the return, which recapitulates the procession.

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<sup>6</sup> *PP* I, 4, 38 (442B).

<sup>7</sup> *PP* I, 3-4, 20-22 (441B). The Latin for these divisions reads: *creat et non creatur; creatur et creat; creatur et non creat; nec creat nec creatur*.

<sup>8</sup> *PP* I, 4, 24-25 (442A).

<sup>9</sup> See *PP* I, 92, 2856-2868 (508CD). Though, once it is concluded that God admits of neither action nor passion, the dialogue proceeds to consider how God suffuses *Natura* in activity and passivity by being “more than” action and passion.

<sup>10</sup> *PP* IV, 167, 5164-5169 (860B).

<sup>11</sup> “And do not be astonished if you should see said something in this little book about the return of creatures to their origin and end. For the procession of creatures and the return of the same occur *simultaneously to the reason that is investigating them*, such that they seem to be inseparable from each other, and no one can explain worthily and certainly the one absolutely without inserting the other, i.e., the procession without the return and recapitulation” (*PP* II, 8, (9)59-65 [529A]).

The circular *poetics of natura* follows a logical argument, by which Eriugena executes a dialogical reduction of the four divisions into one by way of *ratio*. The Teacher asks, “For nothing other than [God] is truly called Essential, since all things which are from Her are nothing other than—insofar as they are (*in quantum sunt*)—the participation in Him who by Herself alone subsists through Himself. Would you deny that the Creator and creation are one?”<sup>12</sup> To which the Student replies, “Not easily would I deny this. For it seems to be ridiculous to resist this recapitulation [*collectioni*].”<sup>13</sup> The response appears nonchalant, despite the monism it ostensibly propounds. However, the Teacher was careful in his choice of words (*poetics*) throughout: *in quantum sunt* renders creation nonetheless dependent *somehow* on the Creator. While the procession and return are simultaneous “to *ratio*” investigating them, *in quantum*, or insofar as, enables a productive turn to the creative imagination.<sup>14</sup> This *as* is the *being-as* of metaphor. *Ratio* produces monism, pantheism, or even radical apophaticism, whereas the imagination maintains nondualism.

This dispassionate portion of the dialogue is a clear example of dialectical reasoning. The Teacher and Student dialogue and step-by-step reduce the four into two and then the two into one—a synthesis. It is so *reasonable* that the Student acquiesces calmly to the logical conclusions. Nevertheless, this calm, cool, and collected dialogue in the beginning of Book II is distinguished from the perturbing dialogue that follows in the rest of Book II and into Book III.

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<sup>12</sup> *PP* II, 7, 109-114 (528B).

<sup>13</sup> *PP* II, 7, 115-116 (528B).

<sup>14</sup> This *in quantum* principle becomes foundational for the mystical theology of Meister Eckhart, so much so that Bernard McGinn contends that “not to understand the *inquantum* principle is not to understand Eckhart” (Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* [New York: Crossroad Pub., 2001], 16). The just person possesses all that Divine Justice has *insofar as* she is just (but not insofar as she may be other things). Eckhart invokes his *inquantum* principle at his Cologne defense, claiming that it excludes all other predicates and even the person from equality with God. For Eriugena, it does not play such a central role, although it is a small step to take from Eriugena’s theology to Eckhart’s. But, as McGinn notes, tracing genealogical influence of Eriugena on Eckhart is problematic, and the most the German knew of the Irishman was likely his *Homily on the Gospel of John*, which was also known by Aquinas (though both cited it as Origen’s); see *ibid.*, 178. For a summary of the scholarship regarding Eriugena’s direct (unlikely) and indirect (possible) influence on Eckhart, see fn. 77, 78, and 79 in *ibid.*, 274.

As *ratio*'s conclusions unfold in the dialogue, the Student is left occasionally in stupefaction at the implications of reason's explications. It is in these moments that dialectical truth concedes to metaphorical truth, to coincidences of opposites and nondualism. The law of noncontradiction—the logic of the impossible—struggles to maintain control of the dialogue and yields to poetic imagination, to the poetics of the impossible.

### **First Removal of Duality: All Things Are Eternal in the Word and Made in Their Effects**

As the reader engages Books I and II, she becomes slowly convinced that this *Natura* being divided is nothing but the Divine Nature; the division of nature is really a division of Divine Nature, it seems. But this conclusion cannot be attained until Eriugena has carefully removed a series of binaries in the first one-hundred pages of Book III. This procedure begins when the discussion turns to *nihil*, the nothing from which God made all things. Once the Teacher explains that God, too, is nothing,<sup>15</sup> the Student is befuddled to understand how at once God is nothing and God created out of nothing: “I feel myself to be enclosed from every which way by the dark clouds of my thoughts...I am repelled, with the sharpness of my mind struck down (*perculsus*) by the excessive obscurity of the most subtle reasons that elude me, or more correctly by [their] excessive brightness.”<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, all things are eternal in their primordial causes in the Word,<sup>17</sup> on the other hand, they are made out of nothing; all things are eternal and made. “However, in what *way* [*quemadmodum*] these things that are opposed, as it were (*veluti*), to one another, harmonize into a single bond of understanding—i.e., *how* [*quomodo*] *all things are simultaneously eternal and made*—seems not only to you but also to me to be worthy of a most

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<sup>15</sup> “If, therefore, on account of Its ineffable excellence and its incomprehensible infinity, the Divine Nature is said not to be, does it not follow that It is entirely *nothing*, since *non esse* is predicted to the Superessential for no other cause than that true reason does not permit [It] to be reckoned among the number of things that are, given that It is understood to be beyond (*super*) all things that are and that are not” (*PP* III, 24, 644-649 [634BC]).

<sup>16</sup> *PP* III, 25, 662-668 (635A).

<sup>17</sup> *PP* III, 25, 687-688 (635C).

diligent search by reason.”<sup>18</sup> Note that the search is for *how* this is the case; they are seeking a theo-poetics of *natura*, which perplexes the Student not on account of the deficiency of his rational faculty, but because of “excessive brightness,” suggesting that *ratio* is unveiling something *more than rational*.

The Teacher soon after points out that “the eternal universe of the whole creation is *in* the Word of God”<sup>19</sup> as the Cause of all things. At this point, it should be noted that the distinction between the Cause and their multitudinous effects is still maintained; nevertheless, it is baffling for the Student. The Teacher then brings in scripture and authority. He glosses Acts 17:28 (“In Whom we live, and move, and are”) with Augustine<sup>20</sup> and Dionysius the Areopagite:<sup>21</sup> “Once

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<sup>18</sup> *PP* III, 29, 805-808 (638BC).

<sup>19</sup> *PP* III, 31, 866-867 (639C).

<sup>20</sup> “[Saint Augustine writes] in *De Trinitate*, ‘The Word of God,’ he says, ‘through Which all things were made, wherein all things immutably live, not only things that were, but also things that will be; not, however, that they were in Him, nor that they will be, but rather that they *only exist*. And all things are one, even better, is one.’ Likewise in the Hexameron concerning the Word of God: ‘On the one hand, those things that were made through Him are ‘under’ Him, on the other hand, in Him *are* the things that *He is*.’ Just as if he were to say: On the one hand, they are under him, since, made through generation into genera and forms, they are actually manifest spatially, temporally, and visibly in matter; while on the other hand, they are in Him, since they are eternally understood in the primordial causes of things, which are not only in God, but also are God” (*PP* III, 33, 890-900 [640ACD]). The first citation is from *De trinitate* IX, i, 3, but the modern edition differs: “So because there is but one Word of God, through which all things were made, which is unchanging truth, in which all things are primordially and unchangingly together, not only things that are in the whole of this creation, but things that have been and will be; but there it is not a question of ‘have been’ and ‘will be,’ there they simply are; and all things there are life and all are one, and indeed there is there but one ‘one’ and one life” (Augustine of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, volume 5, 154). For Augustine’s Latin, see CCSL 50, 162, 39-45. The second citation is from *De genesi ad litteram*, II, vi, 12, but once again differs from the modern edition: “So then, the things that have been made through him, because he governs them and holds them together, are in him in one way, while the things which he himself is are in him in another” (Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, volume 13, 97). For Augustine’s Latin, see Augustine, CCSL 28, 41, 6-8.

<sup>21</sup> “Moreover, Dionysius the Areopagite in the chapter *On the Perfect and the One* [in the book *On the Divine Names*] says, speaking of God: ‘He is called the One because He is universally all things...for nothing in existence *is* that is not participating in the One.’ And a little later, ‘Therefore, this too must be understood, that according to the One each species is ‘pre-cogitated’; the One is said to unify the things that are unified and is the exemplar of all things. And, if you remove the One, then there will be neither a universe nor anything else of the things that exist. For the One uniformly pre-embraces and ‘circum-prehends’ all things in Himself” (*PP* III, 33-34, 906-914 [640D-641A]). Eriugena is citing Chapter 13 of *The Divine Names*, first 977C and then 980B; for English, see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 128-129; for Greek, see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 1, 227 (lines 6-8) and 228 (lines 3-7). Eriugena leaves out two sections of Pseudo-Dionysius’ original that would suggest some separation between cause and effect. In the first quote, the ellipsis would read, “through the transcendence of one unity and that he is the cause of all without ever departing from that oneness.” In the second, he cuts the sentence short, which ends with “in its capacity as an inherent unity.”

these and other similar examples and testimonies are brought together, it is openly given to understand that all things are not only eternal *in* the Word of God, *but really are the Word of God.*<sup>22</sup> Here, we have an additional step taken, viz., from *is in* to simply *is*; this foreshadows the conclusions to be obtained nearly sixty-five pages later. But the Teacher reminds the Student of his original question: *how* are things both eternal and made. The Student agrees that this has not yet been made sufficiently clear, and so the Teacher continues to remove dualities, quoting Maximus Confessor,<sup>23</sup> and adding: “whatsoever is substantially in God the Word necessarily is eternal, *since nothing but the Word Itself is.*”<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, the Teacher contends that the Word of God is both simple and united as well as manifold and permeated in all things.<sup>25</sup> The tensive

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<sup>22</sup> PP III, 34, 915-917 (641A).

<sup>23</sup> The Teacher turns to Maximus Confessor to gloss the following three scripture passages: “All things were made through Him, and without Him *nothing* is made,” [John 1:3] “That which was made was Life in Him,” [John 1:3-4] and “In Whom all things were created, those things that are in heaven and on earth, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers. All things were created form Him and through Him and in Him” [Col 1:16]. He then quotes Maximus’s *Ambigua ad Iohannem* (Greek is taken from original to illustrate differences): “For having the causes [*causas*, λόγους] of those things that are made pre-subsisting [*praesubstitutus*, προϋφειστάς] before the secular-ages, by His good will, He substantiated [*substituit*, ὑπεστήσατο] according to them the visible and invisible creation from non-existence, [and] by the Reason and Wisdom [*ratione et sapientia*, λόγῳ καὶ σοφίᾳ], according to the appropriate time, He made and is making both those things which universally are, and those things which are individually [i.e., both universals and particular, τὰ καθόλου τε καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἑκάστων]. We believe, indeed, that a cause [*causam*, Λόγον] of angels was considered before [*praeduxisse*, προκαθηγεῖσθαι] creating [them], and [the same is believed for] the reason [*rationem*, λόγον] for each of the essences and powers of the complete world that is above us, the reason [*rationem*, λόγον] of humanity, and the reason [*rationem*, λόγον] of each of the things that receive being [*esse*, τὸ εἶναι] from God...[And He] recapitulates (i.e., consummates) [*omnia recapitulans hoc est consummans*, ἅ πάντα ἀνακεφαλαιούμενον {see Eph 1:10}] all things in Himself, through Whom [all things] exist and endure, and from Whom things that were brought forth were brought forth, and to Whom they were brought forth; things at rest and in movement participate in God. For all things participate proportionately in God because they were made from God, whether through intellect, reason, sense, or vital movement, or through their essential or habitual fitness, as in the opinion of Dionysius the Areopagite, the great and divine revealer” (PP III, 34, 929-944 (641BC). The passage from Maximus Confessor is from *Ambiguum 7* (See Maximus the Confessor, *Maximi Confessoris Ambigua Ad Iohannem*, 27-28, 1080AB; for Greek-English edition, see Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 94-97). In the ellipsis, Eriugena skips, “We believe that He Himself, by virtue of His infinite transcendence, is ineffable and incomprehensible, and exists beyond all creation and beyond all the differences and distinctions which exist and can be conceived of within it. We also believe that this same One is manifested and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in Him, in a manner appropriate to the being of each, as befits His goodness” (Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 97).

<sup>24</sup> PP III, 35, 957-960 (642A).

<sup>25</sup> “The Word of God is the simple and in Itself infinitely manifold creative Ratio and Cause of the created universe. Indeed, simple because the universe of all things is an indivisible and inseparable one in Him; or, really, the Word of God is an indivisible and inseparable unity of all things, since He is all things. However, not undeservedly is He understood to be manifold, since He permeates all things unto infinity, and this permeation

concept of reality is felt even within the Word Itself. The text holds the reader in a tension throughout: simple and manifold, united and permeated. The Word alone is, yet the Word is diffused through all things. In other words, in this world only the Word's permeation exists.

Eriugena is quick to indicate that there were not pre-existent things into which the Word diffused. Rather, the effusion of the Word is equated with all things, and the *subsistence* of all things is the participation in the Word, both important nuances that maintain the tension of a *universal multiplicity* rather than the stasis of either monism or dualism. To believe otherwise would result in “the death of the rational soul” and to think “monsters and abominable idols of the Creator.”<sup>26</sup> The Teacher's persistence in demonstrating *how* all things are both eternal and made in the Word of God is a veritable crescendo, and it continues for another four pages in the Latin edition. These passages and others have been astutely analyzed by Michael Sells in his *Mystical Languages*, in which he demonstrates the paradox of the Word/Wisdom's “self-containment.” His analysis need not be repeated here, but it suffices to recall Sells' argument that the prepositions “in” and “into” intensify the paradox of simultaneous immanence and transcendence.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Eriugena may allegorize or symbolically interpret portions of scripture often, but he reads prepositions in these cases as eminently literal. Eriugena quotes extensively various passages from Dionysius the Areopagite (where he glosses that “the being of all things is the Divinity beyond being,” which “is nothing in nothing through nothing” and “made in all things,” and which in Jesus has become the formless form of the formless),<sup>28</sup> ending with a quote

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is the substantiation of all things” (*PP* III, 36, 984-992 [642C]).

<sup>26</sup> *PP* III, 37-38, 1036-1037 (643D).

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter Two of Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 34-62 (esp. 48-53).

<sup>28</sup> “Hence, the great Dionysius the Areopagite in the book *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in the fourth chapter, says, ‘First of all this truth is to be said, viz., the Superessential Divinity, out of goodness, has brought out into being all things that are by substantiating [their] essences. For it is proper for the Cause of all things, the Goodness beyond all, to call to communion with Him the things that are, so that each one of the things that are are defined according to their proper analogy. Therefore, all things participate in the providence that is flowing out of the Superessential Divinity, the [most original] Cause [of all]. Indeed, nothing would exist without assuming the being and principle of all things that are. Therefore, the existence of all things is participating in His being; for the being of all things is the Divinity beyond being. The living likewise [participate in] the Life-Giving Power that is beyond all life, likewise rational and intellectual [creatures participate in] the Wisdom that is perfect and

from Augustine's *Confessions*.<sup>29</sup> Not only do all things *subsist in the Word*, but “all things whatsoever that are truly understood *to be, are* nothing else but the Manifold Power of Creative *Wisdom which subsists in all things*.”<sup>30</sup> The Teacher ends, concluding the first duality-removing

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pre-perfect in Itself and beyond all reason and intellect” (*PP* III, 38, 1048-1060 [644AB], citing Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, IV, 1 [English: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 156; Greek: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 2, 20, 9-19, 177CD]). Eriugena then cites from *Letter 9*: “The Divine Wisdom puts forward to types of food, one solid and edible, the other damp and flowing-forth, and extends into a basin her providential goods... The Providence of all things... is at once diffused through, and encompassing of, all things, without beginning and without end (*infinitae*)... Perfect Providence us the cause of the being and well-being of all things, and proceeds into all things, and is made in all things, and contains all things. Yet, because of Its Excellence in Itself, It is nothing in nothing through nothing, but is exalted above all things, existing, standing, and remaining in itself identically and eternally, and always according to itself keeping it so, and in no way is made outside itself, [in no way] does it leave behind its proper base and immutable abode and goodness, but working best in itself its entire and most perfect providential acts, both coming into being in all things, and remaining in itself, and resting always in movement” (*PP* III, 39, 1074-1094 [644D-645A], citing Pseudo-Dionysius' *Letter 9*, 3; English: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 285-286; Greek: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 2, 201, 10 - 203, 4, 1109BD]). He follows this with *The Divine Names*: “We must also be bold to say even this in truth, that He Himself Who is the Cause of all things, by Her good and most benign love, through the excellence of His amorous goodness, passes beyond Herself in His providential acts towards all things that are, and, as it were, cherishes [them] by Her goodness and affection (*dilectione*) and love (*amore*) and far removed beyond all things from all things, is enticed (*deducitur*) according to this into all things, in accordance with his mind-surpassing superessential and irreversible power” (*PP* III, 39-40, 1096-1102 [645AB], citing Pseudo-Dionysius's *The Divine Names*, IV, 3; English: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 82; Greek: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 1, 159, 9-14, 712AB]). He ends with *The Divine Names*: “The cause and fulfillment of all things is the deity of Jesus, which, in saving, harmonizes the parts with the whole, [and the deity of Jesus] is neither part nor whole while being both whole and part, even if it co-embraces in itself every part and whole while standing beyond (*supereminiens*) and excelling [every part and whole], being perfect in what is imperfect, for it is the Principle of Perfection, but it is also the imperfect in the perfect as it is beyond perfection and before perfection; [the deity of Jesus] is the form giving form in the formless as the Principle of Form, [but also] Formless in the forms for it is beyond form (*superformis*); [the deity of Jesus] is the Essence that surpasses all the essences without being contaminated by them, and it is superessential for it is removed from all essence. [The deity of Jesus] appoints all beginnings and all orders, and it is set above very beginning and every order. [The deity of Jesus] is the measure of all things that are, and of the secular-ages, and yet beyond the secular ages and before the secular ages. [The deity of Jesus] is full in all things that are unfulfilled, beyond full in the multitudes; [the deity of Jesus] is secret, ineffable, beyond soul, beyond life, beyond essence. Supernaturally possessing the supernatural, superessentially possessing the superessential” (*PP* III, 40, 1104-1118 [645BC], citing Pseudo-Dionysius's *The Divine Names*, II, 10; English: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 65-66; Greek: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 1, 134, 7 - 135, 1, 9-14, 648CD]). This section of *The Divine Names* ends with a critical passage regarding the Incarnation: “And out of love he has come down to be at our level of nature and has become a being” (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 66).

<sup>29</sup> “This appears to be what Saint Augustine... understands in his book of his *Confessions*, addressing his speech to this truth, viz., to the Divine Wisdom. ‘I have examined,’ he says, ‘other things *within You (intra te)*, and I saw that they are not entirely *esse*, nor entirely *non esse*; not entirely *esse* because what *You are they are not*, not entirely *non esse* because *they are though you*” (*PP* III, 41, 1142-1147 [646B]). Augustine actually wrote *infra te* (“below or lower than you”) where Eriugena had “*intra te*” (*Confessiones*, VII, xi, 17; for Latin see CCSL 27, 104, 1-3). According to the editors of the CCSL, the codices that Eriugena possessed did indeed read “*intra te*.” The Teacher then adds the standard Augustinian gloss that all things “incline toward nothingness” (*PP* III, 41, 1153-1154 [646B]): “Life, having freely fallen, falls away from [God]...[and] inclines toward nothingness” (see *De vera religione*, XI, 21; for Latin see CCSL 32, 200, 6-8).

<sup>30</sup> *PP* III, 41, 1137-1139 (646A),

discourse:

Therefore, all things that are, are not inappropriately said to be at once both eternal and made, given that in them is made Wisdom Itself, Which makes them; and the Cause, in which and through which they are both eternal and made, in them is eternal and made.<sup>31</sup>

The poetics of this passage quite nearly fails to maintain subject-object distinction and temporal order. Wisdom makes all things *in which Wisdom is made*; all things are eternal and made in the Cause *which is eternal and made in them*. *The Word/Wisdom subsists in all things which subsist in the Word/Wisdom*. The perplexity of this passage, in which both dualistic and monistic logic fail but from which nondual truth emerges, illustrates the poetics of the text. *How* these words coincide produces semantic shocks that struggle against dualistic logic of the impossible. This is evident in the Student's reaction:

I am greatly bewildered and, stupefied, *as it were (veluti)* dead, perplexed. For I am allured (*attrahor*) by these arguments, since they are likely to be true and corroborated by the testimonies of the Holy Fathers and Holy Scripture. However, again and again I am drawn back (*retrahor*) in hesitation and immediately thereafter I slide into the thickest darkness of my thoughts. For the sharpness of my mind is unable to consider and thoroughly penetrate into the profundity of these present questions.<sup>32</sup>

We can connect “the death of the rational soul” the Student referenced earlier to his stupefied death here; the passage cannot be comprehended via a rational hermeneutics, and attempting to do so results in, *as it were*, his death. Metaphorical truth, however, can interpret nondual truth. It is no accident that as soon as the first of three dualities is removed, the Student is bewildered and the Teacher interrupts his verbal anxiety with one of only two prayers to be found in the five-volume *Periphyseon*.<sup>33</sup> The poetics of the text weakens their sturdy reliance on logic, in which they are supposedly most confident. As their faith in logic is held in doubt, their faith in a poetics is increased, whence their prayer of invocation whose tenor of *desire* is patent.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *PP* III, 41, 1161-1164 (646C).

<sup>32</sup> *PP* III, 42, 1165-1171 (646CD).

<sup>33</sup> See *PP* III, 46, 1292-1308 (649D-650A), after which is the prayer.

<sup>34</sup> “God, our salvation and redemption, Who granted nature, generously grant also grace. Stretch forth Your Light onto those who, trembling, seek You out in the shadows of ignorance. Call us back from errors. Stretch out Your right hand unto the lame who are not strong in You without reaching You. Reveal You Yourself to those who desire nothing but You. Destroy the clouds of vain phantasies that prevent the mind's eye from

The first duality removed is through the assertion that all things are both eternal in the Word and made in their effects. The Teacher declares that all things *always were* in the Word of God, and *always were not* in generation, “locally or temporally or in their proper forms and appearances in which accidents occur.”<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, if one were to see intensely through (*intentus perspexerit*) to the nature of things, no creature susceptible to the senses or intellect would be found, of which [creature] it could not truly be said: *It always was, is, and will be, and it always was not, is not, and will not be.* [...] [The Wisdom of God] begins through generation in time to receive quantities and qualities, in which, as it were (*veluti*), concealed by some sort of vestments, it can manifest that it is, *but not what it is.*<sup>36</sup>

Note how the Teacher is imploring the Student “to see intensely through to the nature of things.” This sort of nondual comprehension requires a particular vision of the theophanic world, one that can quite palpably perceive the tensive concept of reality wherein all things always were, are, and will be, and always were not, are not, and will not be *in the Word*. Ricœur’s theory of metaphor as “seeing-as” is quite pertinent here, and combined with an Islamic theo-poetics of the world, permits one to understand *how* this theophanic world is the metaphor (in which the metaphorical copula signifies “is and is not”) that *carries us beyond* to God whose *plus-quam* nature demands that we see the “more than” of not only God, but also this phenomenal world.<sup>37</sup> The “*is and is not*” of this world is a poetics, *how* this world is disruption-in-continuity.

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admiring You in a manner that You, Invisible, permit to be seen by those desiring to see Your Face, their calm, their end, (beyond which they desire nothing, for nothing is beyond) their Superessential Supreme Good” (*PP* III, 46, 1309-1318 [650AB]). This resonates with Caputo’s “weak theology.” As theo-logic weakens, the theo-poetic is strengthened, and what is prayer but the invocation for the impossible, for advent of the event of the Reign of God: “That means this weak theology is never far removed from prayer, in particular a prayer of invocation, of calling (*viens*) for the incoming (in-vention) of the event. But by calling I also mean what always and already calls upon us, comes over us, in an advent that invokes and provokes us, continually calling up what is best in us, calling us out beyond ourselves. God calls us before we call upon God, calling up what is best or highest in us. In that sense, God pursues us, preys upon us, or even prays to us, inasmuch as God calls upon, provokes, and invokes us. The name of God is the name of what we desire, of everything that we desire, but it is also the name of what desires us, of what desires everything of us” (Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 122).

<sup>35</sup> *PP* III, 67, 1914–1917 (665B).

<sup>36</sup> *PP* III, 67, 1925-1935 (665CD).

<sup>37</sup> This theophanic perception of the world permits the Teacher to declare that, once this nature is purged and “adorned with the gift of grace” in those who are good (he thus shifts to speaking of human souls), they are “glorified beyond (*ultra*) every nature, even their own, and turned into God Himself, made God not by nature but by grace” (*PP* III, 68, 1949-1952 [666A]). The language used here is reminiscent of *plus-quam* discourse, for it is through grace that human nature becomes “more than” its proper nature.

## **Second Removal of Duality: All Things Are Eternal and Simultaneously Made in the Word**

The first binary that is removed maintains a certain duality of things: eternal in the Word, made in the world. This nondualism is enough neither for Eriugena, nor for a theo-poetics of the flesh. The Teacher pushes the Student further, asking, “You do not therefore doubt that all causes of all things and all *effects* of all causes are *eternal and made* in the Word?”<sup>38</sup> The Student does not doubt that this is what his Teacher is in fact *teaching*, but he still does not see *how* it accords with reason that “made things are eternal and eternal things are made,”<sup>39</sup> especially since the Word in which they are made and eternal is Itself coeternal with the Father. “Accordingly, it will seem that there is no difference between the eternity of the universe in the Word and its creation, if eternity is creation and creation is eternity.”<sup>40</sup> The Student is seeking *how* all things are eternal and simultaneously made in the Word. It is this search that launches the dialogue into one of the most moving, profound, and penetrative discussions concerning the depths of the Divine Nature, the Word, the Divine *Nihil*, and the theophanic nature of the universe.

The Student is immediately rebuked by the Teacher, for seeking after the reason or the understanding of the purpose (*propositum*) of the Divine Wisdom is precisely asking *how* all things are both made and eternal. Such an understanding is unable to be made manifest to intellects, human or angelic. The Teacher reminds the Student that even the angels “veil with their wings both their faces and their feet, i.e., fearing to gaze at the profundity of the Divine Power, beyond every created nature, and Its immensity in things which were made through it and in it and from it.”<sup>41</sup> One would think further discussion is foreclosed. However, the Teacher quickly adds: “Nevertheless, they do not cease to fly, turning on high. For *they always seek*, insofar as they are able, *lifted up by Divine Grace* and the subtlety of their nature, those things

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<sup>38</sup> *PP* III, 70, 2010-2011 (667C).

<sup>39</sup> *PP* III, 70, 2016-2017 (667D).

<sup>40</sup> *PP* III, 70, 2017-2019 (667D).

<sup>41</sup> *PP* III, 70, 2024-2027 (668A).

that are beyond themselves by their desire unto infinity.”<sup>42</sup> The subject calls for silence, and yet the Student and Teacher still desire more, the *plus-quam* of the Divine Nature in this phenomenal, theophanic world. Lest all manner of discourse be precluded, the pair continue their discussion by their desire unto infinity. They are seeking after the Divine Will, for this world is precisely *how* God *willed* it should be. Yet it is the Divine Will that is present in the world while remaining concealed, and it is this that entices them into further inquiry:

Nothing is more *hidden* than [the Divine Will], nothing is more *present* than it, difficult as to *where it is*, more difficult as to *where it is not*, the ineffable *light* always *present* to all *intellectual* eyes, and *known by no intellect* as to what it is, *diffused* through all things *unto infinity*, and made *all in all things* and *nothing in nothing*.<sup>43</sup>

Here the Teacher offers another textualization of the theophanic cosmos. God manifests-in-concealment the phenomenal world, and these statements mirror the simultaneity of apophatic and kataphatic discourse that is theophany. The tensive concept of reality once again becomes textually palpable. It is at this point, the moment where it appears one should give up the quest, that the Teacher expresses the second removal of duality.

All visible and invisible things, eternal and temporal things, and even eternity and time, and place and space, and all things that are said according to substance or accidents, and...whatsoever the universe of all creation contains, [are] eternal and simultaneously made in the Only-Begotten Word of God; their eternity does not precede in them their being made, and their being made does not precede their eternity.<sup>44</sup>

Not only are all things eternal in the Word and made in this phenomenal world, a distinction that permits a certain dichotomy of cause and effect to endure, but all things in their *causes* and in their temporally and spatially generated *effects* are both eternal and created in the Word. These things do not begin “to arise at that time when they are perceived (*sentiantur*) to arise in the [phenomenal] world.”<sup>45</sup> Rather, even created effects *are eternal in the Word*. The distinction

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<sup>42</sup> *PP* III, 70, (14 )104-106 (668A).

<sup>43</sup> *PP* III, 71, 2040-2044 (668C).

<sup>44</sup> *PP* III, 72, 2046-2051 (669A).

<sup>45</sup> *PP* III, 72, 2055-2056 (669B).

between the created, phenomenal world and God is slowly being wiped away. This is a far more forceful assertion than the previous one, and can thus be considered a second duality that has been removed from the eyes of the Student.<sup>46</sup>

### **Third Removal of Duality: God and Creation**

The dialogue then turns to the search not for *how* all things “never were eternal but not created, and never were made but not eternal,”<sup>47</sup> but for *why* they are said to be both. Eriugena masks a theo-poetics of the world (*how* God relates nondually to the world) because his *ratio* does not permit its explication. The Latin *cur* (why) asks “for what reason,” the logic of a proposition; whereas the Latin *quomodo* (how) asks “in what way,” the poetics of a proposition. The Teacher’s response to the Student’s inquiry (why?) is simple: the authority of holy scripture declares this to be the case.<sup>48</sup> When pressed for the *mode* (how?) of the creation of all things in the Word of God, the Teacher, once again, refers to the authority of holy scripture: “Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in inaccessible light” (1 Timothy 6:16). The *modus* or way that all things are both eternal and made is inaccessible. Throughout the last several pages, the Student and Teacher slowly guide the discussion further and further into the Word of God. All things are eternal and made; eternal in the Word, made in this phenomenal world; and then both

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<sup>46</sup> This is only possible because the “Divine Wisdom circumscribes times, and all things that in the nature of things temporally emerge precede and subsist eternally in [the Divine Wisdom]” (*PP* III, 72, 2060-2063 [669B]). Here it should be recalled that the Divine Nature was called the Place of all places in a previous section of the dialogue (see footnote 70 in Chapter One); the consequence of such an assertion is playing out now.

<sup>47</sup> The clarity with which the entire passage recapitulates the recent conclusion merits a full citation: “But now, since right reason does not permit us to admit such things—for it declares, and very truthfully declares, that not only the primordial causes, but also *their effects and spaces and times and essences and substances* (i.e., the most general of genera and the general forms and the most particular of appearances) *through the indivisible individuals, along with all of their natural accidents* and, to speak simply, *all that is in the universe of created things*, comprehended by either the senses or the intellect, whether angelic or human, or which surpasses all sense and all sharpness of mind—and yet it is created—[all of this] is simultaneously and at once eternal and created, and never were they eternal but not created, and never were they made and not eternal—nothing else remains but that is sought *not how* they are eternal and made, but *why* they are said to be both eternal and made” (*PP* III, 74, 2108-2120 [670CD]).

<sup>48</sup> He goes on to cite Genesis 1:1, Psalm 103:24, John 1:3, and Col. 1:16, respectively: “In the Beginning God made the heavens and the earth;” “[God] made all things in Wisdom;” “All things were made through Him;” “In Whom are created all things which are in the heavens and which are in the earth whether visible or invisible” (*PP* III, 74-75, 2121-212 [671A]).

eternal and made in the Word. They are now entering the incomprehensible mystery of the Word of God as they struggle to comprehend the nature of the phenomenal world. This world is folding into the Word, as it were. The Word “is made all things in all things.”<sup>49</sup> And, as if to textualize the interpenetration of the world and the Word, the Teacher declares: “*how or by what reason is the Word of God made in all things that are made in Him (dei verbum in omnibus quae in eo facta sunt fit)* flees the sharpness of mind.”<sup>50</sup> Temporal and causal priority elude the mind in the very structure of this sentence; the subject chases the object chasing the subject. How is the Word made in all things made in the Word? The theo-poetics of the world remains elusive to the interlocutors. This sentence keeps the reader within poetics (*how* words mean), because *what* it means (hermeneutics) remains inaccessible, logically impossible.

Nevertheless, the Teacher rests confident. Despite the impossibility of the task, he encourages the Student. Even though the reason for the universe’s creation in the Divine Word “surpasses all intellects and is known only to the Word,” the Teacher asks him to “stretch [yourself] forth (*intentus esto*) toward the things that follow” if he wishes “to learn what I perceive (*sentio*) concerning the eternity of the universe in the Word of God.”<sup>51</sup> Is this hubris? The Teacher admits that the subject surpasses all intellects, and is known only to the Word, only to prepare the Student for further comprehension. Yet, there is some nuance here. The Teacher is offering a way of perceiving, as if to say: “Do you wish to see the world as I see?” Reading these passages through the Islamic theo-poetics, I aver that the Teacher is training the Student to see the world as metaphor, *attuned to the modality of God’s relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, and impassioned to unveil God for self and for others.*

The Teacher asks the Student whether or not the Word of God saw (*vidisse*) all things that

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<sup>49</sup> PP III, 75, 2149-2150 (671C).

<sup>50</sup> PP III, 75, 2150-2152 (671C).

<sup>51</sup> PP III, 76, 2180-2182 (672C).

were made in Him,<sup>52</sup> to which the Student replies assuredly in the affirmative by quoting Maximus the Confessor on the Divine Volitions (*voluntates* / θελήματα).<sup>53</sup> God sees the things that are made as He sees His Divine Volitions. But the Teacher catches the Student in another potential duality: the things that are made are the Divine Volitions, but is God's vision of the Divine Volitions "different from the made things that He sees as Divine Volitions?"<sup>54</sup> The Student finds himself "hemmed in from every which way,"<sup>55</sup> since he is forced to choose between two options that appear equally preposterous and illogical (impossible and impermissible, at least without God); in this way, logical reasoning subverts logic.

Either that the Will of God be separated from God and added to creation, such that God and His Will are two different things, i.e., that God is the maker and Her Will made. Or, if right reason forbids [me] to say this, necessarily I will admit that *God, His Volitions, and all that She has made are one and the same*. And without delay, by the compelling power of reasoning, it will be concluded: God therefore makes Himself, if Her Volitions are not external to Himself, and She does not see His Volitions one way and what She makes in another way, but rather sees what He has made as Her Volitions. And if it is thus, who will doubt of the *eternity of all things that are made in God, when they are not only made and eternal, but also understood to be God?*<sup>56</sup>

This created world becomes the Will of God; we are the Divine Volitions. The Teacher applauds the Student's conclusions, happily proclaiming that "no more labor is necessary in order to suggest the eternity of all things that were made in the Word of God."<sup>57</sup> The Student strikes back,

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<sup>52</sup> See *PP* III, 76, 2184-2185 (672C).

<sup>53</sup> "For it is not possible, as reason demonstrates, that He Who is beyond those things that are grasps all things that are through those things that are, rather we say that He knows those things that are just as His own volitions, adding also the logical [proof] from the cause: for if He made all things by His Will, and no reason contradicts [this], it is right and pious to say that God always knows His own Will, while He made, willingly, each of the things that were made, then God knows those things that are as His Own Volitions, since He, also willingly, made the things that are" (*PP* III, 77, 2209-2217 [673B]); citing Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua ad Iohannem 7*: for Greek-English, see Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 108-109 (1085B).

<sup>54</sup> *PP* III, 78, 2225-2226 (673C).

<sup>55</sup> *PP* III, 78, 2228 (673C).

<sup>56</sup> *PP* III, 78, 2240-2252 (674AB). Here and in the following, it seems Eriugena moves beyond the conclusions of Maximus Confessor, or at least comes to a similar conclusion but from a different path.

<sup>57</sup> *PP* III, 79, 2255-2256 (674B).

rather humorously: “I think you’re mocking me!”<sup>58</sup> Such a frank opinion concerning the Divine Volitions and created things is worthy of further discussion. The Teacher acquiesces and a back-and-forth ensues, with the following conclusions granted:<sup>59</sup> God was never without His Volitions; God has always seen Her Volitions, for what He has cannot be hidden from Her (to think otherwise “belongs to the mad”);<sup>60</sup> thus, the Divine Volitions are eternal; therefore, God has always willed what God has always seen (indeed, for God nothing is future, for all times are within Him); so all things that God willed to make She has always had in His Volitions.

And if His Will is Her Vision and His Vision is Her Will, then all that He wills is made without any interval. And if all that She wills to be made (*fieri*) and sees to be made (*faciendum*), and if what God wills and sees is not outside of Himself but rather in Herself, and nothing is in Him that is not Herself, then it follows that all that God sees and wills is understood to be *coeternal* with Him, if Her Will and Vision and Essence are One.<sup>61</sup>

To this the Student responds, “You now compel us to admit that all things whatsoever that are said to be eternal and made are God!”<sup>62</sup> Again, the subtle arguments put forth by the Teacher lead the Student to the proper vision of *Natura*. The Teacher congratulates him, for he sees that what the Student has said he also has understood, viz., that outside the Divine Nature there is *nothing*, and that “It contains all that It has created and creates, nevertheless such that It, being Superessential, is *different* from that which It creates in Itself.”<sup>63</sup>

Once again, *how* Eriugena constructs his theological conclusions reflects a poetics of nonduality. God *is different* from the things that He has created *within Himself*. Same within, but different. Is, is not. The dialogue is nearing the final removal of duality, and the Teacher is skillfully—poetically—guiding the Student to reach the impending conclusion. The Student

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<sup>58</sup> *PP* III, 79, 2257 (674B).

<sup>59</sup> See *PP* III, 79-80 (674C-675B).

<sup>60</sup> *PP* III, 79, 2282 (674C).

<sup>61</sup> *PP* III, 80, 2299-2304 (675AB).

<sup>62</sup> *PP* III, 80, 2305-2306 (675B).

<sup>63</sup> *PP* III, 81, 2322-2325 (675CD).

thinks aloud, it seems, “I used to maintain that the fullness of the whole universe was limited to these two, as it were (*veluti*) parts (i.e., God and creation). But now, once again, it seems my faith is wavering, weakened by the foregoing arguments.”<sup>64</sup> Faith in what? Surely not God, but in *ratio*, in a logic that precludes the impossible. The sharp logic of the foregoing reasoning is precisely that which undermines the logical rule of noncontradiction. The Teacher lends a helping hand, reminding the Student that he believes and understands at least this, “that outside of God there is *nothing*.”<sup>65</sup> “Therefore, move around the sharpness of your mind more diligently and with a more penetrating vision around that which you believe to be *within* God.”<sup>66</sup> The pair have just come from concluding that the entire created universe is within God. Thus, this suggestion the Teacher offers the Student essentially asks of him to perceive with a penetrating vision the entire created cosmos, this phenomenal, theophanic world included, outside of which there is nothing. The Student understands, replying:

Student: “I perceive (*sentio*) within God nothing but Himself and creation created by Herself.”  
Teacher: “Therefore you see *in God* what *is not God*.”  
Student: “I see [that], nevertheless it is created from God.”  
Teacher: “[...] Did God see all things that [God] made before they were made?”  
Student: “[Yes.]”  
Teacher: “Thus [God] saw the things that He willed to make; and [God] saw nothing other than the things She made; and the things that [God] made He has seen before She made them.”<sup>67</sup>

The final statement once again demonstrates the poetics of the *Periphyseon*. It collapses temporal distinctions, and the words come together in such a way to produce nondual recognition: God sees what He *will* make while seeing what She *has made*, which He *has seen before* She *made* them. As usual, the dialogue thrives on the tensive use of language, for only such a strain on the discourse can manifest the nondual vision of *Natura*; this is the function of a particular poetics. This final example, like the examples above, demonstrate the poetics of the *Periphyseon*;

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<sup>64</sup> *PP* III, 81, 2330-2333 (676A).

<sup>65</sup> *PP* III, 81, 2335 (676A).

<sup>66</sup> *PP* III, 81, 2337-2338 (676A).

<sup>67</sup> *PP* III, 81-82, 2339-2348 (676AB).

attention to *how* words come together in his dialogue reveal the ways in which *ratio* is subverted. Dialectical reasoning yields to nondual truth. Theo-logic is weakened and theo-poetics strengthened. Put otherwise, the hermeneutics is unattainable, and we are left with the poetics of the text, which permits the impermissible.

Once the Student concedes this final statement, the Teacher challenges such an assertion, at which point the Student undergoes another bewilderment, for the distinction between God and creation is at the point of deletion. He exclaims, once again frightened: “I see myself surrounded from every which way, and that there remains no way of escape.”<sup>68</sup> Bewildered, suffering, in passion, the Student is once again cornered and forced to remove the final duality, viz., that between God and creation. His exclamation segues directly into a rather lengthy disquisition in which he demonstrates carefully how creation is, as it were, folded into God. The full passage contains a steady stream of bewildering aporias, negations, and coincidences of opposites that disrupt *ratio*, concluding later that “God is all things everywhere...though [He does not abandon] the simplicity of His nature.”<sup>69</sup> It seems the Divine Goodness creates in the Divine Wisdom, or in

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<sup>68</sup> *PP* III, 82, 2358-2359 (676B).

<sup>69</sup> The full conclusion suggests, as Ernesto Mainoldi has argued, that the divine causative power is the Divine Goodness, and Divine Wisdom, the Word, is *that in which* creation takes place. This suggests that *how* the *Nihil*-God creates is *through* the Word; see Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, “Creation in Wisdom: Eriugena’s Sophiology beyond Ontology and Meontology.” in *Eriugena and Creation*, ed. by Willemien Otten and Michael Allen. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 183-222. “And therefore, if God saw all things that were to be made in Himself before they were made, right reason will necessarily teach that She saw Himself, and God will be all things that God made, if God made all things that God saw in Himself; and God will be the Maker and the made. If, however, I were to say, ‘God saw the creature to be made before it was made’, it will be said: Therefore there was a creature before it was made. If God saw it before it was made, then what God saw in it before it was made truly and substantially was. For God does not see unreal things (*falsa*), since He is immutably the Truth, and all that is in it is true and immutable. And if God saw in Herself creation before it was made, then God always saw what He saw. For to see what She sees is not an accident to God, since to be and to see are not two different things in God; for His is a simple nature. If, however, God has always seen what He saw, then what God saw always was; and therefore, what God saw is necessarily eternal. And if God saw creation which up until that point was not, and what God saw was—for all that God saw is true and eternal—nothing, then it remains but that we understand that creation was in God before it was made in itself. A twofold understanding of creation will be given: One considers its eternity in the Divine Knowledge, in which all things truly and substantially remain, the other [considers] its temporal establishment, *as it were (veluti)*, afterward in itself. And if it is thus, the logical consequence of reasoning compels us to choose one of the two: either we should say that the same creature is better and worse than itself, better insofar as it subsists in God eternally, whereas inferior insofar as it created, and its creation in itself is not thought to be in God but, *as it were (veluti)*, outside of God, and it will contradict scripture which says: ‘You have created all things in Wisdom’ (Psalm 103:24). Or, it was not the same nature that was eternal in the knowledge of God and which, *as it were (veluti)*, afterward was created in itself. And therefore, God did not see those things that are made before they were made, but rather God only saw those things that are entered in Himself. And if one were to grant this, then it

the Word.<sup>70</sup>

### **Incarnation as Nondual Truth: Moving Beyond Synthesis**

At this juncture, the dialogue elaborates how God and creation are related through theophany.<sup>71</sup> It is argued that creation is *subsisting in* God, Who is created *in* creation through the Divine Word/Wisdom. The dialogue concludes with the Student rhetorically asking, “How would the Word suffer to be made in Himself what was not [already] consubstantial with Him?”<sup>72</sup> In other words, *how* could “the Word be made flesh” unless there was not already a consubstantial relationship between the corporeal world and the Word. The non-logical truth of God in creation and creation in God is essentially a nondual truth, an Incarnational truth, and through an Islamic theo-poetics, a truth *attuned to the modality of God’s relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, and thus disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate.*

The thrust of Book III becomes evident in these passages. The Teacher guides the Student in removing any sort of dualistic truth regarding *Natura*. The first is the dualism between created and eternal things. The second is the same dualism, but more forcefully put (not just eternal

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would seem to contradict the profession of Catholic faith. For Holy Wisdom proffers that what God has seen in Himself before [things] were made is no different from what, afterward, God has made in Himself; rather, what is eternally seen is eternally made, and all of this is in God, and nothing is outside of God. However, if the Nature of the Divine Goodness is different from what God sees to be made and made and in Himself saw and made, then the Simplicity of the Divine Nature falls apart, when there is understood to be in it what it is not, which is entirely impossible. Now if the Divine Goodness is no different than what God saw in Herself to be made, then the Nature is one and the same, Whose Simplicity is inviolable and Whose Unity is inseparable, and so certainly it will be granted that God is all things everywhere, and the Whole in the whole, and the Maker and the made, and the Seer and the seen, and time and space, and the essence, substance, and accident of everything and, to put it simply, all that truly is and is not, Superessential in essence, Supersubstantial in substance, the Creator beyond every creation, and Created within every creature, and subsisting below every creature, beginning to be from Himself, and moving Herself through Himself, and the movement toward Herself, and resting in Himself, multiplied unto infinity through the genera and species in Herself, though not abandoning the simplicity of His nature, but recalling the infinity of His multiplication in Herself. For in Him all things are one” (PP III, 82-83, 2362-2413 [676B-677D]).

<sup>70</sup> See footnote 69 above.

<sup>71</sup> This portion of the dialogue was already discussed in chapter one, in the section entitled “Eriugena: Theophany and the Incarnation of the Word.”

<sup>72</sup> PP III, 86, 2497-2498 (679CD).

causes and created effects, but eternal causes *and* effects). The third and most shocking one is the dualism of God and creation. However, as if to keep the tension, the dialogue brings the Wisdom-Word, the Son and the Incarnation into the theophanic process; the Incarnate Word enacts nondual truth. It is arguably because of the conciliar Christology of the Incarnation—the “originating tensive event”<sup>73</sup> of Christianity—that Eriugena unfolds *natura* as nondual *Natura Divina* in the Word. This is Ernesto Mainoldi’s argument, viz., that conciliar Christology gives Eriugena freedom to explore the meaning of the Incarnation *for* creation.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the sophiological/logological argument transcends *ratio*, and so Eriugena constructs a “contemplative theory whereby God and creation are comprehended in a unitary rather than a contrasting view, but at the same time neither confused nor equated as in non-biblical philosophy.”<sup>75</sup> Mainoldi stresses the unitary and terms it contemplative and sapiential, whereas a theo-poetics of the flesh stresses the nondual and redirects the contemplative toward praxis: it is Incarnational. Here, Eriugena’s theo-poetics disrupts his beloved *ratio*, just like the Incarnation disrupts the created order.

A full one-hundred-and-one pages into Book III, which was *supposed* to be on the third division of nature (this phenomenal world), the Student comes to this realization: “Now I most clearly see the quadripartite division of universal nature, and I recognize it to be undoubtedly

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<sup>73</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 408.

<sup>74</sup> This is because the Wisdom/Word shapes *how* the Divine Goodness creates: “Since the divine Wisdom is not identified by Eriugena with the divine causative power of creation – this causative power being the divine goodness (*bonitas*) – the sophiological argument relates to the understanding of the eternal creation in the Word-*principium* and transcends the domain of the ontological-dialectical generation of genres and species, on which the fourfold division of Nature is also based” (Mainoldi, “Creation in Wisdom: Eriugena’s Sophiology beyond Ontology and Meontology,” 220). Mainoldi adds: “After the conclusion of the great dogma-defining epoch of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, during which the doctrine of the salvation of man was gradually understood and defined in its theological principles (Trinity, divine-human nature of the incarnate Word, etc.) and soteriological implications (eschatology, doctrine of deification, etc.), a new challenge awaited Christian authors, this time concerning the problem of creation, not only in its ontological meaning, but in relation to the salvation of the cosmos” (ibid., 221). In other words, rather than follow salvation history in doing theology (creation, Incarnation, eschatology), the order is re-imagined: the Incarnation shapes eschatology, which in turn shapes creation. For a contemporary project of Catholic constructive theology that does just this, see Daniel Izuzquiza, *Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a Radical Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2009), 94ff.

<sup>75</sup> Mainoldi, “Creation in Wisdom: Eriugena’s Sophiology beyond Ontology and Meontology,” 222.

understood of God and in God.”<sup>76</sup> Immediately after, the discussion is concluded, and the Student and Teacher *finally* enter into a dialogue concerning the third division, beginning a lengthy Hexaemeron that continues all the way into Book V. It is as if the Teacher did not want to enter into a discussion of this phenomenal, theophanic world, its creation, the fall, and its restoration, *until* the Student had a clear vision that *Natura* is really *Natura Divina*, and that *this vision may be understood only through the Incarnation of the Word*. Had they embarked upon a discussion of this phenomenal world before coming to such a profound conclusion, the risk of perceiving this world in a dualistic fashion, placing the nature of this world in opposition to the Divine Nature, would have been a looming threat. Such a dichotomous vision is entirely at odds with the poetics of *divina natura* being propounded by the dialogue, and would have risked conforming and restricting the poetics of the Incarnation to the created logic of *ratio*.<sup>77</sup>

Eriugena via the dialogue assiduously puts dialectical reasoning to the test, straining it to the point of breaking the principal rule of logic: the law of noncontradiction. He constructs a God-world relationship that relies on nondual truth. Nondual truth is, I suggest, another term for Ricœur’s metaphorical truth; the copula of the metaphorical statement signifies both *is* and *is not*. Not only is the conclusion a nondual truth that illustrates the tensive truth of metaphor, but the dialogue itself, its *poetics*, manifests the tensive concept of reality and thus of metaphor. This metaphorical truth is sustained by the nondual truth of the Incarnation. Rather than read these portions in terms of idealism, suggesting an ultimate synthesis of God and the world, reading them in terms of nondual, metaphorical truth permits the retrieval of an Incarnational, dynamic imaginary open to the dynamism of reality.

