

Abdul Hadi's translations of Ahmad Raza: An internal logics approach

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This article employs an internal logics approach, developed in a recent work by Sher Ali Tareen, to the study of the Barelwi school in South Africa. This approach ties metaphysics to practice. Specifically, the article addresses some works of the school's founder, Ahmad Raza Khan, as translated by South African Islamic scholar Abdul Hadi Qadiri, in the light of this approach. It then extrapolates the insights of this approach to a recent article by Sepetla Molapo, which highlights the importance of appreciating the metaphysical role of ancestors in any academic approach to understanding traditional African worldviews and African self-concept. Taken together, the article suggests that the internal logics approach is helpful in bringing to the surface the crucial, but often obscured, metaphysical presuppositions concerning the nature of time-presuppositions that inform not only the worldview of the object being studied, but, equally, the often different ones that shape the perspective of the researcher.

Contribution: This article wishes to underscore the importance of metaphysical considerations in the study of religion, advocating an approach that highlights such considerations and examining some of its broader academic implications. While it specifically focuses on a theological contestation in Islam, it extends the implications of this contestation to the academic study of traditional African worldviews and to world religions more generally.

Keywords: Ahmad Raza Khan; Barelwi; Deobandi; internal logics; metaphysics of the academy; technology of the self; African self-concept.

Introduction

South African Muslims of Indian extraction¹ trace their origins in this country to the 1860s and 1870s when ships brought indentured labourers, and subsequently traders, to what was then British-controlled Natal. They maintained, at varying levels, familial and ideological ties with India and the forms Islam took in that country. By the late 19th century, two such forms had emerged in the Indian sub-continent: a form that largely supported and justified the historically inherited cultural expressions of Islam in India, such as the traditional veneration of the saints and another which by and large rejected these expressions as unwarranted innovations in Islam and wanted to return to the 'pure' teachings of the Quran and the Prophet's example. Consequently, South African Muslims of Indian extraction have historically been divided into two groups: the Barelwis, with their stronghold in KwaZulu-Natal and the Deobandis, often referred to as Tablighis, who are dominant in Gauteng in particular (Vahed 2001). The terms 'Barelwi' and 'Deobandi' refer to two contesting schools of Islamic thought that emerged in north India in the late 19th century, centred on the towns of Bareilly and Deoband, respectively. The Deobandis, who founded their school in around 1866, sought to eradicate traditional Islamic customs of India, which they saw as compromising the true worship of God and the principles of Islam. To them, an over-veneration (from their perspective) of the Prophet and saints detracted from what lay at the heart of Islam, namely that worship is solely because of Allah and that nothing else must be venerated in a manner that echoes such worship. On the other hand, the Barelwis, under the leadership of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (1856–1921), defended these customs (although not without qualifications) and criticised the Deobandis for undermining, as they saw it, the status of the Prophet and the saints in the religion (Sanyal 1999; Tareen 2020). They drew a stark distinction between the sole worship of God, which is an indisputable requirement of Islam and veneration of the Prophet and the saints. This veneration did not constitute worship in any way and, in fact, was an essential aid to the proper worship of God. In South Africa, descendants of Muslim indentured labourers have traditionally (but not invariably) been associated with the Barelwi school, while those of traders, often based on their ethnic background, have demonstrated

1. The term 'Indian' is a contested one. While many South Africans self-identify as 'Indians', the term has historically been contested because of its apartheid connotations. Thus, the term 'Indian extraction' is preferred.

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allegiance to either of the schools (Khan 2009, 2012; Vahed 2003).² It is noteworthy that these were historical divisions that played out in much of the 20th century, but that in the latter part of this century, particularly from the 1980s onwards, there emerged newer trends that challenged the ideological domination of these two groups.³ However, it is fair to say that these two groups still play a determinative role for many South African Muslims of Indian extraction, as can be seen, for example, the prominence of 'ulama (traditional scholarly) bodies affiliated to these schools in Muslim, and indeed broader South African, public life.⁴