The passages leading up to the exposition of the Incarnation are bewildering and very

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<sup>76</sup> *PP* III, 101, 2937-2939 (690A).

<sup>77</sup> Spanish, Jesuit theologian Daniel Izuzquiza intends to prevent such a restrictive theology when he re-imagines the traditional theological order of salvation history *from* (1) creation, (2) incarnation, (3) eschatology, *to* (1) incarnation, (2) eschatology, (3) creation (see Izuzquiza, *Rooted in Jesus Christ*, 94ff). Such a re-ordering “*makes visible* that another world is *possible*” (ibid., 106 [*emphasis mine*]).

nearly incomprehensible to *ratio*. The way the words come together produces a semantic shock at every turn. They propound a poetics in which subjects and objects are conflated and temporal distinctions elide, producing meaning otherwise occluded by simple statements of logical truth. In these passage, *the Incarnation is never referenced*; Eriugena constructs a theology absent of explicitly Incarnational language. The poetics of the dialogue confound *ratio*. Then, suddenly, Eriugena brings the Incarnation into the discussion, and they are enabled to proceed to discussing the nature of this phenomenal world. The poetics of the text is incomprehensible *without an Incarnational theology*. This suggests that the Incarnation functions as the theo-poetics of this world. Eriugena is not elaborating a theo-hermeneutics that seeks *what* God is, but rather a theo-poetics that seeks *how* God is in relation to the world. In the next section, I aver that Eriugena's increased use of *veluti* as a metaphorical marker provides insights into how the phenomenal, theophanic world should be perceived as metaphor.

## ***Veluti*: The Metaphor of the Created World**

The subversion of logical truth by metaphorical truth is textually performed in the careful removal of dualisms throughout the dialogue analyzed in the previous section. The ambiguous, metaphorical nature of this phenomenal world is marked throughout the dialogue when Eriugena's poetics produces the paradox of the created world in the Word and the Word in the world. In many of these moments, Eriugena intersperses the Latin adverb *veluti*, "as it were, as though." The descriptions of reality, of theophany, of this world coming from nothing to something, of God moving from nothing into something via theophany—all of these topics (and more) are discussed with statements riddled with *veluti*. I suggest that *veluti* is functioning in this text in a similar manner as Michael Sells argues the Greek *hoion* (οἷον) functions in the *Enneads* of Plotinus:

Plotinus often uses the term *hoion* (as it were) to indicate that a name or predicate should not be taken at face value...Just as readers of poetry agree to accept certain features (syntactical ambiguity, referential multivalence) that would be problematic in discursive prose, so apophasis is based upon a kind of apophatic pact between the text and the reader. The reader is asked to bracket the apophatically

self-deconstructing propositions, to recognize their aporetic nature with the expectation that their meaningfulness will be retrieved in a nonreferential or *transferential mode* of discourse.<sup>78</sup>

In discussing this phenomenal world and the process whereby it becomes manifest, Eriugena intersperses *veluti* in key statements; I submit that this forces the reader not only to *unsay* what is being said, but also to do so with a view to the *metaphorical* nature of this world. This recalls Sells' "*transferential mode* of discourse." It is an *unsaying* that *says all the more*. Meaning is obtained in the *mode* of discourse. Recalling Ricœur, the metaphorical copula "is" signifies both "is and is not;" furthermore, "being *as*...means being and not being. In this way, the dynamism of meaning allowed access to the dynamic vision of reality which is the implicit ontology of the metaphorical utterance."<sup>79</sup> *Veluti* performs the apophatic act that demands the reader to engage reality "as it were", and thus to perceive "as though." *Natura* is a dynamic nonduality rather than a static monism or synthesis. The Arabic corollary to *veluti* in the School of Ibn 'Arabī is *ka-inna*, "as though." In the previous chapter, the power of the imagination is within the *ka-inna* of "worship God *as though* you saw Him," for "revelation has come through it, and understanding and consideration."<sup>80</sup> For Ḥāfīz, it was the imagination that rendered the impossible image possible, and thus what renders the impossible in general possible. *Veluti* does not suggest a fake or unreal reality, but one that is augmented beyond the empirical, beyond the possible. This poetics conduces to a reality *more real than* what *ratio* suggests. It thus gestures toward Eriugena's *plus-quam* theological discourse, a "*hyper-realism of the event*...in the name of God...that commands my attention and demands that I collaborate in its realization, in transforming it into existence."<sup>81</sup>

### **Apophasis, Kataphasis, *Plus-Quam* Discourse, and Metaphor**

Before proffering these examples of *veluti*, Eriugena's own definition and use of

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<sup>78</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 17 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>79</sup> Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 351.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, I.304.13.

<sup>81</sup> Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 123.

*metaphora*, including his use of *per metaphoram*, *translative*, *translate*, and other permutations of *transfere*, should briefly be explored. Eriugena distinguishes what can be said of God properly (*proprie*) from what can be said of God by metaphor. The only statements that can be predicated of God *properly* are negative ones; therefore, apophatic language appears to be truer to God's nature (even though it says nothing). Affirmative statements are all predicated of God by metaphor "from creation to Creator," i.e., by a transference from creation to the Creator. While affirmative statements are not said of God properly, a close reading demonstrates that they certainly have effective force in bringing creation back to God. A theo-poetics of the flesh, incipiently constructed in the first three chapters, assists us here; it conceptualizes the Word/words as overflowing into the created, phenomenal world, and the sensorial encounter with this world as unveiling the superabundant meaning of the Enfleshed Word: its excess.<sup>82</sup>

In a passage reminiscent of both theophany as "the condescension of the Wisdom of God upon human nature"<sup>83</sup> and of Eriugena's harmonization of apophatic and kataphatic discourse in terms of *proprie* and *per metaphora* (respectively),<sup>84</sup> the Teacher informs the Student how holy scripture informs us about God. Indeed, truth "dwells within [holy scripture], as it were (*veluti*) in a certain hidden habitation of its own."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Caputo characterizes his theology of the event as one of excess, which is helpful here. "Events happen to us; they overtake us and outstrip the reach of the subject or the ego. Although we are called upon to respond to events, an event is not our doing but is done to us... The event arises independently of me and comes over me, so that an event is also an *advent*. The event is visited upon me, presenting itself as something I must deal with, like it or not. The event requires a horizon of expectation or anticipation, not in such a way that it must abide within it, but in order precisely to shatter and overflow it. That is why one cannot speak of an absolute event, because every event occurs against a horizon of expectation that it breaches. But if it is nothing absolute, an event is an excess, an overflow, a surprise, both an uncontainable incoming (*l'invention*) on the side of what philosophy calls the "object," and something that requires a response from us, soliciting an expenditure without an expectation of return on the side of what philosophy calls the "subject." That is because an event is not part of an economic chain; it cannot be contained within a balanced equation, is not held in equilibrium by counterbalancing considerations. An event is an irruption, an excess, an overflow, a gift beyond economy, which tears open the closed circles of economics. Moreover, if horizons demarcate zones of possibility, what Kant would call the conditions of possible experience, then an event belongs to what philosophy calls (the) impossible, constituting an experience of *the impossible*" (Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 4-5).

<sup>83</sup> *PP I*, 13, 303-304 (449B).

<sup>84</sup> *PP I*, 30-31, 823-835 (461BC).

<sup>85</sup> *PP I* 92, 2874-2875 (509A).

Nevertheless, it is not to be thusly believed that, when [scripture] pushes us into the divine nature (*divinam nobis naturam insinuans*), it always uses the proper (*propriis*) meanings of verbs and nouns. Rather, it uses certain parables and transferences (*translatorum*, from *transfero* = metaphor) of verbs and nouns in various ways, *condescending toward our weakness* and, by simple doctrine, stimulating (*erigens*) our senses, hitherto undeveloped and infantile.<sup>86</sup>

The Wisdom of God, which is equivalent to the Word, descends and thereby deigns to be understood through metaphor (*veluti*), which *carries* human nature back to God *through* this phenomenal world by means of revelation. Far from making metaphorical discourse (flesh's linguistic counterpart) about God a technique ultimately to be discarded in favor of apophatic theology (the immateriality of soul, reason, intellect), it is the means whereby our return is effected; metaphorical language is also directly linked to revelation in theophany.

Metaphorical language, therefore, is the means whereby the Divine Nature draws God's creatures back to their End in God. This becomes evident when the Teacher proffers a "careful, salvific, and catholic profession for proclaiming God," in the final paragraphs of Book I:

That first according to kataphasis, i.e., affirmation, we should proclaim all things, whether nouns or verbs, of God, yet not properly (*proprie*) but by way of metaphor (*translative*). Next, that we should negate, through apophasis, i.e., negation, yet *not metaphorically* but properly, all things that were proclaimed through kataphasis to be God. For more truly is God negated to be those things which were proclaimed of God than is He affirmed to be [those things]. Next, beyond everything that is proclaimed of God, the Superessential Nature, which creates all things and is not created, is superessentially to be super-praised (*superlaudanda*).<sup>87</sup>

Note that the metaphorical signification is not negated, for there is no need to negate what was not predicated properly of God. The metaphorical naming of God perdures through the act of negating names of God properly. The metaphor is carried over into *plus-quam* discourse (God is "super-praised"), where a given divine name carries us through to the more-than of both creation and Creator. The *super* or *plus-quam* statements of God are not the *via eminentiae* that produces the *analogia entis*, and thus giving a subtle primacy to the affirmative; instead, they give subtle

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<sup>86</sup> PPI, 92-93, 2875-2880 (509A).

<sup>87</sup> PPI, 109, 3418-3428 (522AB). The Latin is helpful: *ut prius de eo iuxta catafaticam (id est affirmationem) omnia sive nominaliter sive verbaliter praedicemus, non tamen proprie sed translative; deinde ut omnia quae de eo praedicantur per catafaticam eum esse negemus per apofaticam (id est negationem) non tamen translative sed proprie. Verius enim negatur deus quid eorum quae de eo praedicantur esse quam affirmatur esse. Deinde super omne quod de eo praedicatur superessentialis natura, quae omnia creat et non creatur, superessentialiter superlaudanda est.*

primacy to the negative.<sup>88</sup> Even so, they imply, as Jean-Luc Marion notes, “a new voice of speaking rather than a mere reduplication [of apophasis or kataphasis]: not a repeated kataphasis or a repeated apophasis but instead *an original, breaking new way of speaking out*, of proclaiming through praise [see above: *superlaudanda*] the incomprehensibility of God.”<sup>89</sup> If there is a primacy of negation in *plus-quam* theology, it neither forecloses knowledge of God, nor creates a static Godhead and a quietist human subject; instead, it perpetually entices the human subject into the infinity of the Divine Nature, and thus there is a *positive effect* from *negative theology* within the *plus-quam statements of God*.<sup>90</sup> This new way of speaking is also the function of poetic metaphors, “to increase, to augment the capacity of meaning of our language,”<sup>91</sup> to produce a semantic shock within the metaphorical copula that preserves the “is not” within the “is,” to discursively attend to the dynamic vision of reality and, by redescribing reality, to offer new ways of being in the world.<sup>92</sup>

This is precisely why, I submit, *veluti* statements are scattered throughout Book III, the subject of which is intended to be this phenomenal, theophanic world. The world *is* the metaphor; indeed, this is the constructive takeaway from the Islamic theo-poetics. We are to see the world *as though* the Word of God. Metaphor is not merely a linguistic technique for learning about God, but the *way* this world *is*; it produces a dynamic ontology. A subtle passage in Book II foreshadows the numerous *veluti* statements to come in Book III and the way kataphatic theology

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<sup>88</sup> This is why Jean-Luc Marion argues that Eriugena resists “in advance the metaphysical turn, which Duns Scotus would impose on the so-called ‘negative theology’ by insisting on the primacy among its two ways of the affirmation over and against the negation” (“*Veluti ex nihilo in aliquid*. Remarks on Eriugena’s Path from *Apophasis* to *Divine Philosophia*,” in *Eriugena and Creation*, 660).

<sup>89</sup> Marion, “*Veluti ex nihilo in aliquid*. Remarks on Eriugena’s Path from *Apophasis* to *Divine Philosophia*,” 664 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>90</sup> This is because, for Eriugena, divine ignorance, the impossibility of knowing God, is not a mere epistemological weakness within human beings, but the subjective state of the Divine Nature: God is ignorant of God’s self because God is not a *what*, and we are ignorant of God and of ourselves because we are in God. But this ignorance is one of infinite desire for the excess of God (who is a Superessential Nothingness).

<sup>91</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Poetry and Possibility,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 440.

<sup>92</sup> See Chapter Three of this dissertation for Ricœur on poetry, metaphor, and imagination.

is more than mere analogical discourse; it speaks literally about the metaphorical world:

But now we are attempting to examine the other, I mean καταφατική, by that Guide Who is sought and Who seeks to be sought and Who runs to meet those who are seeking Her and Who desires to be found. And this part contemplates that which is to be proffered of the Divine Nature *as though properly (veluti proprie)*.<sup>93</sup>

The revelation of the world, holy scripture, and the Word, is all intended to draw creatures to God, Who desires to be encountered within phenomenal experience. This phenomenal world permits us to come to real knowledge of God *as though properly, as though literally*. The *as though* is *proper* knowledge of *how God is in this theophanic world*. That language is unconditionally deficient in coming to know the absolute Divine Nature, or in describing the unqualified Divine Nature, is in fact a tautology not worth mentioning. It says nothing, in fact, because the absolute Divine Nature does not reveal Itself in disembodied meaning. God *only* reveals in manifest forms, constitutively in the Incarnation, and language is one of the ways *literally* to describe God Who is, in any case, *only* knowable via theophanies. God “runs to meet those who are seeking Him” through the theophanies, and theological language draws meaning from the theophanies themselves. *Veluti* marks the *plus-quam* nature of God that draws us in for more.

### ***Veluti* as Metaphorical Marker**

I now turn to several examples of *veluti* as a marker of the metaphorical—but not unreal—nature of this phenomenal world. Sells considers *hoion* to be an apophatic marker in Plotinus, but I read it as a metaphorical marker in Eriugena, given that metaphor perdures in the apophatic act and is carried over into *plus-quam* discourse. In the dialogue that commences the removal of the duality between created and eternal things, the Teacher suggests a path of inquiry: “However, *in what way* these things that are opposed, as it were (*veluti*), to one another, harmonize into a single bond of understanding (i.e., *how all things are simultaneously eternal and made*), seems...to be

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<sup>93</sup> *PP* II, 101-102, 2457-2462 (599D).

worthy of a most diligent search by reason.”<sup>94</sup> This opens the discussion that culminates in the removal of three dualities. Here, the Teacher uses the metaphorical marker *veluti* to gesture toward the metaphorical nature of this phenomenal world, which is “as it were” opposed to the eternity of all things in the Word. Later, the Teacher and Student conclude that all created things always were, are, and will be, and always were not, are not, and will not be; this is because the Wisdom of God assumes quantities and qualities “in which, as it were (*veluti*), concealed by some sort of vestments, It can manifest that It is, but *not what* It is.”<sup>95</sup> The manifestation of the Wisdom of God is “as it were” in this world; the metaphorical marker keeps this world in ambiguity and tension.

Another powerful example occurs in the passage on God as Middle. The Teacher and Student have already concluded that God is unarguably Beginning and End; throughout the dialogue, *veluti* is never used. It is only in arguing that God is Middle that *veluti* is carefully inserted into the explanation. The Divine Nature appears in Its theophanies from the “most hidden folds of Its Nature” in which It is unknown to Itself because, Supernatural and Superessential, It “knows Itself in nothing.” However, it then descends and “as it were (*veluti*), creating Itself, It begins to know Itself in another thing.”<sup>96</sup> The creative act of the Divine Nature is *as it were*; God does and does not create God’s self *as* this phenomenal world. It is no accident that this *veluti* pertains to God as Middle. Between God as Beginning and God as End (hermeneutics) is the theo-poetics of this world, which marks the metaphorical, nondual nature of God’s relationship to the world.

Earlier in Book III, the Teacher turns to the multiplication of the monad into the plurality of numbers as an analogy for conceptualizing how the effusion of God (monad) is all things (plurality). In this case, numbers eternally established in the monad are made not only “in the

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<sup>94</sup> *PP* III, 29, 805-808 (638C).

<sup>95</sup> *PP* III, 67, 1933-1935 (665CD).

<sup>96</sup> The full section is in *PP* III, 99-100, 2898-2912 (689B).

mind and reason by simple intellect alone...free of every imagination,” but also “in the memory and corporal senses, thickened (*incrassati*) with certain imaginations, and made, as it were (*veluti*) from and in some sort of matter.”<sup>97</sup> Later, the Teacher corrects this process, but keeps *veluti* when it comes to the appearance of numbers in the sensible world: “Therefore, in whatever way numbers permit [themselves] to be perceived...their appearance [is] nowhere but from themselves. Thence, they are eternal in the monad, [and]...made by themselves...whether in the intellect, or in reason without any imaginations, or are, as it were (*veluti*), made by making out of themselves certain phantasies in which they may be made manifest (*appareant*) in the memory formed out of the appearances (*speciebus*) of sensible things.”<sup>98</sup> In both passages, *veluti* is employed when describing the appearance of numbers in this sensible, phenomenal world. The monad is and is not perceptible in this world.

The dialogue regarding numbers is a remedy to the Student’s stupefaction over the collapse of the subject-object and eternal-created duality: “I am greatly bewildered and, stupefied, as it were (*veluti*) dead, perplexed.”<sup>99</sup> Dualistic, logical truth is rendered *as it were* dead by nondual, metaphorical truth (the “death of the rational soul”). The analogy of the monad of numbers proceeding into the genera and species of this world enables the Student to awaken to metaphorical truth. “Now I return into myself. For, having been stupefied by the difficulty of the aforementioned and by the contemplations of things, as yet unknown to me, as it happens to many, I was brought into an ecstasy.”<sup>100</sup> Eternal numbers proceed into rational nature “according to, as it were (*veluti*), a procreation” for in this nature “their powers are more manifestly extended.”<sup>101</sup> The numbers then “[take] on phantasies, or rather, theophanies, into the memory

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<sup>97</sup> *PP* III, 59, 1685-1689 (660A).

<sup>98</sup> *PP* III, 60, 1714-1721 (660C).

<sup>99</sup> *PP* III, 42, 1165 (646C).

<sup>100</sup> *PP* III, 61, 1734-1736 (661A).

<sup>101</sup> *PP* III, 61, 1741-1743 (661B).

and the senses.”<sup>102</sup> The manifestation occurs within the *as it were* of their self-procreation. At this moment, the Student recalls his death: “Now, however, as it were (*veluti*), aroused (*expergefactus*), returning to myself, and more brightly perceiving the ray of inner light, I begin to recognize what you said.”<sup>103</sup> The Student then summarizes that all numbers flow forth from the monad, “as it were (*veluti*) from a fountain”<sup>104</sup> into two rivers; one flows through the interior faculties of intellect and reason and the other through the exterior appearances of visible things into the exterior senses, only to flow together once again into the memory of the human person. But when the Student endeavors to transfer the analogy of numbers into corporeal things, he falters: “I do not sufficiently see how incorporeal things...are able to appear in the memory and senses, i.e., in images and visible figures, as it were (*veluti*) in some sort of bodies.”<sup>105</sup> The increased employment of *veluti* is evident in these passages, and I submit that this is the case because it functions as a way to mark the metaphorical nature of how invisible things become visible. When the reader encounters *veluti*, she is forced to bracket dualistic truth and engage in metaphorical, nondual truth. Incorporeal things *are and are not* rendered into corporeal things.

The Teacher once again aids the Student: “as for what you do not sufficiently see, learn what I perceive (*sentio*).”<sup>106</sup> The dialogue is aiming to form vision, an imaginary, and it proceeds up until the frequently mentioned nondual truth is established: that all things always were, are, and will be, and always were not, are not, and will not be. The Teacher concludes forcefully: “Therefore, after having considered these rational arguments (*rationibus*), who but the excessively dimwitted or excessively contentious would not concede that all things that are from

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<sup>102</sup> *PP* III, 61, 1743-1744 (661B).

<sup>103</sup> *PP* III, 61, 1747-1749 (661B)

<sup>104</sup> *PP* III, 61, 1750 (661B).

<sup>105</sup> *PP* III, 61-62, 1756-1760 (661C).

<sup>106</sup> *PP* III, 62, 1762-1763 (661C).

God are both eternal and simultaneously made?”<sup>107</sup> The Student concurs and sharpens the conclusion: “I am compelled to admit that all things are made and eternal in the Word of God, I mean all things visible and invisible, temporal and eternal, all of the primordial causes along with all of their effects, by which the order of the secular ages is accomplished locally and temporally and this phenomenal, visible world is filled up.”<sup>108</sup> But, perhaps embarrassed, the Student adds: “But I am unable clearly to perceive *how* this can accord with reason.”<sup>109</sup> *Reason* compels him to admit *that* that this is the case, but cannot conceive *how* it is possible, for the *modus* is beyond (*plus quam*) *ratio*. At this point, the dialogue proceeds to explain *why* all things are said to be and not to be, to be created and eternal in the Word of God, and many of these passages have already been analyzed above. In none of them, however, does Eriugena exercise rational arguments to explicate *how* all things are created and eternal, *how* this phenomenal world is within the Word, eternally created, as it were. The dialogue eventually collapses temporal distinctions in discussing the Divine Will/Volitions, analyzed in the previous section. In these passages, *veluti* ceases to be used and the dialogue functions as a rational argument with a poetics that subverts logical laws. Furthermore, these rational arguments ascertain *why it is said that*, but not *how*, all things are created, eternal, and within the Word. The *how* is revealed in the structure of language in the dialogue, which collapses subject-object duality and temporal order. In executing rational arguments, *how* words coincide to produce meaning beyond the logically possible is precisely a poetics of the impossible.

Metaphorical truth permits God to be both beyond and within all things, and all things to be within and outside of God, *as it were*. *That* this is the case can be deduced from rational discourse, but *how* this is the case is left explicitly unanswered. Nevertheless, through a careful reading it is possible to contend that the Incarnate Word is precisely the *how* of the nondual

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<sup>107</sup> *PP* III, 68, 1952-1954 (666B).

<sup>108</sup> *PP* III, 68, 1962-1973 and (12)99-102 (666BC).

<sup>109</sup> *PP* III, 68, 1963-1964 (666B).

nature of the world. Learning from Ḥāfīz, the imagination functions to conjure the impossible image of the Divine Beloved before our very eyes; in Eriugena’s theology, the Incarnation takes on this imaginary but very real function. *How* God is within and beyond all things suggests a theo-poetics of the world constituted by the Incarnation: it is “the way of the creation (*modum conditionis*) of things in the Word...[a way] accessible only to the gnostic power.”<sup>110</sup> To make the leap from the theo-poetics of the world uncovered in Eriugena to the theo-poetics of the flesh, a bridge between cosmology and anthropology is needed. The liminal reality of *natura*—all things subsisting in the Word Who subsists in all things—is mirrored in the liminality of the self subsisting in God in the Islamic theo-poetics, to which I now turn for comparative insights.

## Liminality from World to Self: Learning from an Islamic Theo-Poetics

### *Ghazal 107*<sup>111</sup>

- 1 When the reflection of Your Face fell upon the mirror of the goblet,  
the mystic<sup>112</sup> fell into vain desire<sup>113</sup> because of the wine’s laughter.<sup>114</sup>
- 2 On the Day of Pre-Eternity, Your Cheek manifested under the veil,  
[and] all these images fell into the mirror of fantasies.
- 3 All these reflections and contrasting images that have appeared in the wine  
are a single ray of the cupbearer’s face that has fallen in the goblet.
- 4 The zealous-ardor of passionate love has cut off the tongues of all the elite,  
because of how the secret of its sorrow has fallen into the mouths of commoners.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> PP III, 74, (16)123-125 (670B).

<sup>111</sup> *DKh* #107, 230; *SH* II, #210, 1,423; *DAv* #107, 151; *DFo* #197, 372.

<sup>112</sup> *‘arīf*: This is the technical term for a real knower or recognizer of God, a term later translated into English often as “mystic” or “gnostic.” Here, Ḥāfīz is likely poking fun at the mystic who *pretends* to know or recognize God.

<sup>113</sup> *ṭam ‘-i khām*: This is a vain or raw desire, understood perhaps as a naïve or inexperienced desire.

<sup>114</sup> The “laughter of the wine” alludes to the sloshing of wine in the goblet as one picks it up, turns it around, and drinks from it.

<sup>115</sup> Here, *‘amm* (commoners) is explicitly counterposed against *khaṣṣān* (elite) in the first hemistich; Ḥāfīz values the “general public” over the “privileged elite”.

- 5 Not of myself did I fall from the mosque to the wine tavern.  
This, in the end, happened to me because of the Primordial Covenant.
- 6 What are they to do when they do not follow [time's] revolution, like a compass,  
those who have fallen into the cycle of the turning of days.
- 7 Underneath the sword of [passionate love's] suffering one must go dancing to Him,  
for the one killed by it has ended up felicitous.
- 8 The heart was hanged by the curl of your tress from the well of your chin.  
Alas! It's come out of the well, but fell into the snare.<sup>116</sup>
- 9 O Master, that [day] has passed when you once again see me in the cloister.  
My business is with the cupbearer's face and the goblet's edge.
- 10 At each of His breaths there's another kindness for my afflicted heart.  
See how this beggar has been made worthy of benefaction.<sup>117</sup>
- 11 Why should I, who among the group of passionate lovers, am an authority<sup>118</sup> on libertinage,  
hide the clamor?—rumor of my [infamy] has fallen from the roof!
- 12 The one's with pure sight obtain the desired object from pure vision.  
The cross-eyed ones fell into vain desire because of double vision.<sup>119</sup>
- 13 All the *ṣūfīs* are rivals<sup>120</sup> and have roving eyes, but  
among [them] afflicted Ḥāfīz has become infamous.

### Subsisting in God, Imaginally

Lāhūrī takes this love lyric and explicitly displaces it into the discourse regarding the relationship between unity and multiplicity, self-annihilation (*fanā'*) and egoism, the *barzakh* (liminal space) of which is subsistence (*baqā'*) in God. He does not clarify or disambiguate this debate; rather, even in his own commentary he wavers back and forth between the merits and demerits of *fanā'*, between unity and multiplicity, and between a unity that effaces the self and a

<sup>116</sup> A subtle allusion to Qur'ān 12, the *sūra* of Joseph in which his brothers put him into a well, he is saved by a caravanserai, and once again enslaved; he comes “out of the well” only to fall into another trap.

<sup>117</sup> *in'ām*: this is the verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) of the fourth form from the trilateral root *nūn* 'ayn, and *mīm*: to bestow or confer favors, graces, or gifts. It is theologically related to the rewards of paradise or the grace of God (*ni'mat Allāh*). If glossed as *an'ām*, then it refers to any sort of grazing livestock.

<sup>118</sup> *'alam*: One who us an authority or outstanding character regarding something, but more impersonally a sign, token, banner, flag, or signpost (symbolic representation).

<sup>119</sup> This couplet and the one above are in Lāhūrī's commentary, but not in any of the manuscripts consulted by Khānlarī for his critical edition of Ḥāfīz's love lyrics.

<sup>120</sup> *ḥarīf*: This term is rich and ambiguous. It means both companions and associates, but also rivals.

unity that maintains the self. Lāhūrī’s commentary mirrors the enfolding of disparate metaphors in the first three couplets. Ḥāfiẓ playfully intertwines the metaphors: there is a *reflection of images* in the *mirror* of the *goblet* filled with *wine* which itself reflects the *face* of the *cupbearer*, who is in fact pouring that very same *wine*. Image upon image upon image obfuscates the metaphors, which parallels Eriugena’s convoluted poetics in inscribing nondualism into discourse to show *how* the Word is in the world which is in the Word. For Lāhūrī, only the fluctuating heart can make meaning out of the transmuted images.

### **Neither Annihilated, Nor United: The Wine Tavern of this World**

The first couplet opens with the frequently employed twofold metaphor: the whole world as a mirror reflecting the Divine Names, and the heart of the passionate lover or realized one as a mirror reflecting the same Divine Names. Lāhūrī elaborates upon the anthropological metaphor. The “face” is the Essential Theophany in which the wayfarer becomes “absolutely annihilated” such that “knowledge, sensation, and perception absolutely do not remain.”<sup>121</sup> The goblet is therefore the human wayfarer, and its mirror is her attributes, which now reflect the Divine Attributes. Wayfarers who reach this station exclaim “I am the Real!” (Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj), “There is nothing within my garment but God!” (Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī), and “There is no god but me, so worship me, glory be me, how exalted my affair!”

We learn later in the commentary on the fourth couplet that the historical figures to which these exclamations are attributed are in fact the “commoners...who, in this station of inebriety (*sukr*) and annihilation (*fanā*), proclaimed ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*) and pronounced the secrets of lordship, and who are referred to as the ‘mystic’ (‘*ārif*) in the opening couplet of this love lyric, and who through ecstasy (*wijdān*) and recognition (‘*irfān*) of the Essential Theophany in the mirror of their own goblet, fell into vain desire, and who know themselves to be God.”<sup>122</sup> It appears, then, that this station of radical self-annihilation is, while a necessary penultimate stage,

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<sup>121</sup> SH II, #210, 1,425.

<sup>122</sup> SH II, #210, 1,430.

ultimately undesirable. This is confirmed in Lāhūrī’s commentary on the eighth couplet. Traversing the path successfully is outside the wayfarer’s capacity, and so “by the intermediary of Your attraction, we are made to arrive from the station of inebriety and annihilation to the station of stability and subsistence [in God], and we are safe from the fear of proclaiming the ecstatic utterances and from manifesting the secrets.”<sup>123</sup> The irony is that the wayfarer has moved from one trap to another, just as Joseph in Qur’ān 12, to which the couplet subtly alludes. Joseph is saved by the caravanserai from the difficulties of being trapped in the well, only to fall into another snare, viz., enslavement by the ones who saved him. Protologically, the well refers to being in external nonexistence *before* creation of the phenomenal world. The world is the snare, in which humans are “ignorantly unjust” (33:72), but falling into it is a provision of the Primordial Covenant mentioned in the fifth couplet. Moving from mosque to wine tavern in this world mirrors moving from pre-eternal unity with God to phenomenal existence in this world of multiplicity, full of suffering and oppression.

Joseph’s story serves as an excellent analogy for the coming-to-be of the human wayfarer in this phenomenal world, an individual enactment of the primordial assent by humans to the Trust of God (which all other creatures refuse, and which the angels judge to be foolishness). Joseph’s dwelling in the well, alone and in silence, does not prevent him from a contemplative “escape alone with the alone.”<sup>124</sup> This solitude is arguably an ascetic’s aspiration. However, remaining in the proverbial well of divine solitude does preclude him from developing a love for God that requires suffering: a passionate love in engagement with the multiplicity of this world.

### **Intertextual Metaphors: Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt***

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<sup>123</sup> SH II, #210, 1,432.

<sup>124</sup> I incorporate these words from Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.9 (φύγη μόνου πρὸς μόνον, see Plotinus, *Plotinus*, Volume 7, [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989], 344-345) because my reading of the Islamic mystical tradition through Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī challenges 20th-century scholarship that had judged philosophical sufism to be a mere reduplication of a neoplatonic mystical ascent to the One. This is exhibited in the title of the seminal work by Corbin: Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998). Of course, this disembodied reading of Plotinus is itself arguably a reductive, essentializing reading that served to value the incarnate aspects of Christianity over disincarnate Greek philosophy.

Lāhūrī references Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt* as a way to conceptualize the nondual, liminal space between self-centeredness and total self-annihilation in God. Unsurprisingly, he does so through a poem that explicitly employs the Arabic *kāf* of metaphor and imagination discussed above, as well as the Persian *gūyī*. Lāhūrī writes that “the author of *Lama ‘āt* has searched out this station with utmost clarity and beauty,” and then follows it with four couplets. However, the first two couplets are extracted from Flash V of ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt*, and the next two from Flash II:

The glass becomes clear and the wine becomes clear;  
 They resemble (*tashābaha*) each other, [and] conform (*tashākala*) wholly.  
 As though (*ka-inna*) all wine, no cup;  
 As though (*ka-inna*) all cup, no wine.<sup>125</sup>

From the purity of the wine and the subtlety of the glass,  
 The color of the goblet and the wine were mixed together.  
 It’s all a cup and, as it were (*gūyī*), the wine is not.  
 Or, it’s wine and, as it were (*gūyī*), the cup is not.<sup>126</sup>

Lāhūrī selects verses from the *Lama ‘āt* that employ the particles and verbs of resemblance, formation, metaphor, and imagination. *Ka-inna* and *gūyī* function for ‘Irāqī as *veluti* does for Eriugena. Flash II is a discussion of the singular theophany that unfolds the cosmos, while Flash V speaks to the “diversity of the loci-of-manifestation at every instant, and the disparity of the outward (*zāhir*) manifestation in accordance with the diversity of the loci-of-manifestation.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, Flash II is more concerned with unity, and Flash V with multiplicity. That Lāhūrī explicitly brings these together suggests his own poetics of unity-in-multiplicity. He has selected poetic discourse within which are verbs and particles indicative of the imagination, augmenting the function of metaphor at every level.

<sup>125</sup> These two couplets are from Flash V and are in Arabic: ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-‘i Lama ‘āt Va Risālah-‘i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 14; ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 82. They are verses from Ṣāḥib ibn ‘Abbād (d. 995): see Ṣāḥib Al-Ṭāḥqānī, *Dīwān Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ‘Abbād* (Bayrūt: Mu’assasat Al-‘Alamī, 2001), 110.

<sup>126</sup> These two couplets are from Flash II. See ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-‘i Lama ‘āt Va Risālah-‘i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 8; ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 75-76. They are paraphrased translations of the Arabic poem by Ṣāḥib Al-Ṭāḥqānī; see footnote 125 above.

<sup>127</sup> This is Jāmī’s title to his commentarial section on this Flash in *Ash ‘iāt al-Lama ‘āt*; See Jāmī, *Ash ‘iāt al-Lama ‘āt*, 97.

Furthermore, the first and second couplets of this love lyric have strong semantic resonances with Flash V. ‘Irāqī discusses the infinite multiplicity of theophanies that never repeat themselves, for “every image (*naqsh*) changes into another image in the mirror according to the states.”<sup>128</sup> He then connects this topic with the heart: “The one to whom such a vision is conferred is ‘the one who has a heart’ (Qur’ān 50:37), to the one [who], by the transmutation of his [heart] according to states, is given insight, and through which insight he is able to understand the transmutation of [the Real] in the forms [of the world].”<sup>129</sup> The connection between the heart and the imagination is thus reinforced.

Lāhūrī, in juxtaposing these two pairs of couplets, is likely following Jāmī, who himself connected them in the final words of his commentary on Flash V in *Ashī ‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*: “[The second pair] refers to the ontological theophany (*tajallī-i wujūdī*) and [the first pair] refers to the phenomenal/visible theophany (*tajallī-i shuhūdī*).”<sup>130</sup> The ontological theophany gives *unified* existence to all things *in God* (the Divine Names and then the immutable entities), while the phenomenal or visible theophany *manifoldly* manifests this world of images (concrete existence); to the first corresponds Joseph in the well, and to the second Joseph rescued therefrom and cast into the world of passionate (suffering) love. In interpreting this first couplet, Lāhūrī suggests that the visible theophany, which is this phenomenal world of metaphor, should be perceived *as though* the Real through the heart; this is possible because of the transmutation of forms reflected in the heart. The relationship between the wayfarer and the Real is neither monistic nor dualist, and this is how the nondual liminality of the self is expressed. The closing lines of the Flash V of ‘Irāqī’s *Lama ‘āt* buttress Lāhūrī’s point:

I am with you, my beloved from Khotan, so much so  
that I err: am I you or are you me?

<sup>128</sup> ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-i Lama ‘āt Va Risālah-i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 12; ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 81.

<sup>129</sup> ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-i Lama ‘āt Va Risālah-i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 13; ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 82. The bracketed text in my translation reflects Jāmī’s explanatory commentary (Jāmī, *Ashī ‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, 100). The transmutations of the heart, according to Jāmī, are “for example contraction (*qabḍ*) and ease (*bast*), fear and hope, intimacy (*uns*) and awe (*haybat*)” (Jāmī, *Ashī ‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, 100).

<sup>130</sup> Jāmī, *Ashī ‘āt al-Lama ‘āt*, 103.

No! I am I. No! You are you. No! You are me.  
Rather, I am I—rather, you are you—rather, you are me.<sup>131</sup>

The liminality of this phenomenal world of metaphor is likewise reflected in the liminality of the wayfarer's sense of self: is she God or is God she? The nondual truth of metaphor, the tensive concept of reality discursively produced in the metaphorical copula, is mirrored in the wayfarer's heart; this is no static synthesis, but a dynamic imaginary. The world subsists in the Word Who subsists in the world.

### **Perduring Ambiguity**

Lāhūrī suggests that the second couplet “seeks to drive away the wavering perplexity (*taraddudī*) that arose in the previous couplet.”<sup>132</sup> The term, *taraddudī*, suggests a back-and-forth movement of hesitation, which illustrates well his interpretation of the first couplet specifically and the entire love lyric generally: there is a binary hesitation between unity and multiplicity, self-annihilation and subsistence in God, all augmented by the intertextual metaphors from ‘Irāqī. Lāhūrī frames this hesitation in terms of the Akbarian conception of the Holy Emanation (*fayḍ-i muqaddas*), also termed Compassionate Theophany (*tajallī-i raḥīmī*), and the Most Holy Emanation (*fayḍ-i aqdas*), also termed the All-Merciful Theophany (*tajallī-i raḥmānī*).<sup>133</sup> The latter, the All-Merciful Theophany, refers to the Divine Self-Disclosure of existence to the Divine Names in the *Unseen World*; this is the first theophany essentially of God to God, which is why Lāhūrī reminds us that “most of the realized ones call the ‘cheek’ the All-Merciful Theophany, which is called the existence-granting (*ījādī*) theophany”,<sup>134</sup> whence “under the veil” and “on the Day of Pre-Eternity” (unseen). The Compassionate Theophany is the Divine Self-Disclosure whereby the *Seen World*, i.e., the phenomenal world of metaphor, emerges and “makes manifest

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<sup>131</sup> ‘Irāqī, *Risālah-'i Lama'āt Va Risālah-'i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 14; ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 82-83.

<sup>132</sup> *SH II*, #210, 1,427.

<sup>133</sup> Lāhūrī, #210, 1,427-1428; for a superb analysis and explanation of these two theophanies, see chapter 9, “Ontological Mercy”, of *Sufism and Taoism*, by Toshihiko Izutsu. See also footnote 17 of Chapter Two of this dissertation.

<sup>134</sup> *SH II*, #210, 1,427.

the receptive essences in the mirror of the goblet.”<sup>135</sup> The ontological relationship between the Unseen World and the Seen World is what renders the latter imaginal. Lāhūrī rewrites the couplet in prose as a lover addressing the beloved, in this case the Nondelimited Beloved, God: “Your Existence-Granting, All-Merciful Theophany manifested in pre-eternity under the veil, i.e., Yourself by Yourself upon Yourself without the intermediary of the loci-of-manifestations, on account [of which] every image (*naqsh*) of the possible things and the forms of existent things fell upon the mirror of fantasies (*wahm-ha*), and they were ascribed fancied existence (*wujūd-i mawhūm*), because whatsoever is not the Real is entirely fantasy, fanciful, and imaginary (*wahm, pindār, khayāl*), and is non-being—so consider this deeply!”<sup>136</sup>

The paradox of the existence-granting theophany is that it gives existence to something that is non-being. Lāhūrī aims to resolve this *taraddudī* by recalling the imaginal, *khayāl* nature of this phenomenal world. While vis-à-vis the Real, this world is non-being (just as in Eriugena’s ontology this world is nonexistent vis-à-vis God); it nevertheless exists *imaginally*. The image both is and is not, just as the metaphorical copula signifies both is and is not. Lāhūrī claims he has resolved the *taraddudī*, but he has arguably drawn us deeper therein via this phenomenal world of metaphor. In fact, in his commentary on the third couplet, as if ignoring his attempt at resolving the *taraddudī*, he writes again that “this couplet is a response to the *taraddudī* that emerged in the previous (second) couplet.”<sup>137</sup> The ambiguity remains throughout, never disambiguated.

Drawing from Ismā‘īl Ibn Muḥammad Mustamlī’s (d. 1042-1043) *Sharḥ-i Ta‘arruf*,<sup>138</sup> a

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<sup>135</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,427.

<sup>136</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,427-1,428.

<sup>137</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,428.

<sup>138</sup> See Ismā‘īl Ibn Muḥammad Mustamlī Bukhārī, *Sharḥ Al-Ta‘arruf Li-mazhab Al-Taṣavvuf: Nūr Al-murīdīn Va Faṣīḥat Al-muddi ‘īn*, four volumes, ed. by Muḥammad Rawshan (Tehran: Asāṭir, 1984). For a brief discussion of Mustamlī’s place in the School of Love, see Joseph Lumbard, *Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 131ff.

Persian commentary on al-Kalābādhi's (d. 990) Arabic *Kitāb al-Ta'arruf*,<sup>139</sup> Lāhūrī once again pushes his interpretation deeper into the experience of this phenomenal world. The wine is the All-Merciful Theophany being poured by God the Cupbearer into the goblet that contains the realities of all things, and yet all that is perceived in this phenomenal world of the goblet is the single ray of God, the Cupbearer's Face being reflected in the various images in the wine.<sup>140</sup> This confusing language enfolds metaphor upon metaphor such that the images of wine and reflections, cupbearer and cupbearer's face, become merged. This produces a theo-poetics in which God and the world interpenetrate while remaining distinct.

Lāhūrī once again attempts to resolve the confusion. In the second couplet, Lāhūrī distinguishes the two theophanies; but in this couplet, he brings them back together:

The reflections of the wine of the Existence-Granting, All-Merciful Theophany, which [makes] existent all of these contrasting images—in form and meaning (*ṣūratān wa ma'nan*)—within the “Be! And it was!”<sup>141</sup> [of everything] is a single theophanic-splendor (*jilva*) and ray (*furogh*) of the Existence-Granting, All-Merciful Theophany of the Cupbearer that has fallen in the goblet of the immutable entities of the possible things, and in a single instant they are all at once brought into existence. This is because according to all of the realized ones, there is no repetition (*takrār*) permitted in the Existence-Granting, All-Merciful Theophany.<sup>142</sup>

As if to mimic the fluctuating heart that perceives the divine transmutation in forms, Lāhūrī's commentary palpitates between unity (the single theophany within God) and multiplicity (the theophanies of this phenomenal world), between the All-Merciful Theophany and the Compassionate Theophany. Here, he elides the two Akbarian theophanies even if conceptually they remain distinct. This is because the wayfarer in this phenomenal world of metaphor *sees* the world as God/not God; her perception glances the singular theophanic-splendor uniquely

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<sup>139</sup> For original see Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Kalābādhi, *Al-Ta'arruf Li-madhhab Ahl Al-taṣawwuf* (Al-Qāhirah: Dār Iḥyā' Al-Kutub Al-'Arabīyah, 1960). For an English translation, see Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Kalābādhi, *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfīs = Kitāb Al-ta'arruf Li-madhhab Ahl Al-taṣawwuf*, trans. by A.J. Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). For a discussion on al-Kalābādhi's place within the early history of sufism, see Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 67-71; see also Chittick, *Divine Love*, 287ff, 320ff.

<sup>140</sup> See *SH* II, #210, 1,428.

<sup>141</sup> Here Lāhūrī writes *kun fa-kāna*, instead of the Qur'ānic *kun fa-yakūn* (See Qur'ān 3:47, 59; 19:35; 2:116-117; 6:73; 36:82; 16:40; 40:68).

<sup>142</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,428.

manifested in the manifold phenomenal forms of this world. She thereby engages the theo-poetics of the world.

Ḥāfīz juggles multiple metaphors in the first three couplets, and Lāhūrī does little to disambiguate the ambiguity. Rather, he transfers the poetic ambiguity, as his habit, into the experiential ambiguity of the phenomenal world of metaphor. Even though he dwells on the cosmological metaphor of the goblet as phenomenal world, as if to augment the ambiguity, couplet four and his commentary return to the metaphor of the goblet as the heart of the wayfarer. The elite for Lāhūrī are the “complete, perfecting persons... firmly fixed in the station of stability (*tamkīn*) and subsistence (*baqāʾ*) in God, [and in] awareness (*ṣaḥw*) after effacement (*maḥw*).”<sup>143</sup> The commoners are those who, as mentioned above, “fell into vain desire, and who know themselves to be God,”<sup>144</sup> in the station of self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and inebriety (*sukr*). Instead of “speaking profusely” in ecstatic sayings, the elite wayfarer who “arrives at the station of witnessing the pure [Divine] Essence, [and] obtains an ocular, visible recognition (*maʾrifat-i ʿiyānī-i shuhūdī*), is silenced of conversation with the tongue, and enters into conversation of the inner court according to ‘my heart spoke to me about my Lord.’”<sup>145</sup> Vision with the eyes renders the wayfarer silent because of the “zealous-ardor of the passionate beloved [God].” Lāhūrī avers that the wayfarer is silent because witnessing occurs through the sovereignty and magnificence of the passionate beloved who overcomes the wayfarer’s inwardness.<sup>146</sup> External vision is augmented by internal transformation.

### **Engaging the Theo-Poetics of the World through God**

This transformed vision is the subject of the final two couplets. Lāhūrī’s commentary thereon suggests that properly perceiving the ambiguity of this phenomenal world is an effect of

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<sup>143</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,430.

<sup>144</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,430.

<sup>145</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,431.

<sup>146</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,431.

the Real becoming the vision of the wayfarer, as per the famous *ḥadīth al-nawāfil*, the *ḥadīth* of supererogatory works. Those who possess pure sight are those same complete persons who are in the station of awareness after effacement, and “pure vision alludes to that vision of the one whose particular eyes have been transformed into the complete eye of the Real by the light of ‘I am his sight by which he sees,’ and who thereby see the realities of things as they really are.”<sup>147</sup> The full *ḥadīth* of the supererogatory works, which is a *ḥadīth qudsī* in the voice of God:

Whoever opposes a Friend (*walī*) of Mine, I declare war on them. And My servant does not come near to Me with anything more lovable (*aḥabb*) to Me than what I have made a duty<sup>148</sup> for him. And My servant continues to come nearer to Me through the supererogatory works<sup>149</sup> until I love him. Then when I love him I [already] was (*kuntu*)<sup>150</sup> his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks. And if he asks Me, I most surely give to him. And if he seeks My help, I surely help him. I have never hesitated (*taraddadtu*) about anything I do as I hesitate about (taking) the soul of the person of faith who dislikes death, since I dislike hurting him.<sup>151</sup>

The *ghazal* and Lāhūrī’s commentary begin with a focus on cosmology and end with a focus on

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<sup>147</sup> *SH* II, #210, 1,433.

<sup>148</sup> The verb, *iftaradtu*, is from the same root as *farīda*, the technical term for the obligatory religious “duties” (the daily ritual prayers, fasting in Ramadan, etc.) in later schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

<sup>149</sup> *Al-nawāfil* in later Islamic tradition becomes a technical legal term referring to the supplementary acts of personal devotion, often mentioned in the Qur’ān and described at length in the *ḥadīth*, which were constantly practiced by the Prophet and his close Companions, especially in the early Meccan period, but which were not made incumbent on the wider body of Muslims in Medina and in later legal schools. These devotions would normally include longer and more numerous prayers, especially at night, much more frequent fasting, spiritual retreats during Ramadan (and some other times), a wide range of invocations (*dhikr*), more specific devotional vows (*nadhhr*), and works of charity (*ṣidqa*). Possibly even more relevant is the original meaning of simply “what comes next” (i.e., after the obligatory forms of worship), originally referring to the end of a caravan.

<sup>150</sup> The literal translation of this verb is “I [already] was”, even if the *ḥadīth* is often translated as “I am”. Technically, it is in the Arabic conditional, which can be translated as past, present, or future, depending on context. In this case, the use of *kuntu* in this saying was very important to the later Islamic tradition, for it suggests that God was *already* the servants faculties *before* the election to perform the *nawāfil*.

<sup>151</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. M. D. al-Bughā, 6 vols. (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), 5: 2384–85 (*kitāb al-riqāq*). Michael Ebstein distinguishes four parts of this *ḥadīth*: “(1) the war that God wages on the enemies of His friends (*awliyā’*, sg. *walī*); (2) the importance of supererogatory works in achieving divine love, as a result of which God becomes the very organs of His servant; (3) the theurgical power of the servant, who is able to invoke God and have his prayers answered (*ijābat al-da’wa*); and (4) the “waving” of God in taking the life of the believer” (Michael Ebstein, “The Organs of God: Ḥadīth Al-Nawāfil in Classical Islamic Mysticism,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138, no. 2 [2018], 272). He notes that there are early sources that just have the second and third parts, and others than have the first and fourth parts, together as a single *ḥadīth* or added to other *ḥadīth*. It is the second and third part that are perennially cited in *ṣūfī* literature since the 10th century, while, he argues, it is possible that the first part was more relevant to a specifically “Shīi milieu, or at least was interpreted therein as referring to the Imams and to their supporters who suffered persecution during Umayyad times” (*ibid.*, 274).

anthropology. Here, the self's faculties and limbs are imagined to be God's because the wayfarer has attained the "desired object," which is the station of *jam 'al-jam'*, or "union of union", according to Lāhūrī.<sup>152</sup> Despite its name, this is not an additional effacement after self-annihilation, but rather a return to the Imaginal World of metaphor with renewed perception. Lāhūrī draws from the *Commentary on the Rose Garden of Mystery* once again for explication:

*Jam 'al-jam'* is the witnessing of creation subsisting (*qā'im*) in the Real, i.e., the Real is witnessed in all of the existent and created things, [given that the Real] becomes manifest everywhere in each attribute. This is the station of subsisting (*baqā'*) in God, but it is also called the station of separation after union (*farq ba'd al-jam'*) and the second separation. And it is also called awareness after effacement, because after sheer unity (*waḥdat-i ṣarfī*), which is union and effacement, [the wayfarer] alights upon the station of separation and effacement. There is no station greater in perfection than this one, since [the wayfarer] sees and knows each thing as it really is. The person in this station witnesses unity (*waḥdat*) in multiplicity (*kathrat*) and multiplicity in unity. According to this perfection, unity is the mirror of multiplicity, and multiplicity is the mirror of unity. Just as the one in this station does not become veiled from the real unity by the vision of multiplicity, likewise does she not become veiled from multiplicity by the vision of unity.<sup>153</sup>

The aim of the wayfarer is neither a monistic union with God, nor a radical self-effacement into the nothingness of God (much less a self-centeredness negligent of God), but rather to bring together opposites, to perceive nondually. Lāhūrī considers the cross-eyed ones to have fallen into vain desire, they are the commoners "crude [enough] to proclaim, 'I am the Real' and other similar ecstatic utterances."<sup>154</sup> They think themselves to be the Real absolutely, as opposed to nondually through theophany. Lāhījī, in the few lines before what Lāhūrī cites from the *Commentary on the Rose Garden of Mystery*, clarifies the differences between the separation and union that precede this final, complete station. "Separation veils the Real with creation [so that the wayfarer] sees creation [alone] and knows the Real to be totally other than it. Union witnesses the Real without creation, and this is the stage of the wayfarer's self-annihilation."<sup>155</sup> These two

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<sup>152</sup> SH II, #210, 1,433.

<sup>153</sup> SH II, #210, 1,433-1,434; see Lāhījī, *Sharḥ-i Gulshān-i Rāz*, 24. For other sections of the *Commentary on the Rose Garden of Mystery* that discuss this final station, see, inter alia, *ibid.*, 52, 114, 241-242, 254, 264, and 275-276.

<sup>154</sup> SH II, #210, 1,434.

<sup>155</sup> Lāhījī, *Sharḥ-i Gulshān-i Rāz*, 24.

are positions inferior to the station of union of union, which is nondual.

To see creation and God to be utterly and categorically distinct entities is the result of a radical apophasis or transcendence (*tanzīh*), while to see God in monistic union with creation is the result of a radical kataphasis or immanence (*tashbīh*). In concluding, Lāhūrī's interpretation of cross-eyed vision can be connected to the Akbarian tradition of "seeing with two eyes" as opposed to one.<sup>156</sup> Lāhūrī even references the tradition of "the possessor of two eyes (*dhū al-‘aynayn*)" in his commentary on another love lyric.<sup>157</sup> But Lāhījī summarizes this conception more succinctly for my purposes, and Lāhūrī, versed as much as he was in Lāhījī's commentary on the *Rose Garden of Mystery*, was likely well aware of the following:

Those "immanentizers" (*mushabbih*)...profess the Real to resemble the physical...and they do not know the transcendence of the Real's essence, and they are confined within immanence. The source of their opinion is blindness, for they are neglectful of transcendence and say that the Real resembles bodies in essence, attributes, or in both...and they do not see the unity (*tawhīd*) of the Real. Transcendence is the sanctification (*taqdīs*) of the Real's essence from deficient attributes or entirely from the attributes of all possible things. Those who profess transcendence have one eye because they know the Real's essence only through the attribute of transcendence. But they do not see and do not know the modality [*kaiḥiyat*] of [the Real's] manifestation in the loci-of-manifestation. Seeing transcendence alone and seeing immanence alone both in reality fall short of recognition of God. The Folk of the Real bring together transcendence and immanence and say that the Real is in reality one among all of the entities such that the [divine] essence is free of attributes, [and this] is transcendence. At this stage, otherness and duality are not perceived. But the Real [is also] immanent within all the entities, and from this aspect [the Real] manifests in the form of each thing and is a theophany in the image (*naqsh*) of every entity. This person is the recognizer of God and sees with two eyes.<sup>158</sup>

Lāhūrī interpreted the first three couplets of this *ghazal* in an attempt to reconcile the binary

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<sup>156</sup> See footnote 107 of the Introduction to this dissertation.

<sup>157</sup> The commentary is for the third couplet of *DKh* #345, 706; *SH IV*, #372, 2,360; *DAv* #345, 424; *DFo* #345, 876: "The teaching of the lesson of the People of Vision (*ahl-i naẓar*) are a single allusion (*ishārat*): / I have spoken allusively (*guftam kināyatī*), and I'm not repeating [it]." The commentary reads: "The 'People of Vision', according to technical terms, are said to be the perfect 'ārīḡs who cross over (*'ubūr*) from the levels of formal and spiritual fancied multiplicity (*kithrāt-i mawhūma-i šūrī u ma 'nawī*) and arrive at the station of *tawhīd* (unity) seen-with-the-eyes (ocular, eye-witnessed: *tawhīd-i 'iyānī*); they see with the eye of the Real in accordance with 'I am [the servant's] vision whereby he sees', [and] in the forms of all of the existents they witness the Real with the eye of the Real. Since they see themselves and all of the existents subsisting (*qā'im*) in the Real, necessarily otherness and duality are removed from their vision, and whatever they see and know is seen and known by the Real. The possessor of this sort of witnessing, according to technical terms, is said to be 'the possessor of two eyes' (*dhū al-‘aynayn*). He returns to conversing with the ascetic of crooked-understanding, and says that the teaching[s] and the lesson[s] of the People of Vision and the Possessor of Two Eyes are a single allusion for which there is no need of protracted speech, for I have offered an abridgment thereof" (*SH IV*, #372, 2,363).

<sup>158</sup> Lāhījī, *Sharḥ-i Gulshān-i Rāz*, 69.

perplexity (*taraddudī*) exemplified by the mutually imbricating images employed by Ḥāfīz. The poetic ambiguity is not resolved discursively, but rather transferred to the ambiguity of this phenomenal world of metaphor. Wayfarers are to subsist in God, see unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity, perceive with two eyes, and effectively live within the liminal space of this phenomenal, Imaginal World. She engages the theo-poetics of the world through the nondual, liminal space of the self *in* God. Those who see with one eye, either of immanence (kataphsis) or transcendence (apophasis), are ignorant precisely of the *modality* (*kaiḥiyat* = “howness”) of God’s self-manifestation *as* the world: they do not know *how* God relates to the world, they are unaware of the theo-poetics. This subsistence, or *baqā’*, informs the embodied consequences of Eriugena’s mutual subsistence of all things in the Word and the Word in all things, constituted by the Incarnation.

One other love lyric will be presented to elaborate further on this tensive nature of reality in which the wayfarer must be and not be the Real so that she may act in accordance with this theo-poetics. Redressing Eriugena’s dialectic that has the potential to produce a synthetic vision whereby all of *natura* is subsumed into God, I continue to flesh out the import of imaginal vision whereby this phenomenal world of images is perceived through the tensive, nondual reality of metaphor.

### ***Ghazal 191***<sup>159</sup>

- 1 Those who with a gaze perform alchemy on dirt—  
may it be that they should grant a corner of their eyes to us!
- 2 My pain best hidden from pretending physicians—  
may it be that it’ll be healed from the Treasury of the Unseen.
- 3 Since the passionate beloved does not lift the veil from the face,  
why does each person tell a tale according to fantasy?<sup>160</sup>
- 4 Since a lovely recompense is through neither libertinage nor asceticism,

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<sup>159</sup> *DKh* #191, 398; *SH* II, #110, 789; *DAv* #191, 251; *DFo* #191, 538.

<sup>160</sup> “Tale” translates the Persian word of Arabic origin *ḥikāyat*, and “fantasy” in the original is *ba taṣawwūr* (but in philosophical discourse it has the meaning of imagination, concept, and idea).

it's better that their deeds be committed to providential care.

5 Don't be without recognition, for in the "do I have a higher a bid?"<sup>161</sup> of passionate love, the people of the gaze make transactions with their companions.<sup>162</sup>

6 Drink wine! For a hundred sins committed by strangers behind the veil is better than one act of obedience performed in hypocrisy and affectation.

7 The coat from which the scent of Joseph comes to me, I fear his jealous brothers may tear up.

8 Hidden from the envious ones, I recite to myself. For the generous ones perform acts of kindness in secrecy very much for the sake of God.<sup>163</sup>

9 Presently, many seditions are occurring from behind the curtain, until that time when the curtain falls—what things they've done!

10 Do not wonder if the stone laments from this story/*ḥadīth*, [for] the people of the heart recount well the tale of the heart.<sup>164</sup>

11 Pass by the monastery's street in the group of [the people of] presence, for they offer pure prayers on their own time for your sake.

12 Ḥāfīz! Continuance of union is impossible. Kings pay little attention to the beggar's state.

### **Ocular Vision of the Real via the Heart: Imaginal Perception**

Fouchécour rightly underscores the theme of "hypocrisy, dissimulations, and indifference" in this love lyric, particularly in how Ḥāfīz confronts the pretentious, fake healers of his affliction.<sup>165</sup> The first and final couplet surround the lyric with indifference. Veiling is also a recurring image in this *ghazal*: the veil of the beloved, the veil behind which sins occur, the curtain behind which the seditious ones act, the implicit veil behind which Ḥāfīz "recites to [him]self," and ultimately the curtain that closes the stage of this world when the drama of life is

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<sup>161</sup> The original is *man yazīd*: lit., "who adds [to the current price]", a phrasal metonym for the auction or marketplace.

<sup>162</sup> This is a subtle correction to previous couplet, wherein one's deeds are to be left to providential-care (God's providence); in this couplet, the people of the gaze make transactions with their companions with recognition and in the marketplace of passionate-love.

<sup>163</sup> Lāhūrī includes this couplet in his commentary; however, Khānlarī, in his critical edition of Ḥāfīz's *ghazals*, does not.

<sup>164</sup> *ḥikāyat-i dil*:

<sup>165</sup> *DFo* #191, 539.

over and we are judged. Lāhūrī interprets these themes by opposing the restorative and healing powers of the gaze of the complete persons (the *ṣūfī shaykhs*, masters of the path) with the useless, fake medicine of the hypocritical ascetics. The gaze is the central theme for Lāhūrī, and those who possess it are able to perform alchemy on the heart of the disciple. I intend to draw out two subjects of import to this present discussion: (1) how Lāhūrī’s commentary presents the space between this material, Seen World and the immaterial, Unseen World as porous, and (2) how this permeability manifests in the human subject as imaginal perception. Underscoring both these topics is Ḥāfiẓ’s assertion in the second couplet: the affliction of passionate love is healed by the Treasury of the Unseen, the source of the Qur’ān and whence his poetic inspiration comes through the imagination (both the imaginal faculty and the World of Imagination). After all, Ḥāfiẓ’s honorific, conferred by Jāmī, is Tongue of the Unseen (*lisān al-ghayb*).

Lāhūrī suggests in his commentary on the first couplet various interpretations of how the gaze of the perfect ones transforms wayfarers. One interpretation is a transformation from dirt (the rank of deficient existence) to the rank of God-Friendship (*wilāyat*).<sup>166</sup> Another is a transformation from the filthy, gross body to a spiritual rank. This second interpretation implies miraculous powers to the perfect person. He cites “the Greatest Master [Ibn al-‘Arabī]” from the *Futūḥāt*: “I saw Aḥmad Sabtī coming and going from the wall of the Ka‘ba, and in the wall there was neither hole nor crack.”<sup>167</sup> The porous relation between the Seen and Unseen World,

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<sup>166</sup> *SH* II, #110, 790.

<sup>167</sup> *SH* II, #110, 790. Aḥmad Sabtī was a well-known Moroccan saint, born at Sabta (Ceuta) in 1130. It is perhaps no coincidence that this saint is known for his charity and generosity, and his conduct quite the opposite of the hypocritical, pretentious ascetic. A contemporaneous *qāḍī*, al-Tādilī, visited and wrote about him. “His doctrine was simple, according to al-Tādilī, who knew and visited him: every principle contained in religion (*shar‘*) may be reduced to the deprivation and to the bestowal of the goods which one possesses. He insists on the religious duty of *zakhl* [sic]. Charity (*ṣadaqa*) is the essential theme of his sermons and of his injunctions. He denounces avarice (*al-bukhl*) and parsimony (*al-shuḥḥ*) and preaches generosity (*al-‘aṭa’*, *al-jūd*), and beneficence (*al-iḥsān*), quoting Qur’ānic verses to illustrate his purpose (IX, 34; X, 88; LIII, 33; LXVIII, 17; XCII, 5-10). His symbolic interpretation of prayer and of its various manifestations illustrates his doctrine of asceticism, since it signifies the sharing and the abandonment of all goods. Of presentable appearance, always carefully groomed, he was furthermore admired for his eloquence and his knowledge of dogma and for the ease with which he succeeded in convincing the most sceptical. His conduct earned him the reputation of a pious man, having no wish to publicise his virtues and willing to accept criticism (the Oriental mystical tradition of the *Malāmatiyya*)” (H. Bencheneb, ‘Al-Sabtī,’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_6385](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6385) [accessed March 8, 2019]).

expressed in terms of the imagination, was often how the tradition explained the miraculous acts of the Friends of God. This permeability is the subject of the commentary on the third couplet. Given that “the face,” for Lāhūrī, is the unmanifest divine essence, “there is consensus that, in the world, the Real...is unable to be seen, either with vision (*baṣar*) or with insight (*baṣīrat*), except through certainty (*īqān*).”<sup>168</sup> This true vision (*ru’yat*) is conferred by “the utmost generosity and most honorable blessing of the Real...and the best place wherein this vision occurs is paradise. So if [this] vision...is granted to the servant in this world, then no distinction remains between the perishing world (*dunyā-yi fānī*) and the perduring paradise (*jinnat-i bāqī*).”<sup>169</sup> It appears, then, that this vision is possible, and it is likely in accordance with seeing with two eyes discussed in the previous love lyric. When one subsists (*baqā’*) in God while in this world, one attains to a vision of the Real through creation; subsistence (*baqā’*) yields perdurance (*bāqī*).

Turning to the fifth and ninth couplet, Lāhūrī addresses the second topic of import: imaginal perception that takes advantage of this porous space between the material and immaterial. Lāhūrī defines the *ahl-i naẓar*, or people of the gaze: they “see with the eyes of their hearts through the kohl of pearls (*kuhl al-jawāhir*) of ocular, witnessed recognition (*ma’rifat-i shuhūdī-i ‘iyānī*) and now have become recognizers (‘*ārif*) of God.”<sup>170</sup> Kohl is a dark substance placed on the eyelids as a form of makeup. In this case, kohl made of pulverized pearls was believed to increase one’s vision. There does not appear to be a sharp distinction between material and immaterial perception; the eyes of the heart function through ocular perception. In his commentary, Lāhūrī avers that recognition (*ma’rifat*) obtained through the ocular vision of the heart produces passionate love (‘*ishq*) in the wayfarer.<sup>171</sup> By blending ocular vision with a vision

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<sup>168</sup> SH II, #110, 792.

<sup>169</sup> SH II, #110, 792. *Dunyā-yi fānī* and *jinnat-i bāqī* are typically translated as “the passing or perishing world and the eternal paradise”, but I have elected “perishing world and perduring paradise” to suggest how these terms may be considered opposites. Furthermore, *fānī* and *bāqī* each have etymological allusions to the penultimate and ultimate mystical states: *fanā’* and *baqā’*, or self-annihilation and then subsistence in God.

<sup>170</sup> SH II, #110, 795.

<sup>171</sup> SH II, #110, 795.

“of the heart,” the wayfarer recognizes the Real in this world, and this results in passionate love; the mutual enfolding of ocular vision with “heart vision” is not foreign to either Ḥāfīz or Lāhūrī.<sup>172</sup>

In the ninth couplet, this sequence, from ocular vision, to recognition, and then to passionate love, culminates, for Ḥāfīz, in this very love lyric, a “tale of the heart.” In the first hemistich, Ḥāfīz even calls his own *ghazal* a *ḥadīth*, a narration constitutive of the Islamic tradition and thus considered part of scripture in the broader sense. The Tongue of the Unseen “boasts in the degree of realities and recognitions that this matchless love lyric conveys, and [his] accomplishment...is due to God.”<sup>173</sup> Lāhūrī once again relies on Jāmī to connect the heart to this revelatory poetry:

The possessor of the heart is a person who has become one realized by the lights of divinity, and who has become transmuted (*mutaqallab*) in the phases (*aṭwār*) of lordship, and who has arrived at the station of *jam* ‘ and has returned [therefrom]; the perfection of this state is called the “second birth”: for “whosoever has not been born a second time will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth.”<sup>174</sup>

Prescinding from the parallel passages that exist in the third chapter of the Gospel of John regarding being born again,<sup>175</sup> Lāhūrī describes a possessor of the heart, which was demonstrated above to be one with a strong imaginal faculty, to be someone who has returned from the station

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<sup>172</sup> Lāhūrī explicitly combines the vision of the heart with ocular vision in his commentary on the first couplet of another *ghazal*: “When the image (*khayāl*) of your face passes by the rose garden of my eye, / in pursuit of vision (*nazar*), the heart comes toward the window of the eye” (*DKh* #331, 678; *SH* III, #354, 2,232; *DAv* #331, 410; *DFo* #331, 846). Lāhūrī glosses: “‘*Khayāl*’ is an imaginal form. ‘Face’...refers to the Real Face....Know that the quality of the attribute of the sense of the eye is such that everything that it sees in this phenomenal world [i.e.. World of Witnessing = ‘*ālim-i shahādat*’] is formed (*muṣawwar namūda*) and made present before the heart. The heart, upon beholding (*tamāshā*) it, becomes cheerful if it is beautiful and becomes unpleasant if it is ugly. Hence, [Ḥāfīz] addresses the gracious beloved, and says, when the image and imaginal form of your Real Face, absolutely beautiful, passes by the rose garden of my eye, the heart, with total yearning/desire (*shawq*) to witness your imaginal form, for the sake of gazing [at it], comes toward the window of the eye; the brilliance is so much that [the eye] cannot endure it, and so the eye passes on the imaginal form to the vision of the heart” (*SH* III, #354, 2,233). In this passage, the heart sees through the window of the eye, that is, through ocular perception.

<sup>173</sup> *SH* II, #110, 794.

<sup>174</sup> Lāhūrī claims this is from Jāmī’s *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, but after extensive search I was unable to find it in the critical edition.

<sup>175</sup> “Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above/again (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν)” (John 3:3) and “Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above/again (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν)’” (John 3:7).

of union and thus into the station of “union of union,” subsisting in God while in this phenomenal world. As such, this person—in this case Ḥāfiẓ—obtains a “tale of the heart,” but not from human narrators (as per the *isnāds* or chains of transmitters of *ḥadīth*) but rather directly from the Real. Instead of saying “it was related to me from so-and-so,” this person prefaces his narration with, “my heart related to me from my Lord.”<sup>176</sup> Lāhūrī clarifies:

The meaning: do not be amazed if the stone, despite its firmness and hardness, laments and cries out from this *ḥadīth* of realities and recognitions that I have expressed in the garment of this burning, melting<sup>177</sup> love lyric. This is because the perfect ones and the possessors of the heart recount the tale of the heart in a pleasant manner that such an effect occur.<sup>178</sup>

Here, because Ḥāfiẓ possesses a heart, he constructs poetry that is revelatory of recognition (*maʿrifat*). If we follow the commentary, this means that it produces passionate love in the listener or reader. Just as this phenomenal world is revelatory of recognition that effects passionate love in the one with a heart or with a gaze, likewise does Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyric. His *ghazal* is the textual mirror of the world. Both are revelatory, and both find their source in the World of the Unseen through the imagination (God’s, or the poet’s). All this is possible precisely because there is no dualistic dichotomy between the Seen and Unseen world. The human wayfarer with a heart possesses an imaginal *perception* that sees the Real through and along with (perceives, *per* + *capere*, to seize through or with) the forms of the world, not despite them. The self itself must enter into the imagination so that the imaginal-but-very-real nature of this world may be perceived.

Reading these two *ghazals* together, the self is conceptualized as fully realized and thus receptive to a theophanic, Imaginal World when it subsists in God. Subsisting in God, the wayfarer’s heart perceives the Imaginal World via the imagination. The imaginary existence constructed by Lāhūrī via Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics is one in which the self is to live within the tension

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<sup>176</sup> *SH* II, #110, 794-795.

<sup>177</sup> “Burning, melting” translates *sūz u gudāz*, which is an impassioned style of Persian poetry devoted to the narration of painful experiences.

<sup>178</sup> *SH* II, #110, 795.

between monism and radical nothingness; that is, the self subsists in metaphorical truth. As argued throughout, Lāhūrī does not disambiguate the ambiguity of the metaphorical poetry, but displaces it into the phenomenal world of metaphor and into the wayfarer’s heart. God becomes her faculties, her limbs, her perception—via the heart, the organ whose capacity to bring together opposites is similar to the imagination.

Both these love lyrics allude to the Qur’ānic narrative of Joseph, and variably to the imagination, imaginal perception, and the liminality of a self subsisting in God. Joseph is the master dream interpreter, and in the Schools of Love and of Ibn ‘Arabī, the prophet is famous for his faculty of the imagination. The topic of the imagination in these Islamic schools was rarely ever expounded upon without reference to Joseph, whose gifts of the imagination were granted to all who had an astute ability both to interpret the theo-poetics of the world and to create poetry. Joseph is a passionate lover who possesses a heart capable of bringing together opposites, just like the imagination.

## **Seeing Through False Binaries, Seeing the Real Through the World**

Employing language to poetic effect, Eriugena carefully removes a series of binaries in his dialogue. As though mirroring Ḥāfiẓ’s intertwining and enfolding of multiple metaphors, Eriugena produces a confounding poetics: the *way* words come together subverts the grammatical logic of language. Subjects and objects, verbs and predicates, perfect, imperfect, present, and future tenses forcefully coincide to produce semantic shocks, the “Essential Theophany” that momentarily annihilates the wayfarer in Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī, stupefies the Student, as it were dead, in Eriugena. The Incarnation remains the unreferenced subtext of this subversion of rational discourse. As soon as the Incarnation is explicitly referenced (even if Eriugena does not seek to equate, yet, this poetics of nondualism with that historical event), the dialogue proceeds to discuss the third division of nature, viz., this phenomenal world of sense perception. In

Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, the imagination and heart rescue the bewildering coincidence of opposites.

The texture of nondualism demands a subversive use of language. Eriugena employs the Latin particle *veluti* when discussing *how* the divine Word is both beyond and in the world, *how* the world is in the Word and thereby carried beyond itself. This *mode* of manifestation from *nothing as/into something* forces Eriugena to be careful with his language:

Therefore [the Divine Goodness] is understood to be incomprehensible, and so it is not unreasonably called *nothing* by excellence. But, when it begins to appear in Its theophanies, it is said to proceed *as it were (veluti)* from nothing into something; and that which is *properly (proprie)* thought to be beyond all essence is also *properly (proprie)* known in all essence, and therefore every visible and invisible creature can be called a theophany (i.e., a divine appearance).<sup>179</sup>

This *as it were* compels the reader not merely to *unsay* what was said, as Michael Sells suggests regarding Plotinus's use of the Greek *hoion*, but subsequently to *say all the more (plus quam)*. The *veluti* in the above passage gives us *proper* knowledge of God, which is linked by Eriugena to *plus-quam* theology. This *more* reveals the metaphorical nature of reality that is not fake or unreal, but *more than* what *ratio* alone can convey: the *excess* of the divine, creative act perdures in the *as it were* of this world. Contrariwise, a dualistic theology would radically separate this world from God, permitting *ratio* to take absolute control of the world, now emptied of any trace of divine excess, mystery, and poetics.<sup>180</sup> The desire for *more than* the logical, *more than* the created imaginaries of this world, fuels the imagination; this desire imagines forth the Incarnation and embodies an Incarnational imaginary, a theo-poetics of the flesh that disrupts the logic of the impossible.

The Islamic theo-poetics of Ḥāfīz, interpreted through Lāhūrī, facilitates transposing this poetics *from text to world*, and *from world to self*. The only way to practice passionate love in this ambiguous, nondual liminal world of metaphor is by placing the self, through the heart, within

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<sup>179</sup> *PP* III, 88-89, 2549-2555 (681A).

<sup>180</sup> This is in fact how Otten reads Eriugena: "In a sense, the notion of theophany could only imply its own failure. Be that as it may, after our anthropological reading of the *Periphyseon* the theophanic spell of the universe has in fact been broken, for man seems to impose his rational standards on the universe he investigates rather than letting himself be intimidated by something that from the very start would transcend his human capacities" (Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, 215).

the same nondual liminality; one is thus rescued from well to world, just as Joseph. Neither self-annihilation nor self-realization responds appropriately to this world. Rather, when the self subsists in God it is enabled to subvert the predominating logic of dualistic ontologies and cosmologies. It *sees through* false binaries and enters into the perplexing ambiguity of the world. Binary vision seeks facile resolutions to ambiguous situations, akin to the logic of *ratio*; whereas imaginal perception *sees* the Real *through* this phenomenal world. The story of Joseph recalls that, in his suffering at the hands of the Egyptians, he was nonetheless enabled to subvert their oppressive tactics with the help of his powerful imagination.

Ḥāfīz’s poetry rejects binaries, and he is enabled to textualize the texture of the world and self precisely on account of his powerful imaginal faculty. Lāhūrī’s commentary suggests that the modality (*kaiḥiyat*) of the God-world relationship—its theo-poetics—is ocularly witness through the heart when the self subsists (*baqā’*) in God; this consequently enables an imagining forth of the (impossible) image of the Beloved. Eriugena is ultimately held back by his persistent alliance with *ratio*, but his own *poetics* and use of *veluti* betrays his rational limits. Contrariwise, Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī explodes the ideology of dualistic logic through expert poetics. However, Ḥāfīz’s poetics is performed within *passionate love* lyrics that do not presume an idealistic love but a love that *suffers*—again, from the solitude of the well wherein no love is possible, to the phenomenal world of suffering wherein love may be lived. This non-binary existence in the liminal world of metaphor is concomitant with *suffering love*. This alone gestures toward the revelation of the Incarnation in the Christian tradition, and one I seek to uncover in Eriugena’s corpus. From subsistence (*baqā’*) in God we learn how all things subsist in the Word Who subsists in all things.

The subtext of Eriugena’s theology remains the Incarnation, and this is why Marion’s reading of the Eriugena’s “*as it were* from nothing into something” is on point:

*Theologia* turns into an *oeconomia*, whereby God displays his appearance by diminishing himself into the frame of the only visibility which finite human minds can deal with – Being. Being, far from exhibiting the transcendence of God, becomes the downgraded scene (*proscenium*) where his transcendence in some way *incorporates* into flesh and, more than that, into its condition of possibility,

Being, as it makes itself a visible being.<sup>181</sup>

This transcendent incorporation into the flesh is theophany, which disrupts in continuity and renders the impossible possible (“condition of possibility”). But it still requires a subjective realization, which is why a turn to the creative imagination is promising. Ḥāfiẓ’s imaginal faculty and the larger Islamic theo-poetics of the imagination suggests that the function of the image, the imaginary, and the imagination may have constructive import to Eriugena’s theology, and particularly to understanding the *modus*, the *how* of God’s relation to the world: the Incarnation. The imagination is *how* God self-manifests *as* world, but it also enables Ḥāfiẓ to *reveal God in the world* through his poetry. Might the Incarnation perform similar functions, being both *how* God relates to the world and *how* we may Incarnate God for others? For Eriugena, the radically apophatic God creates *as it were* in the Divine Word/Wisdom, and the Real in the Islamic theo-poetics self-manifests through the Imaginal World, via the imagination. Theophany remains the concept in common between both, and theophany may be conceptualized as God imagining forth the world. In the next chapter, the *imago* and the Incarnation become explicitly connected.

To the Islamic theo-poetics—*attuned to the modality of God’s relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate*—we may add *a desire to engage this world subsisting in God, who is passionate love*. This desire spurs the imagination, which creates new ways of being in the world, a poetics that is a *poïesis*/creation. To subsist in God is thus to subsist in passionate love, in the Word made Flesh. Living an Islamic theo-poetics is to assume God’s *mode*: to suffer love, to love passionately, to grow in a love that suffers, but to find God therein. One must flee the simplicity of the well, with Joseph, and enter into this phenomenal world of metaphor. For Eriugena, this liminal world of embodiment is *as it were*, and the Incarnation constitutes *how* the world is, theo-poetically. Furthermore, the Incarnate Word, in Jesus’s passion, death, and resurrection, theo-poetically constitutes the

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<sup>181</sup> Marion, “*Veluti ex nihilo in aliquid*,” 673.

meaning of the Incarnation for us. Images, metaphors, and *being-as* does not make this world *less* real; on the contrary, it permits us to re-imagine the world beyond logical limits, beyond ideologies, ontologies, and epistemologies that constrain rather than liberate. It gives us access to the excess of the creative act, to the *more than* of God in the world, which is constituted by the (com)passionate life of Christ.

## Chapter 5

# From the Imagination to the Incarnation: Disrupting *Ratio*, Imagining Infinitely

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### Introduction

In this chapter, Eriugena's theology of the image is expounded in light of an Islamic theo-poetics. This chapter uncovers Eriugena's *imago Dei* anthropology in terms of metaphor and imagination, and addresses Eriugena's correlation of worldly phantasies with theophanies to illuminate how both the human and the world image the Divine. In large part, Eriugena is influenced by Gregory of Nyssa for his *imago Dei* anthropology, and by Maximus the Confessor for his correlation of worldly phantasies with theophanies, which results in a divine omnipresence. When *imago Dei* anthropology and imaginal, divine omnipresence (cosmology) are brought together, the "image" is anything but false, weak, and dispensable; this is because of Eriugena's unique Christology in which both Word and the flesh of the Word are omnipresent. The Incarnation, as the originating tensive event that concretely constitutes universal theophany, poetically brings together the anthropological and cosmological theologies of the image. Self as *imago Dei* and world as *imagines Dei* give creative capacity to the imagination, because it permits reified ideologies, ontologies, and epistemologies to be disrupted by a theo-poetics of the impossible. This results in a theo-poetics of the flesh, for it is *how* we are called to exist in this imaginal but very real world. Before concluding this chapter, I propose comparative insights after engaging another love lyric of Ḥāfiẓ's. The aim is to demonstrate that the poetics of our relationship with God and others is constituted by the Incarnation.

### **Imaginaries: The Disruptive and Creative Power of Images and the Imagination**

The subject of this chapter enables this investigation into pre-modern theology to connect constructively with contemporary theological practice. This is possible when the theology of the

image and imagination is informed by the concept of social imaginaries. Recall that a social imaginary is “the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life.”<sup>1</sup> The relation of language to ideology demonstrates how “creative, imaginary activities serve to sustain social relations which are asymmetrical with regard to the organization of power.”<sup>2</sup> Let us recall that social imaginaries are not inherently oppressive, but that they tend toward oppression because they force all members of a society to conform to their rationalities. For example, neoliberalism, as a social imaginary, forces all members of a society to conform to the logic of, inter alia, profit, investment, efficiency, and consumerism, should they wish to participate *successfully* in society; it *consumes* the lives of nearly all, only the few *profit*, and the many are forced to *sacrifice* their freedom to the wealthy elite at the altar of financial security. But the only underlying ground for neoliberal logic is what society, together, establishes. So how do we disrupt it? Paul Ricœur argues that ideology and utopia are two fundamental directions of the social imaginary.<sup>3</sup> The first serves to preserve and reaffirm a shared identity within a society, while the second critiques the institutional powers of a society by disrupting oppressive imaginaries.<sup>4</sup> Ricœur suggests that the “imagination can have a ‘constitutive’ role” in this “real” world when “the field of the possible...extends beyond that of the real.”<sup>5</sup>

Theologically, this is only possible if the imagination is freed from the restrictive theory

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> See Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 186; Ricœur, “The Creativity of Language,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 475.

<sup>4</sup> When the imaginary functions as a reaffirmation, it is an ideology “which can positively repeat and represent the founding discourse of a society...thus preserving its sense of identity” (Ricœur, “The Creativity of Language,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 475). The imaginary functioning as rupture is utopia, “which remains critical of the powers that be out of fidelity to an ‘elsewhere,’ to a society that is ‘not yet’” (*ibid.*, 475). Ideologies can be and often are perverted by elites or charismatic figures; in this case, the symbols are coopted for the seizure of power through subjugation and hegemony. Utopia thus serve to disrupt the order of oppressive ideology.

<sup>5</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 184.

of the Platonic forms (εἶδος, *eidos*). In this Platonic theory, the *possible* images of this phenomenal world are mere appearances of these forms. Consequently, the possible is limited by the Platonic forms. Instead, Ricœur's theory suggests an *inversion*: the imagination can disrupt the possible with the impossible, thereby shaping reality.<sup>6</sup> After discussing the symbolic nature of the cosmos in his *Interpretation Theory*, Ricœur proffers an understanding of poetic metaphor that reflects the rich, thick symbols of the sacred universe. He argues that symbolic systems as manifested in fiction, poetry, and narrative, contribute to *shaping* reality. In other words, "the world of the text necessarily collides with the real world in order to 'remake' it, either by conforming it or by denying it."<sup>7</sup> In his theory, poetry recreates reality and reflects the "tensive concept of reality."

Cornelius Castoriadis' theory of the social imaginary accords with Ricœur's inversion of the Platonic forms with the images of this world. For Castoriadis, "the central imaginary significations of a society, far from being mere epiphenomena of 'real' forces and relations of production, are the laces which tie a society together and the forms which define what, for a given society, is 'real'."<sup>8</sup> The imaginary of a society is the symbolic network of images, language, narratives, and myths, and then of organizing systems (legal, religious, economic, political, etc.), all of which come together to create "each historical period, its singular manner of living, of seeing and of conducting its own existence, its world, and its relations with this world."<sup>9</sup> Briefly put, any given society would not function with any semblance of order (concomitant with marginalization) were it not for social imaginaries that create institutions of governance. The use

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<sup>6</sup> In his *Interpretation Theory*, Ricœur offers a rejoinder to Plato in the *Phaedrus* in which the Greek philosopher compares writing to painting, "the images of which are said to be weaker and less real than living beings" (Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 40). Instead, Ricœur argues that the images produced by the painter, who has to depict reality with fewer tools and marks than what ordinary experience offers, rather than being shadow images of Plato's forms, "increase the meaning of the universe by capturing it in a network of abbreviated signs" (ibid., 41).

<sup>7</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 24,

<sup>9</sup> Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 145.

of the term “imaginary” here does not suggest that social imaginaries are “unreal,” but rather that they can be abandoned or re-imagined, or even created anew *ex nihilo*.

Castoriadis sharply distinguishes his use of the term “imaginary” from the ontological tradition.<sup>10</sup> The imaginary is not an image *of*, it is not false, weak, or less real, but rather the social-historical and psychical creation of figures, forms, and images that constitute society: it is thus *very real* and attendant with embodied consequences. The social imaginaries of a society create the socio-historically internal logic of what is impossible and possible. A related example: one can conceive of Eriugena’s *ratio* as a product of a particular Aristotelian, neo-platonic imaginary that is constantly challenged by the paradox of the Incarnation. This is why the theo-poetics of the impossible—and the Incarnation—disrupts the logic of the impossible.

In fact, both Ricœur and Castoriadis “grant to the symbolic or imaginary function...a collective faculty for producing social changes,” which “clearly connects the imaginary with history.”<sup>11</sup> Social imaginaries make history. Ricœur speaks of *producing* something new within the confines of his hermeneutics, i.e., critical interpretation of inscribed discourse leads to appropriation and thus the production of new ways of being in the world. But Castoriadis speaks of *creating* something new *ex nihilo* in terms of *poïesis*.

The Aristotelian division into *theoria*, *praxis* and *poïesis* is derivative and secondary. History is essentially *poïesis*, not imitative poetry, but creation and ontological genesis in and through individuals' doing and representing/saying. This doing and this representing/saying are also instituted historically, at a given moment, as thoughtful doing or as thought in the making.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “In particular, [the social imaginary] has nothing to do with that which is presented as 'imaginary' by certain currents in psychoanalysis: namely, the 'specular' which is obviously only an image *of* and a reflected image, in other words a *reflection*, and in yet other words a byproduct of Platonic ontology (*eidolon*)...The imaginary does not come from the image in the mirror or from the gaze of the other. Instead, the 'mirror' itself and its possibility, and the other as mirror, are the works of the imaginary, which is creation *ex nihilo*. Those who speak of 'imaginary', understanding by this the 'specular', the reflection of the 'fictive', do no more than repeat, usually without realizing it, the affirmation which has for all time chained them to the underground of the famous cave: it is necessary that this world be an image *of* something. The imaginary which I am speaking is not an image *of*. It is the unceasing and essentially undetermined (social-historical and psychical) creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone there can ever be a question of 'something'. What we call 'reality' and 'rationality' are its works” (ibid., 3).

<sup>11</sup> Johann Michel, “Preface to the French Edition,” in *Ricœur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, xxxiv.

<sup>12</sup> Castoriadis *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 3-4. This connects Vendler’s poetry as “thought made

Ricœur critically challenges Castoriadis's position, because it seems that even the most radical acts of the imagination still rely on prior, inherited images, narratives, metaphors, symbols, etc.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Castoriadis' employment of *poïesis* is insightful, because it gives radical autonomy to the imagination much akin, first, to how God creates *ex nihilo* in the Christian tradition under discussion, which for Eriugena is really *creatio ex Deo*, and second, to the creative imagination of the poets in the Islamic theo-poetics under discussion. Contrary to Castoriadis, imagination within the ontological or onto-theological tradition is subject to higher faculties:

In this way, too, representation, imagination and imaginary have never been seen for themselves but always in relation to something else—to sensation, intellection, perception or reality—submitted to the normativity incorporated in the inherited ontology, brought within the viewpoint of true and false, instrumentalized within a function, means judged according to their possible contribution to the accomplishment of the end that is truth or access to true being, the being of being (*ontos on*).<sup>14</sup>

Instead of the imagination being restricted by the possible, for Castoriadis the *radical* imagination is freed from the limits of the possible when it actualizes its potential to create new ways of being in the world beyond the logic of instituted social imaginaries (i.e., disruptive of the logic of various congealed imaginaries become ideologies, such as capitalism, rationalism, onto-theology, etc.).<sup>15</sup>

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visible" to Castoriadis's social imaginary.

<sup>13</sup> See Michel, "Preface to the French Edition," in *Ricœur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, xxxv. Castoriadis does admit that there are *some* constraints to the creative capacity of the social imaginary; see footnote 4 in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

<sup>14</sup> Castoriadis *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 168.

<sup>15</sup> Castoriadis distinguishes the instituting social imaginary from the instituted social imaginary, the former also named the radical imaginary for the collective, and the radical imagination for the singular human person. Indeed, the imagination is only truly creative when it is freed from instituted, inherited imaginaries. "I talk about the imaginary because the history of humanity is the history of the human imaginary and its works (*oeuvres*). And I talk about the history and works of the radical imaginary, which appears as soon as there is any human collectivity. It is the instituting social imaginary that creates institution in general (the institution as form) as well as the particular institutions of each specific society, and the radical imagination of the singular human being" (Castoriadis, "Imaginary and Imagination at the Crossroads," in *Figures of the Thinkable*, 71). Furthermore, "Castoriadis starts from a basic observation: The emergence of the radically new in human history. This leads him to postulate a creative potential, a *vis formandi*, that is immanent to human collectivities *as well as* to singular human beings. He calls this the *instituting social imaginary*. Once created, both social imaginary significations and institutions crystalize or solidify, and this is what Castoriadis calls the *instituted social imaginary*. The instituting social imaginary involves institutions. But what animates these institutions are significations that refer neither to reality nor to logic; hence Castoriadis calls them *social imaginary significations*. He also refers to these social imaginary significations as the 'immanent unperceived'. Examples of such social imaginary significations include the God of monotheistic religions, 'the State', or 'the

This is where the social imaginary as propounded by Ricœur and Castoriadis converges with the aim of this chapter. The function of *images* in Eriugena, while arguably grounded in the *ratio* of Platonic thought in that images are always images *of* something “more real,” can be critically re-read in search of its *creative* potential. The *image*, be it humanity’s being made in the *image of God* or everything’s being nothing but *images of God* (theophany), is dialogically explicated in a *way* that disrupts this hierarchal dualism. Indeed, if all that exists are images of God, *who is nothing-beyond-being*, then the imagination is granted the creative potential to imagine new ways of being in the world from the *excess* of God’s self-creativity from nothingness. Eriugena’s radical apophatic theology results in a nonsubstantialist God beyond being, whence his *creatio ex Deo*, Who is *Nihil*. Thus, imaging the divine disrupts the logic of *ratio* grounded in onto-theology: *nothing* restricts the images.

The imagination functions in Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī to bring together opposites through a theo-poetics that renders the invisible visible, the impossible possible, in the images of the world. The imagination permits the apperception and creation of the *unreal* vis-à-vis “that which is called reality in ordinary language and vision,” viz., the social imaginary. This apperception and creation permits us to “[approach] the heart of the reality which is no longer the world of manipulable objects, but the world into which we have been thrown by birth and within which we try to orient ourselves by projecting our innermost possibilities upon it, in order that we *dwell* there, in the strongest sense of that word.”<sup>16</sup> The *unreal* is *more real than* the confines of our present social imaginary, which restricts the possible by its internal logic. In conversation with this Islamic theo-poetics, in which the imagination (human and divine) is given precisely this creative and disruptive potential, the Incarnation functions as the radical imagination. *How* Eriugena discusses the *imago Dei* and the images of the world via *ratio* is itself subverted by the

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commodity” (De Cock, “For a Critical Creativity: The Radical Imagination of Cornelius Castoriadis,” in *Handbook of Research on Creativity*, 155).

<sup>16</sup> Ricœur, “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 133.

nondual relationship he effectively constructs. The *image* is *more real* than positivism posits precisely *because* of the Incarnation, which precedes onto-theological creation in that it should constitute *how* we relate to God beyond the onto-theology of *ratio*.

Specifically, the Irishman discusses the image principally in two ways: first, the human person is *the* Image of God, and second, all things in this phenomenal world are *images*.

## **The Image of God: The Human Person within Metaphorical Tension**

In Book IV, Eriugena continues his *hexaemeron*, which he does not complete until well into Book V. The dialogue sharpens its scope onto theological anthropology, for Eriugena places theological protology within the human person; that is, the whole world is created within the human person (the workshop of creation), in which resides the Tree of Life, which is Jesus Christ. He relies primarily on Gregory of Nyssa's *De Hominis Opificio*, called *De Imagine* by Eriugena. While he quotes extensively also from Augustine's corpus, such as *De Civitate Dei* and *De Genesi ad litteram*, he rejects his interpretation of Genesis and the paradisiacal or prelapsarian state in favor of the Gregory's interpretation, albeit with a clever reconciliation between the two.<sup>17</sup>

Other scholars have analyzed how Eriugena either rejects Augustine or reconciles him with

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<sup>17</sup> The main two disagreements Eriugena has with Augustine are, first, his theory of "two paradises, the one earthly and local and possessing the properties of sensible nature, and the other entirely spiritual, in the image of which the earthly and sensible one was made" (*PP* IV, 145, 4451-4455 [844A]). This is Eriugena's understanding of Augustine's Book XI (particularly sections 17, 24, 55, and 58) of *De Genesi ad litteram*, which is his exegesis of Genesis 2:25—3:24: The temptation and the fall of Adam and Eve (see CSEL 28). Second, he opposes Augustine's assertion that the body of the first human person was animal, earthly, and mortal, to become immortal and incorrupt had they not sinned. Regarding the first contention, Eriugena prefers Origen, Ambrose, and, most significantly, Gregory of Nyssa, viz., that paradise was the human person herself. Regarding the second, he maintains Gregory of Nyssa's position that the original body of the human person was spiritual, and that the exterior body of this world is an expression of this interior one. For Eriugena's disagreements with Augustine regarding the latter's contention that the body of the first human was animal and earthly, see *PP* IV, 87-92, 2572-2740 (803B-806D), wherein he adduces passages from Augustine's corpus such as: *De peccatorum meritis* I, ii, 2 - iii, 3 (CSEL 60, 4, 2 - 5, 20); *De Genesi ad litteram*, VI, xix, 30 - xxviii, 39 (CSEL 28 (1), 197, 27-200, 9); *De civitate dei*, XIII, xxi-xxiii, xxiv, 6 (CCSL 48, 404-408; 412-413); *De civitate dei*, XIV, x, (CCSL 48, 430-431); *De civitate dei*, XIV, iii, 22-34 (CCSL 48, 417); *De civitate dei*, XIV, xxvi, 1-22 (CCSL 48, 449).

his Greek sources regarding his interpretation of Genesis.<sup>18</sup> My intention is rather to demonstrate how Eriugena's reconciliation of Gregory of Nyssa with Augustine resulted in a theological anthropology that precludes dualisms of body/spirit, matter/soul, and animal/human. He therefore endeavors not to create a bi-polar human being, one animal and fleshy, and the other in the Image of God. Eriugena's theological anthropology of the Image of God constructs a human person that exists in metaphorical tension, just as this phenomenal world. The human person, as *Image* of God, *mirrors* God: she accepts coincidences of opposites, she is essentially unknowable, all things were created *in* her, and she reflects the *plus-quam* nature of God by transcending categories.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Nonduality of the Human Person**

A line of questioning commences when the Student strives to comprehend how the human person was both created in the genus of animals and yet transcends animal nature by being made in the Image of God; moreover, that animal nature is within the human person further complicates this.<sup>20</sup> The Student seems to think the Teacher is arguing for a duality within the human person, one soul (*anima*) that animates the human as an animal, and another soul created in the Image of God.<sup>21</sup> In reply, the Teacher argues that the *whole* of the *single* human soul is life, intellect, reason, interior senses, memory, and exterior senses (whereby it perceives the appearances of sensible things in all the physical senses), and that the whole human soul, purged of vice, also

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, J.J. O'Meara, "Magnum Virorum Quendam Consensum Velimus Machinari (804D). Eriugena's Use of Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* in the *Periphyseon*," in *Eriugena: Studien Zu Seinen Quellen: Vorträge Des III. Internationalen Eriugena-Colloquiums, Freiburg Im Breisgau, 27.-30, August 1979*, ed. by Werner Beierwaltes (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1980), 105-116.

<sup>19</sup> Mooney has astutely interpreted and analyzed the way Eriugena conceptualizes the human person as the image of God in the third section of the fourth chapter of her *Theophany* (Mooney, *Theophany*, 126ff). I am not presenting an interpretation at variance with hers; rather, I approach the same sections she carefully analyses through the lens of image, imagination, and metaphor I have detailed above.

<sup>20</sup> This replicates the "double-within-ness" or mutual subsistence of the Word in the world and the world in the Word.

<sup>21</sup> The discussion begins at *PP* IV, 19, 481 (753D).

“revolves around the Creator in an intelligible and eternal movement.”<sup>22</sup> The human soul is both present in this phenomenal world and with the Divine, as it were.<sup>23</sup> Eriugena is careful not to create a binary in the human person, but instead avers that the whole human soul functions at all levels: intellect, reason, and corporeal senses, and she is only “*as it were (veluti)*, the whole [divided] into parts.”<sup>24</sup> This is important, lest human nature be impiously torn asunder into two.<sup>25</sup>

The Student is unable to see the human person nondually, “[to] see sufficiently how one and the same human person is... both animal and not an animal... [both] a living creature and not a living creature... both flesh and not flesh, both spiritual and not spiritual,” and to generalize, “how these opposing and mutually contradicting things can be understood in one most simple nature.”<sup>26</sup> What follows is novel not so much in terms of the proposed anthropological doctrines, but rather in terms of how Eriugena unfolds them. Keeping track of how he expresses the two-in-one nature of the Image of God, i.e., the human person, the metaphorical truth of “is and is not” relates his anthropology to his cosmology.

“God is truth; God is not the truth.” Both these statements are true, and the Student further submits that “God is *more than* truth” is even truer.<sup>27</sup> Thus does the dialogue briefly recall the distinctions among apophatic, kataphatic, and *plus-quam* discourse. The Teacher suggests that the coincidences of opposites may likewise occur in the human person, “who alone among the other

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<sup>22</sup> *PP IV*, 20, 520-521 (754C).

<sup>23</sup> For an exercise in comparative theology that constructively engages the question of how the soul is both whole in the self and with the Divine, see Voss Roberts, *Dualities*, 17-53 (Chapter 2, “Duality in Union with the Divine”).

<sup>24</sup> *PP IV*, 20, 524 (754C).

<sup>25</sup> See *PP IV*, 20, 533-538 (755A).

<sup>26</sup> *PP IV*, 20-21, 539-544 (755A).