In this article, the author wants to explore the internal logics at play in these positions, focusing here on the Barelwi school. The author draws out the metaphysical considerations highlighted by this approach and examine some of its implications for academic approaches in the humanities. The notion of internal logics, which is an approach that ties metaphysics to practice, has been developed in an important new book by Sher Ali Tareen on the Barelwi and Deobandi dispute in India. In brief, the approach broadly ties one's metaphysical vision of the world, that is one's implicit or explicit notions of time, space and causality, to the type of practices one emphasises and the latter in turn to the type of consciousness one seeks to cultivate. Thus, metaphysics is the basis of practice. In this article, the author focus on the internal logics underlying the Barelwi position as found in the writings of Imam Ahmad Raza as translated by South African Muslim scholar, Moulana Abdul Hadi al-Qadiri. The author then brings this approach into comparative perspective by examining a recent article by Sepetla Molapo on, what is in effect, the internal logics of an African worldview.

The argument of this article is that an internal logics approach can bring to light the metaphysical dimensions of both the objects of the analyses as well as those underlying the methodologies employed to study them – dimensions, the author believes, are crucial to bear in mind if we want to appreciate these objects on their own terms.

Internal logics and the technology of the self

In a lecture on *Technologies of the Self*, delivered in Vermont in 1982, Michel Foucault talks about, among other technologies, technologies of power and technologies of the self. Foucault (1988b) says that:

... [T]echnologies of power [...] determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject... Foucault (1988b)

2.Thus regarding traders: typically the Surtees (whose ancestors come from Surat in India) follow the Deoband school, while the Memons and Kokanies, whose ancestors have their origins in Kathiawad and Maharashtra, respectively, have traditionally followed the Barelwi school or beliefs and practices that have been validated by this school.

3.See, for example, the reference to the Muslim Youth Movement later in this article.

4.For example, the notion of 'halaal' – food permitted by Islamic law – plays a ubiquitous role in South African consumer life. Two influential 'halaal' authorities in South Africa, the South African National Halaal Authority (SANHA) and the National Independent Halaal Trust (NIHT), are affiliated to the Deobandi and Barelwi schools, respectively.

This statement, of course, is an allusion to Foucault's famous concept of governmentality. However, in this lecture, Foucault (1988) was more interested in technologies of the self, which he says:

[P]ermit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality Foucault (1988b).

This interest in technologies of the self was towards the latter end of Foucault's life (in about the early 1980s) and Foucault (1988) himself says in this lecture:

Perhaps I've insisted too much in the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of self Foucault (1988a).

It is evident from the given statement that the way an individual acts upon themselves (e.g. through ascetic and ritual practices) guides their attitude to, and perceptions of, the political.⁵ The individuals are not only acted upon by the political, as in Foucault's governmentality, but they can approach the political on their own terms. This might also mean, as Foucault himself says, an avoiding of the political in order to take care of the soul or self.⁶

So, what becomes paramount with Foucault in this lecture is what might be termed the internal logic of the self. The care of the self presumes a metaphysic (which means that 'happiness, wisdom, immortality,' etc. is realisable because of the nature of existence), practices ('operations on the body') that align with an understanding of that metaphysics, and a movement or consciousness ('transformation') that this is the purpose of life. Thus, there is, in my view, a close correspondence between the internal logic of the self and the care of the self as described by Foucault. As Foucault shows, in both ancient Greece and early Christianity, taking care of the self does not mean that it cuts itself off from society but, rather, it becomes part of a community of like-minded individuals, such as those in monasteries, which strive as a collective to take care of the self. It is within the internal logic of this collective – a collective, community, group or movement, with an underlying metaphysic, with specific aspirations and with a more or less specific programme to reach those aspirations – that the self realises itself, that is, finds its own internal logic.

The notion of 'internal logics' – especially at the collective level, is fundamental to an important new book on the Barelwi–Deobandi divide, entitled *Defending Muhammad in modernity*, by Sher Ali Tareen. Tareen's argument is that, to understand the contestations between these two groups, it is crucial to grasp their internal logics (Tareen 2020:3–5). Both

5.Here political is taken in its common meaning, namely how government and public role players such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) shape society and its values.

6.The soul or self is used synonymously by Foucault in the quotes provided.

groups aimed to secure divine sovereignty (the pre-eminence of God in human dealings), but did so differently. Deobandis emphasised the humanity of the Prophet: to them, an overemphasis on the Prophet's exceptionality detracted from the awareness of God's awe-inspiring power and control over all things, which was precisely the message the Prophet brought. However, the Barelwis stressed his exceptionality: the Prophet has a supreme role and is at the heart of God's creation, and it is precisely by being aware of this role, and developing the proper relationship to the Prophet and his deputies, the saints, in the light of this awareness, that the believer cultivates a proper relationship to God in turn. Both groups, on the basis of these outlooks, sought to cultivate different types of public. For the Deobandis, the customs and traditions found in late 19th century India overreached in their veneration of the Prophet and the saints, compromising divine sovereignty, and had to be abandoned. For Barelwis, as divine sovereignty was maintained by venerating the Prophet and the saints, these customs, although not without qualification, were to be upheld. Thus, there is an internal logic operating within each group that needs to be attended to in order to understand why they act in the way they do (Tareen 2020:175–176).

For Tareen, and this is a major point in his book, categories such as legal versus mystical or traditional versus reformist which are often used to describe the contestation between the two groups, misrepresent the nature and stakes of the debate. Thus, typically Barelwis were seen as mystical, traditional and populist, while Deobandis are seen as legalist, puritanical and reformist. Such categories, while perhaps well-meaning (but also at times invidious⁷), seek to make sense of the debate in terms of categories familiar to the outside observer, particularly those from a secular academic background, but are categories often alien to the participants themselves. For example, the Barelwis, and not only the Deobandis placed a strong emphasis on the legal (the Shariah) while the Deobandis, like the Barelwis, exhibited a strong mysticism; the Deobandis, akin to the Barelwis adhered to a tradition of forbears, especially in the Hanafi school of Islamic law, while the Barelwis, and not only the Deobandis, also sought reform of customs. Thus, such categories, which the author might add are grounded in temporalities of modernity, are unhelpful in understanding the nature of the debate. They are categories imposed from outside, from the logics of a different worldview, to, consciously or not, instrumentally understand and control another. As Tareen notes, these binaries, as well as others such as inclusive versus exclusive, speak more to the liberal secular attempt to patrol religion, to make it more legible in terms of a reality seen in secular terms, a legibility that can perhaps be employed by the modern nation-state for its own needs. As other scholars have shown, this legibility is premised on a fundamental bifurcation between the 'secular' (assumed to be the touchstone for reality) and the 'religious', as well as attendant divisions such as the 'social' and the 'political' being separate from the 'religious' (Asad 2003). Unlike these categories,

7. For example, where the categories are used to separate the 'good' Muslim from the 'bad' Muslim for foreign policy goals.

which speak to liberalism's propensity to compartmentalise life, Tareen's internal logics approach integrates metaphysics (here the temporality of divine sovereignty and the place of the Prophet's authority) with practice, with how life ought to be lived, as can be seen in these school's respective attitudes to traditional Islamic customs and, by extension, the manner in which they guide their adherents to cultivate moral selves. Tareen's approach, in a word, is an attempt to understand these schools from within, a way to take their understanding of reality seriously.

The author now turns more specifically to the way reality is understood, and moral selves cultivated, by one group, the Barelwis, by focussing on some of the writings of their founder Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, as translated by South African scholar, Moulana Abdul Hadi Qadiri.