<sup>27</sup> *PP IV*, 25, 652-654, (757D).

animals was made in the Image of God.”<sup>28</sup> Given that affirmations and negations come together in the Divine Essence, it is permitted “to perceive negations and affirmations harmoniously to come together in [God’s] Image and likeness, which is in the human person.”<sup>29</sup> The Student laboriously endeavors to comprehend the way the human person images the Divine Nature, and *not* in a way that constructs a binary: “I think, both the whole image subsists in the whole animal, and the whole animal subsists in the whole image, and [both] through the whole human person.”<sup>30</sup> The Teacher is “astonished why [the Student is] so greatly disturbed, even though [he] sees that it is chiefly *herein* that the Image and likeness of God is able to be recognized in human nature.”<sup>31</sup> The Teacher then illustrates that, just as God is both beyond and within all things, likewise human nature is both *wholly* within itself and “beyond its whole, for otherwise it would not be able to adhere to its Creator if it did not exceed both all things that were below it and also itself. [This,] because ‘between our mind,’ says Augustine, ‘by which we understand the Father, and the Truth through which we understand Him, no creature is interposed.’”<sup>32</sup> Eriugena follows this with John 12:26, “Wheresoever I am, there also is My servant,” commenting that “the human person cleaves to [God/the Word] beyond all things and beyond himself, insofar as He is all things.”<sup>33</sup> The Word is therefore present in the human person because she is His image. This

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<sup>28</sup> *PP* IV, 25, 668 (758A).

<sup>29</sup> *PP* IV, 25, 675-677 (758B).

<sup>30</sup> *PP* IV, 26, 692-694 (759A).

<sup>31</sup> *PP* IV, 26, 695-696 (759A).

<sup>32</sup> *PP* IV, 27, 708-713 (759BC), citing Augustine, *De vera religione*, LV, 113 (CCSL 32, 259, 122-125): “*quia inter mentem nostram, qua illum intellegimus patrem et ueritatem, id est lucem interiorem, per quam illum intellegimus, nulla interposita creatura est.*” The irony is that the Teacher cites an Augustinian text typically adduced to prove the *complete* nature of the beatific vision, i.e., *fullness* of knowledge of God, in order to demonstrate how we *do not know the fullness* of God, given Eriugena’s radical apophatic theology and anthropology. This is evident by the the quotation from the first chapter of Pseudo-Dionysius’s *The Mystical Theology* interpolated as marginalia just after the citation from Augustine; see *PP* IV, 27, (9)45-52 (760A), citing Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 2, 142, 5-11 (997D-1000A) and Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 135. We are images of a nonsubstantialist, *Nihil*-God who is more-than-being. In other words, we are images of nothing.

<sup>33</sup> *PP* IV, 27, 713-715 (759CD).

perfect cleaving “presently exists and has even been accomplished *now*” through divine grace.<sup>34</sup> The anthropology being theologized by Eriugena purports a nondual truth, and demonstrates just how seriously and literally Eriugena takes the imaginal nature of the human person. The human person exists within the tension of metaphorical truth, just as the phenomenal world. More importantly, we are images of a God who is *Nihil* by being *more than* Being; this frees up the field of the possible through the poetics of the impossible; we are unrestricted images, as it were.

### **Residing Within the Divine Word: The Unconfined Human Person**

To see the human person properly is to perceive the *more-than* of the Word in the human person and the *more-than* of the human person in the Word. This is possible firstly because the “Wisdom of God, Who created [human nature] and received [human nature] into a unity of substance with Him [i.e., the Incarnation] so that thusly [human nature] may be saved, has liberated [human nature] from all misery,” and secondly because of the imaginal nature of the human person, whose nature is “whole everywhere in itself, and [whose Image] is whole in the animal, and...the animal...whole in the Image.”<sup>35</sup> Angelic nature is not an animal, and so the anthropological import of human nature’s being made in the Image of God reflects, as Mooney

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<sup>34</sup> *PP* IV, 27, 720-721 (759D-760A).

<sup>35</sup> “Therefore, we must not judge human nature according to what manifests to the corporeal senses and to what is temporally and corruptibly born in this [phenomenal] world (ending with death) through the copulation of the sexes in the likeness of the irrational animals on account of the deserved penalty for the transgression, but rather [we must judge] according to what is created in the image of God before having sinned, which, furthermore, incomprehensibly eludes every corporeal sense and every mortal thought on account of the ineffable dignity of its nature. However, having been deceived and having fallen, blinded by the darkness of its perverse will, [the human person] has handed over to forgetfulness both [human nature] itself and his Creator. And this is the most unfortunate [feature] of [human nature’s] death, and the deepest profundity of the submersion into the fog of ignorance, that she has drifted so far from herself and her Creator and approached in likeness so near and so shamefully the irrational and mortal animals, from which again no one is able to redeem her, recall her, lead her back, and restore her to the pristine condition from which she had fallen. However, the Wisdom of God, Who created [human nature] and received [human nature] into a unity of substance with Him so that thusly [human nature] may be saved, has liberated [human nature] from all misery. Therefore, do not be disturbed that it is said of human nature that it is a whole everywhere in itself, and that the Image is whole in the animal, and that the animal is whole in the Image. Accordingly, all that her Creator primordially created in [human nature] remains whole and intact, nevertheless it still escapes notice, awaiting the revelation of the Sons of God” (*PP* IV, 29, 760-781 [760D-761B]).

suggests, a theological aesthetic.<sup>36</sup> The Teacher responds to the Student regarding this subject:

It would be sufficient for me to respond briefly to your asking why God created the human person in the genus of animals, whom [He] proposed to make in His image, [with the following:] [God] thusly wished to create [the human person] so that there be a certain animal in which [God's] distinct Image should be manifested. However, if anyone should ask *why* God wished it thusly, he would be searching into the causes of the Divine Will, and seeking these causes is exceedingly presumptuous and arrogant.<sup>37</sup>

While the reason *why* God did this may be beyond human understanding, the consequences of this are doubly revealing. It firstly reveals that God ineffably considered it good and worthy to appear in a creature who not only exercised intellectual nature (like the angels), but also animal nature, the latter of which includes the use of the exterior, corporeal senses. This first revelation implies the second: the sensorial and corporeal aspect of the human person reveals of the Divine Word something *more than* angelic nature alone reveals. In this way, human nature is far more suitable than angelic nature to image God insofar as the human person possesses exterior, corporeal senses.<sup>38</sup> This, surely, is an anthropological corollary to the Incarnation, which revealed not only to embodied humans but also to disembodied angels Christ, through whom the Trinity “removed from all things” is understood somehow in the flesh, as was discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation.<sup>39</sup>

The human person, “a manifold source of infinite profundity,”<sup>40</sup> images God in another way, viz., in her unknowability. Even though the human person must be considered “on the one hand, in the Word of God in which all things were made, and on the other hand, in itself,”<sup>41</sup> the

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<sup>36</sup> See Mooney, *Theophany*, 131ff.

<sup>37</sup> *PP* IV, 32, 860-867 (763C).

<sup>38</sup> For this argument, see *PP* IV, 33-34, 872-897 (764ABC).

<sup>39</sup> In particular, the following from Eriugena is of import: “For even the angels were unable to (re)cognize their God, Who surpasses every intellect, in their own nature, since He is invisible and unknowable; but once the Word was enfleshed (*verbo vero incarnato*), they understood their Lord, viz., the Son of God, and in Him and through Him [they understood] the Trinity which is completely removed from all things” (*CJ*, 53, 16-20); see also *Ca*, 86-87. Both these passages are discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>40</sup> *PP* IV, 42, 1137-1138 (770A).

<sup>41</sup> *PP* IV, 43, 1156-1157 (770BC). He then adduces Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, II, vi, 12 (CSEL 28 (1), 41, 6-8), which reads “*aliter ergo in illo sunt ea, quae per illum facta sunt, quia regit et continet ea; aliter autem*

Teacher is quick to redress the Students' suggestion that there are two substances in the human person: "I should not say two [substances], but rather one [substance] understood in a twofold manner [*dupliciter*]."42 Not two, but not one. The human person may be recognized intellectually within the Word of God and sensorially in the generated effects that emerge in this phenomenal world, "nevertheless she preserves everywhere her incomprehensibility, I mean in her causes and in her effects,...for she succumbs to no created intellect or sense, nor does she understand in her *what* she is."43 The human mind therefore knows and does not know itself. "It knows that [*quia*] it is, however it does not know what [*quid*] it is. And therefore...the Image of God is taught to be chiefly in the human person."44

For just as God is comprehensible when He is gathered from creation *that* She is, and incomprehensible since He is able to be comprehended by no human or angelic intellect as to *what* God is, not even by Herself, because [God] is not a "what"—of course God is Supersensual—likewise this is given to the human mind, viz., to know *that* it is...[but] not *what* it is.<sup>45</sup>

What is both "more amazing" and "more beautiful," is that this human ignorance of the self and the other is more praiseworthy than any sort of knowledge she may have thereof; Eriugena defends this position from the theological position that true ignorance is wiser than knowledge of the Divine Nature, "Whose ignorance is true wisdom" and "who is better known by not knowing," adducing from Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine, respectively, and drawing from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.<sup>46</sup> This praiseworthy ignorance of the boundless Divine

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*in illo sunt ea, quae ipse est,*" translated as "So then, the things that have been made through [the Word], because he governs them and holds them together, are in him in one way, while the things which he himself is are in him in another" (Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, volume 13, 197), but which Eriugena cites as "In one way the things which are made through [the Word] are under [the Word], and in another way the things that [the Word] is are in [the Word]" [*aliter sub ipso sunt ea quae per ipsum facta sunt, aliter in ipso sunt ea quae ipse est*] (PP IV, 43, 1158-1160 [770C]).

<sup>42</sup> PP IV, 44, 1178 (771A).

<sup>43</sup> PP IV, 44, 1187-1191 (771AB).

<sup>44</sup> PP IV, 44, 1197-1198 (771).

<sup>45</sup> PP IV, 44-45, 1199-1204 (771BC).

<sup>46</sup> PP IV, 45, 1205 and 1210-1211; citing Pseudo-Dionysius's *First Letter* (see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 2, 157, 3-5 [1065AB] and Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 263), which reads Καί ἡ κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον παντελῆς ἀγνώσια γνώσις ἐστὶ τοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ γινωσκόμενα ("this

Nature is imaged in the human person:

If [the human person] were recognized to be a certain something, then it would at once be confined in something, and therefore it would not express the Image of its Creator entirely in itself, Who is entirely unconfined and understood in nothing, because [God] is Infinite, beyond all that is said and understood, Superessential.<sup>47</sup>

This anthropological imaging of the Divine *Nihil*, a nonsubstantialist nothingness-beyond-being, does not constrain human potential within the confines of possible forms. Instead, humans as images of a Superessential Deity disrupt the restrictive logic of onto-theology, of an imaginary of *ratio* that restrains the possible. The imaging of divinity in the human person reflects the theophanic, *plus-quam* nature of Eriugena's theology and cosmology. Humans are granted the *excess* of God's self-creativity *ex nihilo*, furthermore, through the Incarnation. Far from restricting humans, this imaging renders *nothing impossible, for all things are possible with God*.<sup>48</sup> In human relations, we are thus carried beyond (*metaphero*), into our unconfined seat within the Divine Word, which humans image. The paradox is that, by *residing within* the Divine Word, the human person is *unconfined*, and by residing outside we become confined.<sup>49</sup> In

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total ignorance is greater knowledge of Him who is more than all things that are known"), and Augustine's *De ordine*, II, xvi, 44 (see Augustine, *On Order*, 108-109). See also 1 Cor 1:25, the Latin of which is "*quia quod stultum est Dei sapientius est hominibus*." Eriugena adduces these same texts often in his corpus, and nearly always paired together back-to-back; see *CJ*, 55, 89 - 56, 2 (302B); *PP I*, 94, 2936-2937 (510B); *PP II*, 99, 2369-2372. Elsewhere he says the same without citing directly: *PP II*, 93, 2208-2209; *PP II*, 94, 2213-2214.

<sup>47</sup> *PP IV*, 45, 1214-1219 (771D).

<sup>48</sup> Luke 1:37: "For nothing will be impossible with God." Matthew 19:26: "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.'"

<sup>49</sup> See *PP IV*, 45-46, 1224-1242 (772AB), in which Eriugena argues that the human person is knowable *that* he is (*quia sit*), but not *what* he is (*quid sit*), because he resides in the Divine Word. "Indeed, that all creation is substantially created in the human person is deduced from this chief argument. Accordingly, the substance of all things that are is unable to be defined in any way what it is, as Gregory [of Nazianzus] witnesses, who was disputing about these things against those who were denying that the Word of God was Superessential and contending that [the Word] was confined within some substance, and therefore was not beyond all things, but rather contained within the number of things, wanting to separate the substance of the Son from the substance of the Father. However, just as [the substance of the Father], the human substance is bound by no certain limit, however, it is only understood to be from those things that are understood around it (i.e., time, place, differences, properties, quantities, qualities, relations, habits/conditions, positions, actions, passions), and in no way [is it understood] what it is. And hence it is given to understand that the substance of no creature is other than that reason according to which it was substantiated (*substitutata*) in the Primordial Causes in the Word of God, and therefore it is unable to be defined what it is, since it surpasses all substantial definition; however, it is defined through its circumstances, which are accidents to it, coming forth in its proper appearance through generation, whether intelligible or sensible." Here, Eriugena suggests that Christology—the Incarnation—constitutes anthropology. What Jesus is should not be restricted by the logic of worldly anthropology (created imaginaries); instead, what the human is should be unrestricted and liberated by the Incarnation. He is drawing

between knowing that she exists, and not knowing *what* she is, the human person images the Incarnate Word in *how* she lives.

***Plus-Quam Imaginary: A Dynamic Vision of the Human***

In unfolding how the human person images God, Eriugena endeavors to keep the Image of God mirrored in the person nondually, lest the body be superfluous to the immaterial soul. While it is the human soul that is the Image of God, the soul is related to the body as God is to the world: “just as God is diffused through all things that are and in none of them is able to be comprehended, likewise the whole soul penetrates the whole organ of her body—though the soul is unable to be confined by [the body].”<sup>50</sup> The body reveals the Image of God and should not be perceived dualistically separate from the Image or from God. Eriugena argues this in an extensive examination of Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Image*. “The constitution of the human person [is formed] into three, *as it were (veluti)*, parts, viz., into the mind, the vital movement..., and out of matter, such that the whole human person [consists] of [these three parts].”<sup>51</sup> Eriugena then explains that the form of the human mind reflects the Incomprehensible Divine Essence in an ineffable way, and the vital movement, though involved with mutable matter, reflects the mind, and is “the form of the mind, *as it were (veluti)*, a second image.”<sup>52</sup> Here, the human person becomes a series of images in which the body manifests the mind; the body is the manifest *form* of the Image of a nonsubstantialist God. This is nearly explicitly stated later: “The material and external body is not improperly understood to be, *as it were (veluti)*, a certain garment of the interior and natural [body]” that, while mutable, was nevertheless made by God and therefore

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from Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 29*. For English see Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, Tr. by Lionel Wickham (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 69-92, and for Greek see *Sources Chrétiennes* 250, 208-212.

<sup>50</sup> *PP* IV, 68, 1909-1911 (788A).

<sup>51</sup> *PP* IV, 70, 2005-2010 (790B).

<sup>52</sup> *PP* IV, 71, 2018 (790C).

derived from “Divine Goodness and the Infinite Providential-Care towards all things.”<sup>53</sup>

This section on the human person as the Image of God demonstrates how the person exists within metaphorical tension: she is neither fully material nor fully immaterial, but rather *imaginal*, that is, *more real* than bodily flesh alone, which nevertheless manifests the immaterial Image of God, the soul. The fleshy body is not superfluous to the human person, to be discarded for the sake of perceiving the immaterial Image of God. Rather, the nondual relationship of the human person with the Word, coupled with her perfect imaging of the *more-than* nature of a God who is *Nihil*, constructs a *plus-quam* imaginary of the flesh: the body permits us to perceive the *more than* of the human person in the Word and the Word in the human person. By being *unconfined in* the Word, the human person is perceived only through a dynamic vision that never reduces her either to the flesh alone or to her immaterial “essence.” Rather, she is set free from the confining dualistic logic of the impossible, so that the poetics of the impossible may be imagined forth in the flesh. Imaging an *indefinite* Word in the flesh, she can imagine *infinitely*.

In the next section, I extend the imaginal nature of the human person to the imaginal nature of the world. The human person as *imago Dei* relates to the world as imaginal theophany through the Incarnation. The Incarnation constitutes our relationship between self and the world, between self and the spaces we create with each other. All this is possible via a radical imagination made infinite through the Incarnate Word.

## **"All Things...Are Images": Phantasies, Theophanies, and Metaphors**

In Book IV, Eriugena connects the body to the soul in alluding to the resurrected state of the human person, which is the explicit topic of Book V. In addressing the topic of the *reditus*, or return of all things into the Divine Nature, Eriugena speaks of images and the imaginal nature of reality in order to understand *how* (*quomodo, qua ratione*) all things *cross over* (*transitus*) into

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<sup>53</sup> *PP* IV, 85, 2518-2519 and 2523-2525 (802A).

God; a connection between *crossing over* and *metaphor* can thus be established. In this section, I will offer a reading of Book V that underscores the nondual nature of both the human person and this phenomenal world. The focus will be on how, to use Eriugena's words, all things in this visible world "perish and yet perdure."<sup>54</sup> The possibility of these contradictory events depends on the metaphorical, transitional nature of *reality* and of the *human person as images* and *Image*, respectively, of God.

### **The Incarnation as Exemplary of Human *Theosis***

Eriugena cites Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Maximus Confessor (commenting on Gregory in his *Ambigua ad Iohannem*) in a section of the dialogue concerning, generally, the return of the body or flesh into the soul, and the soul subsequently into the Divine Word.<sup>55</sup> Given that, especially between the Latin Ambrose and the Greek Gregory and Maximus, technical terms regarding anthropology vary, Eriugena himself is not entirely consistent, sometimes eliding the spirit as well as the soul and mind throughout. The technical differences do not take away from the general import of the dialogue, which is aiming to demonstrate the perdurance of the body or flesh (the inferior) in the soul (the superior), and both in the Word. For instance, Eriugena cites Maximus: "At the time of the resurrection, according to the good future conversion by the Holy Spirit through the grace of the Incarnate God, the flesh will be absorbed by the soul in the Spirit, and the soul furthermore [will be absorbed] by God."<sup>56</sup> He then turns to Ambrose in an attempt to corroborate Maximus's argument; but the former uses body, soul, and spirit to speak of the

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<sup>54</sup> The Student struggles to understand *how* two contradictory occurrences can come together: "I am still faltering over the effects of the invisible causes, I mean over this visible world, [for I am still] deliberating over how (*qua ratione*) it is said that it will perish and yet perdure. For to perish and to perdure seem to be mutually contradictory. So how (*quomodo*) can that which perdures perish, or that which perishes perdure?" (PP V, 71, 2271-2275, [910B]).

<sup>55</sup> The dialogue in fact ceases to be one and turns into a lengthy disquisition by the Teacher that extends for about eight pages (some 261 lines in the critical edition). See PP V, 22, 622 - 30, 883 (874C-880B). Throughout, he draws from Gregory of Nazianzus's *Orationes* (VII, XVI), Maximus Confessor's *Ambigua ad Iohannem* (III, XVII), and Ambrose's *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* (VII).

<sup>56</sup> PP V, 26, 774-777 (878A); see Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 436-437 (1252AV). Eriugena's "absorbed" is from *absorbeo* and Maximus's is from *καταπίνω*.

composite human person.<sup>57</sup> “For we who are even now composite shall be one, and we shall be transformed into one substance. For in the resurrection one will not be inferior to another, . . . rather, we will be made-beautiful (*figurabimur*) into the grace of a simple creature.”<sup>58</sup> But Eriugena is quick to clarify that Ambrose is not speaking of a “confusion or transmutation” of substances, but rather an “ineffable and incomprehensible unification of our substances.”<sup>59</sup> Ambrose arguably flirts with monism, but Eriugena maintains his nondualism.

At this juncture, the dialogue unfolds to demonstrate how, according to Maximus, “the whole person is made God according to body and soul through grace, while *remaining* according to the soul and the body through nature.”<sup>60</sup> When the inferior is absorbed into the superior, such as when the corporeal substance is absorbed by the soul and the soul by God, the inferior does not cease to be; it is not destroyed. Rather, the inferior is “more saved (*plus salventur*) in [the superior], and the [inferior] exists/subsists more (*plus . . . subsistant*) in the [superior].”<sup>61</sup> This becoming *more* is explained by Eriugena:

The corporeal substance will *cross over* (*transituram*) into the soul, not that what it is should perish, but rather that it should be preserved in the better essence. Likewise must it be understood concerning the soul herself, viz., that it will be moved into the intellect such that it will be preserved therein as *more* beautiful and *more* similar to God.<sup>62</sup>

In these passages, Eriugena is endeavoring to construct a union of human nature with God that

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<sup>57</sup> See *PP* V, 27-28, 786-818 (878BCD); citing Ambrose’s *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, VII, 192 and 194 (CCSL 14, 281-282). For English, see Ambrose of Milan. *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel According to Saint Luke*, Tr. by Íde M. Ní Riain (Dublin: Halcyon Press in Association with Elo Publications, 2001), 192-269.

<sup>58</sup> *PP* V, 27, 804-810 (878C). This is from Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, VII, 194 (CCSL 14, 282). For English see Ambrose of Milan. *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel According to Saint Luke*, 253-254.

<sup>59</sup> *PP* V, 28, 820-822 (878D).

<sup>60</sup> *PP* V, 29, 870-872 (879D-880A); see Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 112-113 (1088C).

<sup>61</sup> *PP* V, 28, 832 (879A).

<sup>62</sup> *PP* V, 28, 839-843 (879B). Eriugena does not cite Maximus here, but he is drawing from his *Ambigua*, as usual; see Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 86-89 (1073C-1076A), 112-115 (1088D), 210-213 (1137BC), 216-217 (1140C).

precludes a twofold monism: first, that the corporeal substance, the body, is not destroyed, leaving only some immaterial substance (soul, spirit, or mind), and second, that particular human persons maintain some sort of individuality. In making his final argument for this section of the dialogue, Eriugena cites a passage from Maximus Confessor regarding the eternal life *given* through nature and *granted* through grace:

[This eternal life] is constituted...by the total participation in the Whole God, Who became to the soul [what] the soul [is] to the body, and through the soul/mind [He] became [present] to the body as He Himself knows (*et animam in modum ad corpus animae, et per medium animum ad corpus factus, sicut novit ipse / αλλά Θεός όλος όλοις μετεχόμενος, και ψυχής τρόπον προς σώματή ψυχή και διά μέσης ψυχής προς σώμα γινόμενος, ως οιδεν αυτός*),...and the whole person is made God through the deifying grace of the God Who became human (*inhumanati / ένανθρωπήσαντος*), and the whole person is made God according to body and soul through grace, while remaining according to the soul and the body through nature, and [the whole person] comes-together-in-harmony (*convenientem*) with [God] through the Whole Divine Clarity of Blessed Glory, beyond which there is nothing to be understood that is brighter and more exalted. For what is more desirable than θέωσις (i.e., Deification) for the worthy, through which [θέωσις] God, united to those whom She has made gods, has wholly made His Universe through Her Goodness?<sup>63</sup>

This is an incredibly sharp and unambiguous passage from Maximus in which the Incarnation is employed as an exemplar of how the human person becomes God. This, because the humanity and divinity of Jesus the Incarnate Word is “without confusion,” too. Eriugena draws the attention of the reader immediately after this passage (and again later) and reiterates the key passage: “Pay attention to what [Maximus] says: ‘the whole person is made God according to body and soul through grace, while remaining according to the soul and the body through nature.’ Therefore, the property of [the two] natures will perdure, and there will be a unity of both; neither

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<sup>63</sup> *PP* V, 29-30, 865-878 (879D-880A); see Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 112-113 (1088C). The Greek in parenthesis is for reference to the original; however, Eriugena does use the Greek original for θέωσις. Just after this section, Maximus has his much-commented-upon passage: “God, who by nature is infinite and infinitely attractive, and who rather increases the appetites of those who enjoy Him according to their participation in that which has no limit” (Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 116-117 [1098B]). Before, Maximus writes that joy is the best term of this experience, because it neither remembers former sorrows nor fears the possibility of any future satiety, in the way that pleasure fears the inevitable consequences of pain. Furthermore, “satiety by definition is the quenching of appetite, and this happens either because appetite desired things that were trivial, or because it was repulsed and nauseated by things that were base and repugnant...but neither of these can apply to God, who by nature is infinite...” (Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 1, 114-117 [1098B]). Eriugena’s perpetual finding and not finding of God in theophanies, with an increase in desire, is certainly reminiscent of Maximus’s theology here, as well as in Gregory of Nyssa’s concept of *epikstasis*; see Paul M. Blowers, “Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of ‘Perpetual Progress’” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 46.2 (1992): 151-171.

will the property of the two natures remove the unification, nor will the unification remove the property of both natures.”<sup>64</sup> There is thus a unity-in-twoness, a two that is not one and a one that is not two. This nondual logic once again threatens the reasoning of the Student, though by now he is less perturbed by it and remarks that, “though [what has been said] appears similar to true reason, to those less capable...they will seem...to be as it were certain conclusions of a deranged mind.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, *how* substances both *perdure* and *cross over* (from *maneo* and *transeo*) is worthy of further investigation, for it illuminates the function of *metaphor* in Eriugena’s theological anthropology and cosmology, which function I am arguing constructs and underscores a theo-poetics. My intention is to push back against synthetic interpretations of Eriugena’s overt use of dialectical reasoning in the foregoing passages; but this is only possible by taking seriously the function of the image and thus the imaginary of poetic, metaphorical discourse. *How* all this is possible presents a certain theo-poetics—comprehensible to the imagination, deranged to *ratio*. This theo-poetics is the manner of our *theosis*, the contracted form of the Greek original, *theopoïesis*.

### **The Perpetual Crossing Over (*Metaphero*) of All Things**

Eriugena argues that the *finis* (limit or boundary) of human persons is the Divine Word, “beyond which *finis* no creature has any desire,”<sup>66</sup> and therefore all things will be returned into the Word, “Who is the Manifold End without end and Beginning ἀναρχος [without beginning].”<sup>67</sup> This crossing over into the Word is nonetheless *without* “any confusion or dissolution of essences and substances.”<sup>68</sup> Given this, it is unsurprising that Eriugena contends that all things in the Word

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<sup>64</sup> *PP* V, 30, 878-880 (880A).

<sup>65</sup> *PP* V, 30, 884-887 (880B).

<sup>66</sup> *PP* V, 48, 1496-1497 (893A).

<sup>67</sup> *PP* V, 48, 1500-1501 (893A).

<sup>68</sup> *PP* V, 49, 1543-1544 (894A).

are also “in a movement-at-rest or a rest-in-movement.”<sup>69</sup> In crossing over into the Word, all things perpetually desire to be like the Word even though the Word is without likeness;<sup>70</sup> human persons continually cross over into further likeness without reaching an end that is monistic union. They are, in other words, at their *finis* (rest) which is an incessant crossing over (movement). Eriugena is careful *not* to term this a death of the human person. Rather, “by a certain, *as it were* (*veluti*), perishing” human persons become God through grace.<sup>71</sup> One, *as it were*, dies; but this death is properly the “crossing over (*transeundi*)”<sup>72</sup> of human nature, along with the world, into the Word, whereby “inferior things will cross over (*transire*) into superior things”<sup>73</sup> but without the confusion of the two.

At this point, the dialogue persistently returns to the subject of “crossing over,” employing various permutations of *transire* to signify how all things do not perish but cross over into the Divine Word. Eriugena, in a struggle to which the reader has grown accustomed, strives to conceptualize creation *as it were* outside of God, even though all things are within the Divine Word. To make sense of this nondual relationship, he turns to the function of *images* (phantasies, theophanies, or otherwise), nature, and grace, all as a way to explain the transitory but real nature of this phenomenal, theophanic world. Eriugena distinguishes nature from grace in terms of James 1:17: “Every best gift (*datum*) and every perfect grant (*donum*) is from above, descending from the Father of Lights.”<sup>74</sup> He explains that “nature is given, while grace is granted, [and] nature leads [things] from non-existence to existence, while [grace] carries away certain existents

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<sup>69</sup> *PP* V, 48, lines 1485-1486 (892CD).

<sup>70</sup> “For [Jesus] is Whole God and whole human, one substance, or put more commonly, one person, lacking all local and temporal movement, since He is beyond all place and time, God and human, without any form, since He is the Form of all things and the Impress of the Paternal Substance, without any likeness, even though all things desire to be similar to Him” (*PP* V, 50, 1560-1565 (894B)).

<sup>71</sup> *PP* V, 56, 1755 (898C).

<sup>72</sup> *PP* V, 59, 1867 (900D).

<sup>73</sup> *PP* V, 59, 1885 (901B).

<sup>74</sup> *PP* V, 64, 2047-2049 (904D).

beyond all existing things unto God Herself.”<sup>75</sup> Eriugena then unhesitatingly avers that the servants of Jesus Christ (cf. John 12:26), the Truth, will exist beyond all things just as He does. These graced servants become *more than* nature without destroying nature, and are carried beyond all things through and in the Word; but, human persons do not ascend beyond theophanies, but rather become, “*as though (velut)* theophanies of theophanies in contemplation nearest to God.”<sup>76</sup> That all things come from nothing and remain forever belongs to the function of nature, whereas that things are deified, “i.e., cross over (*transire*) into God”,<sup>77</sup> belongs to grace.

This creation from nothing into something borders on the dualistic, and Eriugena uses the Student to remedy this. Since outside the Word of God “there is nothing, He brought forth concealed creatures (*creaturas conditas*) from Himself, *as it were (veluti)* outside of [the Word]...and therefore are said to be, *as it were (veluti)* outside of the simplicity of the Divine Wisdom, even though outside [of Which] there is *nothing*.”<sup>78</sup> Creation exists in the *veluti* of this metaphorical—though no less real—phenomenal, theophanic world. Eriugena has to address the tensile concept of reality once again when endeavoring to explicate the return, or the crossing over and beyond (*metaphor*), of all things. If all things exist and live in the Word, then that means that all things are consequently “unable to perish (*perire*).”<sup>79</sup>

The Student recalls his lessons from Book III, viz., that not only causes but even created effects are eternal in the Word of God.<sup>80</sup> But he still falters over *how* all created things accept a coincidence of opposites in that they somehow perish and perdure. This demands a reformulation

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<sup>75</sup> *PP* V, 64, 2062-2065 (905AB); see footnote 17 in Chapter Two for additional references to this discussion, and also put into comparison with the School of Ibn ‘Arabī.

<sup>76</sup> *PP* V, 65, (2)8-10 (905B).

<sup>77</sup> *PP* V, 66, 2100 (906C).

<sup>78</sup> *PP* V, 68, 2157-2158, 2164-2166 (907D-908A).

<sup>79</sup> *PP* V, 68, 2172-2173 (908B).

<sup>80</sup> See *PP* V, 70, 2235ff (909C).

of what it means to perish (*perire*) and to perdure (*permanere*). A brief intervention by the Teacher transforms the Student's understanding immediately. Given that all things are unable to perish in the Word, the Student exclaims: "I should rather admit that I thoroughly *am not* than be able to be *unaware* of this [fact], since I listen to the Apostle saying [in Acts 17:28], 'In Whom we live and are moved and are.' For if *I am not* in [the Word], then *I am entirely not*; and if *I am unaware of this [fact]*, then I have perished (*perditus*), having been ruined (*interitu*) by foolishness and ignorance."<sup>81</sup> A closer look at the poetics of this line of reasoning reveals its meaning disruptive of *ratio*: I would rather *not be* than *not be aware* that *I am in* the Word; for if *I am not in* the Word, *I really am not*, and if *I am not aware* of this, *I am perished*. To subsist in the Word is to exceed the limits of the self restrained by the normative imaginaries of the world—dualistic logic, onto-theology, and other various ideologies that constrain the imagination; to be outside of the Word is to be restricted by foolishness and ignorance.

Recall that *how* all things are created and eternal is left unanswered in Book III.<sup>82</sup> This mode of contradiction is mirrored in the coincidence of perishing and perdurance, which may be otherwise comprehended as nothing more than a perpetual crossing over of all things into the Word. The *how* or *mode* of contradiction is the Incarnation, which constitutes the nonduality of theophanic, imaginal nature and of the *imago Dei* that is the human person.

### **Perpetual Searching as Dynamic Imaginary: "All things...are images"**

The Student inquires how the whole world, from irrational animals to trees, plants, and all parts of the phenomenal world, are restored in the Incarnate Word of God. More explicitly, he asks how "the masses of bodies, extended in local space, and composed of many and diverse parts, and also visible forms in which those masses are contained...will be resurrected in the general resurrection of the human person."<sup>83</sup> The return of all things is possible because *all things*

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<sup>81</sup> *PP* V, 71,2282-2284 (910C).

<sup>82</sup> See section "Natura Understood" in Chapter Four.

<sup>83</sup> *PP* V, 76, 2421-2424 (913C).

are images, or theologically put, theophanies. Bodily things in this world return to that in which they subsist in the Word:

Accordingly, *all things* that fluctuate according to place and time and that succumb to corporeal senses are not to be understood as substantial things truly existing in themselves, but rather as *certain transitory images and reverberations of those truly existing things themselves*.<sup>84</sup>

Eriugena then compares this phenomenal world to an echo (using the Greek, ἠχώ), which is an *imago* of a voice, and shadows, which are produced by bodies. “The bodies of these sensible things are, *as it were (veluti)*, certain likenesses of subsisting things, and are unable to subsist in themselves. For even human bodies...will not exist in the future resurrection, but will rather...*cross over (transitura)* into a spiritual nature.”<sup>85</sup> The parts of this phenomenal world then cross over (*transire*) into human nature, and human nature crosses over into divine nature.

Eriugena finds precedence for this crossing over in Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Image*, in which the soul is said to be in perpetual movement toward the Good:

For [concerning] that which is entirely moved, if it should possess a progress toward the Good, then on account of the Excellence of the thing for which it is searching, it never ceases its progress (*meatu*) through Him Who is on high. For it will not discover the end (*terminum*) of its search, [and] nothing that it obtains will stabilize its movement at any time; and it will not accept a movement toward that which is contrary to it.<sup>86</sup>

Eriugena continues the quotation, which further argues that should a person move toward evil, he will reach a limit to the movement, at which point he will be turned toward the Good. More importantly, Eriugena remarks that Gregory of Nyssa asserts that human nature is always moving, desiring nothing but the Supreme Good; every creature is always seeking God. Irrational movement toward evil is circumscribed and delimited, while human nature is always moving, striving for God, “ardently desiring the fruit of the Tree of Life (viz., the contemplation of the Word of God), hastening to receive the divinity of the Divine Image (according to which it was

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<sup>84</sup> *PP* V, 77, 2437-2441 (914A).

<sup>85</sup> *PP* V, 77, 2448-2455 (914AB).

<sup>86</sup> *PP* V, 81, 2587-2593 (917B), citing Gregory of Nyssa, *De imagine*, 21 (*Patrologia Graeca* 44, 201A-204A). See footnote 63 for how this correlates the Maximus Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa elsewhere.

made).”<sup>87</sup> Eriugena then makes a case for this perpetual movement and desire in his own language of theophanies:

However, since that which [the human] seeks and desires, whether she is moved rightly or not, is infinite and incomprehensible to every creature, necessarily she is always seeking and is always moved through that which she seeks, and in some wonderful way she finds what she is seeking in a certain measure, and she does not find It, for It is unable to be found. She finds It through theophanies, however she does not find It through the contemplation of the Divine Nature in Itself. Furthermore, by theophanies I mean visible and invisible appearances, by the order and beauty of which [appearances] God is recognized to exist, but [God] is found not as to what [God] is, but rather only that [God] is, since the Nature Itself of God is neither spoken of nor understood. For Inaccessible Light surpasses all understanding. And this is what the Psalmist means: “Seek the Lord and be strengthened, seek His Face always.” [Ps. 104:4] This is that spiritual way which stretches unto the infinite, upon which pure and perfected souls advance, seeking their God. For even the celestial powers are always seeking their God, at Whom they ardently desire to gaze.<sup>88</sup>

Theophany explains the perpetual movement and desire of the human soul, who is an Image of God existing in this phenomenal world, itself constituted of images of things truly subsisting in the Word. Pious, saintly individuals recognize the imaginal nature of this theophanic universe when they die according to the words of Psalm 115:15: “Precious in the gaze of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Eriugena comments that this death is “the crossing over (*transitus*) of the most purified souls into the inmost contemplation of the truth...and...the death whereby those living religiously and piously and seeking after their God die, *while still being established in this mortal life*, seeing in a mirror and enigmatically [1 Cor 13:12] that which they are seeking.”<sup>89</sup> Perhaps, then, this death-while-still-living of the saints corresponds to the “death of the rational soul” wherein dualistic logic dies and nondual logic is born; the living saints see God through the Word in this phenomenal, theophanic world of fluctuating images.

As demonstrated, Eriugena employs the concept of *images* to relate, nondually, this world to the “real” world of the Divine Word, in which nonetheless this world subsists. Paradoxically, that this world is a collection of infinite images makes it no less real, given that theophanies are

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<sup>87</sup> *PP* V, 83, 2672-2674 (919BC).

<sup>88</sup> *PP* V, 83-84, 2675-2691 (919CD). See footnote 63 regarding how Eriugena’s own perpetual desire is likely learned from Maximus Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa; nonetheless, Eriugena’s explication of perpetual desire is constituted by his unique theology of theophany.

<sup>89</sup> *PP* V, 94, 2984-2989 (926BC).

themselves images of the divine and all that exist. Elsewhere in Book V, he refers to phantasies, which are “certain image[s] or apparition[s] of the visible or invisible appearance[s] impressed upon the memory.” He goes so far as to suggest that no corporeal or incorporeal thing, in itself, is clearly seen by the mortal senses; rather, “the nature of things establishes that images of sensible things are expressed in the exterior senses, and [images] of intelligible things are expressed in the interior senses.”<sup>90</sup> Phantasies cannot expressly be opposed to the Truth, “since Truth Itself is invisible in Itself, but runs to meet those seeking It in Its phantasies, which are called *θεοφανιας* [*theophanias*], and in an ineffable manner manifests [Itself to them].”<sup>91</sup> As such, the Student proclaims: “Therefore, phantasies are something good, since they are the imagination of natural things.”<sup>92</sup> Indeed, that all created things are images, phantasies, or better yet, theophanies, is not a negative judgment of this world, but simply *how* the world exists in the Divine Word.

The perpetual search for God is related to the imaginal nature of the world, grounded as it is in theophany, the Incarnation, and the theology of the Image of God. I suggest that this relationship may be conceptualized as a theo-poetics that precludes monism and a static synthesis of all things into a stable rest. Rather, this dynamic vision of reality provides the human person with a dynamic imaginary by which they are to live and act in this world, here and now. This dynamic imaginary is ultimately Incarnational, because it forces us into enfleshed existence in embodied (imagined) spaces and communities. While we are images of God and all things are images of the divine (theophany), these reflections are of a God unconfined by *esse*. True, an image of *nothingness-beyond-being* risks chaos, disorder, and anarchy (“without beginning”). But the Incarnation directs our becoming in terms of the imagination; we are freed to imagine forth

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<sup>90</sup> *PP* V, 143, 4637-4642 (962C).

<sup>91</sup> *PP* V, 144, 4650-4653 (962D). The phrase, “which are called *θεοφανιας*”, was added by the later, non-Irish redactor of what the CCCM editors call *Versio IV* of the manuscript tradition. This nonetheless concurs with what is later written by Eriugena’s hand at *PP* V, 145, 4688-4690 (963C): “since even the felicity of the blessed, which [felicity] is established in the contemplation of the Truth, is bestowed in phantasies, which theologians call ‘theophanies’ in order to differentiate them from the other phantasies.”

<sup>92</sup> *PP* V, 144, 4665-4666 (963A).

the Incarnation in a theo-poetics that disrupts, liberates, and lives with (com)passionate love. The following section solidifies this argument through Eriugena's unique arguments regarding Christ's flesh.

## **"Christ is Our Epiphany": The Omnipresence of Jesus's Flesh**

Eriugena's construction of an imaginal reality does not necessarily imply a cosmology that renders this phenomenal world somehow less real or true, or something in practice to be abandoned or ignored for the greater truth and reality beyond, which reality is reflected in the images of this world and in the Image of God that is the human person. This reading of Eriugena results first from emphasizing the immateriality of the *reditus* which can be interpreted as a synthesis of all things akin to idealism, and second from ignoring his Incarnational theology. This Incarnational theology, otherwise occluded by his hierarchical ontology that places the material below the immaterial, is uncovered when Eriugena is reread after having engaged Ḥāfiẓ's and Lāhūrī's theo-poetics, in search of how his own poetics disrupts the logic of *ratio* and onto-theology. Furthermore, Ricœur's thesis that the imagination or images should no longer be a mere "appendix to perception" or a "shadow of perception"<sup>93</sup> is helpful here. This world qua imaginal reality for Eriugena is thus not simply a weak version of reality. Instead, drawing from Ricœur, the imaginal nature of metaphors "consists in the coming together that suddenly abolishes the logical distance between heretofore distinct semantic fields in order to produce the semantic shock, which, in its turn, ignites the spark of meaning of the metaphor."<sup>94</sup> The flashing, essential theophany encountered in Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī produces the *impossible* image of the Beloved, now perceived via the imagination. Poetic metaphors unveil the Divine in this phenomenal world of images, for the imaginal faculty is capable of bringing together opposites. The logical distance between the created world and the Uncreated Godhead is abolished by Eriugena's construction of

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<sup>93</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 172,

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, 172-173.

a theophanic cosmos in which all things are images and will cross over and beyond (*metaphor*) into the unconfined Divine Word. The Student in the *Periphyseon* experientially suffers these semantic shocks in the form of his various stupefactions and bewilderments which resulted from Eriugena's poetics. In these moments, the imagination functions more similar to Castoriadis's radical imagination: the human is freed from the impossible and creates *ex nihilo/Deo* new imaginaries, new ways of being in the world.

The logical distance between divinity and human flesh is bridged by the Incarnation, and here I return to constructing a theo-poetics of the flesh. Eriugena spent the middle section of Book V demonstrating the imaginal nature of reality through theophany. Toward the end, when the dialogue turns explicitly to the *reditus*, the return and restoration of all things, he explicitly addresses *how* this world will cross over into the Word, employing the Incarnation and the resurrected state of Jesus as the exemplary mode of return. In doing so, however, he implicitly suggests that Christ's flesh is omnipresent even now. My suggestion that the human encounter *in the flesh* is constitutive of our relationship with both the world and God becomes further established through Eriugena's Incarnational theology that makes Christ our *epiphany*: Christ appears (*-phany*) upon (*epi-*) us in *our* flesh.

### **Christ's Flesh is Omnipresent**

In a section of the dialogue addressing the resurrected state of Jesus, Eriugena engages Augustine's *City of God* and often disagrees with him on several matters.<sup>95</sup> More constructively, Eriugena frequently repeats that all visible things will cross over into God through the Divine Word rather than be completely annihilated. Eriugena suggests that when Augustine, in *City of God* Book XX, speaks of the destruction of the corporeal world, he was writing "according to the [intellectual] capacity of [his readers]."<sup>96</sup> Rather, Eriugena proffers a novel understanding in

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<sup>95</sup> See *PP* V, 182ff

<sup>96</sup> *PP* V, 184, (11)58 (992A). The particular passage Eriugena has in mind is *City of God*, XX, xvi: "Afterwards, this world as we see it will pass away, burned away by terrestrial fires, just as the flood was caused by the overflowing of terrestrial waters. This conflagration will utterly burn away the corruptible characteristics proper to corruptible bodies, as such; whereupon our substance will possess only those qualities which are consistent

which, on account of the Incarnation and the resurrection, Christ's flesh is omnipresent now.

I, however, in no way disparaging or disputing [with Augustine], unhesitatingly understand what the Lord said: "I and the Father are one" [John 10:30] not only of His Divinity, but also of His entire substance. And therefore all of Christ (Word and flesh) is omnipresent [*ubique*], contained by no place, whether in whole or in His parts, i.e., [all of Christ is contained] in neither [only] His divinity nor in [only] His humanity, from which, two parts, *as it were* (*veluti*), the whole of His Substance is constituted.<sup>97</sup>

The flesh of Christ is transformed into the power and spirit of God, which is the Word, Itself omnipresent; consequently, the flesh of Christ, on account of the consubstantial nature of the Incarnation and resurrection, is "omnipresent and everywhere diffused."<sup>98</sup> Here, Eriugena is shifting from the Incarnation to cosmology, and he does so via a particular theology of the resurrection in which Christ's flesh intermingles (unconfused) everywhere with this phenomenal world. In this under-appreciated aside, Eriugena contends that the Divine Logos is *always an enfleshed* Logos, whose flesh is present and significant even now.<sup>99</sup>

### **Christ is Our Epiphany**

A little later in the dialogue, Eriugena interprets the terms Zabulon and Nephtali of Isaiah 9:1ff, quoted by Matthew 4:15ff, to mean, respectively, "habitation of virtue" and "breadth."

And what is [Christ's] habitation? Is it not our nature, in which He desired to dwell through the Incarnation? Listen to the evangelist: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt in us." Thence, the Humanity of Christ is the spiritual Zabulon, in Whom we are all saved, and, being saved, we dwell and will dwell in eternity. For [the Word] is our virtue and fortitude...And who else is our breadth but Christ? His charity and mercy encompasses the whole human species, He "died for sinners" when "who would perhaps dare die for even the good?" [Rom 5:6-7], since He loves all human persons

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with bodies immortalized in this marvelous transformation-to this end, that the world, remade into something better, will become fit for men now remade, even in their bodies, into something better" (Augustine, *The City of God Books XVII-XXII*, 291); for Latin, see CCSL 48, 726-727, 13-21. Even though Augustine seems to suggest a transformation (*mutacione, innovatus*), apparently Eriugena does not agree with his deployment of words that suggest destruction (*praeteribit, conflagratione, interibunt*). Nonetheless, later Eriugena cites Augustine against himself to argue that his reading concurs with the Latin father: "The fact is that it will be after the judgment is completed that heaven and earth will end with the beginning of the new heaven and earth. For it will be by a transformation, rather than by a wholesale destruction that this world of ours will pass away (*mutacione namque rerum, non omni modo interitu transibit hic mundus*)" (Augustine, *The City of God Books XVII-XXII*, 287); for Latin, see CCSL 48, p. 724, 19-24.

<sup>97</sup> *PP V*, 184, {11}61-67 (992AB).

<sup>98</sup> *ubique praesens est atque diffusa: PP V*, 186, 6041 (993C).

<sup>99</sup> Trevor Hart makes a similar argument regarding Christian theology in general in his discussion with the theology of T.F. Torrance. See Chapter 1 of Trevor A. Hart, *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), especially 32ff.

equally, when He handed Himself over for everyone. This, then is the most spacious [*amplissima*] law of nature which He fulfilled in Himself, undergoing death for everyone. The law of nature is the communal love (*communis...dilectio*) for all human persons without excluding anyone. [This communal love] was most perfectly fulfilled in Christ, and [this communal love] proceeded from the Father “Who did not spare His only Son, but handed Him over for all of us” [Rom 8:32].<sup>100</sup>

Eriugena is connecting the Incarnation to the communal love that encompasses all human persons. He then pushes forward with this interpretation of the Incarnation, and contends that this encompassing love is the “breadth” (*latitudo*) which is understood to be “the manifestation and top surface (*superficies*)”<sup>101</sup> of something. “Therefore, in Greek it is said with the term *epiphania*. Christ is thus our epiphany (i.e., our manifestation and top surface), since even though there are three substances of the Supreme Good, only one of them appeared to us in the person of Christ (viz., the Incarnate Word) and made Himself comprehensible to the corporeal senses.”<sup>102</sup> The second person of the Trinity, of the same essence of God nonetheless, becomes our flesh and therefore encompasses our bodies through the Incarnation. Eriugena has connected the Incarnation to the communal love that encircles us through our own flesh; the Word is omnipresent and encompassing all things through corporeal theophanies. Once again, the Divine Word, *forever enfleshed*, is present to us as *our flesh* and through this material world; the former is a correlate of our being the Image of God, and the latter of the whole world being divine images of God (theophanies).

### **Flesh and Words: Perpetual Crossing Over**

This is made even more evident when, a few lines later, Eriugena comments on the fatted calf that was slaughtered in celebration of the prodigal son’s return in Luke 15:11ff. He adds that this fatted calf is “the human Christ...thickened (*incrassatus*) with the fleshiness (*pinguedine*) of the letter and the visible creation. In these two things, viz., the letter and the visible creation, *as it were* (*veluti*) the certain fleshiness of Christ is manifest, since in them and through them [Christ]

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<sup>100</sup> *PP* V, 200, 6487-6503 (1003BC).

<sup>101</sup> *PP* V, 200, 6504-6505 (1003C).

<sup>102</sup> *PP* V, 200-201, 6505-6510 (1003CD).

is understood, insofar as [Christ] is able to be understood.”<sup>103</sup> Eriugena contends that the flesh of human persons and the letters of scripture reveal the Incarnate Word. A theo-poetics of the flesh emerges in which the flesh of this world demands indefinite interpretation, just as metaphors require careful interpretation—or, otherwise put, *translation*, from *transfero*, i.e., crossing over, or metaphor. The etymology of these terms provide us with further substance to this theo-poetics. Christ is our breath (*latitudo*, from *latus* the perfect participle of *fero*) because the Word became our flesh, and so entering into the flesh via enfleshed experiences is our only means whereby we may cross over (*transfero*, *metaphero*) unto God. God becomes flesh to lead us beyond. Our embodied encounters with others lead us and our communities beyond; we do not abandon the flesh, but we enter into it by imaging the Incarnation.