Knowing, teaching and upholding the Cosmic Prophet

As mentioned, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan is the founder of the Barelwi school. A child prodigy, who qualified to pass Islamic legal verdicts by the age of 13, he wrote prolifically throughout his life and his total writings in Arabic, Urdu and Persian amount to over 30 volumes, each over 500 pages. Yet it was not the quantity of his writings but the impact they caused that is most significant. He was seen as the leading bulwark against Deobandi influence in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent, and considerable numbers of Islamic scholars and Sufi leaders (pirs) coalesced around his school in order to defend and consolidate the beliefs and customs historically associated with Muslims in the region. Ahmad Raza himself was considered a leading Sufi master, having received permission to teach in a number of different Sufi orders. But he considered himself, above all, as an Islamic scholar whose duty was to preserve the religion's authentic, mainstream scholarly legacy as he saw it. This legacy refers to what Ahmad Raza saw as the correct, established and standard views of the Sunni Muslim scholarly majority⁸ in the issues of debate between the Barelwis and the Deobandis. To this end, he established, in 1904, an Islamic educational institution in the city of Bareilly, the Manzar-e-Islam, which became the leading centre for the school associated with his name, the Barelwi school (Sanyal 1999; Tareen 2020:244 ff). In time, this school attracted Muslims from around the globe, including South Africa. One of its students was Abdul Hadi Qadiri of Durban, who graduated from the institution in 1978.

Upon his return to South Africa, Moulana Abdul Hadi dedicated himself to spreading the teachings of Imam Ahmad Raza in this country. While he is involved in teaching activities and is a spiritual deputy in the Sufi order associated with Imam Ahmad Raza, he primarily appears to be involved in writing and publishing. He thus founded, in 1986, the Imam Ahmad Raza Academy in Durban, which primarily

8. More specifically, the scholarly majority that belongs to the majority denomination in Islam, the Ahl Sunnah wal Jama'ah [People of the Prophetic example and the congregation] of 'Sunnis'. Thus, Barelwis often refer to themselves as 'Sunni' meaning the holders of the authentic or correct views in the areas of controversy, implying or stating that the Deobandis hold inauthentic, non-Sunni views on these questions, even though they regard themselves as members of the Ahl Sunnah wal Jama'ah.

publishes works of Ahmad Raza as well of those who align with the Barelwi school more generally. Abdul Hadi himself has translated 55 works by Ahmad Raza (Imam Ahmed Raza Academy 2022). Among these works is one entitled *Thesis of Imam Ahmad Raza*, which consists of 13 texts on various topics, such as on the intercession of the Prophet for believers, the status of the Prophet's parents, whether the Prophet had a shadow, the way the Prophet saw God on the night of his ascension through the heavens, the pre-eminence of the saint, Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani as well as some others, such as a Muslim's rights (Khan & Qadiri 2005). But the focus of the texts in general is on the exceptional status of the Prophet and through a composite reading of these texts, we wish to sketch how Imam Ahmad Raza sees that status.

For Imam Ahmad Raza, as per standard Muslim belief, God – Allah – alone is the source and doer of all things. But within the created order, the Prophet is the Light of God, the first of God's creation, and creation in turn has been created out of that Prophetic Light (Nur-e-Muhammadi).⁹ He is God's Most Beloved and praise of God is intrinsically tied to praise of the Prophet. He is the Chief Intercessor with God for creation, and for Muslims in particular. Because he is Light, he casted no shadow. His parents too were believers, even though they passed away before he received revelation at forty. Allah resurrected them for him and they accepted Islam at his hands. But prior to that they were already Muslims because the Light of the Prophet, the first thing that God created, was passed down from generation to generation until it reached the Prophet's parents.¹⁰ His intercession for Muslims, especially sinners, is available not only on the Day of Judgement but in this world as well and things, such as relief from worldly problems, can be sought through his intercession. He was granted knowledge of the Unseen and it is through his medium alone that the saints of Islam can also access this knowledge. The saints are his deputies and through the Prophet's permission can also alleviate the problems of their followers even though they have passed on from the world. Thus, the famous saint, Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani, told his followers: 'Anyone who calls out to me in times of difficulties, it will be removed' (Khan & Qadiri 2005:306). Even the renowned poet Mevlana Rumi, who is also considered a saint in Islam, told his disciples: 'When the mercy of Allah frees my soul from my body and exposes me to the world of solitude, I will divert my attention to you' (Khan & Qadiri 2005:135–136).¹¹

9.The doctrine of Nur-e-Muhammadi is based upon a reading and acceptance of certain Prophetic reports (*ahadith*). It is a major trope in the Barelwi school. Interestingly, the Deobandis do not deny this doctrine; however, it appears to play a much less significant role in their school.

10.Imam Ahmad Raza explains that the Prophet's parents were *Muwahiddun* [believers in one God] prior to Islam. Thus, they were already safeguarded from hell. However, having both passed away before the Prophet received revelation, they could not testify to his messengership (Risalah). This was why the Prophet's parents were resurrected. We need to add to Imam Ahmad Raza's view is based on a very detailed reading of the primary sources in this regard, and he acknowledges that there are various views on the matter (see Khan & Qadiri:152–199).

11.The given paragraph is taken from the author's overall reading of the book *Thesis of Imam Ahmad Raza* (Khan & Qadiri 2005). It needs to be reiterated that this bare summation belies the complexity of the argument and sources used. However, the author's aim here is simply to give a broad picture of the metaphysic, which characterises the school and which it seeks to cultivate in its adherents. For this reason as well, we are not interested in the validity and sources of these arguments and statements, only in the type of self they cultivate.

For those who follow the Barelwi school of thought, these beliefs are consolidated at events such as the *Mawlood* (the celebration of the Prophet's birthday) or *Urs* (celebration of a saint's death anniversary and thus their 'wedding' to God) and the school of Ahmad Raza has also provided legal justification for these events, in addition to those provided for the beliefs described here.

Coming back to the question of internal logics, in the Barelwi school – as Tareen has also noted – God's authority (divine sovereignty) and the Prophet's authority is co-constituted. That is, it is impossible to worship God correctly without due veneration of the Prophet. For Imam Ahmad Raza – and he often adopts a pedagogic approach in his texts – the ordinary Muslim needs to be *taught* that the Prophet plays the central role in God's court. While God is the real doer of all things and the only being worthy of worship, his specially chosen one in creation is the Prophet; he has created the rest of creation for the sake of the Prophet,¹² and readily accepts petitions and requests that are done through the medium of his Beloved (Hussain 2021). Thus the only way to God is by intensely revering the Prophet and any detraction of his exceptional status, such as seeing him as an elder brother or just a creation among God's creation, is to be condemned.¹³ Crucially, the Prophet and his deputies, the saints, are metaphysically available to all Muslims, travelling between this realm of time and the next, coming to the assistance of Muslims when needed. The deeds of the Prophet's followers are presented to him twice a day, salutations that are sent to him by Muslims are conveyed to him in person, as he holds court in this other realm of time. The trope, the Court of the Prophet, is also widely used by the Barelwi school.

There is thus, a particular conception of time, a particular relation to reality and a particular relation between those in this world and the next that is cultivated by the school of Imam Ahmad Raza. It is a conception of time in which 'worldly time' is in a continuum with 'other worldly time', where death is a bridge between two realms, not an end in itself, where those who have 'gone' to a perceived other realm continue to exert influence on those who are in this one. It is of course an orientation that works in tandem with the well-known fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam to which the school necessarily adheres. But it is an orientation that nevertheless gives a distinctive cast to the school, as can be seen in its South African manifestations as well. This technology of the self – how the self ought to relate to reality, particularly the reality of the Prophet's cosmic role – is cultivated and reinforced not only by *Mawloods* and *Urs*, which is a particular hallmark of this orientation, but also, and perhaps more tellingly through family upbringing, as well as through the weekly and daily

12.This is a well-known Barelwi trope and is based on a hadith: 'Were it not for you I would not have created the worlds.'

13.The Barelwis charged their rivals the Deobandis of seeing the Prophet as an elder brother, thus diminishing the status in which he should be held.

teachings at the many mosques and educational institutions associated with the Barelwi school in this country.¹⁴ It is at madrasas and darul ulooms – elementary and advanced Islamic educational institutions, respectively – as well as through familial networks that ‘bodies, souls, conduct and ways of being’, to use Foucault’s terms, can be transformed to align with metaphysical picture painted by the Barelwi school. It is here that the fundamental matrix of an individual’s metaphysical disposition, and consequently the way they relate to other modes of being and temporalities, be it to other orientations in Islam, to other religions, or to secular orientations, is formed.¹⁵