This crossing over or translation of the theo-poetics of the flesh is the only reward Eriugena requests from God. When the Student later recalls the complex and perplexing words of holy scripture, which words demand careful interpretation, the Teacher responds with the second of the two prayers in the *Periphyseon*:

O Lord Jesus, I ask for no other reward, no other blessing, no other joy from you but that I may purely understand Your Words...For just as You are not sought more fittingly anywhere other than in Your Words, likewise are You not found more manifestly than in them. There You dwell and therein do You lead those seeking and loving You; there do You prepare a spiritual feast of true recognitions for Your elect and therein do You serve those crossing over (*transiens ministras eis*) into them. And what is, Lord, Your crossing over (*transitus tuus*)? Nothing but an ascent through infinite degrees of Your contemplation. For you always make a crossing over in the intellects of those seeking and finding You. For You are always sought by them, and you are always found and not found. For You are always found at least in Your Theophanies, manifoldly in which, as it were in certain mirrors, You run to meet the minds of those understanding You in a manner whereby You permit Yourself to be understood: not what You are, but what You are not and that You are. You are not found, however, in Your Super-Essentiality, by which You cross over and surpass (*transis et exsuperas*) every intellect desiring and ascending to comprehend You. Therefore, You grant to Your own Your Presence through an ineffable manner of Your Manifestation, You cross over them (*transis ab eis*) through the incomprehensible

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<sup>103</sup> *PP V*, 203, 6576-6581 (1005B). Eriugena cites Maximus Confessor’s *Ambigua ad Iohannem* to give evidence of his argument: “In the words of the blessed Maximus when he is explaining what Gregory the Theologian [of Nazianzus] said of the Nativity: ‘The word was thickened’: He says, ‘the Word, even though simple and incorporeal and the spiritual nourishment of all the divine powers after it, deemed it worthy to become thick through His presence in the flesh because of us, on account of us, and according to us, though without sin.’” (*PP V*, 203, 6583-6589). Maximus is commenting on what Gregory of Nazianzus says in *Oration 38* (*Sources Chrétiennes* 358, 106, 16-17); see *Ambigua ad Iohannem XXIX*, 2-6 (Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, volume 2, 62-65 [1285C]).

excellence and infinity of Your Essence.<sup>104</sup>

Given that earlier Eriugena connected the words of scripture with the flesh of visible creation, one may reasonably suggest that this perpetual crossing over or interpretation of scripture applies to corporeal perception as well. This prayer, too, occurs in the final few pages of the massive five-volume *Periphyseon* during which Eriugena was himself explicating *natura divina* and presenting it in the form of the dialogue.

### **Entering into the Wedding Feast of the Lord**

Before closing the *Periphyseon*, he ends with one final interpretation of a parable, viz., the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Mathew 25:1ff. Of import is one possible reason Eriugena gives for why the foolish virgins, having been refused entry into the wedding banquet, cry out the name of the Lord twice (“Lord, lord, open to us!” [Mt 25:11]). “The double repetition of the name of the Lord...signifies...the idleness of certain simple faithful...who think that our Lord Jesus Christ is composed of two substances when He is [rather] one substance in two natures.”<sup>105</sup> These virgins are denied the delights of the marriage feast because they were “ignorant of the inner and secret marriage feast of [Jesus’s] divinity and humanity.”<sup>106</sup> The recognition of the nondual nature of Jesus’s Incarnation is the prerequisite for entering into the banquet. Eriugena then ends the interpretation with one final Christological statement before a quick recapitulation that ends the *Periphyseon*:

Therefore, the Word united with the flesh and the flesh united with the Word in an inseparable unity of the one and the same substance out of two natures (viz., Divine and human) receives no one *except those who gaze at the unity of His substance with the single eye of perfect contemplation*, such that both the human in the Word, truly the Son of God, and the Word in the human, truly the Son of Humankind, without any transmutation of natures, one and the same Son of God and of Humankind, our Lord Jesus Christ, is realized.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *PP* V, 210-211, 6818-6841 (1010BCD).

<sup>105</sup> *PP* V, 221, 7175-7183 (1018A).

<sup>106</sup> *PP* V, 222, 7199-7200 (1018B).

<sup>107</sup> *PP* V, 222, 7209-7217 (1018CD).

In this passage, the proper contemplation or interpretation of Christ's nature is required for one's entrances into the wedding feast of the Lord. In other words, creating spaces that image the wedding banquet requires an Incarnational, nondual mode of living: a theo-poetics of the flesh.

Connecting otherwise disparate arguments regarding the Incarnation, the omnipresence of the flesh, Christ our epiphany, the thickening of the Word in visible creation and in scripture, and the crossing over or interpretation of the words and Word, I have suggested in this section that the imaginal nature of reality is Incarnational at heart. Eriugena has constructed a theo-poetics of the flesh in which all things are images of God, viz., theophanies, and in which the flesh becomes constitutive of our relationship with others in the Incarnate Word. Refusing to read Eriugena as presenting an idealistic synthesis of opposites, or a theology in which pure, idealized and imageless concepts are truer to the meaning and nature of the Divine Logos, I instead searched for the metaphorical, nondual truth occluded by his dialectical reasoning; this is possible when Eriugena's arguments are read through the theo-poetics of Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī. Ultimately, this produces a dynamic imaginary through which the Incarnation—a theo-poetics of the flesh—is lived. The Word remains *enfleshed now and forever*. It is no accident that the substance of this theo-poetic reading occurs when Eriugena is proffering his unique interpretations of scriptural passages, the words/Word of God (Isaiah 9:1ff, Matthew 4:15ff, Luke 15:11ff, and Mathew 25:1ff).

## **The Incarnation as a Theo-Poetics of the Flesh**

Let us recall that Eriugena explicitly leaves unanswered the *how* or *manner* whereby all things are both eternal and created. The *mode* can be constructed by the imaginal and metaphorical nature of reality, which permits coincidences of opposites. The imaginal or metaphorical nature of this phenomenal world is a direct consequence of the Incarnation, and therefore demands indefinite interpretation or crossing over and beyond into the Word. Already in Chapter One, a link between the Incarnational and the theophanic was established, implicitly at

least, in the Student's question: "How would the Word suffer to be made in Himself what was not [already] consubstantial with Him?"<sup>108</sup> Eriugena logically separates the historical Incarnation from the ahistoricity of theophany, but the *way* he speaks of both nearly elides them; his own logic self-subverts to produce a theo-poetics.<sup>109</sup> In Chapter Four, after an interreligious reading with Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, applying an Islamic theo-poetics to Eriugena's dialectical reasoning uncovered the Incarnation as the *mode* of nondual truth, *how* opposites coincide to disrupt the law of noncontradiction, to subvert Eriugena's *ratio*.<sup>110</sup> Underscoring Eriugena's use of *veluti*, the metaphorical was linked to the imagination, and the subjective, creative imagination became paramount for accessing the Incarnation as a theo-poetics. Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī suggest that the human heart, when it subsists in God, becomes receptive to the theo-poetics of the world because both the heart the the imagination bring together opposites.<sup>111</sup>

Now, having read Eriugena in search of how the Incarnation is understood through images (both through divine images, i.e., theophanies, and the nondual, *imago Dei* anthropology) and the imagination, the human person and her imaginative capacity is *unconfined in the Word*: she is liberated from the restrictive *ratio* of the world so that the poetics of the impossible may be imagined forth in the flesh, our epiphany, which is Christ's omnipresent, resurrected flesh. There is always *more* to imagine forth *than* the present state of the world; this is dynamic vision is an imaginary, a theo-poetics of the flesh. But an even more explicit connection between the Incarnation and this theo-poetics of the impossible is possible.

Accordingly, I submit that Eriugena suggests that the Incarnation is in fact the *how* or manner whereby the world exists in this imaginal, metaphorical, or dynamic state. The

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<sup>108</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2497-2498 (679CD).

<sup>109</sup> See the Chapter One section entitled "Theophany and the Incarnation of the Word," particularly the sub-section "The Incarnational and the Theophanic."

<sup>110</sup> See the Chapter Four section entitled "Natura Understood: The Removal of Dualities in the Periphyseon, especially the sub-section entitled "Incarnation as Nondual Truth: Moving Beyond Synthesis."

<sup>111</sup> See the Chapter Four section entitled "Liminality from World to Self: Learning from an Islamic Theo-Poetics."

Incarnation becomes a cosmology, and therefore the theophanic process is an Incarnational process. Poetics is *how* words come together to produce meaning. The Incarnation is *how* the human and divine come together to constitute *how* God and this world relate; it is thus a theo-poetics of the flesh. This is because the Incarnation is the explicit structure of theophany for Eriugena. While he repeatedly confesses that *how* (*quomodo*) all things are eternal and *facta* (made) cannot be detailed, much less known, he does proclaim that *why* one is compelled to admit as much is discoverable.<sup>112</sup> He can aver this because of the Incarnation: “If only the Word of God remains as the being of existent things...what else is left to be understood but that [the Word] is made (*fieri*) all things in all things.”<sup>113</sup> However, he adds, *how* or *by what reason* this is the case “flees the sharpness of our minds.”<sup>114</sup> The linguistic and logical gap between the cosmology of the Word being made (*fieri*) in all things and the Incarnation of the Word made (*factus*) flesh (John 1:14) is almost closed. (Un)Grounded in the imaginal nature of reality and of the human person, this section endeavors to close this gap through a close reading in search of a theo-poetics of the flesh.

### **The Incarnation as the Manner of Nonduality**

Eriugena very nearly suggests that the *how* of this cosmological situation is the Incarnation, expressed in terms of theophany; he expressly connects the salvific consequences of the Incarnation to a renewal of human perception of this cosmologico-Incarnational reality. In discussing how God is the maker of all things, he writes that “[God] is made in the [phenomenal] effects...and is manifestly disclosed in His theophanies...and even though She is made *in all things*, He does not cease to be *beyond all being*...i.e., She produces...from the negation of all things that are and are not the affirmations of all things that are and that are not.”<sup>115</sup> God is *in* by

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<sup>112</sup> See, e.g., *PP* III, 74, 2093ff (670ABC).

<sup>113</sup> *PP* III, 75, 2144–2145 and 2149–2150 (671BC).

<sup>114</sup> *PP* III, 75, 2150–2152 (671C).

<sup>115</sup> *PP* III, 91–92, 2647–2657 (683B).

being *beyond*. This protology is then followed by an eschatology in which all things are returned unto God. But, Eriugena surreptitiously adds, “Not that even *now* God is not all things in all things, but rather that, after the sin of human nature and expulsion from the abode of paradise (i.e., from the profound spiritual life)...no one but someone illuminated by Divine Grace and rapt into the height of Divine Mysteries is able to perceive with an attentive gaze of true intelligence *how* (*quomodo*) God is all things in all things.”<sup>116</sup> Apparently, then, *some* are able to comprehend the *how* of nondual truth. But *how* is this *mode* understood? Through the Incarnation:

And so the Word of God Incarnate descended in order to lead human nature back to this vision, taking on that previous sin in order to call [human nature] back to that pristine state, healing the wounds of transgressions, destroying the shadows of false phantasies, opening up the eyes of the mind, manifesting Himself in all things by such a vision to the ones who are worthy.<sup>117</sup>

The Incarnation is the manner, the *how* or *quomodo* of nonduality. Without the Enfleshed Word, we perceive the flesh as distinct and separate from the Word, rather than making the Word’s flesh our epiphany. After the Teacher makes this Incarnational conclusion, the Student exclaims that those living *carnaliter*, i.e., carnally, will immediately “burst forth and shout out: ‘Mad are the ones who say these things!’”<sup>118</sup> To live carnally is to live in duality in which the flesh is distinct from the Word and therefore to be ignorant of the Christological nature of flesh.

Eminently noteworthy is *where* this Incarnational truth is proclaimed, which is in Book III, after the process of removing the three dualities, throughout which the Student is left occasionally in stupefaction and terror. This Incarnational statement is proclaimed, and vision is restored, it seems, for the Student declares several pages later than the division of nature is *really* a division of Divine Nature. Then, and only then, begins the lengthy Hexaameron.<sup>119</sup> In other words,

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<sup>116</sup> *PP* III, 92, 2660-2667 (683C). The passage continues, “...since interposed is the cloud of carnal thoughts and the fog of variegated phantasies, with the sharpness of mind weakened by the irrational passions, turned back from the splendors of clear truth, restrained by the habitual corporeal shadows” (*PP* III, 92, 2667-2671 [683CD]).

<sup>117</sup> Or, “... to the ones who are worthy of such a vision” (*PP* III, 92, 2677-2682 [684A]).

<sup>118</sup> *PP* III, 93, 2688 (684A).

<sup>119</sup> The exegesis of the six days of creation in Genesis begins at *PP* III, 101, 2947 (690B).

Incarnational truth *shapes* eschatology (God is already all things in all things through the Incarnation), which in turn liberates Eriugena's theology of creation (protology) from the confines of non-Incarnational, unimaginative and dualistic *ratio*.

**The Incarnation, Ricœur's Theory of Iconicity, and Castoriadis's Social Imaginary: Perceiving Incarnationally**

In reading the foregoing chapters together, it becomes apparent that Eriugena's imaginal reality does not present the material, fleshy world as something to be abandoned for the sake of the purely spiritual or meaningful, or as something constrained by forms in God. Rather, my reading of Eriugena suggests an imaginal reality in which all things are images that, like metaphors, are to be interpreted with proper theophanic perception so that they lead us to the *more than* of the Word in the flesh and the flesh in the Word. The theophanic is at once Incarnational. This enfleshed reality demands interpretation through a Christological perception granted by the Incarnation. Eriugena's radical apophatic theology, in which the *nihil* out of which God created the world is God's *Nihil*, produces a world of metaphorical images that reveal the *plus-quam*, or *excess*, of God. The Incarnate Word intensifies the meaning of reality and demands more and more from the human subject in terms of perception, words, and actions. The Incarnation liberates our imaginative practices so that we, too, may create, or imagine forth, *ex nihilo/Deo*, novel imaginaries that disrupt normative ideologies. Being images *of* God, pace Castoriadis, in this case *frees* the imagination.

It is precisely in the metaphorical, imaginal nature of reality that a theo-poetics of the flesh is discovered. This is the case when Ricœur's theory of iconicity and Castoriadis's social imaginary are applied to the interpretation of the world in the Incarnate Word. Incarnational cosmology, whereby all things in the world are theophanic images, suggests that, in perceiving the other in the flesh through the Incarnate Word, one is able to encounter this reality augmented and intensified by the Word. But this augmented perception requires that one apply the Incarnate Word to one's encounter with the other. She must take on the vision restored by the Incarnation whereby nondual, metaphorical truth becomes how one relates to humans, all of whom have

Christ as their epiphany. This may be construed as perceiving Incarnationally. In this way, the human person is enabled to disrupt congealed imaginaries with dynamic ones unconfined through the Incarnate Word. The images of the world are shaped and re-shaped perpetually by us, Images of God Incarnate.

### **From Poetics of the Flesh to Theo-Poetics of the Flesh: Entering Within to Go Beyond**

This augmentation of reality that poetry provides, coupled with the imaginal yet Incarnational reality I have drawn out of Eriugena's apophatic yet *plus-quam* discourse, resonates with the poetics of the flesh as constructed by Rivera:

A poetics of flesh deploys negations to counter reifications. But the apophatic gestures that this poetics has sought most intently are not those of negation but rather of multiplication. Describing flesh entails depicting a plurality of relations, images, and perspectives, which do not yield a smooth, uniform, or harmonious vista.<sup>120</sup>

It becomes evident how Eriugena's *plus-quam* discourse is discovered in Rivera's poetics of "negations to counter reifications" and how Ricœur's augmentation is encountered in her poetics of "multiplication." Rivera concludes:

Since flesh is always becoming, since it envelops and exceeds each one of our bodies, since our expressions emerge from it, writing flesh should be a poetics. This implies not only a style of writing but also a recognition of the limits of our knowledge and appreciation for the imaginative dimensions of thought. Such poetics does not abandon the task of learning about and from the world. It is the beginning of attention, a seriousness—which leads us to explore the world again in wonder, to describe it faithfully.<sup>121</sup>

A poetics of the flesh yields not to a flight from the world but *into* the world; a theo-poetics of the flesh enters into the world to go beyond—beyond the possible and toward the impossible, beyond flesh alone and toward flesh and divinity imagined together. Rivera's poetics of the flesh can be transformed into a theo-poetics of the flesh if her "flesh...exceeds each one of our bodies" is interpreted through Eriugena's statement that Christ's flesh is omnipresent now and also our epiphany—what appears upon our very bodies. Nondual images of an unreified God disrupt a

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<sup>120</sup> Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 158.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

reality reified by dualistic ideologies, ontologies, and epistemologies.

For Eriugena and for this project, the Incarnation is not merely the most appropriate means for God to teach human beings and thereby to save them (such is the case, say, with Aquinas's argument for *convenientia*),<sup>122</sup> but also the constitutive, historical act that informs *how* this world relates to God, and *how* we are to relate to each other. Explained in terms of metaphorical, nondual truth, this world should be interpreted through the Incarnate Word, which is why this *theo-poetics* of the flesh finds further meaning in the explicitly metaphorical and poetic love lyrics of Ḥāfīz. Moving beyond a synthesis of dialectical reasoning, a *theo-poetics* of the flesh conduces toward the nondualism of an Incarnational imaginary. The Incarnation provides us with a *theo-poetics* of the flesh: *how* we are to live is never reducing God or our aims into a reified *what* that can be contained and that restricts. We must embrace the *theo-poetics* of this life rather than be constrained by a reified hermeneutics that limits the possible.

A particular love lyric underscores the importance of the heart in mirroring the divine, and connects it with the centrality of broken-heartedness to the experience of imaging God. In the next section, I engage this Islamic *theo-poetics* to uncover how being an image of the Divine is attendant with embracing suffering love. A *theo-poetics* of the impossible, in confronting reified ideologies of the world, means doing the Truth of passionate love, which the Incarnation constitutes.

## Learning from Ḥāfīz: A Theo-Poetics of Broken-Heartedness

### *Ghazal* 136<sup>123</sup>

1 For years [my] heart sought out Jamshīd's goblet from me.

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<sup>122</sup> For a concise explication of Aquinas's *convenientia*, see Chapter 1 ("Incarnation as Instruction") of Mark D. Jordan, *Teaching Bodies: Moral Formation in the Summa of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 21ff.

<sup>123</sup> *DKh* #136, 288; *SH* II, #187, 1,274; *DAv* #136, 185; *DFo* #136, 428. This lyric is also translated by Elizabeth T. Gray in Ḥāfīz, *The Green Sea of Heaven: Fifty Ghazals from the Diwān of Ḥāfīz*, 89. As subsequent footnotes indicating disparate couplets suggest, Khānlārī's apparatus is replete with various versions of this love lyric, indicative of a robust and dynamic transmission and deployment of this lyric.

From strangers it desired what it itself possessed.

- 2 That pearl outside the shell of the spatio-temporal world,  
[the heart] sought from those lost on the shores<sup>124</sup> of the sea.
- 3 Last night, I brought my problems to the Master of the Magi,  
so that with the help of his gaze he might unravel the mystery.
- 4 I saw him, joyful, happy of heart,<sup>125</sup> with a goblet of wine in hand,  
and within that mirror one beheld hundreds of various spectacles.
- 5 I said, “That’s the world-seeing goblet! When did the All-Wise (*al-ḥakīm*)<sup>126</sup> give it to you?”  
He said, “That day when He made this azure dome!”
- 6 He said, “That friend on account of whom the [top of the] gallows was raised,  
his crime was this: he revealed the secrets.”
- 7 All of reason’s sleights-of-hand [by] which it [tricks us] here,  
the sorcerer had performed before, in front of [Moses’s] rod and white hand.<sup>127</sup>
- 8 The one whose heart, like a flower bud, conceals the secret of reality,  
comments on the margins of the mind’s pages with [these] subtle point[s].<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Lāhūrī reads *labb*, which means “edge”, and in this case the seashore. Khānlarī, while indicating other possibilities in his apparatus (five manuscripts attest to *labb*), settled on *rah* instead, which would translate: “...lost on the way to the sea.” The seashore makes more sense in this context, because the heart is asking the wrong people, viz., those too frightened to dive into the sea of existence or the ocean of love. See *DKh*, #136, 289.

<sup>125</sup> Khānlarī’s edition reads *khūsh-dil* (happy of heart), while Lāhūrī reads *khandān* (laughing). Khānlarī’s apparatus for this *ghazal* (*DKh*, #136, 289) indicates three manuscripts attest to Lāhūrī’s version.

<sup>126</sup> This is a Divine Name established in the Qur’ān. See, e.g., 31:27, 46:2, 57:1, and 66:2.

<sup>127</sup> Referring to Qur’ān 7:104-122: “And Moses said, ‘O Pharaoh! I am truly a messenger from the Lord of the worlds, obligated to speak naught about God save the truth. I have brought you a clear proof from your Lord; so send forth with me the Children of Israel.’ He said, ‘If you have brought a sign, then bring it forth, if you are among the truthful.’ So he cast his staff and, behold, it was a serpent manifest. And he drew forth his hand and, behold, it was white to the onlookers. The notables among Pharaoh’s people said, ‘Truly this is a knowledgeable sorcerer. He desires to expel you from your land; so what do you command?’ They said, ‘Put him and his brother off for a while, and send marshals to the cities to bring you every knowledgeable sorcerer.’ And the sorcerers came unto Pharaoh. They said, ‘We shall surely have a reward if it is we who are victorious.’ He said, ‘Yes, and indeed you shall be among those brought nigh.’ They said, ‘O Moses! either you cast, or we will be the ones who cast.’ He said, ‘Cast!’ And when they cast, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck them with awe, and they brought forth a mighty sorcery. And We revealed unto Moses, ‘Cast their staff!’ And, behold, it devoured all their deceptions. Thus the truth came to pass, and whatsoever they did was shown to be false. Then and there they were vanquished and turned back, humbled. And the sorcerers were cast down prostrate. They said, ‘We believe in the Lord of the world, the Lord of Moses and Aaron.’”

<sup>128</sup> The verb is *muḥashshā kardan*, which is the act of writing a supercommentary on a manuscript, or any act of writing a commentary on the margins of a manuscript. *Nukta* translates “subtle point[s]” and *khāṭir* translates “mind”, but this can also mean memory, heart, thought, or whatever occurs to the mind. This couplet does not appear in Khānlarī’s edition, though a version of it does appear in one manuscript tradition (see *DKh*, #136, 289).

9 In all states God is with the one lost of heart,  
[and] he always sees Her, and cries out to the distance, “O God!”<sup>129</sup>

10 If the abounding<sup>130</sup> Holy Spirit continues to assist,  
others may every well perform what [Jesus] the Messiah did.

11 I said to him, “The chains of the idol’s tresses, what purpose do they serve?”  
He said, ”Ḥāfīz is complaining of a heart madly in love.

### **The Heart Capacious Enough for the Real: Becoming Broken-Hearted Like Jesus**

The heart is the locus for various functions in this love lyric, in addition to being the abode of the Real. Lāhūrī does not create a duality between the real heart and the metaphorical heart; the relationship between the physical organ of the heart and the Real is not fantasy, but very real. This *real* relationship is a nondual one, and can thus be understood as metaphorical truth in the Ricœurian sense. Metaphorical truth is not false or unreal; it is nondual, and augments reality just as the image does. The capacity to bring together opposites is one of the special characteristics of the human heart in this Islamic theo-poetics. In this love lyric, the theme of the heart ends with the necessity of becoming broken-hearted like Jesus.<sup>131</sup> As Hillman long ago suggested regarding this particular love lyric and its meter, Ḥāfīz’s consistent election to utilize long syllables when one or two short syllables was permitted by the meter indicates “a serious treatment of the subject of the *ghazal*.”<sup>132</sup> That is, in reciting it out loud, the auditor would become aware of the import of the lyric from the protracted long syllables. More importantly, the

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<sup>129</sup> Lāhūrī’s version of this hemistich has a meaning opposite of those found in the manuscript tradition studied by Khānlarī, who ultimately excluded it from his final, critical version. The manuscript tradition reads: “[and] he didn’t see Him, and cries out to the distance, ‘O God!’.” For Lāhūrī, the one lost of heart is the broken-hearted, afflicted wayfarer, with whom God remains perpetually and therefore who always sees God. For the opposite meaning, it appears this wayfarer is referring to the subject of the first two couplets, the wayfarer seeking in the wrong place for God; he cries out afar for God, even though God is already with him.

<sup>130</sup> The word I translate into “abounding” is the Arabic *faḡḡ*, which has variably been translated as emanation, radiation, or overflowing. It corresponds in Islamic philosophical texts to the neoplatonic term “emanate” with respect to the One. This term was encountered in Chapter Two (see footnote 17 therein) of this dissertation when Ibn ‘Arabī’s Holy (*muḡaddas*) and Most Holy (*aqdas*) Emanation (*faḡḡ*) was discussed.

<sup>131</sup> For a concise article on the function of the heart in Persian *ghazals*, and with respect to Ḥāfīz’s, see Glünz, “The Poet’s Heart: A Polyfunctional Object in the Poetic System of the Ghazal.” For the contemplative import of the heart to the function of spiritual perception for Ibn ‘Arabī, see Chapter Two (“Listening: Contemplation and the Purified Heart”) of Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 46-100.

<sup>132</sup> Michael C. Hillmann, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, 40.

repeated long syllables throughout indicate the lament of a broken-hearted wayfarer.

### The Real Heart is the Corporeal Heart

In Lāhūrī's commentary on the first couplet, rather than gloss "heart" metaphorically or as a symbol for some invisible entity in the human person, he expressly writes: "The intended [meaning] of 'heart' here is the pine[cone]-shaped heart that is on the left side [of the body] under the chest."<sup>133</sup> While this corporeal heart is common with all animals, the human heart has certain specific "subtleties and modalities" that make it more excellent than the generic animal heart. Lāhūrī cites an alleged *ḥadīth qudsī* in the voice of God to clarify: "In the body of the son of Adam there is a lump of flesh (*muḍgha*), and in the lump of flesh there is a heart (*qalb*), and in the heart there is an intellect ( *'aql*), and in the intellect there is an inner heart (*fu'ād*), and in the inner heart there is the spirit (*rūh*), and in the spirit there is a hidden [place] (*khafī*), and in the hidden place there is a secret: I am in the secret."<sup>134</sup> This secret, also termed the grain or kernel (*ḥabba*) of the heart, is the particular dwelling place (*manzil*) of the Real (no doubt the etymological root it shares with *ḥubb*, love, is not lost on Arabic speakers). He then cites a couplet from Shabistārī's *Garden of Mystery*: "In that little place the kernel of the heart possesses / the God of the two worlds [of the Seen and Unseen] has a dwelling place."<sup>135</sup> Lāhūrī, drawing

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<sup>133</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,276.

<sup>134</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,276. Lāhūrī also cites this alleged *ḥadīth qudsī* in his commentary on the first couplet of another love lyric (*DKh* #137, 290; *SH* II, #117, 828; *DAv* #137, 186; *DFo* #137, 430). The couplet: "You'll be able to perceive (*naẓar*) the secret of Jamshīd's cup whenever / you are able to make the wine tavern's dust the kohl of your eyesight (*baṣar*)." This *ḥadīth qudsī* is a variant of another ostensible *ḥadīth qudsī* cited by 'Abd al-Jalīl Laknawī (d.1633-34) in the manuscript of his *Rūh wa-naḥs* (no modern edition exists): "Verily within the body of the son of Adam is a lump of flesh, within the lump of flesh a heart, within the heart a spirit, within the spirit a light, and within the light a mystery and within the mystery am I" (William Chittick, "A Debate Between the Soul and the Spirit," in *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 179). Chittick refers in a footnote to p. 57 of Muḥyī al-Dīn Pādīshāh Qādirī's *Miftāḥ al-ḥaqā'iq fī kashf al-daqā'iq* (Hyderabad [?]: Maṭba'a-yi Sarkār-i Āṣafiyya, 1914) in which he claims this version appears. I have been unable to locate Lāhūrī's version of this *ḥadīth qudsī*. But, arguably this tradition of the various interior portions of the heart harkens back to Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa al-qalb wa al-fu'ād wa al-lubb*. For a critical edition, see Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa al-qalb wa al-fu'ād wa al-lubb* (Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre: Jordan, 2012 [available at <http://rissc.jo/-الصدر-والقلب-والفؤاد/>]. Accessed 17 May 2018]). For an English translation, see Nicholas Heer, *Three Early Sufi Texts* (Louisville, Ky. : Fons Vitae, 2003).

<sup>135</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,276; See Shabistārī, *Gulshān-i Rāz*, 17, v. 151; for commentary see Lāhījī, *Maḥāṭib Al-i'jāz Fī Sharḥ Gulshān-i Rāz*, 103, at v. 150.

from the tradition, suggests that the corporeal heart contains the Real, even though the Real is infinite. The heart is a coincidence of opposites. He then cites another commentary: “Jamshid’s goblet is a metonym here for the divine subtlety, which takes residence in the human heart, and from which passionate love emerges.”<sup>136</sup> The human wayfarer in the first couplet was searching for Jamshid’s goblet outside of her heart, which would be outside of God; this goblet contains the “wine of lights and the essence of the real Jamshīd—God.”<sup>137</sup> This divine subtlety in the heart causes passionate love to emerge in search of the goblet, which is ultimately within the human heart. Jamshīd’s goblet refers to Kay Khosrow’s world-seeing cup of Persian legend, and is later elided with Jamshīd, the inventor of wine. According to legend, in this goblet the whole world can be magically perceived; this is the perfect image for the microcosmic human person, in whom the whole world is created.

The second couplet augments the paradox of the infinite Real in the finite human heart: “Jamshīd’s goblet refers to the subtle [divine] secret which is the simple and infinite pearl whose expansiveness does not fit within shell of the spatio-temporal world, which is composite and not simple; this is because the infinite does not fit within the finite. For this reason, the Lord of the two worlds [of the Seen and Unseen] takes his abode there.”<sup>138</sup> It is impossible for the undelimited Real to enter within the delimitations of this phenomenal world; however, the human heart renders the coincidence of the finite and infinite possible. The Real is within the human heart, and the human heart, of course, is in a human person acting in the phenomenal world. The human wayfarer in couplet two is asking the *naḥs-i insānī*, or the human soul, for Jamshīd’s goblet. But the human soul is among those “lost on the shore of the sea of recognition (*ma’rifat*) of the reality of the secret subtlety.”<sup>139</sup> That is, the human soul is not submerged in the sea of

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<sup>136</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,277.

<sup>137</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,276.

<sup>138</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,277.

<sup>139</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,277.

realized existence, but lost along its shore.

### **The Capaciousness of the Heart: Mirroring God’s Infinitude**

Lost, the human wayfarer visits the Master of the Magi to supplicate him for assistance in resolving his enigma. Here it should be noted that there are multiple paradoxes that have produced this predicament. The human wayfarer already possesses something for which she searches; what she possesses cannot be contained within this phenomenal world; what cannot be contained within space and time is in her; she is nonetheless in this phenomenal world. She then seeks counsel from the Master of the Magi, a Zoroastrian priest and thus *outside* of the Islamic tradition. As Lāhūrī indicates, *pīr-i mughān* also means “wine seller” in poetic discourse (although he avers that the *pīr-i mughān* is a descendent of the community of Abraham).<sup>140</sup> The *pīr-i mughān*, who for Lāhūrī is the *ṣūfī* Pole of poles, the Guide of guides who “has inherited the inmost part (*bāṭin*) of Prophecy,”<sup>141</sup> gives the “wine of love (*maḥabbat*) and drink of affectionate love (*muwaddat*) to those who seek it.”<sup>142</sup> The *pīr-i mughān* thus has multiple meanings: the actual Zoroastrian priest, the wine seller, the cosmic, universal Pole (the Complete Human Person who is at once an individual in history, the microcosmic human race, and the collective of individual human persons), and the wayfarer’s particular *ṣūfī shaykh*. In any case, his gaze, or perception, is what assists him in unraveling the mystery.

The wayfarer encounters the *pīr* whose heart possesses the goblet of wine, which is the aforementioned secret divine subtlety, the Real. The goblet acts as mirror reflecting “the light of the theophany of the essence, attributes, names, acts, and effects.”<sup>143</sup> The heart mirrors the Real which is mirrored by the phenomenal world. The mutually reflective entities nevertheless find their ultimate source in the Divine Light. Lāhūrī then refers to Flash XIX of Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī’s

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<sup>140</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,277.

<sup>141</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,278.

<sup>142</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,278.

<sup>143</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,278.

Lama 'āt:

The passionate lover possesses a heart that is beyond all phenomenal-concretization (*ta'ayyun*), such that it is the encampment of the Dome of Glory, and the confluence of the Ocean of the Unseen and Seen. Consequently, the capaciousness [of this heart] is such that it does not fit within the entirety of world; [rather], the whole world vanishes in its embrace. [God] pitches the tent of Unity in the courtyard of [the heart's] oneness; there [God] holds the sultan's audience, and accomplishes affairs; there, [God] makes manifest untying and tying, contraction and expansion, variegation and stability.<sup>144</sup>

The capaciousness of the heart is an image of the Real's all-encompassing infinitude, but manifested in this phenomenal world. The relationship the heart has to the Real is one of contradiction, and 'Irāqī gesture toward this later in Flash XIX when he recalls two *ḥadīths*, paraphrasing: “The heart of [God's] servant encompasses [God] and the heart is in between the fingers of the All-Merciful: [God] is in the heart and the heart is in [God's] grasp.”<sup>145</sup> There is a sort of double within-ness between God and the human heart. In the realized heart, there is no logical, static synthesis, but rather “untying and tying, contraction and expansion, variegation and stability.”<sup>146</sup>

Up until now in the love lyric, Ḥāfiẓ has relied on Persian imagery that is not explicitly Islamic, although it was later appropriated by the *ṣūfī* tradition. However, at the fifth couplet the poet from Shīrāz transitions to Islamic theology and Qur'ānic narratives. The transitional couplet refers to *ḥakīm*, a traditional Divine Name (“All-Wise”). Following that, the Qur'ānic narratives of Moses and Jesus, along with the story of Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj from the Islamic tradition, are referenced. The secret divine subtlety in the heart had been with the Master of the Magi ever since the manifestation of this phenomenal world; Lāhūrī glosses this line further to imply pre-eternity. The point is that the Real has been with the heart eternally, whether the wayfarer knows it or not. This dialogue with the *pīr* conveys to the disciple the perception to see the Real in the

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<sup>144</sup> SH II, #187, 1,278; See 'Irāqī, *Risālah-i Lama'āt Va Risālah-i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 36 and 'Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 109.

<sup>145</sup> 'Irāqī, *Risālah-i Lama'āt Va Risālah-i Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 37 and 'Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, 110. The first saying is a *ḥadīth qudsī* that is unverified by the professional class of *ḥadīth* scholars: “My [God's] earth and my heaven do not encompass me, but the heart of my faithful servant does encompass me.” The other one is “The hearts of the children of Adam are like a single heart between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful” (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, volume 9, Book 46 (*kitāb al-qadar*), *Ḥadīth* 29).

<sup>146</sup> SH II, #187, 1,278.

heart; just as God self-reveals in a mirror, likewise does the master reveal the Real to the disciple in a personal relationship. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, in the sixth couplet, is once again relegated to a penultimate status vis-à-vis *ṣūfī* ranks, for he revealed the nondual secret to those who interpreted it as monistic unity.

### **Broken-Heartedness: Experiencing Beyond the Intellect**

The seventh couplet pitches the intellect (*‘aql*) against the heart. In the Qur’ānic narrative (7:104ff), Pharaoh’s sorcerers were summoned to compete with the miraculous power of Moses. The sorcerers in the narrative “bewitched the eyes of the people” (Qur’ān 7:116) and tricked them into seeing the staff as a serpent, whereas Moses had made his staff a manifest serpent. The distinction is important, because in Lāhūrī’s commentary, the intellect attempts to trick the heart: “This intellect...pretends to be knowledgeable, and fearing shame and ignorance, it does not say to the heart, ‘I am a stranger to the reality of the secret [divine] subtlety.’”<sup>147</sup> The intellect is effectively trying to deceive the heart with shrewd machinations and enticements, and so at other times it says to the heart, “since the secret [divine] subtlety is simple and infinite, how can it fit within your abode, O Heart, which is merely a delimited and composite piece of flesh,” or “since the secret [divine] subtlety is outside this spatio-temporal world, given its simplicity and infinitude, seeking after it in this phenomenal world is futile and impossible.”<sup>148</sup> The intellect deludes the human wayfarer with the logic of the impossible and prevents “the heart [from] seeing with the eye of certainty.”<sup>149</sup> The intellect is unable to bring together opposites, to make sense of metaphorical, nondual truth, whereas the heart, along with the imagination, is wholly capable of perceiving coherent contradiction. In the eighth couplet, the heart, upon recognizing the Real within, writes a supra-commentary on the margin’s of the mind’s pages; that is, the intellect obtains this recognition from the heart and is left transformed. The perception of the

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<sup>147</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,280.

<sup>148</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,280.

<sup>149</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,280.

heart via the imagination produces effects beyond just the heart. Lāhūrī himself suggests that the intellect in this love lyric may also refer to the *naḥs-i insānī* (human soul) or *naḥs-i nāṭiqā* (rational soul), which “perceive[s] the intelligibles through its own essence and conduct[s] the sensory body...through the intermediaries of the faculties of the [corporeal] members.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, perception of the Real within the heart has effective consequences for one’s outward engagement with alterity.

When the human wayfarer encountered her *pīr* in the fourth and fifth couplets, she attained the vision of the Real in the heart, realized the machinations of the intellect, and transformed her external actions mediated by her rational soul to reflect such perception. The ninth couplet, according to Lāhūrī, has as its subject the ultimate station, the Muḥammadan Presence. This station is described in similar terms to *jam* ‘*i jam*’, or the union of union, subsistence (*baqā*’) after annihilation (*fanā*’), but in terms of *coincidentia oppositorum*: “In this couplet [Ḥāfiẓ] is talking about the station of bringing together form and meaning, which...is granted to the most perfect Friends [of God], [for] they become capable of bringing together opposites (*jam* ‘*al-aḍḍād*).”<sup>151</sup> Human wayfarers in this station are in both separation (*farq*) and unity (*jam*’), awareness (*ṣaḥw*) and effacement (*maḥw*).<sup>152</sup> This station reflects Eriugena’s *plus-quam* theology, which brings together opposites similarly. The wayfarer in this station is also “broken-hearted,” according to Lāhūrī, which is why she always sees God in accordance with “I [God] am with/in the ones whose hearts are broken,” a citation from ‘Aṭṭār’s *Memorial of the Saints*, but also a reference to an unestablished though acknowledged *ḥadīth qudsī*.<sup>153</sup> The state of

<sup>150</sup> SH II, #187, 1,280; Here Lāhūrī is allegedly citing Lāhījī’s *Sharḥ-i Gulshān-i Rāz*, but I was unable to locate the exact quote; the topic is discussed variously, however: see Lāhījī, *Maḥāṭih Al-i ‘jāz Fī Sharḥ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 18, 46, 189, 213, 338, and 392.

<sup>151</sup> SH II, #187, 1,281.

<sup>152</sup> SH II, #187, 1,281.

<sup>153</sup> SH II, #187, 1,281. See Farīd Al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Guzīdah-i Tazkirat Al-awliyā*, ed. by Muḥammad Isti‘lāmī (Tīhrān: Mu’assasah-’i Intishārāti Franklin, 1973), 186. The *ḥadīth qudsī* was likely made widely known by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), since it is found in his *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*: “*anā ‘inda al-munkasirah qulūbuhum min ajlī*” / “I am with those whose hearts are broken for My sake.” See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Beginning of Guidance: Complete Arabic Text with Facing English Translation*, Tr. by Mashhad al-Allaf, Re. and Ed by

the afflicted is blessed by God's presence.

Ḥāfiẓ connects this state with Jesus the Messiah, who was enabled to perform miracles by the power of the abounding or emanating (*ḥayḍ*) Holy Spirit. Lāhūrī suggests that this couplet is directly related to the previous ones, and so interprets the state of Jesus Christ to be the state of the lost of heart, the broken-hearted, and the passionate lover, in whom God resides. After a Persian paraphrase of section from Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* on the chapter of Jesus,<sup>154</sup> Lāhūrī concludes: “if the abounding (*ḥayḍ*) Holy Spirit, which was blown into Mary and effected the coming-in-existence of Jesus, grants a similar emanation (*ḥayḍ*) again for others, then those others, too, would do what Jesus did in the variety of miracles and extraordinary affairs. This is because the door of divine emanation is open from pre-eternity to post-eternity in the same way.”<sup>155</sup> Other human wayfarers, in their broken-heartedness, may be Jesus, the passionate lover, through the power of the Holy Spirit; they may *perform the impossible*. Reading the final couplet and its commentary, this may be the lot of all human wayfarers, should they desire it. When Ḥāfiẓ asks what is the purpose of the idol’s tresses, he is effectively asking what is the point of the affliction and suffering of this phenomenal world. The question could be reworded: “Why am I madly in love?” Lāhūrī glosses: “The meaning of ‘idols’ is the metaphorical/phenomenal (*majāzī*) beloveds which, through the manifestations of the Real Beauty, are the purpose (*maqṣūd*) and object of intention of the recognized ones (‘*ārif*s) who possess the eye [of insight].”<sup>156</sup> What’s the purpose of this world? To enter into its broken-heartedness so that the Real may be made manifest through us, just as Jesus does.

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Abur-Rahman ibn Yusuf (White Thread Press, 2010), 128-129; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Bidāyat Al-hidāyah*, ed. by ‘Abd Al-Ḥamīd Darwīsh (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 1998), 143. It is also found in Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* in several places; see Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, I.410.4, I.434.36, II.149.24, III.219.33-34, III.481.6, IV.103.30.

<sup>154</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,282. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 177; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of ‘The Bezels of Wisdom’*, 106; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 211 (line 12) - 214 (line 2).

<sup>155</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,282-1,283.

<sup>156</sup> *SH* II, #187, 1,283.

Recalling our working definition of an Islamic theo-poetics: it is a way of operating, living, speaking, and acting (*modus operandi vivendi loquendi agendi*) attuned to the modality of God's relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate, imbued with a desire to engage this world subsisting in God, who is passionate love. To this we add that it is freed from the constraints of the intellect by the experience of broken-heartedness.

### **Subsisting in God Subsisting in Us**

The reference to Jesus provides an opportune closure to this section and the pivot at which I turn to some comparative insights. How might the theological anthropology of subsistence in God, imagined in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry, be reimagined Christologically both in Eriugena's own cosmology of the world as imaginal and in his anthropology of the self as the *imago Dei*? Returning to Eriugena, Lāhūrī/Ḥāfiẓ enable a further construction of the Incarnation (and Incarnate Word) as the Christian *khayāl* or imagination, and the Incarnational life as the Christian imaginary. The imagination in Lāhūrī and the larger Akbarian tradition is exercised with the heart, which is not only able to comprehend nondual truth like the imagination and metaphor, but is also the locus of its own *coincidentia oppositorum*: the human subsists in God, and God dwells in the human heart. Lāhījī, in his commentary on the verse from the *Rose Garden of Mystery* Lāhūrī cites, concludes as much: "The heart brings together opposites and contraries through [its] outward and inward liminality (*barzakhīyat-i zāhir u bāṭin*)."<sup>157</sup> Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī keep the boundary between God and the world, between the self and the Real, porous, passable, and permeable, and a Christian theo-poetics of the flesh, given the Incarnation, should imagine the same liminality.

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<sup>157</sup> Lāhījī, *Maḥāṭih Al-i 'jāz Fī Sharḥ Gulshan-i Rāz*, 103.

## Theologizing the Poetic, Interreligiously

The heart in this Islamic theo-poetics connects not only with the *imago Dei* anthropology of Eriugena, but also with his cosmology of imaginal theophanies. There is a double mirroring in the heart, as it were: it images God by entering into the images of the world. In other words, it lives within the theo-poetics of the world in order to encounter God. In this section, I theologize the poetic in the rich traditions of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī while in conversation with Eriugena in search of comparative insights.

### An Islamic Poetics in Eriugena

Disembodying the meaning of poetry from its formal metaphors is the textual equivalent to fleeing from enfleshment in search of a disembodied experience of God; in Eriugena's cosmological Christology, this would mean a flight *from* the enfleshed life into which God the Word condescended, implying a rejection of that very embodiment God assumed in the second person of the Trinity. Rejecting Christ our epiphany is a rejection of broken-heartedness. This is even paralleled in Ḥāfīz's sharp criticism of the hypocritical ascetic in many of his love lyrics. The ambiguity of poetic metaphors reflects the ambiguity of Incarnational life. Proper, realized perception is required to make sense of these ambiguities, not to disambiguate them, but rather to act within the poetics. This is the image of the Complete Person in Ḥāfīz, who furthermore has an imaginal faculty receptive to the imaginal forms of the world, which forms reveal and conceal God. The Complete Person is able to interpret the inward from the outward and the outward from the inward. In Eriugena, the Incarnate Word is the figure through whom we interpret the world; the Incarnate Word's nondual Christology functions as the poetic key that unlocks theophanic, imaginal perception of the world. Eriugena textualizes this perception in the *Periphyseon*. Moving away from a Christology of synthesis, I aim to construct through this exercise in comparative theology an Incarnational theology of the imagination, or an Incarnational imaginary.

The key to unlocking theophanic perception in the Islamic traditions of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī is

the imaginal faculty. Poetry, with its metaphors that mirror this phenomenal world of metaphors, is the unique medium able to transform dualistic perception into theophanic, nondual perception. Uncovering the imaginal in Eriugena's *Periphyseon* was facilitated through an engagement with the Islamic, poetic tradition. But more can be asked. Is the theo-poetics in the traditions of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī a feature of Eriugena's project? If so, how does it manifest within his Incarnational theology, and are there constructive insights discovered in an Eriugenian, Christian theo-poetics? Simply put: what is the poetics of Eriugena's thought?

Poetics here is defined in terms of the Islamic traditions of Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī, viz., as “the sciences...connected to the forms of imaginalization (*tamaththul*) and imagination (*khayāl*)...[associated] with complete form-giving (*al-taṣwīr al-tamm*) and harmonious arrangement (*al-niẓām*),”<sup>158</sup> and metaphor (*majāz*) as “everything that goes *beyond* the strictly logical application of language”<sup>159</sup> (which is in concert with Ricœur's metaphorical copula that brings together “is and is not”). Evidenced by the two *ghazals* analyzed in chapter three, the Akbarian tradition and School of Love relied on a theory of poetic imagery at variance with even the classical Islamic philosophers and theologians such as al-Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, ibn Rushd, and even al-Ghazālī. For this Islamic theo-poetics, contrariwise, *how* words come together produces meaning unavailable in other permutations, such as logical discourse or syllogism.

This intra-Islamic difference, arguably, is the result of the reception of the Aristotelian corpus by these classical Muslim thinkers.<sup>160</sup> For them, poetic discourse and imagination were subject to syllogistic reasoning and the intellect, respectively. In this case, a poetic metaphor, for

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<sup>158</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.275.13-14;17-18 (Chapter 167 “Concerning the Recognition of the Alchemy of Happiness”), cited by Chittick, “The World of Imagination and Poetic Imagery According to Ibn Al-Arabī,” 114.

<sup>159</sup> From *Ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'ān* (Interpreting the Difficulties of the Qur'ān) of Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), in Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind : Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Isti'āra in Arabic Poetics*, 30-31.

<sup>160</sup> For a summary of the Aristotelian influence on these Muslim figures in terms of their view of poetry, see Salim Kemal, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroës: The Aristotelian Reception* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

example, was judged true only insofar as it could be reduced to a valid demonstrative syllogism, and thereby permit the intellect to obtain an imageless truth through the imagination. Even al-Ghazālī, himself no fan of Aristotelian logic, still held it in some practical regard and argued that metaphors should be converted into poetic syllogisms. However, this “requirement suggests that poetic language succeeds when it can be garbed in literal sense and truth.”<sup>161</sup>

It denies the authenticity of poetic language taken for itself and instead seeks justification through its link with prosaic expression. [For al-Ghazālī,] images, metaphors, etc., are not of value for themselves but for what they are not but can point to: literal sense and truth. In this, poetic language never has autonomy or its own validity but is only ever secondary to something outside itself, which it aims at.<sup>162</sup>

The classical, Islamic reception of Aristotle’s *Poetics* resulted in the disembodiment of poetry, the disambiguation of the ambiguous, so that syllogistic truth can be uncovered once stripped of outer form (it was arguably a genre for those masses not or less educated in syllogistic reasoning). This is decisively *not* the case for the Akbarian tradition and School of Love. Rather, poetic images or metaphors, as expressed and interpreted above, have “meaning...in the structure of the image itself and not in something outside of it.”<sup>163</sup> We have seen that ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078), the Persian literary theorist of the Arabic language, is a Muslim thinker who proposed such a theory of poetic images and metaphors.<sup>164</sup> For al-Jurjānī, poetic imagery, or form (*ṣūra*), is constitutive of the meaning, and the meaning cannot manifest except in that particular form. Furthermore, “the image creates the beauty of the expression *by a process different from* that of the *literal* statement of meaning.”<sup>165</sup> Accordingly, the metaphorical image in particular,

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<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>163</sup> Abū Dīb, *Al-Jurjānī’s Theory of Poetic Imagery*, 80.

<sup>164</sup> “[Al-Jurjānī] treats imagery [as follows]: that no word in isolation has any beauty or eloquence inherent in it. It is only when it enters into a system of relations that it acquires beauty and expressiveness. This view of imagery is, as far as I have been able to determine, unique even with reference to modern criticism. For what is rejected here is the assumption that imagery possesses an inherent inner power or value as an act of imaginative creation, regardless of its linguistic formulation. The implications of this rejection are capable of revolutionizing the study of imagery and, ultimately, disposing of the view that imagery is ornamental and extraneous. I know of no other critic who has gone this far in attributing the effectiveness, expressiveness and power of imagery to its linguistic form and its relationship with its immediate context” (*ibid.*, 62-63).