It should be stressed here that the Barelwi school is very much a major orientation within Islam in the sense that their views on the role of the Prophet, the saints and customary practices resonate with arguments by Muslim scholars in other parts of the Islamic world. It arguably represents the majority of Muslims in the Indo-Pak subcontinent (although the Deobandis also attract the allegiance of a major slice of that demographic) (Global Security n.d.).¹⁶ Imam Ahmad Raza himself *argues* for, rather than simply stating, the beliefs now characteristic of his school using not only direct evidence from primary and secondary sources but also arguing in terms of principles of Islamic jurisprudence as well as logic. In the process, he draws upon an array of scholarly authorities who were at the forefront of classical and post-classical Sunni Islam (Khan & Qadiri 2005:140–141, 188–190). Thus, for the Barelwis, his positions represent the views of a considerable number of major scholars attached to the Ahl Sunnah wal Jama’ah [The people of the Prophetic practice or example and Congregation, popularly called the ‘Sunnis’], the majority trend in Islam, which Ahmad Raza sought to champion and which he saw as being compromised by the Deobandis (although the latter would vehemently deny this). It is for this reason as well that ‘Barelwi’ beliefs and practices, such as visiting the tombs of saints, are often found in many parts of the Muslim world, but with different historical trajectories. Indeed, the Barelwi school prefers not to see themselves as ‘Barelwis’ at all but as ‘Sunnis’,¹⁷ that is, as practitioners of the most widely accepted path in Islam. It is via what they see as faithful adherence to this path that their particular orientation to the Prophet, the saints, time and ritual practice is cultivated.

14. The teachings of the Barelwi school are also made more accessible through booklets, pamphlets or books geared for popular consumption. A fairly recent example of this last trend is a book entitled *Our Sunni Identity* by M.Y. Abdul Karrim, published by Islamic Education Projects (Durban 2015), which is written mainly for the youth and which presents fundamental teachings associated with the school in question and answer style.

15. On how cultivation of selves can take place within religious contexts, see the classic study by Asad (1993), on how such cultivation took place in monasteries.

16. Of course, Shi’is also engaged outwardly in some of the same practices and also have a strong belief in intercession of their Imams. However, the epistemological grounds for the Sunni validation of these practices are quite different. Imam Ahmad Raza uses a set of sources that would be recognised by opponents of their position as well.

17. Academic theories are of course very conscious of situatedness. However, such situatedness is normally seen in political terms, employing categories such as race, gender and class. However, metaphysical situatedness – which includes considering the metaphysical location of these categories themselves in a particular internal logic – is less evident.

Centring time: Some implications for the humanities

This internal logics approach – the integration of metaphysics and practice – helps to explain why, seemingly arcane, irrelevant issues from an outsider perspective, animate and generate strong views and passions among the followers of the two groups. Thus, for example, the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa was a time of tremendous political upheaval for non-white communities in general including Muslims. However, there was a very vigorous, heated and at times violent debate and confrontation between Barelwis and Deobandis on the issue of celebrating the Prophet’s birthday as well as other practices, such as visiting the graves of saints. Amidst much media interest, the Muslim Youth Movement complained that these two groups were involved in a debate imported from India that was irrelevant to their situation in South Africa and its then political realities. They maintained (Vahed 2003):

The debate has been imported from the Indian sub-continent [...]. The sooner we export this divisive theological nitpicking back to the Indian Subcontinent, the better our chances of getting on with the task of building our country into a land where all the children of Adam will be honoured and their rights upheld (p. 329).

But the author thinks this response misunderstood the stakes of the debate. The debate and confrontation could not be understood as an aside, an obscuring of that which was truly important. Rather, seen from an internal logics perspective, it is precisely because the debate touched upon issues of ultimate significance to each group that it was important. While the then politics in which they found themselves, and to which they also needed to respond, was critical to their day-to-day living as well, it was a temporality that was ultimately subsumed by another: their orientation to what they saw as the source of time. They had to inevitably return from the marginal dimension of time, which constituted their present life to what was perceived as a greater dimension of time in the next realm and so the latter naturally takes priority. Thus, in a sense, they had to put aside the political in order to focus on the soul, as Foucault would have said. In relation to the humanities, it is this built in, hardwired, fundamental time associated with the technology of the self, one of course found across religious traditions, which requires at least as much attention as the time devoted to ‘relevant’ issues, predicated as they are on the time of politics, the time associated with the technology of power as Foucault would have it. How people respond to the vicissitudes of the political on their own terms, that is, in terms of their own worldviews and its associated temporalities, is equally as important as the historical events that shape them.