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, 80. Similarly, [for] Jurjānī, meaning does not exist outside its own form, and it is a heresy to say that

and poetry in general, expresses something otherwise inexpressible by the logical or literal.

Is this not theophany for Eriugena? Theophany is nothing but “the speaking of the unspeakable (*ineffabilis fatus*).”<sup>166</sup> Here we have a constructive insight, viz., that theophany is theo-poetics, when poetics is understood in terms of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī and their Islamic, poetic tradition. But this is also the Incarnation for Eriugena. The Incarnation structures the world in ways unavailable without it; the event of the Incarnation cannot be abstracted from Eriugena’s thought without fundamentally altering *how* God relates to the world and humans, and humans with each other. The Incarnation is not secondary to ontology, cosmology, and anthropology, but it is constitutive of them; it is *how* we are, *how* the world is, and *how* we relate to each other and the world. To extract further this poetics from Eriugena, I turn once again to his other texts: his *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy* and, in concluding, his collection of poems, *Carmina*.

### **Theology, “as it were a poetess”**

In his *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy*, Eriugena spills plenty of ink on the proper interpretation of visible, sensible images and forms (in creation and in Scripture) vis-à-vis the invisible beauty and formless meaning that they unveil. While Eriugena often places these visible, corporeal images at a lower level of the divine hierarchy than invisible meaning, he never relegates them to a status that is at once unnecessary and discardable in this phenomenal world. Rather, because the human mind is prone to deception by “material fantasies,” a consequence of original sin, “it is unable to be raised unto the immaterial imitation of the celestial residents, according to our nature, [in] contemplation of the highest Cause of all things through theological grace, *unless it first make use of the guidance of material things* so that it may arrive thereto.”<sup>167</sup>

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the same meaning can be expressed in two different ways, one being more, or less, eloquent than another. He sees in this heresy the roots of many misconceptions about language, poetry, and literary expression in general” (Kamāl Abū Dīb, “Abd-Al-Qaḥer Jorjāni,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abd-al-qaher-jorjani-grammarian-rhetorician-and-literary-theorist-d-1078> ([accessed April 25, 2018]).

<sup>166</sup> *PP* III, 22, 591 (633AB); see *PP* III, 22, 589-598 (633AB) for full section.

<sup>167</sup> *CCH*, 14, 498-505.

The material, phenomenal world cannot be discarded for the sake of immaterial contemplation.

Visible forms, whether they be contemplated in the nature of things or in the most holy sacraments of divine scripture, are not made for their own sakes, and are not to be desired or made known to us for their own sakes, but rather...they are images (*imaginatioes*) of invisible beauty, through which [images] human souls are called back by divine providence into that pure and invisible beauty of that Truth which everyone who loves, whether they know it or not, loves, and towards which [everyone who loves] stretches (*tendit*).<sup>168</sup>

Desiring and knowing visible forms in this world is for the sake of desiring and knowing God the Truth; the images guide the human subject *beyond towards God*, neither by settling on the object in itself nor by discarding the object as useless. The relation between the visible and invisible is constitutive of the image. One must enter into the image—the flesh—in order to go beyond.

Later, in chapter two of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Eriugena comments on the function of theology detailed by Pseudo-Dionysius, which he translates: “Indeed, with intense artistry (*valde artificialiter* = ἀτεχνῶς—!), theology employs sacred, constructed (*factitiis* = ποιητικάῖς) formations in [revealing] formless meanings (*non figuratis intellectibus* = ἀσχηματίστων νοῶν)...unveiling our mind, providing a return that is proper and connatural to it, [and] forming holy scriptures to uplift [us] to [God].”<sup>169</sup> In a thoroughly contradictory mistranslation, Eriugena renders ἀτεχνῶς (without artistry or skill) as “with intense artistry.” René Roques has demonstrated that this is no accident of a misreading or of a materially deficient manuscript; Eriugena intentionally—and audaciously—corrects Dionysius’s negative adverb and translated it into a superlative with the opposite meaning.<sup>170</sup> Condensed in this mistranslated adverb there is found the exalted status which Eriugena grants the liberal arts. Following the subsequent commentary, and then drawing from his conception of the eternal and divine status of the liberal

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<sup>168</sup> CCH, 15, 510-518.

<sup>169</sup> CCH, 23, 124-128. The original Greek: Καὶ γὰρ ἀτεχνῶς ἢ θεολογία ταῖς ποιητικάῖς ἱεροπλαστίαις ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσχηματίστων νοῶν ἐχρήσατο τὸν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὡς εἰρηται νοῦν ἀνασκειψαμένη καὶ τῆς οἰκείας αὐτῶ καὶ συμφυοῦς ἀναγωγῆς προνοήσασα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀναπλάσασα τὰς ναγωγικὰς ἱερογραφίας (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, volume 2, 10, 9-12 (137B)). For English, see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 148.

<sup>170</sup> See René Roques, “‘*Valde artificialiter*’: le sens d’un contresens,” *Annuaire de l’école pratique des Hautes Études* 77 (1969-1970): 31-72.

arts, theology is understood to be both a power of the human mind and a poetic art that conforms revelation to en fleshed souls. He comments on this translation as follows:

With great artistry (*multum artificiose*), theology, viz., that power (*virtus*) which inheres naturally in human minds for the sake of seeking, investigating, contemplating, and loving the divine reasons, employs constructed, i.e., formed, holy images for the sake of signifying divine meanings, which lacks all circumscribed and sensible figure and form; by this art of forming images [theology] unveils to the mind, or...counsels the mind, and by a guiding-back that is proper and connatural to the mind, formed cleverly in the images of sensible things, [theology] provides things connatural to us, as yet constituted in the flesh on account of our sin, and conforms the anagogic holy scriptures for the sake...of guiding our minds back, leading the soul upward on high.<sup>171</sup>

Here, theology is both a power in the mind, and that which unveils to the mind through poetic images of divine meanings; theology functions much like the imagination in Ḥāfiẓ and Lāhūrī.

Eriugena suggests that the revelatory function of theology is executed within the human mind, the nexus at which God reveals, and humans create, sensible images. Theology *creates images of unconfined divine meanings*. He then continues:

Just as in poetic art, through imagined stories (*fictas fabulas*) and allegorical similitudes, which compiles moral and physical teaching for the disciplining of human souls...likewise theology, *as it were a poetess*, conforms holy scripture to formed images for the sake of looking after and leading souls back, via the corporeal and exterior senses into the perfect recognition of intelligible things, as it were (*veluti*) from an imperfect, childish nature into the maturity of the interior person.<sup>172</sup>

Theology—in this context, the composition of holy scripture—is a function of poetic art and valued as the apex of artistry for Eriugena, *pace* Dionysius, who was contending that it was a discipline entirely different from human artistry and incomparable therewith. In a commentarial section of chapter one of the *CH*, Eriugena states more forcefully what he also treats in the *Periphyseon*:<sup>173</sup>

The natural and liberal disciplines are united to signify one and the same inner [discipline] of contemplation, which is the greatest source of all wisdom, who is Christ. [...] And all the natural arts, in the limits of which all divine scripture is included, come together to signify Christ in a symbolic

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<sup>171</sup> *CCH*, 23, 129-141.

<sup>172</sup> *CCH*, 24, 142-151.

<sup>173</sup> See, e.g., “Accordingly, it has truly been searched for and discovered by the philosophers that the arts are eternal and forever adhering immutably to the soul such that they seem to be not some sort of accidents to it, but natural virtues and actions that in no way recede from it; neither are they able to recede nor do they come from elsewhere, but rather they are naturally innate to [the soul]” (*PP* I, 62, 1891-1896 [486C]).

manner.<sup>174</sup>

Roques rightly understands this passage to imply that the liberal arts, through which all of the phenomenal world is studied, described, and known, are an image of Christ, just as the human mind is made in the image of God.<sup>175</sup> The arts are not a human invention but eternally subsisting in the Wisdom of Christ and accessed and exercised by human persons insofar as they are innate to the human mind. The human artist gives form to meaning in a process that parallels theophany, in fact; the art, residing eternally in Christ the Word, descends in a threefold progression from intellect to reason, from reason to memory, “[revealing] itself more manifestly in phantasies, as it were (*veluti*) more brightly in certain forms,” and then is “diffused into the corporeal senses.”<sup>176</sup> The human artist, in constructing sensible images, emulates the Divine Artist (Christ) in manifesting the world through theophany; the theologian (i.e., an author of holy scripture) is a human artist who is moved by the Divine Artist when contemplating Christ the Word in whom the arts reside. The function of theology mirrors the function of the imagination for Ḥāfīz, and the theologian for Eriugena functions similarly to the poet for Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, as outlined in chapter three. Furthermore, the Incarnate Word, Christ, is arguably functioning, through this interreligious reading, as the Imaginal World. The theologian participates in divine *theopoiesis* and *creates* images *ex Deo/Nihil*.

Christ, the Divine Word, is the intermediary through and in which the world is *as it were created* from *nothing*, and *how* human persons image the God who is *Nothing*. We can be images of *nihil* because of the Divine Word who creates (*poiesis*) us, and in whom we are paradoxically *unconfined*. The Divine Word frees up our poetic potential to imagine forth ever disruptive images of God in this world, to imagine forth the Incarnation, now. As argued in this chapter, the Incarnation, the *how* of nonduality, constructs a theo-poetics of the flesh in which these

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<sup>174</sup> CCH, 16, 551-560.

<sup>175</sup> See Roques, “‘*Valde artificialiter*’: le sens d’un contresens,” 43-45.

<sup>176</sup> PP III, 58, 1633-1636 (658C). The full passage is at PP III, 57-58, 1617-1644 (658ABCD).

theophanic images are augmented and intensified through Christ, through whom we can poetically create new images. What does this Incarnational poetics look like? Turning to its corollary in the Islamic traditions of Lāhūrī/Ḥāfīz, we can learn from the relationship among the heart, imagination, and divine immanence (kataphasis) in contradistinction to the relationship among the intellect, dialectical reasoning, and transcendence (apophasis) to inform this theo-poetics comparatively. The heart was central to the love lyric discussed above, and so I draw from the Islamic tradition to expand this theo-poetics of the heart.

### **The Centrality of the Heart in an Islamic Theo-Poetics: Imagining God in the World**

Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed the delimiting knowledge of the intellect (*‘aql*), which yields apophasis/transcendence (*tanzīh*), and the unlimited knowledge of the heart (*qalb*), which yields immanence/kataphasis (*tashbīh*). In the love lyric analyzed in this chapter, the heart is the locus of the Real, a coincidence of opposites, and is enabled to imagine forth the Beloved, while the intellect attempts to deceive the heart and delude the human wayfarer. Here the heart is not a metonym for “emotion” in contradistinction to “reason,” but rather the organ that transfigures perception so that theophany may be witnessed; if it does contradict reason, it does so because reason is reading the world dualistically and without the imagination, or worse yet in mere blind obedience (*taqlīd*) to formal belief.<sup>177</sup> The functional role of the imagination in the knowledge of the heart provides insight into an Incarnational theo-poetics. The imagination is the faculty that permits the perception of God in Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics; given Lāhūrī’s Akbarian background, this is not foreign to him. What does it mean that the House of God resides in the heart, or that through the imagination the Beloved graces the lover with the impossible (*muḥāl*) image, or that within the corporeal heart is the Real? Just as the metaphorical is everything in discourse that goes beyond the strictly logical application of language, likewise for the Akbarian tradition “the heart is the faculty (*quwwa*) that is beyond the stage of the intellect (*‘aql*).”<sup>178</sup> The

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<sup>177</sup> See Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 79ff.

<sup>178</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, I.289.31 (Chapter 58 “Concerning Recognition of the Secrets of People of Veiling Inspiration and the Recognition of the Divine Knowledge Overflowing Upon the Heart”). For

heart of the faithful servant, according to the *ḥadīth* seminal to this tradition, encompasses God, and so contrary to the delimiting function of the intellect, “fluctuation (*taqlīb*) in the heart is equivalent to the divine self-transmutation in forms, hence recognition (*maʿrifā*) of the Real from the Real [is granted] only through the heart and not through the intellect.”<sup>179</sup> The heart’s capacity to encompass God and to fluctuate according to the divine transmutation in phenomenal images is correlated to the Akbarian conception of imagination:

The reality of the imagination is mutability in every state and manifesting in every form. The only real existence that is immutable is God, and there is nothing in realized existence but God; what is other than [God] is imagination. So when the Real manifests in this imaginal existence, It does so according to the reality of [the imagination], not according to [the Real’s] essence, which is real existence.<sup>180</sup>

There is nothing in existence but God; God is immutable; but this existence is mutable; therefore God manifests according to the imagination. This is the basic syllogistic structure of “realized existence,” which implies a coincidence of opposites—the mutable with the immutable. This coincidence of opposites, concluded via a reasoning that subverts itself, is recognizable only to the imagination; otherwise, *the way* this world manifests God (a theo-poetics) would be structurally altered. The imagination is able to comprehend this theo-poetics. Lāhūrī glossed Ḥāfiẓ to aver that the immutability of the impossible image is imperceptible *except* through the imagination and by the beloved’s choice to reveal; this commentary concords with the above. The heart, the only faculty capable of mirroring the theophanies in the world, appears to be correlated to the function of the imagination. Both are able to apprehend reality beyond the strictures of logical reasoning. The poet, through the use of metaphor, textualizes what the imagination apprehends, and the poet-mystic (the *ʿārif*) textualizes the divine apprehended through the heart. Metaphor induces the semantic shock, per Ricœur, of the coincidence of opposites (is and is not),

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Chittick’s discussion, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-ʿArabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 111.

<sup>179</sup> Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, I.289.33 (Chapter 58); see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-ʿArabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 112.

<sup>180</sup> Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.313.12-14 (Chapter 177 “Concerning Recognition of the Station of Recognition”); see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-ʿArabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 118.

and this semantic shock transforms perception and action.

But the Peripatetic Islamic philosophers and the Muslim dialectical theologians relegated the function of the imagination to a secondary or even tertiary status vis-à-vis the intellect; this in large part was an inheritance of the Aristotelian corpus.<sup>181</sup> Given the Akbarian cosmological structuring of “God/not-God”, viz., that the world is (*tashbīh*, kataphasis) and is not (*tanzīh*, apophasis) God, Ibn ‘Arabī rejects this relegation of imagination; if reality is a coincidence of opposites, and if God is the supreme *coincidentia oppositorum* (God is “the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Nonmanifest” [Qur’ān 57:3]), then only the imagination can apprehend the true nature of God and/in the world.

Among the power (*quwwa*) of the creation of the World of the Imagination is that the coincidence of opposites (*al-jam‘ bayn al-addād*) manifests therein, because sense perception and the intellect are unable to make opposites coincide, whereas the imagination is able [to do so]...The imaginal faculty (*al-quwwat al-mutakhayyila*) and the World of Imagination...is the nearest to indicating the Real...Hence nothing has truly attained unto the [Divine] Form except the imagination.<sup>182</sup>

Poetic metaphors textualize the imagination because metaphorical truth is nondual truth; it is the linguistic counterpart to the imagination in that the imagination embodies that which has no body and permits the God/not-God structure of the cosmos to be perceived with any of the corporeal senses.<sup>183</sup> This is not quite a synthesis, but rather a nondual coincidence of opposites. For

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<sup>181</sup> For a summary of the Islamic reception of Greek thought regarding the imagination, see Aaron W. Hughes, *The Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 86-102. As Hughes points out, “Within this Peripatetic paradigm, the imagination fares rather poorly since it cannot provide the rational soul with universals. Indeed, the best that the faculty of the imagination can do is initiate the process of intellection; once this process has begun, however, the imagination actually gets in the way of the intellect’s proper operation” (Hughes, *The Texture of the Divine*, 94).

<sup>182</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, IV.325.3-8 (this is found in a section entitled “The Presence of the Comprehensive Presences Belonging to the Most Beautiful-and-Good Names,” in Chapter 558 “Concerning the Recognition of the Most Beautiful-and-Good Names that Belong to the Lord of Glory and What is Permitted to be Spoken Of About Them and What is Not Permitted” in which he discusses each of the Divine Names and more); see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 115-116.

<sup>183</sup> Elsewhere, Ibn ‘Arabī writes: “The reality of the imagination is to embody (*yujassid*) that which is not properly a body (*jasad*), and this is because the presence [of the imagination] gives it that [body, capacity?]. None of the levels of the cosmos give the situation as it really is except the imaginal presence, for it makes contraries come together, and the realities manifest therein as they are in themselves. The truth of the affairs is that you should say concerning everything that you see or perceive—through whatever faculty perception thereof occurs—[God/not-God]” (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.379.3-6 [Chapter 188 “Concerning Recognition of the Station of Vision, which is the Bearer of Glad Tidings”]; see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 116.)

Ricœur, metaphor abolishes the logical distance of two semantic fields, produces a semantic shock, and creates meaning.<sup>184</sup> The meaning obtained from the text “collides with the real world in order to ‘remake’ it<sup>185</sup>.” For my reading of Eriugena, the Incarnation abolishes the logical distance between the world and God, and produces a dynamic imaginary that remakes the world: it invites the re-imagination of spaces and communities precisely because all things are images of an unrestricted deity, of the unconfined Divine Word. The world is infinitely formable by the unrestrained imagination/Incarnation.

### **The Heart and the Imagination as Liminal Space**

For Ibn ‘Arabī, the imagination is likewise a *barzakh*, an isthmus or liminal place between two contradictory things.<sup>186</sup> This is why Lāhūrī connects the *barzakh* to humanity, or the Complete Person, and also why he contends that witnessing the divine occurs *between* veiling and unveiling. Human persons, with a heart in which the Real resides, are capable of interpreting the inward from the outward and the outward from the inward. Lāhūrī employs the Qur’ānic “He released the two seas, meeting [together], [and] between them there is a *barzakh* that they do not transgress” (Q 55:19-20) to suggest that the human person is this *barzakh*. Ibn ‘Arabī speaks of the *barzakh* in terms of the heart:

The *barzakh* is the most capacious (*ausa* ) of the presences and the meeting place of the two seas: the sea of meanings and the sea of sensory things. The sensory thing [alone] is not a meaning and the meaning [alone] is not a sensory thing, but the presence of the imagination, which we have called the meeting place of the two seas, embodies meanings and subtilizes the sensory thing. *It transmutes (yuqallib) in the eye of the viewer the entity of every object of knowledge.*<sup>187</sup>

This is also what the heart does: it fluctuates according to the divine self-transmutations in the forms of the world. Likewise, the heart is capacious enough for God and between the fingers of

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<sup>184</sup> See Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 172-173.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>186</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 117-118.

<sup>187</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, III.361.5-7 (Chapter 369 “Concerning Recognition of the Waystation of the Keys to the Treasuries of Generosity”); see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, 123.

the All-Merciful. In the most concise introduction to the function of the heart in Ibn ‘Arabī’s corpus, the chapter on Shu‘ayb in his *Fuṣūṣ*, he opens with language similar to the *barzakh* of the imagination: “Know that the heart...of the knower of God is derived from the Mercy of God, though it is more capacious (*ausa‘*) than [God’s Mercy], for [the heart] encompasses (*wasi‘a*) the Real but [God’s] Mercy does not encompass (*tasa‘a*) God...It is established...that [God’s] Mercy encompasses (*wasi‘at*) all things...and is more capacious (*ausa‘*) than the heart or equivalent to it in capacity (*sa‘ah*).”<sup>188</sup> A stronger connection between the heart and the imagination cannot be established.

In the first love lyric discussed in chapter three, Lāhūrī glosses the “search for the impossible (*muḥāl*) image” in terms of the human lover’s own effort in the affair. The image of the Beloved, immutable, is ungraspable by the effort of the lover, absent of the Beloved’s grace. He contrasts the imagination with the search for the impossible; *with* the imagination, the impossible image is perceptible, but *without* the imagination, its perception remains unattainable. Given the capaciousness of the imagination and that, according to this tradition, the “imagination is nothing but one of the presences of sense perception, and therefore it joins meanings to sensory forms so that the impossible (*muḥāl*) is imaginalized in a sensory form,”<sup>189</sup> the impossible image of the Beloved is observed through the imaginal power of the Real. This imaginal power is termed “the Presence of the Imagination” in the Akbarian tradition, and it is exercised both in dreams and, more significantly, in unveiling. “How capacious (*ausa‘a*) is the presence of the imagination in which impossible (*muḥāl*) existence manifests! Rather, according to realization nothing manifests therein except the impossible existence, for [God], who does not receive forms,

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<sup>188</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 168-169; see Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 147-148; and Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Fuṣūṣ Al-ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of ‘The Bezels of Wisdom’*, 86-87.

<sup>189</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, IV.282.18-19 (this is found in a section entitled “Power, the Presence of Power,” in Chapter 558 “Concerning the Recognition of the Most Beautiful-and-Good Names that Belong to the Lord of Glory and What is Permitted to be Spoken Of About Them and What is Not Permitted” in which he discusses each of the Divine Names and more).

manifests in forms in this presence [of the imagination].”<sup>190</sup> Discursive logic, dialectical reasoning, operations of the intellect, sensory perception without the imaginal presence—these all fail to comprehend the impossible because of the law of noncontradiction, the logic of the impossible. The heart, capaciousness enough for God, imagines forth the Beloved in an experience incomprehensible to the intellect: it becomes broken-hearted like Jesus within the theo-poetics of the world and informs the intellect with marginalia on the mind’s pages, as the love lyric above contended.

### **Theology as Imagining Forth the Incarnation**

Having been immersed in the Akbarian poetics of the imagination, Eriugena’s Christ the Artist is reimagined as the Word who provides ever novel images of God/*Nihil* for the *poiēsis* of theology. This *poiēsis* reaches its apex in the Incarnate Word. The imagination manifests the formless God in forms, and the Incarnation gives flesh to the fleshless God. Christ, in whom the creative arts reside, becomes our imagination for this phenomenal world when we imagine forth *novel* images through the Incarnate Word. All flesh is *imagined as* the flesh of Christ, our epiphany. This logically nonsensical and even scandalous statement is judged impossible by the ratiocinative intellect. It cannot *comprehend* the Incarnation because it is not capacious enough; but like the imagination, the Incarnation is the most capacious presence—our “habitation” and “breadth”—for it embraces all of reality and transforms living spaces and communities. Through the superabundant creativity *ex nihilo/Deo*, we have access to God’s infinite images, which we imagine forth in the flesh. Nothing restricts our Incarnational, imaginative practices because we are unconfined in the Divine Word: the poetics of the impossible liberates us from the logic of the impossible.

Even though Eriugena considered the formless, divine meaning of things to be higher on the theo-ontological hierarchy (at the “top” of which is, paradoxically, the nonsubstantialist

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<sup>190</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah*, II.312.4-6 (Chapter 177 “Concerning Recognition of the Station of Recognition”).

Divine *Nihil*), insofar as we exist in this world, one can never discard the body, the flesh, to perceive the Trinitarian God imagelessly. Eriugena does rely on dialectical reasoning to posit a synthesis in the *reditus*, but through this interreligious reading I wish to move beyond synthesis and toward the nondual truth of the imagination and poetic metaphor—something not totally foreign to Eriugena’s theology of the image, as I have argued. We remain in the flesh, and the flesh is renewed in the Incarnate Word; we therefore glimpse God in the flesh through the Incarnate Word, and are compelled to act in the flesh according to the life of the Incarnate Word.

If in neoplatonism, broadly construed, the imagination is the intermediary step that leads the soul from sense perception to imageless apperception of the One, in a Christian theo-poetics of the flesh, the imagination is the faculty through which the Incarnate Word becomes our sense perception. The Incarnation goes beyond the strictly logical; it is outside the law of noncontradiction, refuses to be delimited by apophatic rationality, and expresses the inexpressible God. The Incarnational life, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ the Word proposes a poetics for our lives: it is a theo-poetics of the flesh which compels us to subvert normative and restrictive imaginaries—logical (such as Eriugena’s own *ratio*), social, and hegemonic. Eriugena himself expresses enfleshment most forcefully only in his poems. For example:

After our Salvation [=Jesus] had revived the whole world  
 And completed all the deeds the Father willed.  
 He rested from oppressive suffering, hanging on the wearied tree.  
 [...]  
 Yet no one would deny that the Life has tasted death.  
 The death of the Life’s flesh is rightly called Life’s death.  
 For [the Life] suffered with (*compassa*) the flesh, which hung alone.  
 The sharpness of pure reason enters deeper  
 And gathers that the flesh of the Life is life.  
 If the Life is the Word, and if the Word is also made flesh  
 Certainly it follows to concede that the Life is the flesh.  
 And if by converse path the flesh is the Word,  
 Forthwith it is given to compel that flesh becomes the Life.  
 Therefore the flesh (σάρξ) of Christ subsists (*substat*) as truest life.  
 Living and dying, [the flesh of Christ] swallowed death.  
 [Christ] came from above to assume earthly garment:  
 Endowed with this garment, [Christ] flew upwards therewith.  
 And changed into God the garment assumed from the Virgin,  
 Making-together (*conficiens*) spirit, flesh, and God into one.  
 The Lord, the death of death, rose living into heaven (*in altum*)

And conveyed (*vexit*) our nature with [Him] to the same place.<sup>191</sup>

The Incarnation here is the means through which Christ the Life suffered with (*compassa*) the flesh; divine compassion exists through the Incarnation, which furthermore transforms the flesh into God. Learning from the imagination of an Islamic theo-poetics, the Incarnation may be reimagined in terms thereof. Christian imagination is Incarnational because it sees the body as *more than* merely unquickened flesh; flesh it is, but Christ's quickened flesh. The resurrection of Christ's flesh has forever transformed all flesh. Eriugena may argue that "the inferior" (body, flesh) is absorbed into "the superior," thereby appearing to reject the flesh for the sake of the better. However, upon close reading in search of a theo-poetics of the flesh, the eschatological *reditus* absorbs the flesh only for the sake of remaking it, or better yet, *translating it*. This translation of the flesh demands a transformation of communities and spaces as Christians imagine ways to live this translated state *now*: for even now Christ is all in all, "making-together spirit, flesh, and God into one."

### **Theology: Extending the Imagination into Embodied Practices**

Amy Hollywood, in *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, unfolds the complex nexus at which the imageless God of apophysis meets the imaginal God of visionary imagination.<sup>192</sup> In her subjects (Mechthild, Porete, and Eckhart) the uncreated aspect of the soul in union with God is the catalyst for their move away from the body, suffering, and visionary imagination as the *sine qua non* for the so-called spiritual life.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, the proliferation of texts is a function of the visionary and imaginative experiences that these authors underwent through the biblical images that shaped their imaginaries. Hollywood argues that these "images, whether visual or verbal, are created and

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<sup>191</sup> *Ca*, 90-91 (translation modified).

<sup>192</sup> See Chapter One of Amy M. Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995).

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, 11-12.

evoked” only to be negated so that “other modes of being [may be] brought into existence.”<sup>194</sup> Apophatic theology is not intended to reject the visionary or the imaginative, but rather “to transcend its limitations,”<sup>195</sup> and, I add, ever to reimagine novel ways of Incarnational living. I suggest in parallel fashion that the Incarnation, understood as Christian imagination, draws us into perceiving more than the flesh alone: the flesh renewed in Christ. If “compassion...is a function of the imagination,”<sup>196</sup> then compassion with suffering bodies is effected through the Incarnation as Christian imagination, and through the Incarnational life as the Christian imaginary. Indeed, this is what an Islamic theo-poetics effects in the wayfarer, who is now *freed from the constraints of the intellect by the experience of broken-heartedness*. By grounding images in a nonsubstantialist God, Eriugena liberates the imagination from the confines of onto-theology. In this way, the language of being “images of God” does not restrict the imagination, as Castoriadis suggests, but rather enables a radical imagination that truly disrupts oppressive ideologies and creates novel, liberating imaginaries—precisely because the imagination draws from the infinite depths of God’s self-creativity *ex nihilo* through the Incarnate Word. This is why we are “a manifold source of infinite profundity,”<sup>197</sup> as Eriugena contends.

Theologizing is talk about God, speaking the Unspeakable. It requires imaginative practices grounded in the revelation of the Incarnation. Poetry, for the Islamic traditions of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, participates in unveiling God. In agreement with Hart, then, “theology is intrinsically and necessarily a ‘poetic’ set of practices...in which the imagination is and must be kept constantly and identifiably in play.”<sup>198</sup> Revelation and the imagination go hand-in-hand, yes,

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<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, 14; Hollywood is drawing from the work by Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>197</sup> *PP IV*, 42, 1137-1138 (770A).

<sup>198</sup> Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 42. In Eriugena we find what Trevor Hart has argued, viz., that because the revelation is one grounded in the Incarnation, and because the Logos is never a disincarnate Logos, but always enfleshed on account of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, “*an account of religious and theological engagement cast in terms of the categories of the imaginative is entirely compatible with an appeal*

but this interreligious exercise aims to extend the imagination beyond discourse and into embodied practices. Ḥāfīz’s love lyrics facilitate this endeavor, for they demand an engagement with suffering in order to enter into passionate love, God’s essence. By reading this poetics into Eriugena, I aim to recover the (com)passionate suffering at the heart of the Christian paschal mystery otherwise and overtly lacking in his logical discourse; thereby, the Incarnation becomes a theo-poetics of the flesh.

Theologizing therefore should move beyond the textual production of “faith seeking understanding” and toward the spatial creation of Incarnational communities that image the paschal mystery. Theology should utilize the imagination for the *poiesis* of compassionate engagement with alterity; it should imagine forth the Incarnation. Theology is not just discourse, but embodied living. From speaking the Unspeakable, it should move to doing the impossible, incarnating the Unimaginable, *facere veritatem* (doing the truth), as Caputo puts it.<sup>199</sup> From “faith seeking understanding”—hermeneutics—it should move to “critical reflection on praxis in the light of faith”—poetics.

Remaining in between *what* God is as Beginning and End—the *nihil* beyond being—we must live out this theo-poetics of the flesh, the *how* of Incarnational living. In theology’s search for doctrinal certainty or adequate understanding of revelation, the temptation is narrowly to define God in static, stagnant ways that restrict God to a *what*. But as Eriugena reminds us, God is not a *what*, and as an Islamic theo-poetics assists us, all we have is the *how* of God’s relationship to the world: the Incarnation of broken-heartedness, of compassionate, suffering love.

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to the dynamics of revelation” (Hart, *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature*, 41, *emphasis in original*). Later, he concludes: “Whether we attend to the divinely furnished images of Scripture, the concrete self-imaging of God in the flesh, or the myriad ways in which these have been taken up and responded to in the varied forms and patterns of Christian tradition across the centuries, theology is intrinsically and necessarily a ‘poetic’ set of practices in the proper sense, and one in which the imagination is and must be kept constantly and identifiably in play” (ibid., 42). See also his chapter three, “The Economy of the Flesh” (ibid., 75ff) for his argument that the Incarnation forever renders flesh more than it is, and thus as image draws us in to the ever greater mystery it reveals.

<sup>199</sup> See Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 16, 118.

In the next chapter, an interreligious reading propounds creative ramifications of a radical imagination grounded in the Incarnation. Given the unknowability of God as Beginning and End, the *theo-poetics* of this world demands imagining forth the Incarnation; *what* God is yields to *how* God is. But this is possible only when the physical and the spiritual, the literal and the metaphorical, the image and the imaged, are inverted.

## Chapter 6

# Imagining Forth the Incarnation: A Theo-Poetics of the Flesh

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### The Poetics Between Hermeneutics

Theology is more often associated with hermeneutics than with poetics. Indeed, what is the purpose of speech about God (θεολογία, *theologia*) if not to understand the meaning of the faith in the Incarnate Logos as *revealed and received* in texts, from Scripture to the documents of early Christian writers and of medieval scholastics and mystics, and to the magisterial and conciliar documents of the Catholic Church. Theology in this case is conceptualized as hermeneutics, and this is why Paul Ricoeur's interpretation theory has been helpful not only in defining method in theology, but method in comparative theology.<sup>1</sup> Likewise for the Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Joseph Putti, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Text Interpretation and Method in Theology* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1994). He summarizes his project as follows: "The heart of this hermeneutical theology is the belief that we cannot be a source of meaning unto ourselves. Meaning is the result of an encounter with the contingent signs in which the Absolute reveals himself. This Revelation of the Absolute reaches its climax in the Christ-event. The authentic and historical witness to the Christ-event comes down to us in the form of texts. Among these texts Scripture holds the pride of place. These texts, being historical and cultural artifacts, need to be **interpreted** so that they **mediate** the Christ-event for us **today**. And it is in our response of faith to the Christ-event that Revelation is actualized once again and the Gospel proclaimed" (ibid., 325 [**emphasis original**]). More recently, Ormond Rush has turned to the Catholic category of the sense or meaning of the faithful (*sensus fidelium*) to propose "a hermeneutical approach to a systematic theology of the *sensus fidelium*, grounded on explicitly interrelated theologies of the Trinity, revelation, faith, the church, and the teaching office of the church. In particular, this proposal highlights the operation of the Holy Spirit in the *sensus fidelium* and presents a coherent way of conceiving the interrelationship between the *sensus fidelium*, tradition, Scripture, theology, and the magisterium in the church's ongoing *reception of revelation through faith*" (Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: the Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009], 5, *emphasis mine*). While hermeneutics should not be reduced to mere *reception*, it remains a looming threat. As for hermeneutics and comparative theology, see Marianne Moyaert, *In Response to the Religious Other: Ricoeur and the Fragility of Interreligious Encounters* (Lexington Books, 2014). Moyaert summarizes Ricoeur's hermeneutical circle with a view to applying it to comparative theology: "Ricoeur's theory of interpretation... focuses on the back and forth movement between one's own familiar perspective and the strange. This finds its expression in Ricoeur's theory on the three phases of the hermeneutical circle: naive understanding, objective explanation, and appropriation. Between the three phases of the hermeneutical circle, a double dialectic is at work that moves from understanding to explanation and from explanation to understanding. Ricoeur also describes these three phases as a hermeneutical arc. One understands a text only after having traversed the entire hermeneutical arc. Comparative theology can be thought of as a never-ending hermeneutical circle that moves between identity and openness, conviction and critique, commitment and

tradition, “human and historical *Islam is nothing other than the hermeneutical engagement with Revelation in all its dimensions and loci*,”<sup>2</sup> viz., Text (Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*), Pre-Text (in this case, poetic imagination, experience, the Imaginal World), and Con-Text (poems, commentaries, metaphors). This exercise in comparative theology is ultimately a performance of hermeneutics on various textual traditions in search of constructive insights into the Catholic faith. However, what this interpretative exercise has revealed is that poetics is just as central to theology as hermeneutics.

Recall that, simply put, poetics is *how* texts mean and hermeneutics is *what* texts mean; within the hermeneutical circle of textual criticism, interpretation therefore “precedes and follows poetics.”<sup>3</sup> As *faith seeking understanding*, theology seeks *what* God is, *what* the world means, *what* the human person is, etc., through a hermeneutics in search of *what* texts reveal about these questions. But as this interreligious reading of Persian, Arabic, Latin, and Greek, Islamic and Christian, poetic and prosaic texts uncovered is that theology may also alternatively be practiced as poetics: it reveals *how* we are to be, *how* we are to relate to God, self, and others.<sup>4</sup> Theology is a *praxis*, a theological practice that resembles poetics in that it *creates* Incarnational communities—it is a *poïesis* for our communal *theo(poïe)sis*. It is a *way* of being, a *way* of bringing forth God in the world, not only a search for *what* God is, even if *how* God is *pro nobis* often unveils the meaning of God’s nature in relational ways. Eriugena, in his *Periphyseon*,

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distanciation” (ibid., 179).

<sup>2</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 355. “Human and historical *Islam is nothing other than the hermeneutical engagement with Revelation in all its dimensions and loci*—that is, *the hermeneutical engagement with the Revelatory Phenomenon comprising both Revelatory Premise and Revelatory Product*—which is to say (at this stage in the development of our thesis), *hermeneutical engagement with Revelation as Text and Pre-Text*. This hermeneutical engagement takes place by a wide spectrum of means and produces a wide spectrum of meanings. Islam is the full array of these means and the full field of these meanings: it is *means and meanings*” (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 355-356).

<sup>3</sup> Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Whence the subtext of my own project, viz., Gutiérrez’s *reflexión crítica sobre la praxis a la luz de la fe*: critical reflection on praxis in the light of faith. See Gutiérrez, *Teología De La Liberación: Perspectivas*, 34. In the introduction to the 1988 English edition, Gutiérrez defines theology as “a reflection on praxis in the light of faith” (Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xlv).

guides the Student to an understanding that the division of nature is *essentially* a division of the divine nature. *How* the world *is* mirrors, in relational, nondual ways, *what* God is. The *poetics* of the world is unrestricted by the *Nihil* God, and so our imagination should be freed to disrupt the normative, created logics of the world that oppress more often than liberate.

The Beginning and End—God—remain(s) the radically apophatic nothingness beyond being. A poetic reading of this world attends more to praxis than to meaning, even if the latter is revealed in the former. Theo-logic may be closer to Anselm's faith seeking understanding, but a theo-poetics has more in common with a critical reflection on praxis in the light of faith. The unknowable God is never understood; but the Incarnate God is forever accessible in spaces, communities, and relationships *now*, historically. Taking apophatic theology to its limits, as Eriugena does, produces a nonsubstantialist *nihil*, or nothing. God is nothing beyond being, while the being of all things is the divinity beyond being. *What* God is and *what* humans are remain ever out of each, *beyond*. Nonetheless, the poetics of the Incarnation is our savior: God redeems the nothingness of the world by becoming flesh. The Incarnation demands that we enter deeper into embodied relations to be conducted beyond; or, we go beyond the world by entering within it.

Poetics remains within the liminal space between hermeneutics. This liminal space finds further meaning in the heart and the imagination as detailed in the previous chapter. The human heart brings together God and the world, ostensible opposites, so that the boundary between the two become porous. God is witnessed in the world through the heart. Likewise, the imagination is a *barzakh*, or liminal place that is both the *way* the world manifests God and the *way* the human person encounters the Divine Beloved in the world. Having demonstrated the close relation if not near identity between the heart and the imagination in the previous chapter, I suggest that the *how* of nonduality in this Islamic theo-poetics is the heart's imaginal function. The *how* of nonduality in Eriugena's Christian theo-poetics is the Incarnation. Reading these traditions together, I turn to some constructive comparisons obtained when the heart's imaginal function is related to the Incarnation. This Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh expands on Hart's contention that

“the economy of the divine Word in the incarnation... is more like a verbal image than any other form of utterance, a ‘showing’ as much as a ‘saying’, and one the intractable ‘fleshiness’ of which is essential to its function.”<sup>5</sup> The fleshiness of the poetic images that make up the world require the creative imagination for engagement therewith, because the Incarnation keeps “mystery and meaning together in a constant creative tension” (the tensive concept of reality presented by metaphor, per Ricœur) that resists “every attempt to determine it completely, remaining forever ‘open-ended’ on its God-ward side.”<sup>6</sup> Poetic images refuse reduction to a *what*, but entice us into the *plus-quam* of the divine nature, in the flesh.

As mentioned in the introduction, this project extends Clooney’s exercise in comparative theology as developed in *His Hiding Place is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence*. His theo-poetics attentive to finding and not finding God is central to the theo-poetics of theophany that constitutes this interreligious exercise. His Catholic-Hindu theo-poetics does not preclude returning to the theo-prosaic, to the systematic theo-logic; however, it does “[highlight] the danger of going back with amnesia to [these] ordinary ways of theology.”<sup>7</sup> That is, attending to theo-poetics enables recovering the poetic in all forms of theological discourse, which is precisely the aim of this project. Clooney notes the eminently intimate, private, and personal nature of an individual encountering God, but suggests that this does not preclude matters of public concern and interest.<sup>8</sup> However, he does not develop how his Catholic-Hindu theo-poetics has public, embodied consequences. From his Catholic-Hindu theo-poetics of divine *absence*, I turn to a Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of divine *presence*, that is, *of/in the flesh*.

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<sup>5</sup> Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 88.

<sup>7</sup> “[It] simply highlights the danger in going back with amnesia to ordinary ways of theology; it pleads for slow learning and sacrifices efficiency for the sake of deep currents of encounter. In writing of God in more formal doctrinal and systematic terms, theologians must write in the shadow of the images, the poetry, and the drama of a beloved who may still hide even when everything should be most certain, definitively decided” (Clooney, *His Hiding Place is Darkness*, 126-127).

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, ix-xi.

## The Incarnation and the Heart's Imaginal Function: A Catholic-Islamic Theo-Poetic Nondualism

*Know that the heart, i.e., the heart of a recognizer (‘ārīf) of God—because the heart of someone other than an ‘ārīf is called ‘a heart’ only metaphorically—is capacious [enough to embrace God].*

-Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*<sup>9</sup>

The physical organ of heart in the human person, the muscular organ that pumps blood through vessels, providing the body with nutrients and oxygen, the one located between the lungs—this heart is the metaphorical heart. The *real* heart belongs to the recognizer (‘ārīf) of God, and this heart reflects the divine names, is the goblet into which the wine of existence is poured by the divine cupbearer, and is able to fluctuate in order to perceive the perpetual transmutation of poetic images in theophanies—it embraces God. To perceive the metaphorical nature of this phenomenal world, there must be something in the human person able to subsist in the source of this phenomenal world and imaginally interact with the multitude of divine images. The metaphorical, imaginal nature of the corporeal heart and of this phenomenal world does not make our experience any less real; rather, it requires an imagination that can successfully encounter metaphorical truth, in a way that augments our experience of this world, and compelling us to imagine forth the impossible. We have seen that Lāhūrī does not deny the metaphorical-fleshy heart, given that in his commentary he avers that God’s secret, the divine subtlety of the Real, is *literally* within the fleshy, human organ of the heart. What are the consequences of the Real being within the metaphorical-fleshy heart? *It becomes the real heart.*

The physicality of this nondual relation between the human person and the Real in this Islamic theo-poetics provides an entryway into an interreligious comparison with the Christian Incarnation. The heart and the imaginal faculty produce a nondual relationship with the Divine akin, though not identical, to the Incarnation. Rather than suggest that there are Incarnational undercurrents in the Islamic tradition, I rather contend that the poetic function of the Incarnation

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<sup>9</sup> Jāmī, *Naqd Al-nuṣūṣ Fī Sharḥ Naqsh Al-fuṣūṣ*, 198-199.

can be discovered through the heart's imaginal function in this Islamic theo-poetics. Bringing them together, I suggest that an Incarnational imaginary enables us, as Christians, to imagine forth the Incarnation; just as poets participate in revelation in the Islamic tradition, we participate in the Incarnation in our embodied living. The Incarnation as theo-poetics reveals a *way* of being, *how* to exist in the world *Incarnationally*, not *what* God is. If it reveals *what* God is at all, this *what* is perpetually beyond; practically, then, it reveals *how* we are to search for God, and *how* we are to imagine forth the Incarnation in places, spaces, and communities that never seek to delimit God, but strive for a more perfect revelation—*poïesis*, creation—of the Incarnate Word in the liminal space between one's self and another, one's self and God. It is a *theopoïesis* that effects *theosis* within our social relations.

### **Living through the Incarnate Word**

In Lāhūrī's reading of Ḥāfīz, and drawing from the larger poetic-*ṣūfī* tradition, the imagination functions as the faculty best equipped to receive revelation from above and subsequently bring it forth in the world. Through the faculty of the imagination and the heart, the wayfarer subsists in God so that the Real may become her activity. Lāhūrī, transposing the ambiguity of the love lyrics into the ambiguity of this world—from poetic metaphor to phenomenal metaphor—suggests that the human wayfarer should no longer step outside of this phenomenal world of theophanic images, lest a duality emerge. This is why the language of “subsistence in the Real” provides a solution to the problem of duality: to encounter the Beloved, the wayfarer enters further into the world once she subsists in the Real, who is the infinitely profound source of the ever-novel poetic images of this world.<sup>10</sup>

We saw that for Eriugena, this world is composed of transitory images that fluctuate and succumb to corporeal senses, hence there must be something that assists the human person in properly engaging this panoply of images. This was the heart and the imaginal faculty for Ḥāfīz

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<sup>10</sup> For the larger cosmological concept of *tajdīd al-khalq*, or the perpetual renewal of creation, see footnote 33 of Chapter Two of this dissertation.

and Lāhūrī. Learning through this interreligious reading, I submit that the function of the Incarnate Word, of Christ, in Eriugena's theology is further illumined in dialogue with the heart's imaginal function. Christ becomes our perceptual faculties and relational activities so that we may step further within this Imaginal World—*which is in the Word*—and “see things as they really are.” This Christological perception may be understood as an Incarnational imaginary that subverts normalized and often oppressive social imaginaries. Through this Incarnational imaginary, a theo-poetics of the flesh, we are enabled to do the impossible, to incarnate the unthinkable.

Ricœur reminds us that poetic fiction transfigures reality, which in turn transfigures action; this is, I suggest, what Lāhūrī is describing, via the poetic metaphors of Ḥāfīz, when he discusses subsistence in God after self-annihilation. Likewise, Eriugena's Student in the *Periphyseon* suffers various moments of stupefaction, bewilderment, terror, shock, and the death of the rational soul, only to be “aroused (*expergefactus*),” and returned unto himself, with the result that he “more brightly [perceives] the ray of inner light” and “begin[s] to recognize what [the Teacher] said.”<sup>11</sup> The semantic shock of metaphorical truth (which is nondual truth) is how an Incarnational imaginary disrupts the *ratio* of the Student, as well as the logic of oppressive social imaginaries today. The Incarnation is said to restore human vision, and this restoration grants a nondual, theophanic perception. In effect, the Student subsists in the Incarnate Word after the self-annihilation resulting from the semantic shock.

In addition to Ricœur's paradox of the metaphorical copula, Janet Soskice in *Metaphor and Religious Language* describes metaphor in ways that thicken the relationship between poetic images and the Incarnation. In Soskice's discussion on metaphor, she contends that it joins together mutually exclusive or contradictory “associative networks” through the unity of a common grammatical *subject*; this conjoining often shocks and surprises, just as Ricœur's

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<sup>11</sup> *PP* III, 61, 1747-1749 (661B).

metaphor.<sup>12</sup> Trevor Hart has likewise discovered constructive resonances between the poetic image of metaphor and the Incarnation: “What are we to make, I wonder, of the fact that the structure of the poetic image thus described draws tantalisingly close to the logic of hypostatic union as the Church has traditionally articulated it, where God, for all his overwhelming otherness, is nonetheless conjoined strikingly and surprisingly with our humanity through the positioned unity of a common grammatical subject?”<sup>13</sup> In my reading of Eriugena through an Islamic theo-poetics, I have been endeavoring to demonstrate just this, viz., that because of the Incarnation, “the flesh, far from constituting an inconvenient conduit for the transmission of essentially ‘fleshless’ ideas or feelings from A to B (ideally without either significant loss or pollution), is itself complicit in and contributory to the meanings we discern and make and share together in the world as God has created it, and as the sort of creatures he has made and call us to be.”<sup>14</sup> As concluded in the previous chapter, the Incarnation for Eriugena is not merely a divine *convenientia*, viz., the most appropriate means for God to teach human beings and thereby save them (as per Aquinas),<sup>15</sup> but a “logically prior act in which God himself took flesh and in the very act of taking it transformed it, investing it with significance stretching inexhaustibly beyond the limits of its creaturely form.”<sup>16</sup> While Hart narrows his discussion of the relationship between poetic images and the Incarnation onto theological *discourse*, I wish to shift the effects from

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<sup>12</sup> See Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49-51, 64-66.

<sup>13</sup> Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 86.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 76. In accordance with my project, Hart also suggests that *ideal* of transmitting fleshless *ideas* without loss or pollution is present “in some forms of modern idealism, and aesthetic theories shaped by them” (*ibid.*, 76, fn. 6). See Trevor A. Hart, “Through the Arts: Hearing, Seeing and Touching the Truth,” in *Beholding the Glory*, ed. by Jeremy S. Begbie (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), 8-15).

<sup>15</sup> See Jordan, *Teaching Bodies*, 21ff. The relevant section is *ST* III, Question 1, especially article 1: “Whether it is fitting/suitable (*conveniens*) for God to become incarnate.”

<sup>16</sup> Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 85. Hart further contends: “God’s own Word addressed to humankind is never a *logos asarkos*, but from first to last an enfleshed word, a claim which I take the doctrines of the resurrection and ascension to be intended emphatically to underline. The incarnation is no mere expediency or temporary theophany, but an abiding reality within the triune life of God, flesh situated now at the Father’s right hand for all time, and mediating any and every approach we care or dare to make to the throne of grace” (*ibid.*, 76-77).

divine elocutions and inscribed God-talk to embodied practices. The enfleshment of the Divine Word, a “singular act of divine *poiesis*”<sup>17</sup> in which “God placed himself first and most decisively in the order of signs”<sup>18</sup> does not merely teach us something about “the nature of words and their relation to the flesh,”<sup>19</sup> but rather and more constructively about the nature of the imagination, of imagining forth the Incarnation in communities, and of our *theosis* through embodied *theopoiesis*.