The built-in time associated with the self – one that encounters the world with a prior learned technology requires one to take serious cognisance and appreciation of the *metaphysics* underlying an adherent’s approach to reality – and so to think in terms that is often atypical of theories and methods

deployed in the social sciences and humanities. These theories have been constructed under the immanent frame of modernity, to use Charles Taylor's famous expression, and so, consciously or otherwise, employ assumptions about time, space and causality that are specific to that frame (Taylor 2007). To wit, time is now predominantly linear, space quantitative and measurable and causality is naturalistic. These assumptions now underlie central notions of modern life such as the nation-state, progress, freedom and rationality and have become so naturalised that it is difficult to see beyond them, even in well-meaning academic analysis (Ahmed 2022). Thus, Irfan Ahmed shows how this view of time (and by extension space and causality) inflects even Tareen's work (for which he has high praise generally). The title of Tareen's book speaks to modernity, which is something the book's protagonists themselves did not explicate. In addition, it speaks of 'South Asian' Muslims in the 19th century – while the term itself is of fairly recent vintage. These are minor criticisms to be sure and it is easily understood why Tareen was required to use them – but Ahmed's point was to show the pervasiveness of current 'immanent frame' as a point of departure, even in works such as Tareen's, which provide avenues for rethinking the dominance of linearity. This is not to even speak of theories and methods that expressly disregard notions of time other than that constituted by secular modernity. For Ahmed, any decolonial approach to knowledge, must, at root, question these deep structures of temporality and, by implication, be open to these other ways of being.

One scholar who has done that in a South African context is Sepetla Molapo. Molapo argues that African self-concept cannot be understood except in relation to what he terms a general economy, that is, a fundamentally cosmic understanding of reality on which the general 'order' of this world is premised. In other words, scholars have to take seriously the way an orientation to ancestors in African worldviews shape ethical paths and forms of solidarity in this world. These worldviews are centred on kinship relations, the very fabric of which is held together by a relationship to the ancestors. In these worldviews, it may be said, ancestors do come back and people become ancestors. It is thus impossible to separate death from life as typically found in modern epistemes and Molapo argues that death should be treated as a species of indigenous African thought rather than as something tangential to life. The metaphysical implications of death, in his words, should be taken seriously. The problem is, and this is a running theme in his essay as well, is that the academy, predicated as it is in large part on these modern epistemes, tends to pay perfunctory courtesy to any dimension beyond death and thus avoids these metaphysical questions. It tends to be stuck in, to use Molapo's term, 'order' and so is ultimately bound to the metaphysical limits of that order. Thus, even empathetic scholars such as Frantz Fanon and David Chidester who show a keen understanding of the destruction wrought by coloniality on traditional African and other worldviews fail to truly appreciate death as a

vital element in African self-concept (Molapo 2022). Molapo (2022) notes:

While both Fanon and Chidester's insights and observations concerning African self-concept are useful and illuminating about contemporary challenges around African self-concept, it can be argued that these insights and observations derive from economic worldviews that assume separation of life and death. That is, they arise from an observation of mechanisms and factors within order [in the world prior to death] and how these are brought to bear on African self-concept. This emphasis on order as well as the mechanisms and factors that cohere within it lead to a failure to see the intimacy order has with what lies beyond its administrative boundaries [*that is, beyond death*], namely a general economy [*of life, death and beyond death*] that order presupposes (Molapo 2022:3) [*parentheses mine*].