### **The Mutual Subsistence of the Heart and the Real: The Double Within-ness of the Incarnate Word**

Lāhūrī imagines two functions for the image of the goblet in Ḥāfiẓ’s love lyrics: it is both the phenomenal world into which the wine of existence is poured, and it is also the human wayfarer’s heart which, once polished (now a goblet-mirror), reflects the Divine Names (the mirror image functions also for the wine, which reflects the divine cupbearer’s face). But Lāhūrī, drawing from critical *ḥadīth* and other sayings from the *ṣūfi* tradition, furthermore avers that the Real itself subsists in the heart, which is also in the Real. This mutual subsistence is in effect a coincidence of opposites rendered comprehensible subjectively by the heart’s imaginal function and objectively by the cosmic, or divine, imagination (*khayāl*). Ḥāfiẓ’s metaphors are reinterpreted by Lāhūrī as phenomenal metaphors which reveal metaphorical, or nondual, truth.

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 86.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 85. “But should we not say precisely [that Jesus Christ placed himself in the order of signs] of that logically prior act in which God himself took flesh and in the very act of taking it transformed it, investing it with significance stretching inexhaustibly beyond the limits of its creaturely form? Was it not here, in the conception by the Spirit in the womb of the Virgin, in other words, that God placed himself first and most decisively in the order of signs, a gratuitous act of flesh-taking and meaning-making beginning with the annunciation and opening out through all the particulars of a life lived, through cross, resurrection and ascension, onto eternity at the Father’s right hand? Such a claim—that the incarnation itself sees God entering the order of signs—is not of course incompatible with talk of the Logos indwelling certain of our human *logoi*, but it is a different sort of claim and, for Christians, a different order of claim with some far-reaching implication” (*ibid.*, 85).

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 86. “Unless we suppose the circumstance of the incarnation to be not just unique...but wholly anomalous, it seems reasonable to enquire whether this putative act of divine sign-giving—God becoming ‘incarnate’ as it were not just in the stuff of human nature but thereby in the stuff of human culture too—might itself have something important to contribute to our understanding of that which it appropriates (and thus must presuppose) but also transforms in doing so. Just as we must allow our understand of our own humanity to be informed by consideration of what it amounts to here, so, *mutatis mutandis*, might we not learn something too about the nature of words and their relation to the flesh precisely by pausing to take stock of what occurs in this singular act of divine *poiesis*?” (*ibid.*, 86).

We can understand the interpretive and perceptual function of the Incarnate Word in Eriugena in these terms. Doing so reveals the Incarnation as constitutive of our relationship with others and with God. Eriugena explicitly contends that “creation is subsisting in God, and God is created in a miraculous and ineffable way in creation”<sup>20</sup> via theophany, and that “God the Father established the universe of all visible and invisible creatures *in* God the Son,”<sup>21</sup> who becomes flesh *in* this universe. This double-within-ness, so to speak, is the nondual logic of the Incarnation: *the Incarnate Word, Jesus, was in the world which is in the Word*. Creation is in the Word, and the Word is in each human person; this double within-ness is contradictory, and yet the Word sustains this nondual truth precisely because the Incarnation is understood nondually. The imagination, *khayāl*, gives existence to non-existence; it is the bridge between utter non-being or nothingness and the sheer, more-than-being of God. Reading these traditions together, I suggest that this constructs a theo-poetics of the flesh because the Incarnation becomes our imagination; Incarnational life is our imaginary. *How* we are in the Incarnate Word and the Incarnate Word is in us is a *theo-poetics* of the flesh.

### **The Incarnate Word of our Eyesight: The Incarnation as Our Imaginary**

Carefully interpreting Eriugena in the light of this interreligious reading facilitates the discovery of theo-poetic renderings of otherwise unexceptional passages. I aim to apply this Islamic theo-poetics to key passages in the *Periphyseon* concerning the Incarnate Word’s presence before our eyes. In continuing to construct a theo-poetics of the flesh, the interreligious conclusions produce nothing short of a way of seeing, way of being, and way of doing: a Christian imaginary. Ricœur’s and Castoriadis’s variable though complementary theories of the social imaginary provide the theoretical grounding for how the Incarnation can effect embodied, social change, for, let us recall, the imaginary of a society is the symbolic network of images, language, narratives, and myths, and then of organizing systems (legal, religious, economic,

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<sup>20</sup> *PP* III, 85, 2444-2446 (678C).

<sup>21</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2493-2494 (679C).

political, etc.), all of which come together to create “each historical period, its singular manner of living, of seeing and of conducting its own existence, its world, and its relations with this world.”<sup>22</sup> For Lāhūrī’s reading of Ḥāfīz, the Real within the human heart places the self in liminal space and enables perception of the Real in this world; the heart brings together opposites, which is a function of the imagination. I suggest, then, that the Incarnate Word is the means whereby ocular perception of God is obtained in this world; the Incarnate Word becomes our faculties so that we may imagine forth the Incarnation. To use the language of social imaginary, this would mean that the Incarnation becomes our singular manner of living, seeing, and conducting our existence, world, and social relations. But it also means that it would be disruptive and subversive of non-Incarnational (unjust and oppressive) imaginaries.

The following reading keeps the Islamic theo-poetics as an interpretive lens: it is a way of working, living, speaking, and acting (*modus operandi vivendi loquendi agendi*) attuned to the modality of God’s relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate, imbued with a desire to engage this world subsisting in God, who is passionate love, and freed from the constraints of the intellect by the experience of broken-heartedness.

### **The Word of God, “Always Present to the Eyes”**

We have already encountered in Book V of the *Periphyseon* how Eriugena understands Genesis 3:22: “may he not perhaps (*ne forte mittat*) put forth his hand, and take also from the Tree of Life, and eat [of it], and live in eternal life?”. The Divine Mercy sighs, mercifully condescends, patiently suffers with the human person, and promises the return of humanity to paradise.<sup>23</sup> Eriugena interprets “paradise” as human nature, and the All-Tree as Christ; therefore, Christ is within the human person. In Chapter Two, an interreligious reading, attentive to

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<sup>22</sup> Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 145.

<sup>23</sup> See *PP* V, 5, 73-94 (862BC).

Eriugena's poetics, concluded that the moment of sin is simultaneous with its conversion by Divine Mercy. Salvation is God's co-suffering with humanity through Jesus Christ (who is within the paradise of human nature). But this Incarnate salvation happens *as it were* [*veluti*] *afterward*, *now* [*nunc*], because it constitutes universal theophany, which is continuity in disruption.

But he further complicates these images with overlapping metaphors, just as Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī do with the goblet, the wine, and the cupbearer. When human nature was expelled from paradise, they were rather excluded from the “felicity that would have been theirs had they not despised being obedient to God.”<sup>24</sup> Continuing to interpret Genesis, and relying on Pseudo-Dionysius's definition of “Cherubim,”<sup>25</sup> Eriugena avers that the Cherubim placed before paradise is really “a multitude of knowledge or an effusion of wisdom” placed before the perception or contemplation (*conspectum*) of human nature “so that [the human person] may recognize herself.”<sup>26</sup> By placing this knowledge and wisdom before the *conspectum* of human nature, “Divine Compassion was greater than the Divine Vengeance in having expelled the human person from paradise.”<sup>27</sup>

Why is this? If we read further and more carefully, or in Eriugena's own words, “if one should wish to perceive (*conspicere*) the matter more profoundly, one will understand...that by the term ‘Cherubim’ is signified the very Word of God Himself. For and in fact, the Word of God, ‘in which are hidden the treasures of knowledge and wisdom’ (Col 2:3), is always present to the eyes (*obutibus*) of human nature without any intermediary, and [the Word] reminds, purifies, and illuminates it, until [the Word] guide it back to its undefiled perfection.”<sup>28</sup> Note that Eriugena

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<sup>24</sup> *PP* V, 6, 119-120 (863B).

<sup>25</sup> He is referring to *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Chapter 7. See Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, Volume 2, 27, 8 (205B); Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 161.

<sup>26</sup> *PP* V, 8, 161-162 (864B); See *PP* V, 7, 156-164 (864AB) for his complete treatment.

<sup>27</sup> *PP* V, 8, 165-166 (864B). This echoes both James 2:13 (“mercy triumphs over judgment”) and the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the Prophet, in the voice of God: “My Mercy prevails over My Wrath” (for a discussion of this divine saying, see Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, 184).

<sup>28</sup> *PP* V, 8, 171-176 (864C).

is asking us to *conspicere*, the infinitive of the *conspectum* before which the Cherubim are placed, and that through this gaze we are enabled to see that the Cherubim is the Word of God who is always before our *obtutibus*, a word that has many meanings, but all related to looking, gazing, vision, and even the faculty of sight or the physical eyes themselves. Eriugena immediately follows this passage with a citation from Romans 1:20: “For [God’s] invisible things from the creation of the world are perceived (*conspiciuntur*) and understood through the things that are made, likewise [God’s] eternal power and virtue.”<sup>29</sup> The visible things that are made are in the Word, invisible. The Word is seen through creation via the Word who functions as our eyesight: we *see with* (*con-spicere*) the Word.

Before proceeding to a lengthy dialogue over the return of all things to God, Eriugena concludes this section with a powerful passage that places the Son of God, the Word, at the core of the human person:

However, what is that *way* which leads to the Tree of Life, and what is that Tree to which it leads? Is it not likewise the Son of God, Who said of Himself, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:16)? That, furthermore, He [be understood to be] the Tree of Life is discovered manifestly in many passages of divine scripture, such that there is no lack of evidence. Therefore, manifoldly holy scripture accumulates many symbolic names for the Word of God. For [the Word/Son of God] is called Cherubim, Flaming Sword that turns around, Life, and Tree of Life, so that through this we may understand that the Word Itself may never recede from *the eyes (obtutibus) of our heart*, and that [the Word] may also be most present to illuminate us, never and nowhere permitting us to lose the memory of the beatitude that we lost in sinning, always desiring that we return to it, and, until it be accomplished, [the Word/Son of God] sighing with co-suffering, guides us back thither by seizing and arousing our perfect steps through the journey of knowledge and action. “I have come,” [Jesus] says, “to bring fire upon the earth, and what do I wish but that it should kindle?” (Luke 12:49).<sup>30</sup>

The Son of God is always before the eyes of our heart, and therefore becomes the faculty through which we perceive the world. The invisible is made visible through the Word. How is this possible? The Incarnate Word brings together opposites, just like the heart and the imagination in the Islamic theo-poetics. The Incarnate Word desires that we return, suffers with us, and arouses our senses so that we are enabled to desire the same; broken-heartedness frees us. Without gloss, Eriugena concludes this passage with an ostensibly out-of-context citation of Luke 12:49 (“I am

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<sup>29</sup> *PP* V, 8, 178-181 (864CD).

<sup>30</sup> *PP* V, 9, 207-219 (865BC).

come to cast fire on the earth”). It appears Eriugena intends to suggest that, through this Christological perception, the world is set aflame, renewed through Christ’s vision working in the heart of the human person. The world is thus re-imagined through the Christian imaginary via the Incarnation, the Christian imagination. The theo-poetics of the flesh is lived through the Incarnate Word who is placed before our eyes, and who, it should be recalled, is our epiphany, the appearance on the surface of our bodies, our flesh.

But what sort of flesh is our epiphany, and what is the *manner* of the Incarnate Word placed before our eyesight, constructive of an Incarnational imaginary? Comparative insights from chapter two should again be recalled. The human lapse into sin is concomitant with the merciful condescension, patient co-suffering (*condoleo*), and all-encompassing divine pathos of Divine, Infinite Mercy, which sighs over the fall of the Divine Image (the human person).<sup>31</sup> The continuity-in-disruption of the Incarnation constitutes the paradigm of our imaging, of our being images of the Word, who, as Eriugena’s poem puts it, condescends in Jesus Christ who is “[the Life who] suffered with (*compassa*) the flesh...[so that] the Word is also made flesh...[and] by converse path the flesh is the Word...making-together spirit, flesh, and God into one.”<sup>32</sup> As images we can thus imagine forth this Incarnational act, itself the pattern of all imaginative acts of embodied sympathy and empathy, but in unity.<sup>33</sup> Empathy makes one listen, observe, and attend to the suffering of another, in silence perhaps. Sympathy compels a desire to assist. But an Incarnational act of both in unity demands that the person enter into the spaces of suffering, to attend to, and act with, the oppressed—in broken-heartedness, like Jesus in Ḥāfīz’s love lyric.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter Two of this dissertation, section “Comparative Insights: The Choice for Love and Suffering,” particularly the subsection “The Movement of Suffering.”

<sup>32</sup> *Ca*, 90-91 (translation modified).

<sup>33</sup> “Sympathy overcomes differences through imaginative acts of identification; empathy attends to another person on his or her own terms” (Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* ([New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012], 21); See also Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 199ff.

<sup>34</sup> Sympathy and empathy, when patterned by the Incarnation, are “not so much wholly distinct imaginative performances as overlapping and conjoint ones both of which are needed in some measure” (Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 101). Compassion is indeed a function of the imagination, but when patterned by the

Thereby do we imagine forth the Incarnation, neither by passively letting the oppressed come to you, nor by occasionally visiting them *as other*, but by dwelling among the oppressed, as the Word did.

### **Returning to Metaphor and *Plus-Quam* Discourse: Seeing Christ Our Epiphany**

What does this have to do with metaphor and *plus-quam* discourse? Metaphor, after all, is the discursive correlate to the imagination, for it brings together opposites in the metaphorical copula; furthermore, as poetic image metaphor is defined in nearly identical ways as the hypostatic union. And *plus-quam* discourse is Eriugena's prized theological method that brings together opposites, viz., the form of kataphatic theology and the meaning of apophatic theology. If we weave Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī into a theo-poetic interpretation of Eriugena on the Tree of Life and paradise, we return to the theological underpinnings of Eriugena's method. In the following paragraphs, we can see just how the Incarnate Word and the human person relate to each other as we search for an Eriugenian correlate to *baqā'* (subsistence) after *fanā'* (self-annihilation). This, after all, is the ultimate station that keeps the tensive concept of reality taut and felt within the human person's heart.

We learned in Chapter Four of Eriugena's use of *veluti* as correlated to the metaphorical nature of this world. Eriugena relates metaphor (*transfero*) to the return of all things, for the metaphorical names of God are carried back (*refero*) to God just as all things are carried (*fero*) through God toward God. As such, the names of God in the scriptures are metaphors "condescending toward our weakness and, by simple doctrine, stimulating our senses."<sup>35</sup> This

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Incarnation, the kenosis or self-emptying of the ego required of the embodied person is nearly *impossible*, were it not for the Incarnate Word, our flesh and eyesight. This sort of "imaginative self-transcendence" (ibid., 103) maintains one's self distinct from the other (eschewing universalism), patterned as it is by the nondual relationship between humanity and divinity in the Incarnate Word. But the goal of entering into the suffering of the other still obtains, and "is the responsibility laid upon ethical imagination" (ibid., 103). This radical point was made decades ago by Gustavo Gutiérrez: "The neighbor was the Samaritan who *approached* the wounded man and *made him his neighbor*. The neighbor...is not the one whom I find in my path, but rather the one in whose path I place myself, the one whom I approach and actively seek" (Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 113).

<sup>35</sup> *PP* I, 93, 2878-2880 (509A).

language corresponds to Eriugena’s condescension of the Word through theophany, and the effect corresponds to the role of the Word qua Tree of Life (see Chapter Two). Metaphorical language is the means whereby God draws human persons back to the Divine Nature, and the Word is set before our eyesight illuminating our way back thereto: *the Incarnate Word is our translator of this world of metaphorical, poetic images*. The interweaving of metaphor and theophany, the poetic and the Incarnate, continues to build a theo-poetics of the flesh. When Eriugena offers his “careful, salvific, and catholic profession for proclaiming God,”<sup>36</sup> he defines the kataphatic (metaphorical), the apophatic, and the *plus-quam*. In this profession, the metaphorical is not negated, and therefore perdures through the apophatic. The metaphor therefore is carried over into *plus-quam* discourse whereby a given divine name carries us through to the more-than of the Word in creation and the more-than of creation in the Word.

He proffers examples of his theological method immediately preceding his profession of faith.

Therefore God is through Herself love (*amor*), through Himself vision (*visio*), through Herself movement (*motus*); and yet He is neither movement, nor vision, nor love, but rather more-than-love, more-than-vision, more-than-movement. And through Herself God loves (*amare*), sees (*videre*), moves (*movere*); and yet He through Herself neither moves, sees, loves, since He more-than-loves, more-than-sees, more-than-moves. Likewise through Herself God is loved (*amari*) and seen (*videri*) and moved (*moveri*); and yet through Himself God is neither moved, nor seen, nor loved, since She is more-than-loved, and more-than-seen, and more-than-moved.<sup>37</sup>

In this passage, Eriugena negates, affirms, and then performs *plus-quam* theology. He does this for three verbs in the verbal noun, active infinitive, and passive infinitive each, thereby covering all aspects of the fourfold division of divine nature (all of which are permutations of the active, passive, affirmative, and negative of *creare*, to create). *How* God acts and *how* the world *is* produces a *theo-poetics*. He then proceeds to apply this method in relation to human persons:

Therefore, [God] loves Herself and is loved by Himself *in us and in Herself*, yet neither does He love Herself nor is loved by Himself *in us and in Herself*, but rather He more-than-loves and is more-than-loved *in us and in Herself*. [God] sees Herself and is seen by Himself *in Herself and in us*, yet neither does He see Herself nor is He seen by Herself *in Himself and in us*, rather She more-than-sees and is

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<sup>36</sup> *PP I*, 109, 3419 (522A).

<sup>37</sup> *PP I*, 109, 3402-3410 (521CD).

more-than-seen *in Himself and in us*. [God] moves Himself and is moved by Himself *in Himself and in us*, yet She does not move Himself and neither is She moved by Himself *in Herself and in us*, since He more-than-moves and is more-than-moved *in Herself and in us*.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the careful way Eriugena brings words together in these two passages to produce meaning, his poetics, he also poetically folds divine action and passion into the human. The affirmed and negated statements are *a se ipso* (by God's self), whereas the *plus-quam* statements have no expressed agent but are rather applied only *in God and in us*. *Plus-quam theology folds the human into the divine and the divine into the human*. In perceiving the human other, the image of God, reality is augmented through the material world because it is through the human that God's *more-than* nature is enacted and encountered: "making-together spirit, flesh, and God into one."<sup>39</sup>

*How is this possible?* In the Islamic theo-poetics the heart's imaginal function is enabled to bring together opposites and see *more than* just the material forms of the world. The Real is within the heart, imaginally, and the human person subsists in the Real; this together permits an ocular vision of the Real via the imaginal perception of the heart. But all this is possible not via the intellect, not through dialectical reasoning, but only for the one broken-hearted like Jesus. In reading the Islamic theo-poetics of the imagination into Eriugena, I aver that the Incarnate Word functions as our imagination, thereby permitting an ocular vision of the Word made flesh among us *now*. We are enabled to see Christ, our "breadth" (*latitudo*), *our epiphany*, our flesh. He becomes our translator and transfigures our lives, spaces, and communities.

On account of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, "the flesh is more than it is, gives more than it (as flesh) has."<sup>40</sup> Here Rowan Williams' assertion is both latent within Eriugena's *plus-quam* theology, and in accordance with this Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh. Flesh cannot be discarded for some imageless, pure concept of God precisely because "the eternal

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<sup>38</sup> *PP* I, 109, 3410-3418 (521D-522A).

<sup>39</sup> *Ca*, 90-91 (translation modified).

<sup>40</sup> Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2005), 61.

Word *takes* flesh and tabernacles with us, becoming for us (by all that he is and says and does and suffers) the very *image and likeness* of the invisible God.”<sup>41</sup> Enfleshed encounters may no longer disparage, strip away, or attenuate the flesh, because the Incarnation constitutes a “transfiguration and quickening of [the flesh] in which it is appropriated by God and granted a depth and surplus of meaning which, in and of itself, it can never *bear*.”<sup>42</sup> The Incarnate Word *bears* the flesh *beyond* its meaning, as metaphor does to language.

### **God’s Action *In Us* in this World of Metaphor**

For Eriugena, creation subsists in the Word and the Word is within the human person.

The coiling, twisting, and intertwining, the “making-together” of the material and immaterial, the bodily and spiritual, the flesh and the Word, illustrative of a poetics of the flesh according to Rivera, can be re-imagined as a theo-poetics of the flesh when reading Eriugena through Lāhūrī and Ḥāfiẓ on the imagination, on unity and multiplicity, self-annihilation (*fanā’*) and subsistence in God (*baqā’*), the divine and human faculties, and the mutual within-ness of the heart and God. Following the above passages, Eriugena fleshes out this folding of the human into the divine and the divine into the human with the following gloss on Matthew 10:20, which immediately comes after the catholic profession for proclaiming God:

Therefore, that which God the Word-Made-Flesh (*deus verbum caro factum*) says to his disciples, “It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of the Father Who speaks in you,” true reason compels us to believe, speak, and understand likewise concerning other things: It is not you who love, who see, who move, but the Spirit of the Father, who speaks the truth *in you* concerning Me and My Father and Himself, He Himself loves and sees Me and My Father and Himself *in you*, and moves Himself *in you so that you may desire* (*diligatis*) Me and My Father. If therefore the Holy Trinity in us and in Itself loves Itself and sees and moves Itself, certainly it is loved by Itself, and seen, and moved according to a *most excellent way known to no creature*, whereby It loves and sees and moves Itself, and by Itself and in Itself and *in its creatures* It is loved, seen, and moved, even though it is beyond all things that are said of it. [*emphasis mine*]<sup>43</sup>

Eriugena transitioned from speaking about *plus-quam* discourse immediately before this passage to speaking about human actions (loving, seeing, moving). The ultimate aim of *plus-quam*

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<sup>41</sup> Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *PP I*, 109-110, 3428-3440 (522BC).

discourse becomes nearly explicitly connected to metaphor; we do indeed love but only insofar as we take on God’s more-than loving. Lāhūrī cites the *ḥadīth* of supererogatory works (“I/God am the sight with which he sees...”) to demonstrate just how God’s action is our action when we subsist in the Real. This subsistence is possible via the imagination, and gives new meaning to Eriugena’s passage. In the experience of loving (or moving, or seeing, or any action) the tension between our actions and God’s is felt, and perhaps best characterized as follows:

If...	then...
I love or am loved,	God does not love or is not loved.
I do not love or am not loved,	God loves and is loved.
The Holy Spirit loves in me and is loved in me.	God more-than-loves and is more-than-loved.

The first two rows adhere logically to the law of noncontradiction. Dualistic conceptions of action suggest there can only be one agent and object of a single act: either God or the human person acts (active) or is acted upon (passive). However, the third row, via metaphor and *plus-quam* discourse, is able to bring together opposites just as the divine and human is brought together through the Incarnate Word. This, I suggest, is in fact “the most excellent way” whereby God loves, sees, and moves in this world and in us. Eriugena immediately adds after this passage, “who and what is able to speak about the ineffable (...*ineffabili...potest fari*)?”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the Holy Spirit can speak the ineffable *somehow* in the disciples, in human persons. The Incarnation is the *how* of divine action in this world, the *theo-poetics* of our being, our *theosis*. The *plus-quam* of God’s action and passion overflow into human action and passion via the Holy Spirit, the impossible made possible because of the coiling, twisting, and making-together of flesh with spirit in the Incarnation. God’s more-than-loving is the Spirit loving in the human person, and God’s more-than-passion is the Spirit’s passion in me. All of this is rendered possible through the

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<sup>44</sup> “For who and what is able to speak about the ineffable (...*ineffabili...potest fari*)? For whom any proper name, or verb, or any proper expression neither is discovered, nor is, nor is able to be, and ‘Who alone possess immortality and dwells in inaccessible light.’ (1 Timothy 6:16) ‘For who knows the mind of God?’ (Romans 11:34)” (PP I, 110, 3440-3444 [522C]).

Incarnation, which is the Christian imagination, and an Incarnational life, which is the Christian imaginary. Indeed, the “most excellent *way* known to no creature” is, in my reading after comparison, the Incarnation whereby Incarnational life is made possible. Ḥāfīz had a salient poetic point when he exclaimed:

If the abounding Holy Spirit continues to assist,  
others may every well perform what [Jesus] the Messiah did.<sup>45</sup>

That the Holy *Spirit* enables *embodied* action itself constitutes a nondual relationship between the invisible and visible, the spirit and the body. We incarnate God through our flesh, Christ’s epiphany.

### **Incarnational Imaginary: Overturning Unimaginative Ideologies**

In my interreligious interpretation, Eriugena has implicitly constructed a Christology through his imaginal theology that provides us with a *way* of seeing, a *way* of being, and a *way* of doing. This is nothing short of a re-imagined social imaginary. A social imaginary is constituted in the relation between language and ideology; employing language is a “creative, imaginary activity” that “[extends] the meaning of words, producing new meanings through metaphor, word-play and interpretation.”<sup>46</sup> The poetics of language produces social imaginaries that are attendant with embodied effects. Attentive to Eriugena’s poetics—*how* he brings words together as opposed to *what* he explicitly means—a Christian imaginary constructed in conversation with the love lyrics of Ḥāfīz and Lāhūrī’s commentary subverts the asymmetrical relation between the flesh and the spirit, the body and the soul. The Incarnation, and thus the Incarnate Word, is the Christian *khayāl* or imagination that undermines the normalized relationships among self, other, and God; these relationships, under the unimaginative regimes of oppression and marginalization (be them individualism, legalism, racism, late capitalism, exclusivism, nationalism, etc.), are overturned through the liberating, enfleshed experience of the passion, death, and resurrection of

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<sup>45</sup> *DKh* #136, 288; *SH* II, #187, 1,274; *DAv* #136, 185; *DFo* #136, 428. This lyric is also translated by Elizabeth T. Gray in Ḥāfīz, *The Green Sea of Heaven: Fifty Ghazals from the Diwān of Ḥāfīz*, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 6.

the Incarnate Word. This material world in which enfleshed humans live cannot be abandoned or discarded in this Christian imaginary for the sake of some immaterial, fleshless reality; rather, it is the imaginal, metaphorical world through which we perceive Christ's flesh here and now and become Christ's body co-working the redemption, salvation, and liberation of all from oppressive ideologies. The Reign of God proclaimed by the Incarnate Word, Jesus, may indeed be a utopia, but in this phenomenal, historical world it "performs the function of social subversion."<sup>47</sup>

Incarnational living conceptualized as a dynamic imaginary demands a perpetual process of liberation and subversion *within the flesh*, and not a static assurance of post-mortem salvation *without the flesh*.

Lāhūrī redirects the poetic metaphors conjured by Ḥāfīz's revelatory imagination from the text to the phenomenal, Imaginal World of metaphor; he does not solve enigmatic metaphors, but displaces them into this ambiguous world. In a similar fashion, the Christian imagination, the Incarnational imaginary, does not turn our mind toward the imageless God, but our heart inward and eyes outward to the Enfleshed God; the Incarnate Word perpetually draws us *into the flesh to the God beyond* our unimaginative ideologies (theological, political, social, economic, etc.). The nondual truth of the Incarnation does not overturn our earthly injustices and oppressive systems by a turn to the disembodied God or to incorporeal experience, or by intellectual assent to beliefs, but rather redirects our gaze to imagining ways in which we, participating in Christ's theo-poetics, can subvert earthly oppression through the power of the Incarnate Word working in us. This is possible when we connect Eriugena on theophanies and phantasies along with his understanding of eschatological rewards and punishments.

## **Subverting Perverse Power: Moving the Eschaton/*Reditus* to the Present**

Around the middle of Book V of the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena directs the dialogue toward

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<sup>47</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 184.

the topic of punishments merited from evil acts. The impetus for such a turn in the conversation is the Student's inquiry: since "God will be all things in all" (1 Cor. 15:28) upon the *reditus*, what of the "torments that are promised" in Scripture?<sup>48</sup> Prescinding for the moment from Eriugena's assertion elsewhere that *even now* God is *already* all things in all things,<sup>49</sup> following the dialogue carefully provides insight into how Eriugena distinguishes the effects of phantasies and theophanies on the human subject. The Teacher avers that various punishments will not be within any part of the nature created by God, rather, they "will exist in the perverse movements of evil wills and corrupt consciences."<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the punishment is "*the subversion of every kind of perverse power,*" for "that which is entirely destroyed *is subverted.*"<sup>51</sup> The return of all things to God is comprehensive of the subversion of perverse power.

A principal way power is subverted for Eriugena is a function of desire or passion and vain phantasies. "The false phantasies of sensible things (which the frenzied in this life desired to love)" are the thoughts (*cogitationes*) whereby "illicit wills of wicked humans and angels will be tormented in themselves."<sup>52</sup> Juxtaposing Maximus Confessor and Augustine, Eriugena elaborates on two types of passions (variably using the Latin *affectus* and *passio*):<sup>53</sup> "the one by which the

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<sup>48</sup> *PP* V, 106, 3367-3368, 3379-3380 (935C-935D).

<sup>49</sup> See *PP* III, 92, 2660-2671 (683C).

<sup>50</sup> *PP* V, 106, 3386-3387 (936A).

<sup>51</sup> *PP* V, 106, 3388-3390 (936A). These are two of three uses of the verb *subvert* in the five-volume *Periphyseon*, and it is constructive to grasp the import of this. The only other time Eriugena uses "subvert" is in quoting Maximus Confessor in Book IV in which the senses subvert the intellect; see *PP* IV, 143-144, 4380-4402 (842C-843A).

<sup>52</sup> *PP* V, 118, line 3801-3802, 3807-3808 (944D-945A).

<sup>53</sup> From Maximus, he cites: "Those who wisely meditate on the divine words call 'perdition,' 'hell,' 'the sons of perdition,' and other similar things those who make for themselves according to the passion/affect (*affectum*) of their mind a substance of that which does not exist, thereby becoming similar to the phantasies in all things" (*PP* V, 119, 3813-3817 [945A]). This is a loose translation of *Ambiguum* 20; see Maximus Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, 410-411 (1237C). He then follows with Augustine: "What should I say about Saint Augustine, who in the twelfth book of his *Hexaemeron* discusses that souls, while still established in this mortal flesh, suffer certain empty joys and empty punishments in phantasies, while in the future life, once they receive bodies, the just will rejoice in the solid contemplation of the truth, and the impious will weep, suffering the empty images of sensible things; in both the substances will be preserved and unpunished" (*PP* V, 119, 3817-3824 [945AB]). This is a paraphrase of Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, xxxii, 60-61. For Latin, see CSEL 28 (1), 426-437; for English, see Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st*

divinized are rapt in the purest recognition of their Creator, and the other by which the impious are plunged into the most profound ignorance of the Truth.”<sup>54</sup> Shortly thereafter, Eriugena adds:

There will be for [both the just and the wicked] phantasies and, as it were, certain expressed appearances. For the just [these appearances will be of] divine contemplations (for they will see God not in God’s Self but through certain appearances of His according to the loftiness of the contemplation of each of the saints); these are the clouds concerning which the Apostle [Paul] says: “We will be rapt into the clouds in the Way of Christ,” (1 Thess. 4:17) viz., calling clouds the diverse apparitions of the *divine phantasies* according to the loftiness of the contemplation of each of the divinized. While for the impious the appearances will forever be *diverse and false phantasies* of mortal things according to the diverse movements of their wicked thoughts. And just as the divinized will ascend through innumerable levels of divine contemplation, as it is written: “The saints will advance from virtue to virtue (rapt in the clouds of vision), and they will see the God of gods in Zion” (Ps. 83:8), i.e., not in God’s self but rather in the mirror of *divine phantasies*, likewise those far off from God will forever descend through diverse descents of their vices into the depths of ignorance and into outer darkness in which “there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13).<sup>55</sup>

In this passage, the just are rewarded with infinite divine phantasies, which is another term for theophanies, while the wicked suffer from vain phantasies, which is how theophanies are perceived even now without the restored vision of Christ. The wicked suffer unsatisfied desire via phantasies:

In this life [the unjust] were unwilling to serve God, given that they were detained by their love for temporal things. They will ardently burn by this love in the other life, whether in their souls alone or in the bodies that they will have received, as though with an inextinguishable flame, because there *they will not find* that which they were intemperately gazing-at-with-desire (*inhiabant*); rather, they will see only their *vain and false phantasies*. When they will want to embrace them as though they were real things, *they will vanish like a shadow*, since they are supported by no natural subsistence...What sort of flame of *perpetual want* will torment them...[when] nothing will remain of [earthly cupidity or mortal delights] except the empty, ungraspable elusive shadow of things, which they had believed to be theirs in the future?<sup>56</sup>

Post-mortem punishment of the wicked is conceptualized in terms of an unsatisfied desire for vain phantasies. While “*there*,” the blessed “will be where He is Whom *in this life* they loved and desired always to see.”<sup>57</sup> The dialogue distinguishes then between false phantasies and divine

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Century, volume 13, 499-502.

<sup>54</sup> *PP* V, 119, 3825-3828 (945B).

<sup>55</sup> *PP* V, 119-120, 3842-3859 (945C-946A).

<sup>56</sup> *PP* V, 124-125, 4014-4038 (949BCD). See also *PP* V, 141, 4567-4582 (961AB); *PP* V, 142, 4599-4613 (961C-962A).

<sup>57</sup> *PP* V, 124, 3993-3995 (949A).

phantasies. Indeed, the human mind receives the images of this world as phantasies, “a certain image or apparition of the visible or invisible appearance impressed upon the memory.”<sup>58</sup> Consequently, “phantasies are something good, since they are the imagination of natural things.”<sup>59</sup> The phantasies as such, then, are neutral: they are neither substantially good nor substantially evil. Just as they function as punishment for the wicked (as *vain* or *false* phantasies), likewise are they “rewards for the just...since even the *felicity of the blessed*, which [felicity] is established in the contemplation of the Truth, is *bestowed in phantasies*, which theologians call *theophanies* in order to differentiate them from the other phantasies. For [God] is and will always be invisible ‘who alone has immortality and dwells in inaccessible light’ (1 Tim. 6:16).”<sup>60</sup> But, later Eriugena adds, “how blessed are those who with their mind’s gaze *see* and *will see* at once all things behind God (*post deum*).”<sup>61</sup> The blessed *now* perceive theophanies, and in doing so they ascend unto God “Who surpasses all things and embraces all things and in Whom all things exist; therefore this person ascends unto God Herself Who contemplates, discerns, and judges the whole created Universe...[and this person] sees all things in the Truth Itself, which neither deceives nor is deceived, because It is what It is.”<sup>62</sup> Taking Eriugena beyond himself, I suggest that seeing theophanies, that is, perceiving through the Christian imaginary of the Incarnation, this person is compelled *now* to “subvert perverse powers,” the punishment of the wicked.

Central to humanity’s fall and the blessed just’s reward is in fact power (be it *potestas* or *virtus*, both employed by Eriugena). Eriugena exclaims, “How great was the lust for pride in him who desired to be God through his own power (*sua virtute*).”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, becoming God

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<sup>58</sup> *PP* V, 143, 4637-4638 (962C).

<sup>59</sup> *PP* V, 144, 4665-4666 (963A).

<sup>60</sup> *PP* V, 145, 4686-4693 (963C)., This statement is ultimately why Eriugena’s texts were proscribed by the 1241 Condemnations of Errors.

<sup>61</sup> *PP* V, 154, 4993-4994 (970A).

<sup>62</sup> *PP* V, 154, 5009-5013 (970C)

<sup>63</sup> *PP* V, 162, 5289-5290 (976C).

(*theo[poïe]sis*) per se is not the sin, but desiring it through one's own unjust power. A little later, Eriugena distinguishes once gain between phantasies and theophanies. The wicked are punished by empty, ungraspable phantasies,<sup>64</sup> while the "saints, who while constituted in the flesh, conquered the flesh, the world, and themselves by virtue of their actions and knowledge, and ascended up until God Himself by the depth of their contemplation, will receive reward for their works not in phantasies of sensible things, but in *theophanies of divine powers (virtutum)*, in addition to the grace of deification."<sup>65</sup> The saints' *theoïesis* effects their *theosis*. The blessed eternally desire and seek to see their God, "since what they seek is infinite, it is necessary that they seek [God] infinitely,"<sup>66</sup> finding God in theophanies.

Given that one never "arrives" or "settles" in the post-mortem state of seeking God, given that the blessed *now* perceive theophanies, and given that, a fortiori, even *now* God is already all things in all things,<sup>67</sup> I constructively conclude that the vision restored by the Incarnate Word<sup>68</sup> compels the blessed to imagine forth the Incarnation *now*. By imagining forth the Incarnation, we continue the only historical, enfleshed act universally subversive of perverse power (sin): the Incarnation of the fleshless God. The Incarnation is the condescension of God, in compassion and mercy, to co-suffer with humanity oppressed by sin; the meaning of the Incarnation is discovered in the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this infinite desire for God results in no static synthesis through dialectical reasoning, but in a dynamic ethic of subverting perverse power through a theo-poetics of the flesh.

The danger of reading Eriugena as a monist, idealist, pantheist, or universalist is the danger present in any radically apophatic theologian: the negation of images, of bodies, of flesh,

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<sup>64</sup> see *PP* V, 163, 5299-5304 (976D).

<sup>65</sup> *PP* V, 164, 5347-5352 (977D-978A).

<sup>66</sup> *CCH*, 87-88, 38-39.

<sup>67</sup> See *PP* III, 92, 2660-2667 (683C).

<sup>68</sup> See *PP* III, 92, 2677-2682 (683D-684A).

and of social, political, and ethical engagement—and ultimately the denial of the eminently kataphatic divine act, the Incarnation. After learning from Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī, a theo-poetics of the flesh keeps Eriugena’s theology—and arguably the Christian theological tradition in general—enfleshed in the liberating praxis of the Incarnation, the Christian imaginary. As an imaginary, it works both to create novel images and values and to transfigure present images and values so that the perverse power of ideological systems of oppression may be subverted; from restraining ideologies (oppressive imaginaries), images are imagined forth and re-imagined through the divine power (*virtus*) of the Incarnate Word, the infinite source of the impossible. Keeping both Ḥāfiẓ/Lāhūrī and Eriugena together, we are reminded that these imaginative practices should be grounded in broken-heartedness, which frees the intellect (*ratio*, dialectical reasoning) from restrictive logics.

### **Abandoning Dialectical Reasoning for Poetic Imagination**

We have seen that dialectical logic is availed to a certain point in Eriugena, but it is often self-subverting, either in the aporias experienced by the logic or in the subversion of the logic by the poetic dimensions of Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*, by his explicit poetry, and most importantly by his poetics that brings together words in creative, imaginative ways: the *way* of this subversion is the originative tensive event of the Incarnation, which concretely constitutes universal theophany. The elevation of imagination and poetry above logical discourse and ratiocinative knowledge is the subject of a love lyric written early on in Ḥāfiẓ’s career, perhaps when he formally rejected his prior life of dialectical learning, at least according to Lāhūrī. Four couplets merit attention:

Although [in] the path of passionate love there is an ambush of archers,  
Whosoever proceeds wittingly will prevail over [his] enemies.

In the imagination, all this is a game I’m playing with desire (*hawās*).  
Perhaps the one with vision (*ṣāhib-i naẓarī*) may convey the name of “an enjoyable sight”  
thereto.

The knowledge (*‘ilm*) and learning (*faḍlī*) that my heart gathered for 40 years,  
I fear that this Turkish narcissus may take as plunder.

Ḥāfiẓ, if the soul desires the drunken, amorous glance of the beloved,

empty out [your] house of [all] else, leave [it] so that [the beloved] may carry [it].<sup>69</sup>

Ḥāfiẓ references his forty years of traditional learning he had, which likely included Qur’ānic recitation and commentaries, dialectical theology, philosophical theology, and likely even common *ṣūfi* practices. However, Ḥāfiẓ realized that the path of passionate love was eminently more effective than his erudite knowledge. Lāhūrī references al-Ghazālī *Secrets of the Fātiḥa* to this effect: “The paths to God are as many as the breaths of created beings, but the Straight Path is the path nearest to God. However, the clearest and most discerning path is love.”<sup>70</sup> This path is dangerous, nonetheless; consequently, Lāhūrī counsels the wayfarer to proceed with the “*fatwā* of the complete spiritual guide.”<sup>71</sup> Often, this is the common advise given to novices to seek out a shaykh, a spiritual master who can guide you. However, Lāhūrī internalizes the spiritual guide by adding: “[the spiritual guide] is the spiritual intelligence (*hūsh-i ma’ nawī*) and the corporeal intellect (*‘aql-i mujassam*).”<sup>72</sup> This internal spiritual guide grants imaginary perception, as the next couplet and its commentary suggests.

This phenomenal world of images is a game, but more specifically a collection of marionettes used by puppet masters in shadow theatre.<sup>73</sup> The drama of life unfolds in this phenomenal world of images.

The one with vision terminologically refers to the complete knower who is able to cross over (*‘ubūr*) from the levels of imagined, formal, and meaningful multiplicity in order to reach the station of ocular unity (*tawḥīd-i ‘iyānī*), and with the eye of Real-seeing (*ḥaqq-bīn*), according to “I [God] am his sight whereby she sees,” he witnesses the Real in the forms of all of the existent things. [In other words, Ḥāfiẓ says:] in imagination and formation (*taṣwīr*), all this is a game of contemplation (*tafakkur*) I am playing with passion (*hawās*) and desire (*ārzū*), and in the search of encountering [the beloved] I am pursuing this beholding and that beholding. According to “whoever seeks and strives earnestly for a thing will find it,” I am very hopeful that the one with vision and the recognizer who possesses insight

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<sup>69</sup> *DKh* #124, 264; *SH* III, #239, 1,586; *DAv* #124, 171; *DFo* #124, 406.

<sup>70</sup> *SH* III, #239, 1,591.

<sup>71</sup> *SH* III, #239, 1,591.

<sup>72</sup> *SH* III, #239, 1,591.

<sup>73</sup> See *SH* III, #239, 1,591.

will convey the name of “an enjoyable sight” to this playful game and encounter Me.<sup>74</sup>

Lāhūrī glosses the couplet such that he begins in Ḥāfīz’s voice and ends in the voice of God. This illustrates how the imagination functions so that ocular perception really *sees* God in this world through God’s vision. Human subjects seek God in this drama of life composed of very real images that are not illusions but allusions in that they play towards—*a-ludere*—the divine. Imaginal discourse supersedes logical discourse.

Indeed, Ḥāfīz openly admits to this in the next couplet. The forty years of learning are nothing compared to the imaginal vision of the Real. All this needs to be unlearned—an apophatic act—so that God may be seen—a kataphatic act. Lāhūrī says as much in his commentary, but then adds two lines from Rūmī’s didactic poem:

Recite the verse *they made you forget* (Qur’ān 23:110)  
Observe [the saints’] power of making you forget.  
Since they are able to remind and make forget,  
Thus they rule all human hearts.<sup>75</sup>

If one explores the surrounding verses of this citation, it becomes evident that forgetting yields vision, or apophasis yields a greater kataphasis, a *more-than*:

He makes unsaid what has been said, opening a new way,  
So neither the skewer nor the kebab is burnt.  
Deeds derive from sight, without a doubt,  
For humans (*mardum*) are nothing but the pupil of the eye (*mardumak*).<sup>76</sup>

A certain perception compels a certain action; the two are not unrelated or distinct, but rather flow from one to the other. In the final couplet, Ḥāfīz abandons his former life of logical learning and embraces the life of the realized poet graced with imagination and an imaginary perception. The “house” of the self is emptied of restrictive logics so that the Beloved, or the saints, may carry it. In terms of social imaginaries and the radical imagination, the saints (friends of God)

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<sup>74</sup> SH III, #239, 1,591-1,592.

<sup>75</sup> See SH III, #239, 1,592. See Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, *Masnavī*, volume 1, ed. by Muḥammad Isti’lāmī (Tīhrān: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 1990), vv. 1684-1685 (Persian). For English, see Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, *The Masnavi*, Book One, tr. by Jawid Mojaddedi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 104 (vv. 1684-1685).

<sup>76</sup> Rūmī, *Masnavī*, volume 1, vv. 1681 and 1689; Rūmī, *The Masnavi*, Book One, 104-105.

dwell within the heart so that they may first negate oppressive imaginaries (ideologies) and then imagine forth new ones; this “opens new ways” of living, being, and transforming the world.

Strict adherence to dialectical reasoning postpones the *reditus* and renders it into an idealistic, post-mortem and immaterial synthesis; the imagination, with the nondual logic of metaphors and the poetics of the impossible, imagines forth the *reditus*, the eschaton, into the present—it opens new ways of living, being, and acting in the world *now*.

### **Reuniting the Spirit with the Flesh: Incarnating God in the Dynamism of Enfleshed Living**

The imaginal within Eriugena has been unveiled in conversation with the theo-poetics of Ḥāfīẓ/Lāhūrī. Reading Eriugena as sheer dialectician merely reproduces the conclusions of modern Idealism: the immaterial, spiritual, and mental is categorically superior to the material, bodily, and phenomenal, and arguably what is *really* real. A theo-poetic reading of Eriugena, and of the Christian tradition in general, suggests that God is encountered in the dynamism of enfleshed living; to be Christian is to imagine forth the Incarnation in relationships with others; these relationships incarnate the broken-hearted God within communities and spaces suffering under oppressive ideologies so that perverse power is subverted.

In the above love lyric, there is an explicit abandonment of dialectical learning so that this imaginary perception may be attained. In an Islamic theo-poetics, this is the result of being *freed from the constraints of the intellect by the experience of broken-heartedness*. The “constraints of the intellect” are the restrictive logics of non-Incarnational imaginaries. This compels a theo-poetic relearning of Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*, one attuned to discover such relinquishing of the logical for the metaphorical and imaginary. In an offhanded comment in Book IV, Eriugena does indeed gesture toward an abandonment of logic, and it merits closer reading as we conclude this chapter. This section has been left undiscussed in previous scholarship, perhaps because it contradicts Eriugena’s position of dialectical reasoning as the source and method of his theo-logic.

### The Incarnate Word Becoming Our Corporeal Senses

In the final pages of Book IV, Eriugena is describing the relationship between the mind (inclusive of interior senses, reason, and intellect) to the exterior, corporeal senses; the former is represented by Adam and the latter by Eve. Ever since the Fall, the world is a collection of images that ever deludes human persons with illusions of false phantasies. The mind is malformed and therefore unable to defend against the deceptions of the exterior senses. The images are interpreted as false phantasies as opposed to theophanies. Eriugena reads the serpent in Genesis 1-3 as a “figure for diabolical trickery and carnal delights,”<sup>77</sup> both of which are included in the other. The serpent remains successful to this day in deluding souls who misperceive the world, even if it fails “eternally to reign and to conquer the Image of God,”<sup>78</sup> given that human nature is liberated by Christ the Redeemer.<sup>79</sup> He then enters into a significant interpretation of “I will place enmity between [the serpent] and the woman, between your seed and her seed.” (Genesis 3:15) This interpretation inverses the hierarchal import of the mind and the corporeal senses vis-à-vis the emergence of sin. Eriugena otherwise logically avers that the corporeal senses deceive the mind because the mind is malformed; with a properly formed mind—which is arguably the disciplinary purpose of the *Periphyseon*—the human soul can interpret the phantasies of sensible things as theophanies. This, however, still maintains a certain dualism: the *corporeal* senses are *always* deceptive *unless* the *mind* can interpret the images theophanically. What of the Incarnational nature of imaginary perception that nondually unites mind and body, the spiritual and physical senses, the divine and human, in the Incarnate Word?

‘I will place enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.’ The woman is the corporeal senses, naturally innate to human nature. Through [the corporeal senses] the beauty of visible creation is referred to the Glory of the Creator, [at least] in those, namely, who are perfect. Between which (I mean, the woman) and the serpent (i.e., the one possessing lustful delight of material beauty and the diabolical shrewdness therein) a great enmity has been constituted by God. The woman (i.e., the perfect sense of the perfect) hates the carnal appetite of material things, while the serpent has a

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<sup>77</sup> *PP* IV, 153, 4705 (849D).

<sup>78</sup> *PP* IV, 155, 4757-4758 (851A).

<sup>79</sup> *PP* IV, 155, 4758-4763 (851A).

hostile desire of spiritual and divine virtues.<sup>80</sup>

Eriugena here for the first time gestures toward the possibility of the perfect formation of the corporeal senses. The diabolical shrewdness of the serpent is “false virtue, which tinges the vices with the colors of the virtues, shapes wickedness to resemble goodness, adorns ugliness with the garments of honor.”<sup>81</sup> How does the serpent do this? It deludes and illudes (*illudendas*) souls by “brandishing the grandiloquent charm of unusual and pompous words, imitating the form of truth by the tortuous intricacies of false propositions and *syllogisms*, which deceive the incautious.”<sup>82</sup> The dialectical reasoning innate to human nature, then, is both a gift that permits proper perception of the Divine Word, and a curse manipulated by the serpent to trick humans with false reasonings. The serpent cunningly endeavors to convince the woman to become a god while bypassing God. Eriugena continues the commentary:

“And between your seed and her seed.” The seed of the woman is the perfect, natural, and manifold (re)cognition of visible things, removed from all error. For the corporeal senses were constituted in the human person for this purpose, viz., so that it may become the intermediary between the sensibles and the intelligibles by means of phantasies.<sup>83</sup>

The corporeal senses are intended to receive phantasies, and the interior senses, reason, and intellect are intended to convert those phantasies into theophanies (through the “virtue and wisdom in the senses of the perfect faithful”<sup>84</sup>). Eriugena, while maintaining the epistemological and paramount function he grants to the proper formation of the mind in interpreting phantasies as theophanies, alludes in this interpretation to the ways in which the serpent qua false reasonings can intervene in the dialogue, as it were, between the corporeal senses and the ratiocinative function of the intellect that receives the phantasies. Is there a way for the corporeal senses to

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<sup>80</sup> *PP* IV, 155, 4764-4774 (851A-851B).

<sup>81</sup> *PP* IV, 153, 4717-4719 (850A).

<sup>82</sup> *PP* IV, 154, 4731-4734 (850BC).

<sup>83</sup> *PP* IV, 155, 4775-4779 (851B).

<sup>84</sup> *PP* IV, 156, 4794-4795 (851CD).

perceive theophany *immediately*?

[In righteous humans] their woman (i.e., their [corporeal] senses) are not deceived by the beauty through which the ancient serpent by means of lustful delight pours fourth the deadly venom of the vices into the minds of imprudent human persons. Therefore, the woman (i.e., the [corporeal] senses discerning evil from good), by the powers of the Stronger Woman (I mean, the Word of God), is incited, moved, assisted, reinforced, and guided to the perfection of action and contemplation, and bruises the head of the serpent and the primordial heads of diabolical suggestion and crafty delights, whence divine joy and restoration is effected in them...“And you will lay traps for her heel.” (Genesis 3:15) The heel of the woman (which is αἴσθησις [sense-perception]) are the phantasies of sensible things, i.e., the images which are expressed from the corporeal manifold into the quinquartite senses. And therefore the heel must be quinquartite. For it is divided into the five well-known sense organs, namely, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.<sup>85</sup>

In this passage, Eriugena suggests that the corporeal senses can be restored by the Stronger Woman who is the Word of God. The Word of God becomes the corporeal senses of righteous humans, it seems, and consequently, I argue, they perceive through the Incarnate Word and therefore bypass the need for the mind to discern the phantasies: *corporeal senses perceive theophanies immediately through an Incarnational imaginary*.

If the human person had not sinned, then he would have most purely contemplated, with the utmost ease, the natures and principles of things *not only by the interior intellect but also by the exterior sense, for he would have been freed from the necessity of all syllogistic reasoning (ratiocinatio)*. However, after he had sinned, the mind perceives through the corporeal senses nothing but the surfaces of things, as well as the quantities, qualities, places, and conditions, and the other aspects which succumb to the corporeal senses.<sup>86</sup>

The prelapsarian state of the human person was able to perceive theophany without the use of logical discourse, *freed from syllogistic reasoning*. In our postlapsarian state, however, the exterior senses (the woman) must be subject to the authority of the mind (the man) to perceive aright. Despite the highly gendered reading of this passage, Eriugena nonetheless suggests that the Divine Word can become the corporeal senses and perceive theophanically, that is, Incarnationally; in this postlapsarian state we can act *as though* in the prelapsarian (“on earth, *as it is in heaven*”). It is not that the intellect is abandoned, but that the spiritual and the physical, the mind and the body, the contemplative and the active, come together nondually in Incarnational

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<sup>85</sup> PP IV, 158-159, 4866-4887 (853CD).

<sup>86</sup> PP IV, 160, 4934-4940 (854D-855A).

perception. Just as the imagination functioned to perceive theophany for Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, the Incarnation is the imaginary through which Christians engage the world. The mind perceives through the corporeal senses the “surface of things,” indeed, but through the Incarnate Word, Christ is “*our epiphany* (i.e., our manifestation and top surface), since even though there are three substances of the Supreme Good, only one of them appeared to us in the person of Christ (viz., the Incarnate Word) and made Himself comprehensible to the corporeal senses.”<sup>87</sup> We may be freed from syllogistic reasoning through our participation in Jesus’s Incarnational broken-heartedness.

### **The Incarnation as the Christian Imaginary: Perpetual Incarnating of God, Perpetual Subversion of Perverse Power**

We do well to recall our definition of an Islamic theo-poetics that has been informing this reading of Eriugena throughout: it is a way of operating, living, speaking, and acting (*modus operandi vivendi loquendi agendi*) attuned to the modality of God’s relation to the world, productive of imagining forth the impossible, perceptive of the Divine, impassioned to unveil God for self and for others, disruptive of normative logics that restrain rather than liberate, imbued with a desire to engage this world subsisting in God, who is passionate love, and freed from the constraints of the intellect by the experience of broken-heartedness. Imagining the Incarnation through this theo-poetics, a Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh is constructed.

This theo-poetics of the flesh is understood then as the imaginary perception of the Incarnation in the phenomenal world of images. The Incarnation is the constitutive and quintessential *subversion of perverse power*. This Christian imaginary of the Incarnation, assumed in this life by human subjects, presents a method of subverting perverse power, and perverse power is nothing but oppressive imaginaries wherein the unjust subjugate the marginalized through ideologies productive of asymmetrical power relations. Ideologies are congealed imaginaries that produce the logical norms of life; these ideologies *appear logical* but

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<sup>87</sup> *PP V*, 201, 6506-6510 (1003CD).

they, like the serpent-devil, delude souls by “brandishing the grandiloquent charm of unusual and pompous words, imitating the form of truth by the tortuous intricacies of false propositions and *sylogisms*, which deceive the incautious.”<sup>88</sup> The logic of ideologies such as, inter alia, neoliberal capitalism, racism implicit in our consciousnesses and in organization of society, or patriarchy latent within our biases and in social structures, do not appear illogical when dressed with the (false and harmful) logic of meritocracy, so-called racial colorblindness, or the inward assent to gender equity, respectively. To disrupt and subvert these ideologies, the Incarnation must be imagined forth in embodied practices, and new poetic images, new *ways* of imaging the Divine Mercy that encompasses us, must be imagined forth as well.

Rather than understanding the subversion of sin qua perverse power to be the unique and single act of Jesus on the Cross *alone*, it becomes the ongoing pascal mystery into which we enter through the Christian imaginary of the Incarnation. Just as desire is infinite in the beatific state of the just soul, likewise is the subversion of perverse power an ongoing, perduring act by the communion of just here in this phenomenal world of images. By taking on the senses of the Stronger Woman, we engage others Incarnationally, we live a theo-poetics of the flesh. Logical discourse assists, to be sure, but the imagination is what renders the impossible possible by a theo-poetics of the impossible. Grounded in the coincidence of opposites of the Incarnation, we enter into a Christian imaginary: a perpetual process of liberation and subversion *within the flesh*, and not a static assurance of salvation *without the flesh*. Utopia confronts ideology to image this coincidence of opposites in the flesh, *now*; any act that subverts perverse power is an image of the Incarnation because oppression is confronted with its opposite, liberation. There is no resolution into a greater universal, but a perpetual process of subversion, at least as we are in this embodied constitution. We must forever seek subsistence (*baqā'*) in God, in the flesh, along with communion (*wiṣāl*) with God and others, and not a marginalizing and hegemonic unity (*ittiḥād*), against which Lāhūrī consistently warns.

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<sup>88</sup> *PP* IV, 154, 4731-4734 (850BC).

An Incarnational imaginary is attuned to poetics rather than hermeneutics (though it never abandons the latter). The *way* the human and divine come together in the person of Jesus Christ functions as the *theo-poetics of the flesh* for us today and is thus our communal *theosis*. *How* the spiritual and the physical, the mind and the body, and the contemplative and the active intertwine is a *theo-poetics* constituted by the Incarnation. We are not seeking *what* God is in this imaginary, but we are endeavoring to imagine forth the Incarnation. Just as poets participate in revelation in the Islamic tradition and conjure the Beloved before our very eyes, we are to participate in the Incarnation by enfleshing in our relationships and communities the subversion of perverse power performed by the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This entails *passionate love*, which is the *Divine Essence* and the *mode* of our *engagement* with alterity—in *broken-heartedness*. Indeed, the School of Love was sure about *what* God is only in this singular way: God is *'ishq*, passionate love. We fulfill our covenant with God only through *'ishq*.

How do we “know” we are perceiving Incarnationally, how do we “know” we are engaging the world with a *theo-poetics of the flesh*? When we live according to the measure of the Incarnation: to enter into the *theo-drama* of history in order to transform unjust systems into liberating ones. But, this requires a passionate love that enters into broken-hearted spaces in which the imagination enables the impossible, subverting the delimiting logic of non-Incarnational imaginaries. But just as desire is infinite, likewise is transformation. Never a utopia, always *more* to do *than* humanly possible, one persists nevertheless. The subversion of power that the Cross represents is a once and for all act of redemption that nonetheless perdures in our employment of an Incarnational imaginary *now* and *in the flesh*.

## Conclusion

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### **An Incarnational Imaginary: Communal Theo(poë)sis**

*[Jacob] said, "O my son! Recount not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they devise some scheme against thee. Surely Satan is a manifest enemy unto [humanity]."*

—Qur'ān *Yūsuf* 12:5

*[Joseph's brothers] said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams."*

—Genesis 37:19-20

I have had recourse to the sociological and philosophical categories of the social imaginary and the radical imagination, variously employed by Paul Ricœur and Cornelius Castoriadis, to make sense of the theo-poetics of the flesh I have constructed in this exercise in comparative theology. This discourse is helpful because it posits the image and the imagination not as less real or, worse yet, fake and thus disconnected from the real world of enfleshed existence. Quite the contrary, both Ricœur and Castoriadis “grant to the symbolic or imaginary [the] function [of] a collective faculty for producing social changes,” which “clearly connects the imaginary with history.”<sup>1</sup> Social imaginaries *make* history because they *make* society function, but often at the cost of the marginalized. Joseph’s imagination (central to Islamic theo-poetics), his dreams, *made* history. A theo-poetics of the flesh transforms history by disrupting ideologies and creating social spaces of justice constituted by the Incarnation. The way to subvert perverse power is through an Incarnational imaginary: it shapes our view and engagement of the world, and thus effects transfiguration and even creation of images of the Divine Word within communities and spaces. The Incarnation serves to transform restrictive ideologies into liberating

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<sup>1</sup> Michel, “Preface to the French Edition,” in *Ricœur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, xxxiv. Even for Eriugena, “there is a great difference between the false and the phantasy” (*PP* V, 142-143, 4618-4619 [962A]). Recall that this phenomenal world is nothing but a collection of fluctuating images, theophanies. Images, divine phantasies—these are not fake, but all that we have. They become fake or false through a dualistic logic that separate them from their source in the Divine *Nihil* beyond being, who gives them substance through the Divine Word.

theologies. We are to *realize* the imaginary into practice—imagine it, incarnate it—and therefore deliberately choose to alter and undermine asymmetrical power relations, rather than reinforce and sustain them. A Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh compels compassionate action, forbids the oppression and marginalization of bodies, and seeks to transform our enfolded relations with others and with the world. It reveals rather than conceals God, as Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī demand of us. Here, the Incarnation is not an ideology that is “a pale image of the social world,” but rather a radically imaginative disruption of the status quo. As theo-poetics of the flesh, it constitutes how human persons are to relate to one another (it is “a constitutive element of our social lives”).<sup>2</sup> It becomes liberating from, instead of productive of, asymmetrical power relations when interpreted through the theo-poetics of the passion, death, and resurrection of the Incarnate Word.

Ricœur suggests that the “imagination can have a ‘constitutive’ role” in this “real” world when “the field of the possible...extends beyond that of the real.”<sup>3</sup> For Ricœur, the creative imagination is the social correlate to the literary metaphor: “Just as the metaphor’s disruption of literal meaning allows for a metaphoric reference, so the creative imagination disrupts existing reality and opens a productive reference.”<sup>4</sup> The nondual, paradoxical nature of the Incarnation, re-imagined through Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī’s Islamic theo-poetics, suggests that it disrupts reality qua status quo, qua dominant, organizing social imaginary, and opens up new possibilities of being in the world in theo-poetic contradiction therewith. Ricœur contends that “metaphor not only *shatters* the previous structures of our language, but also the previous structures of what we call reality,”<sup>5</sup> and “every metaphor, in bringing together two previously distant semantic fields, strikes against a

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<sup>2</sup> Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 184.

<sup>4</sup> George H. Taylor, “On the Cusp: Ricoeur and Castoriadis at the Boundary,” in *Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ricœur, “Creativity in Language,” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, edited by Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 132.

prior categorization, which it *shatters*.”<sup>6</sup> The “structures of what we call reality” and the “prior categorization” (of language or reality) are precisely the images, logic, principles, values, etc., of our dominant social imaginaries.

For the creative and disruptive potential of the imagination, Ricœur turns to utopia. He argues that utopia is the imaginative creation that enables us to rethink the nature of “family, consumption, government, religion, and so on.”<sup>7</sup> Utopia, from οὐ-τόπος or “no place”, is considered “nowhere” because it is deemed the impossible, unrealizable imaginative ideal for a society. But Ricœur flips this normative claim on its head: “from ‘nowhere’ emerges the most formidable challenges to what-is...Utopia, in counterpoint to [ideology], performs the function of social subversion.”<sup>8</sup> In Ricœur’s analysis, “utopia is what shatters a given order, [and] by contrast ideology is what preserves order.”<sup>9</sup> Utopia shatters a given order, or a given social imaginary, when it disrupts ideological power “by offering alternative ways to deal with authority and power.”<sup>10</sup> The utopia proposes “the possibility of the *nowhere* in relation to my social condition.”<sup>11</sup> The love lyrics of Ḥāfīz, in his praise for the upending libertine, his critique of the lifeless ascetic, his lambasting of the pretentious mystic, shatter and disrupt the dominant politico-religious ideology of his time from the *nowhere* of a radically apophatic but passionate God.

There is also a connection between “nowhere” and the nonsubstantialist *nihil*, nothing, that is the God beyond being. This is precisely where Castoriadis meets Ricœur: the creative

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<sup>6</sup> Ricœur, “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality,” in *A Ricœur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, 125 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>7</sup> Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 184.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 184.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. by George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 179.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 179.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, “On the Cusp,” in *Ricœur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, 38, citing Ricœur’s *Lectures on Imagination* (14.11). See Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 16ff, for similar descriptions of utopia’s function.

imagination is *ex nihilo*, and through it there is “an emergence of the new arising [therefrom, which] may ‘shatter’ existing social forms.”<sup>12</sup> For my purpose, we are images of this Divine *Nihil* from which an infinite profundity of the impossible becomes theo-poetically possible in the Incarnation. The Incarnation liberates us from the confines of (the oppressive, ideological aspects of) social imaginaries so that from nowhere emerges the subversion of perverse power. God creates *ex nihilo/Deo* through the Divine Word, and so the Incarnation provides us access, in the flesh, to God’s creative capacity. Hence a theo-poetics of the flesh is an Incarnational imaginary: it does not merely *rethink* or *reimagine* the nature of family, consumption, government, religion, and, to add, all social, economic, and racial relations of communities and spaces, but it *imagines forth the Incarnation* in those very spaces through a liberating praxis.

The Incarnation may function as a radical imaginary that disrupts the oppressive dimensions of normative social imaginaries. To be sure, social imaginaries do provide expectations and norms for how we relate to each other, arguably without which there would be total societal disorder.<sup>13</sup> But the social imaginaries of the modern world also function as ideologies that synthesize diversity by occluding difference (e.g., the demand for immigrants to *assimilate* into a dominant national culture); this is the radical unity (*ittihād*), sheer unity (*waḥdat-i šarfi*), and self-annihilation (*fanā’*) without subsistence (*baqā’*) in God against which

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor, “On the Cusp,” in *Ricœur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, 38, referencing Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*. ed. and tr. by David Ames Curtis (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 175; and also Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 372. In particular, Castoriadis relates society to history in that the radical imaginary produces the perpetual self-alteration of society. “As instituting as well as as instituted, society is intrinsically history—namely, self-alteration. Instituted society is not opposed to instituting society as a lifeless product to an activity which brought it into being; it represents the relative and transitory fixity/stability of the instituted forms-figures in and through which the radical imaginary can alone exist and make itself exist as social-historical. The perpetual self-alteration of society is its very being, which is manifested by the positing of relatively fixed and stable forms-figures and through the shattering of these forms-figures which can never be anything other than the positing-creating of other forms-figures. Each society also brings into being its own mode of self-alteration, which can also be called its temporality—that is to say, it also brings itself into being *as a mode of being*. History is ontological genesis not as the production of different tokens of the essence of society but as the creation, in and through each society, of another *type* (form-figure-aspect-sense: *eidōs*) of being-society which is in the same stroke the creation of new *types* of social-historical entities (objects, individuals, ideas, institutions, etc.) on all levels and on levels which are themselves posited-created by a given society” (Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 371-372).

<sup>13</sup> See Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 24ff.

Lāhūrī warns. Further, ideologies may be coopted by elites or charismatic figures for the the seizure of power; this is the strategy of the the sanctimonious *mudda ī* (prosecutor/pretender), *muhtasib* (judgmental critic), and the false ascetic/mystic of “religious fanaticism (*ta ṣṣub*) and censure (*tawbīkh*),”<sup>14</sup> all of whom are Ḥāfīz’s antagonists, lambasted by the inspired libertine. Both—the implicit and explicit hegemony—have deleterious effects upon the marginalized and vulnerable members of a population. A Catholic-Islamic theo-poetics of the flesh challenges us poetically to disrupt the oppressive consequences of hegemonic social imaginaries through a passionate, suffering love. Becoming “broken-hearted like Jesus” renders the impossible possible, and the ways in which humans participate in the imagination of God (God’s revelation) gives us the creative potential to Incarnate images of disruption within the continuity of creation. Subsisting (*baqā’*) in God, we participate in God’s self-revelation/-creation; residing in the Word residing in us in the flesh, we enflesh subversion of perverse power (because Christ is our epiphany). Like Joseph, our dreams challenge the status quo, but only when we embody them, which for the firstborn son of Rachel resulted in a life full of suffering at the hands of the Egyptians.

Furthermore, the metaphorical and imaginal nature of this world makes societal structures far more transformable and renewable than a static conception of reality would otherwise permit. Eriugena and Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī recognize the images of this world as fluctuating, as transmuting (*taqallub*), which is why the heart (*qalb*) could perceive the perpetual transmutation of forms and why the imagination could imagine forth new ones from their source in God and the Divine Word. This provides theological support for our engagement with “instituted society,” which for Castoriadis is “the relative and transitory fixity/stability of instituted forms-figures.”<sup>15</sup> The radical imaginary, as he terms it, engages the “perpetual self-alteration of society,” which is the establishing of form-figures *and* the “shattering of these forms-figures which can never be

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<sup>14</sup> *SH* III, #365, 2,316.

<sup>15</sup> Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 372.

anything other than the positing-creating of other forms-figures.”<sup>16</sup> In connecting the radical imaginary theologically with an Incarnational imaginary, this transfiguration of reality only occurs when opposites coincide, viz., when particular instances of imagining forth the *liberating* Incarnation radically confronts ideological systems of *oppression* embedded within social imaginaries. In other words, *liberation*, be it in the form of particular acts or of the creation of communities of justice, poetically disrupts *oppression*, not by subsuming or reconciling it within larger imaginary structures that themselves marginalize, but by nondually dwelling within contradiction.

Perhaps the Islamic mystical desire to see things *kamā hiya*, “as they are,”<sup>17</sup> is not one merely for an aesthetic perception to see God in all things, thereby producing an equanimous and quietist response to this messy, postlapsarian world of suffering, sin, and subjugation; it is something *more than* this. It is a desire for a disruptive perception that sees the world *otherwise*, that sees another *way* for the world, first in the imagination and then in praxis. To see things “as they really are” (*being-as, metaphor*) is to recognize the impermanence not of reality *in toto* and tout court, but of the *present* imaginal structuring and figuring of reality, so that new ways of living and relating may be imagined forth in disruptive subversion of dominant imaginaries that oppress. An Incarnational imaginary, a theo-poetics of the flesh, restructures and transfigures reality, not eschatologically, but presently, or, better yet, it moves the *eschaton* (utopia) to the present via the Incarnation (imagination).<sup>18</sup>

Imaginaries are totalizing. They restrict the possible by their own logics, but these logics are not necessarily real, subsisting in some Platonic ideal. A brief example serves to conclude this

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<sup>16</sup> Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 372.

<sup>17</sup> This desire is constituted by the famous prayer of the Prophet, a *ḥadīth* of various authenticity, but whose historical and discursive impact on the larger Islamic tradition is uncontested: “O my God, make us to see (*‘ārinā*) things as they really are (*kamā hiya*)!”

<sup>18</sup> Ricœur is once again useful here in these terms. “In the *Lectures [on Imagination]*, the language is not one of ‘configuration’ but of ‘transfiguration’ of reality (17.1, 17.7) and of ‘restructuration’ of prior categorisation (16.12-13). We must ‘reshape’ prior concepts in order to encompass new situations (15.10)” (Taylor, “On the Cusp,” in *Ricœur and Castoriadis in Discussion*, 38).

dissertation. Charles Taylor demonstrates that the economy as the order of mutual benefit in the service of mutual interests among individuals “came to be seen more and more [in modernity] as the dominant end of society.”<sup>19</sup> The economy creates its own logic for society, whose members now see society as an economy, “as an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and its own dynamic.”<sup>20</sup> The economy becomes an objective reality, the only *mode* of being for society; it is totalizing, and so another way for social relations is judged *impossible*. But there is no self-subsisting *idea of the economic* that makes *this the the only way* for society.

This is how Castoriadis assesses the new socioeconomic reality of capitalism, which eventually becomes a “total social fact.”<sup>21</sup> The market economy moved from an arguably innocuous social imaginary that restructured the order of the world to a *mode* of being that seeks “accumulation for accumulation’s sake.”<sup>22</sup> But it is also much more than that. Capitalism “embodies a new social imaginary signification,” it is the “relentless transformation of the conditions and the means of accumulation, the incessant revolutionizing of production, commerce, finance, and consumption,” that leaves the purely economic sphere of monetary exchange for goods and services and comes “to penetrate and tended to shape the whole of social life (e.g., State, armies, education, etc.).”<sup>23</sup> Capitalism ends up shaping the rational; what is reasonable, logical, and thus possible is restricted by whatever maximizes profit for profit’s sake. But this profit is possessed by individuals whose self-reflective judgment of the ethical is itself

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<sup>19</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 72.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 76.

<sup>21</sup> See Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, 37. The term “total social fact” was employed by French sociologist Marcel Mauss. It is “an activity that has implications throughout society, in the economic, legal, political and religious spheres” (Andrew Edgar and Peter R. Sedgwick, *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory* [New York: Routledge, 1999], 64). Mauss defines and explicates the total social fact particularly in the concluding chapter of *The Gift*, wherein he explains the function of “total social phenomena” (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* [New York: Norton, 1967], 63ff, 76-77).

<sup>22</sup> Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 37.

restricted by the new logic of capitalism: I make money to provide for myself and my family (“this is *valuable*, an *investment* in the wellbeing of my children”) to the exclusion of any other deleterious effects my investment may cause. This totalizing logic is what is called in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century “neoliberalism,” which becomes an oppressive social imaginary.

The social imaginary of neoliberalism often blinds otherwise well-meaning individuals from the ways they participate in a system that produces detrimental effects upon marginalized and vulnerable populations. Wendy Brown’s *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* elucidates the manner in which neoliberalism is no mere collection of economic policies or a political theory, anodyne in the realm of ideas, but rather a “normative order of *reason*...[a] deeply disseminated governing *rationality*, [that] *transmogrifies* every human domain and endeavor, along with humans themselves, according to a specific *image of the economic*.”<sup>24</sup> Neoliberalism exemplifies Castoriadis’s assertion that capitalism seeks “rational mastery” in terms of quantification and the “fetishization of ‘growth’ per se.”<sup>25</sup> But, this rationality pervades all conduct, all spheres of existence, which are subsequently “framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized. In neoliberal *reason* and in domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*.”<sup>26</sup> As a social imaginary, neoliberalism produces *images* that restrain what is possible between human social relations. Rather than the liberating passionate love of the Incarnation and the pascal mystery, the logic of profit, accumulation, and economic success (“security”) constrains our decisions; rather than being *images* of the unrestricted Divine *Nihil*, freeing our imagination through the Incarnate Word, we are images of the economy itself, commodified and objectified within the constraints of production and consumption; rather than

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<sup>24</sup> Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 9-10 [*emphasis mine*].

<sup>25</sup> Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 10.

being *transfigured* by the Incarnation, we are *transmogrified* by the economy. No longer *imago Dei*, we are *imago oeconomici*. Indeed, the neoliberal social imaginary is the fetter of our intellects, it is also the logic that veils us and others from God (it makes us a *kāfir*, an unbeliever/veiler). Ḥāfīz’s fulmination against outward conformity to a secure set of social conventions, illustrated by his criticisms of the fake ascetic, the religious legalist, or the pretentious mystic, can be adapted here. We tend to conform to a neoliberal imaginary rather than an Incarnational one.<sup>27</sup>

A social imaginary posits a world.<sup>28</sup> But what if the Incarnation “posits” the world? What if the Incarnation becomes our social imaginary, an Incarnational imaginary? This is precisely what a theo-poetics of the flesh does: it makes (*poïesis*) our world in the flesh of the Incarnate Word. It inverts the real and the metaphorical, just like an Islamic theo-poetics. This world, as restricted by non-Incarnational imaginaries, is not real (the neoliberal imaginary *is not real*); what *is real* is the Incarnation, which should liberate us from the confines of *what we falsely presume to be real*. This follows the work of Spanish, Jesuit theologian Daniel Izuzquiza who re-orders

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<sup>27</sup> Where one lives, works, and plays all become a function of maximizing the benefit of the self, or at best of one’s family, to the exclusion of broader concerns of community, justice, and compassion. For example: “A student might undertake charitable service to enrich her college application profile; however, the service remains unwaged, and the desire for a particular college may exceed its promise of income enhancement. Similarly, a parent might choose a primary school for a child based on its placement rates in secondary schools who have high placement rates in elite colleges, yet not be calculating primarily either the monetary outlays for this child or the income that the grown child is expected to earn” (ibid., 31). *Homo oeconomicus* makes decision as though she were human capital, worthy of investment and producing profit: “Today, *homo oeconomicus* maintains aspects of that entrepreneurialism, but has been significantly reshaped as financialized human capital: its project is to self-invest in ways that enhance its value or to attract investors through constant attention to its actual or figurative credit rating, and to do this across every sphere of its existence” (ibid., 32-33) As such, the logic of the neoliberal imaginary remakes the human being as human capital. The images, metaphors, symbols, values, and ultimately rationality of neoliberalism constitutes a new conception of *how* to be *human*. It is its own poetics. The economy becomes *how* we are to be in *every dimension of personal and political life*: “This subtle shift from exchange [of an otherwise harmless market economy] to competition as the essence of the market [in a nefarious neoliberal economy] means that all market actors are rendered as little capitals (rather than as owners, workers, and consumers) competing with, rather than exchanging with each other. Human capital’s constant and ubiquitous aim, whether studying, interning, working, planning retirement, or reinventing itself in a new life, is to entrepreneurialize its endeavors, appreciate its value, and increase its rating or ranking. In this, it mirrors the mandate for contemporary firms, countries, academic departments or journals, universities, media or websites: entrepreneurialize, enhance competitive positioning and value, maximize ratings or rankings” (ibid., 36).

<sup>28</sup> On how the social imaginary, the institution of society, “always has to posit, *what* each particular thing, every relation and every assemblage of things, is, as well as what ‘contains’ and renders possible the totality of relations and assemblages—the world,” see Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, 317ff.

the traditional theological arrangement of salvation history *from* (1) creation, (2) Incarnation, (3) eschatology, *to* (1) Incarnation, (2) eschatology, (3) creation.<sup>29</sup> Just as my poetic reading of Eriugena re-ordered the logical reading of his texts, likewise does a theo-poetic re-ordering of salvation history.

Theologically, when creation is placed first in the order of Christian salvation history, there is a risk of relegating the transfigurative impact of the Incarnation to both beliefs and practices that *conform to the created order of society*, to the *logic of dominant but unreal social imaginaries* (in our case, neoliberalism). This is why Castoriadis's imagination is under some constraints. The social imaginary is "real," but in scare quotes: it makes the social-historical present into "a special mode of being that is privileged over—or seen as more excellent than—other modes of being...[and] while it is not onto-theological, it is ontological in a privileged fashion, in that the social-historical *has its own logos*."<sup>30</sup> And this *logos* is *not* the Incarnate Logos. This means that the social imaginary that constitutes—or institutes—the coherence of a society possesses its own *rationality*. This is what gives meaning to phrases such as "neoliberal rationality." They are ways of thinking and judging, principles, norms, values, etc., that create their own *ratio*. They are *ex nihilo* but out of the nothing of, to quote Eriugena, "*vain and false phantasies*," which are "supported by no natural subsistence."<sup>31</sup> They are not out of the nothing that is the *more-than-being* of God, made flesh in the Incarnate Word, now our eyesight, our faculties. Social imaginaries rooted in the created order allow only phantasies to be seen, which light "a flame of perpetual want [that] torments [humans]."<sup>32</sup> When creation is placed first in Christian salvation history, and when this creation is equated with the oppressive imaginary of

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<sup>29</sup> Izuzquiza, *Rooted in Jesus Christ*, 94ff.

<sup>30</sup> Adams, *Castoriadis's Ontology*, 202.

<sup>31</sup> See *PP V*, 124-125, 4014-4038 (949BCD). See also *PP V*, 141, 4567-4582 (961AB); *PP V*, 142, 4599-4613 (961C-962A).

<sup>32</sup> *PP V*, 125, 4033-4034 (949D).

neoliberalism, it confines and restrains the imagination, which should be grounded in the Incarnate Word and not in anything else.

When creation is placed before Incarnation, then theology tends to reduce the Incarnation into the language, logic, and images of dominant social imaginaries *because that is what is given to us as at once producing and binding together society*, as “real.” But the Incarnation is the originating tensive event, the *how* of our nondual relation to God, the theo-poetics that disrupts *ratio*, that subverts the perverse power of dominant rationalities of the created order. The Incarnation should be all that is *really real*. Many times in his *Periphyseon*, Eriugena is guilty of placing creation before the surprise, the shock and disruption of the Incarnation, especially with his heavy reliance on the *created* logic of *ratio*; but the radical imagination bursts forth occasionally in moments of stupefaction and even terror, like the flashing theophany and disruption of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī, or like the passionate love and the Incarnate Word that subvert Iblīs-Satan and the serpent-devil of the intellect and *ratio*. The nondual logic of the Incarnation shatters created *ratio*, for how else could Eriugena rhetorically ask, “*How would the Word suffer to be made in Himself what was not [already] consubstantial with Him?*”<sup>33</sup> This is no secular, created logic. The Incarnation—the event of the Word becoming flesh and the flesh becoming Word—is prior to creation. But the created intellect, as we learned in Chapter Five, attempts to deceive the heart, the imagination. Only broken-heartedness can challenge the machinations of non-Incarnational, created social imaginaries.

“If it is one (widely acknowledged) function of imagination to set us free from the given constraints of the empirical, it is certainly another of its functions (though much less widely recognized) to liberate us from pictures by which we might otherwise...be ‘held captive’ in inappropriate and damaging ways.”<sup>34</sup> The images that captivate and constrain us are precisely those constituting social imaginaries that restrain the possible, that find their source in phantasies

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<sup>33</sup> *PP* III, 86, 2497-2499 (679CD).

<sup>34</sup> Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 37.

and not in theophany. Resuming the above example, a neoliberal imaginary limits the Incarnation to the *ratio* of the market. An Incarnational imaginary can liberate us from these pervasive systems, giving us new images to confront and disrupt them. This is possible because of the theophanic and *plus-quam*/more-than character of a theo-poetics.

Creation is theophany, and theophany is images. God, furthermore, is Incarnate as these very images, and we are the *imagines Dei*. All images carry us *through* themselves *beyond* themselves as *metaphors*. Just as poets create metaphors, create images, we co-create (*poiēsis*) with God. The Incarnation shapes creation by disrupting created social imaginaries. God becomes flesh and so fleshiness is part of the images of the world; Christ thus becomes our epiphany, our top surface. The real and the metaphorical are inverted, as the tradition of Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī contend. Far from making this world less real, useless or even unreal vis-à-vis pure ideals or abstract concepts, or with respect to an imageless Divinity, images are *how* God reveals and the Incarnation is *how* God relates (even in the post-mortem state). Thus, that we live in and through images as *imagines Dei* means that we have the creative and imaginative potential to carry *through* (*metaphor*) the Incarnation in spaces, communities, and ways of living and being. The imaginal nature of the world, images *of* a nonsubstantialist, unrestricted God, frees up the field of the possible and makes even the impossible possible, because *nothing* limits us. We can imagine forth something *more than* possible. The Annunciation of the Word's Incarnation—"nothing [is] impossible for God" (Luke 1:37)—meets Jesus's response to his disciples' astonishment regarding the difficulty of wealthy individuals' entering the kingdom of heaven: "for God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Indeed, the eschatological state should be placed prior to even creation: the *reditus* (the fourth and final division of nature, God as *finis*), placed among the impossibles according to Eriugena (see Chapter Four), *becomes possible now* through an Incarnational imaginary.

The world is not immutable, concrete, reified. All things in the world are fluctuating images of the immutable God, reflecting the *Superessential Nothingness of God*. The life,

passion, and death of Jesus Christ, the Enfleshed Word—the foolish glory of the Cross—disrupts reified imaginaries of oppression and destroys sin. The Incarnation is an inextricable correlate, or rather the prior foundation, for creation. Creation *ex nihilo* is a disruptive act that perdures, precisely in the same way that the Incarnation is the unique, singular, and constitutive act of a saving God that *disrupts* created imaginaries by subverting the pervasive perverse power of sin. Subversion of perverse power implies the destruction of created, social imaginaries, of phantasies.<sup>35</sup>

The ineluctable necessity of the imagination to faith and to (writing and reading) theology has been decisively demonstrated in scholarship too extensive to review in detail.<sup>36</sup> But, the function of images, imagination, and metaphor in theologizing has remained within the purview precisely of *talking* about God; theological discourse requires creative permutations of images and metaphors performed by the imagination. Instead, this theo-poetics of the flesh endeavors to shift the focus from discourse to action. The imagination permits us to create new ways of *incarnating the Divine Word*, of entering into the flesh—the *flesh of the Word*—to imagine forth the Incarnation. When we create novel ways of organizing our communities in such a way that disrupt pervasive imaginaries such as neoliberalism (but also racism, individualism, etc.) we in turn *subvert the perverse power of sin*. We unveil God for self and others (like the realized one for Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī) rather than conceal (like the pretender, the fake ascetic, or the hypocritical legalist).

Within the Islamic theo-poetics, the poets participated in divine revelation and drew from the wellspring of Divine Revelation through the Imaginal World; they created (*poïesis*) or

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<sup>35</sup> Recall that the punishment of the wicked is “*the subversion of every kind of perverse power*,” for “that which is entirely destroyed *is subverted*” (PP V, 106, 3388-3390 [936A]).

<sup>36</sup> From the bibliography, see William F. Lynch, Gerald J. Bednar, Ray L. Hart, David Tracy, John McIntyre, Garrett Green, Sandra Marie Schneiders, David J. Bryant, Michael L. Cook, Mary Catherine Hilker, Paul Avis, Richard Viladesau, Richard Côté, Trevor Hart, James Walters, Jeanne Evans, Ritva Palmén, Malcolm Guite, John Coulson, Gordon Kaufman, Cyrus Zargar, Rowan Williams, Janet Soskice, Ormond Rush, William Chittick (specifically *Imaginal Worlds*, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, and “The World of Imagination and Poetic Imagery According to Ibn Al-Arabī”), Richard Kearney, and Aaron Hughes.

imagined forth poetic texts that were in effect extensions (or re-creations) of the Qur'ānic text, and rendered the impossible possible. Learning therefrom in a theo-poetics of the flesh, we may say that Christians participate in the Incarnation, the concrete theophany that disrupts sin, when we imagine forth the Incarnation in praxis; in enfleshing the Divine Word, we become extensions of the Incarnation, each of us becoming a site for the Incarnation (recalling Chapter One). We transfigure our flesh and our embodied communities into the resurrected, omnipresent flesh of Christ so that it may truly become *our epiphany*. This becomes possible when the images of Christ's life, particularly his passion, death, and resurrection, become our imaginary.<sup>37</sup> An Incarnational imaginary *creates the world*; it is not conformed to the created world. It is a true *theopoïesis* that is a communal *theosis* of the created, social order. They transform a society into a community.

In theologizing the Incarnation in terms of an imaginative act that precedes both eschatology and creation, the enfleshment of the Divine Word becomes the source of our creative imagination *ex nihilo*, *ex*/from the Divine *Nihil*, the “divinity beyond being” that is the being of all things. An Incarnational imaginary draws us into flesh so that it may lead us beyond (*plus-quam*) the static rationality of social imaginaries that have their source not in God but in the false syllogisms of the serpent-devil/Iblīs-satan. Novel images of God are imagined forth within ever fluctuating contexts. They are new because the concrete, embodied ways that perverse power is

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<sup>37</sup> Trevor Hart too has argued for an integrate of revelation with the imagination. See Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 40-42. Therein he suggests that “*an account of religious and theological engagement cast in terms of the categories of the imaginative is entirely compatible with an appeal to the dynamics of revelation*” (ibid., 41). He also avers that there is good reason “for insisting that this is precisely what God has done and continues to do, engaging us through texts and practices explicitly and unashamedly imaginative in nature, as well as demanding further acts of tacit but genuine *poiesis* in our more systematic theological reflections and constructions” (ibid.) Finally, “we may in a perfectly proper sense speak of theology as a human practice of ‘imaginative construction’ and even of God as ‘an imagined object, without for one moment abandoning the vital claim that such imagining properly arises from and is informed, constrained and constantly reshaped by a reality lying beyond ourselves, one our continued engagements with whom break open and ‘force new meanings’ upon the very words and images he has himself given to us as appropriate way in which to think and speak of him. . . . Theology is intrinsically and necessarily a ‘poetic’ set of practices in the proper sense, and one in which the imagination is and must be kept constantly and identifiably in play” (ibid., 41-42). As insightful as Hart’s conclusions are, his work nonetheless relegates theology more to discourse, contrary to my theo-poetics of the flesh.

subverted—eschatology—vary according to any given historical and social context—creation. The Incarnation theo-poetically disrupts the oppressive aspects of social imaginaries not by abandoning the flesh, not by fleeing the adversity and anguish of this world, not by reducing its power for disruption, not by translating it into the least common denominator of concordance between it and the logic of the world, but by entering deeper within the world (subsisting in God, in the Incarnate Word) in contradiction to—confronting—the world. Within larger social imaginaries, the impossible becomes possible when the Incarnation functions as the singularly disruptive act that is continuously re-imagined in creation.

### **A Concluding Example**

Shared, created social imaginaries conceal themselves in the form of the good. This is precisely the method of the serpent-devil and his false syllogisms. A neoliberal imaginary covers up its oppressive consequences by the logic and restricted definition of agreed-upon “goods” for society, such as, inter alia, freedom and liberty (that may otherwise enslave the marginalized), spreading democracy (that is a cover for neocolonialism), law and order (that occludes the racist police-state), national security (that permits bellicose foreign policy and discriminatory domestic surveillance), economic development (that profits the few), fighting terrorism (by disproportionately monitoring Muslims and their communities and by exporting the war to foreign lands), creating jobs (that do not pay a living wage because of the corporate maximization of profit in “finance-dominated capitalism”<sup>38</sup>), border security (that is a cover for xenophobia),

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<sup>38</sup> See Kathryn Tanner, *Christianity and the New Spirit of Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), for a critical Christian appraisal of how finance-dominated or -disciplined capitalism has entirely reshaped not just the economy, but human subjectivities now subjected to the valuation of profit over human flourishing: “The question at root is one of subject formation—self-propelled, self-involved action—in line with capitalist demands. What your employer wants—the maximally efficient use of your capacities—is also what you want, what you yourself value, because you see it as part of your own self-realization, not something you are forced into by a foreign power through external imposition” (ibid., 27). Finance-dominated capitalism has abandoned the mere trade of a just and equitable salary (that permits human thriving) for one’s labor and time, and instead now demands complete commitment—faith—from the worker in the corporate mission of maximized profits. Even if one is not so committed, the perpetual insecurity and precarity workers inhabit from this new spirit of capitalism would demand faith in the benign creditors.

private or charter schools (that leave vulnerable communities behind), and the war on drugs (that negatively impacts communities of color). It also masks how one's own apparently benign choices of where to live, what career to pursue, what sort of education to garner for your children, who your neighbors should be, and what neighborhood school to send your kids to, in fact reproduce—at least among the economically, socially, and racially privileged—segregation, marginalization, and oppression.<sup>39</sup> Electing the best neighborhoods, schools, jobs, and career—the “best” according to a neoliberal logic—perpetuates social, economic, and racial inequality, *despite, or precisely because of, one's ideas and beliefs.*

An Incarnational imaginary instead disrupts the logic of neoliberalism with the poetics of compassionate love. The Incarnate Word of our eyesight uncovers the concealment of unbelief, it unveils the machinations of the serpent-devil in the form of dominant social imaginaries, and imagines forth the Incarnation in acts that place the flesh of Christ at the center and surface of all relationships. What Eriugena and Ḥāfīz/Lāhūrī share is a theophanic imaginary of passionate love, a love that suggests embodiment to be more revelatory of the divine than disembodiment. It is not that we should seek broken-heartedness for its own sake, but that we should not flee it for our private, segregated security. It is not that we should become broken-hearted for our own sake, but that we should for the sake of the other in community. A theo-poetics of the flesh means disrupting social imaginaries by living entirely against the grain of normative logics of success, investment, financial happiness, and security, it means leaving “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields” (Matthew 19:29) for the sake of the Reign of God.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See, inter alia, Margaret A. Hagerman, *White Kids: Growing up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2017); Matthew Stewart, “The 9.9 Percent Is the New American Aristocracy,” *The Atlantic*, June 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/06/the-birth-of-a-new-american-aristocracy/559130/>; Jeffrey M. Hornstein, *A Nation of Realtors: A Cultural History of the Twentieth-century American Middle Class* (Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>40</sup> This is the constructive point of Willie J. Jennings in *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). “This joining [of the people of God with the land and with those around in the space of communion] also involves entering into the lives of peoples to build actual life together, lives enfolded and kinship networks established through the worship of and service to the God of Israel in Jesus Christ. Such kinship networks would, of necessity, come into contention with the permeation of

For the Islamic theo-poetics, the *baqā'*, subsistence in God, of the human person keeps the dynamism of divine perception and action in the heart, embracing, and embraced by, Divine Mercy. The heart fluctuates so that the person may not only see, but actively enter into the ever-renewing divine creativity, which is the fluctuating images of theophany. Furthermore, a theo-poetics of revelation in this Islamic tradition gives the poet revelatory power: poets participate in divine revelation through their imagination, which draws its power from the Imaginal World. For the School of Love, it is the wayfarers of *passionate* love who are able to discern, and act within, the ambiguity of this created world in a way that keeps taut the tension of divine immanence and transcendence. Transposing these comparative insights once again, the Christian participates in divine revelation when she enters into the Incarnation through a theo-poetics of the flesh.

Theology is not merely a “worldview” or a hermeneutics, but also an embodied practice that incarnates the Word in all spaces, relationships, and communities. It is not just a way of interpreting the world, but a way of imagining forth the Incarnation in all social relationships; we perpetually enflesh the Divine Word in our communities.

We can learn from Eriugena’s apophatic disavowal for defining *what* (quid) God is, from

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class and economic stratification inherent in the transformation of land into private property. The space of communion draws into itself the social divisions enacted by and facilitated through that stratification in order to overcome them. The identities being formed in the space of communion may become a direct challenge to the geographic patterns forced upon peoples by the capitalistic logic of real estate. We who live in the new space of joining may need to transgress the boundaries of real estate, by buying where we should not and living where we must not, by living together where we supposedly cannot, and being identified with those whom we should not. Thus the new space may betray the logics of geographic commodity form by drawing local communities and their myriad designations (for example, residential, business, commercial, and so on) into a wider, even global kinship network” (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 287). This is one practice implied by a theo-poetics of the flesh; it is an Incarnational imaginary that disrupts and subverts the logic of a capitalistic imaginary. Jennings continues: “For us in the racial world, the remade world, a crucial point of discipleship is precisely global real estate. Where we live determines in great measure how we live. Where we agree to the spatial configurations of land inevitably means a tacit agreement to the racial formation of the world. We must enter the struggle of land acquisition, space and place design, targeted housing development, buying, and selling which constantly reestablishes and strengthens segregationist mentalities and racial identities. We must, for example, disrupt the smooth formation of global real estate brokers and entrepreneurs formed in a process that depends on the logic of displacement and tightens the connection of space to commodity form, yielding the further naturalization of distinct living spaces for peoples with varying degrees of capital. Our imaginations must be drawn to new possibilities of living arrangements that capture our freedom in Christ and turn them toward desiring a journey of joining enabled and guided by the Spirit of God” (ibid., 287). He concludes, “By attending to the spatial dynamics at play in the formation of social existence, we would be able to imagine reconfigurations of living spaces that might promote more just societies” (ibid., 294). A theo-poetics of the flesh endeavors to imagine forth these Incarnational communities for our communal *theo(poïe)sis*.

his assertion that the *plus-quam* statements of God speak truthfully without delimiting God, and from the interreligious insight gleaned from a poetic reading of his texts, viz., that *how* the world is nondually related to God is through the Incarnation. Ultimately, a theo-poetics of the flesh does not merely ask, “*What* should I do” or “*What* should I know” to be Christian. This reproduces a disembodied gnosticism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather, a theo-poetics of the flesh asks “*How* should I live, *how* should I work, play, build community, and—in nuce—*be in the world?*” This *how* is our theo-poetic *mission* in the world, and it is formed according to the Incarnation. God’s *plus-quam* becomes our theo-poetic action in the world through the Holy Spirit. Thus, in every context it will manifest differently; but what remains the same is the theo-poetics of subverting perverse power, of a broken-hearted, passionate love in the flesh. This is an Incarnational imaginary that is foolishness to the specious logic of the serpent-devil and Iblīs (of neoliberalism), but liberates self and others from the oppression of dominant, false imaginaries, and thus unveils God for self, others, and community.

### **Postlude: A Biographical Example**

As a white, heterosexual cis-gender male hailing from a socio-economically privileged family who set up camp in the nearly all-white suburbs of St. Louis, MO, and attended nearly all-white schools, I have been socialized by this imaginary to seek out similar spaces of economic and racial privilege. The logic of this imaginary that I have inherited segregates my spirituality from my embodied praxis, from my theo-poetics of the flesh. This logic propounds that *what* I do with my privilege by “giving back” to the marginalized, by my prayer life, my volunteer life, and my charitable contributions is the measure of Christian discipleship. This neoliberal imaginary does not ask *how* my life reproduces segregation, benefits from dominant systems, and sustains asymmetrical power relations. It does not question the neoliberal metrics of “safe neighborhoods” and “good schools.” This inherited imaginary colludes with oppression by occluding *how* these metrics disenfranchise those unable to participate in these *de facto*—or even *de jure*—

economically and racially segregated spaces.<sup>41</sup>

Instead, an Incarnational imaginary seeks to disrupt and subvert these perverse powers by imagining alternatives to a neoliberal imaginary, by assessing one's decisions of where and how to live, work, play, and build community not through the economic logic of the profitable, but through the passionate theo-poetics of flesh. It is a *way* of life that sets up camp—dwelling, *skēnoō*, *shekhinah*—in solidarity with those oppressed (made broken-hearted) by the very imaginaries that produced my privilege. In doing so, we imagine forth the impossible image of the beloved, the Incarnation, in surprising ways, but ways that may often lead to suffering (at least “suffering” when judged according to neoliberal measures of success and happiness). But this passionate love also brings great joy and delight, as when the lover encounters the Beloved in Ḥāfīz's love lyrics. This Incarnational imaginary implies being “drawn to new possibilities of living arrangements that capture our freedom in Christ and turn them toward desiring a journey of joining enabled and guided by the Spirit of God,” and being attentive to “the spatial dynamics at play in the formation of social existence [so that we may] imagine reconfigurations of living spaces that might promote more just societies.”<sup>42</sup> It is the *theo(poie)sis* of communities *in the flesh*, and not merely *ideally*, that disrupts and subverts the logic of a neoliberal imaginary. As such, it comes full circle to my explication of comparative theology through the lens of feminist and social activist bell hooks: through this theo-poetics of the flesh “all of us [are urged] to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions [that enable]...transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries.”<sup>43</sup> A theo-poetics of the flesh disrupts created, social imaginaries and creates communities that model the dwelling of the Incarnate Word with us. Dwelling nondually, we dwell in difference, but in solidarity nonetheless.

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<sup>41</sup> See footnote 38 above.

<sup>42</sup> Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 287, 294.

<sup>43</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 12.

A theo-poetics of the flesh is not simple, and it is often messy. As someone with privilege, I am more likely to fail in this Incarnational living. But by encamping with, and listening to, those who are marginalized by dominant imaginaries, I am enabled to empty myself (*fanā* ' ) so that I may subsist (*baqā* ' ) in the Incarnate Word, whom I have made my neighbor in the flesh. By perceiving the flesh of Christ in the neighbor, one does not encounter her as helpless, but as possessing the power and grace to liberate. I cannot enter into communion with marginalized communities unless I disavow the *ratio* of what I think is best for them—a dualistic logic of us-them—shaped as it is by a neoliberal imaginary. Instead, I enter into communion (*wiṣāl*) by ceding my own power and making space for the voices of the marginalized, subsisting (*baqā* ' ) as it were in them, transfigured by an Incarnational imaginary.<sup>44</sup> In this way, I imitate, in a broken way, the Incarnation itself, for Jesus, too, learned from and gave power to the marginalized Canaanite woman to re-imagine His own mission.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The distinction correlates to a kenotic power-for model of the Incarnation; see Anna Mercedes, *Power for: Feminism and Christ's Self-giving* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), 133ff. "Power for offers one way to describe the power of Christ. And our exercise of power for may also serve Christ, as our kenotic pleasures flow in a sustaining pulse of Christ's presence among us: extending holy chrism, bringing Christ to flesh again and again. Christ's ongoing presence among us suggests that the embodied power of the incarnation has bearing on us, and in us. Christ's ongoing presence suggests that incarnation is an ongoing thing, active now, and active in conjunction with present human bodies. Yet, this way of thinking incarnation will still be foreign too many Christians" (Mercedes, *Power for*, 137).

<sup>45</sup> See Matthew 15:21-28

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