The author believes believe that what Molapo is pointing to here is an internal logics approach but from an African worldviews perspective. In this internal logic, it is impossible to understand African relations of solidarity without appreciating what is beyond death and how this latter determines this order. To confine an understanding of these relations to elements within order, to this world only, would fundamentally skew how these relationships work. This is akin to the argument made by Tareen that concepts such as legal versus mystical or puritan versus populist (concepts that are themselves products of a secular worldview, which shuns that which is beyond death) misrepresent the Barelwi-Deobandi contestation.

In Molapo, we also find an interplay between the technology of the self and the technology of power. Quite clearly, the orientation towards ancestors is a technology of the self, one taught and consequently hardwired into adherents of African worldviews. It is an inherent part of African self-concept as Molapo would say. It is with this self-concept that they encounter other modes of being. But it is also clear that this self-concept comes into conflict with, and is impacted upon, by political technologies of power. These latter technologies may take the form of historical colonialism, of colonialism's variant in a South African context, namely apartheid, and of colonialism's historical and persistent twin, capitalism. With regard to the latter, Molapo observes that the commodified set of relationships cultivated by the latter have directly eroded the sense of solidarity built into African self-concept and its cosmic view of time. Yet, as Molapo appears to indicate here with reference to Fanon and Chidester, this concept has not been defeated. The fact that it exists and continues to have vital being despite the attritional effects of centuries-old technologies of power is indicative of its sovereignty, that is, the mutual form of care for, and solidarity with, kinship that is rooted in a relationship to ancestors. In a word, it stands on its own. As Molapo (2022) says:

The narrow conception of loss [found in Fanon and Chidester] deriving from economic ways of understanding the world casts African self-concept in relation to victimhood and overlooks sovereignty as a central feature of the expression of that self-concept. It is precisely this notion of sovereignty that this article tries to point to in its reflection on sovereign responsibility.

Discourse concerning sovereign responsibility tries to rescue African self-concept from the relations between black people and white people and give it its own autonomy (Molapo 2022:3-4) [parenthesis mine].

Molapo is pushing the envelope and forcing us to consider what *seriously* taking other modes of being and living might entail. In doing so, he also helps to push metaphysical concerns to the centre of humanities. What are the concepts of time, space and causality that inform not only our objects of study but also our own theories? How do we, for example, understand ancestors travelling forth between metaphysically different constructions of space? In a similar manner, how do we understand the notion of a cosmic Prophet and the travelling between different dimensions of time in Islam? Are our own theories willing to bend to seriously incorporate other temporal dimensions, whether in African worldviews, Islam or any other religion or mode of living reality? What kind of affects, desires and subjects are created by the metaphysical perspectives we study? And, indeed perhaps more pertinently, what are the kinds of affects, desires and subjects created by the metaphysical assumptions concealed in the academic theories we deploy? These, the author believes, are some of the questions to which a full engagement with an internal logics perspective, be it an unnamed one in Molapo or an explicit one as outlined by Tareen earlier, may lead.

Conclusion

Both the Barelwi school and African worldviews have cultivated technologies of the self, which allow their adherents to deal with the political on their own terms. This might mean, at times, eschewing the political to focus on what is considered more fundamental, be it called the soul, the self, or the self-concept. It is here that processes of learning help to hardwire particular individual dispositions and affects, shaping the self's attitude towards the 'world out there'. Of course, the 'world out there', that is, political technologies of power, in turn, effects such technologies of the self. As we have seen, Molapo refers to the way capitalism has frayed traditional kinship networks. Similarly, the Muslim Youth Movement, which was quoted earlier as criticising both the Barelwi and Deobandi schools, came about precisely because they saw historically constituted technologies of self among Muslims in South Africa as failing to address the global and South African 'realities', that is, realities tied to particular technologies of power. But the author thinks that it is important to remember that these political technologies of power are themselves, as we have indicated, concealed technologies of the self. They carry hidden metaphysical assumptions and seek to shape the self in their own ways. They are thus 'theological' projects in a profound sense. There is nothing wrong with this *per se*. One can argue that all projects carry assumptions of time, space and causality. This applies to

our own academic theories as well. The issue it appears to me is to be aware of this underlying theology. The author believes that an internal logics approach, tying as it does metaphysics, dispositions and practices, is helpful in bringing about such awareness.

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