

IQBAL REVIEW

Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan

Volume: 52

April/Oct. 2011

Number:2, 4

Pattern: Irfan Siddiqui, Advisor to Prime Minister
For National History & Literary Heritage

Editor: Muhammad Sohail Mufti

Associate Editor: Dr. Tahir Hameed Tanoli

Editorial Board

Dr. Abdul Khaliq, Dr. Naeem Ahmad, Dr. Shahzad Qaiser, Dr. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Dr. Khalid Masood, Dr. Axel Monte (Germany), Dr. James W. James Morris (USA), Dr. Marianta Stepenatias (Russia), Dr. Natalia Prigarina (Russia), Dr. Sheila McDonough (Montreal), Dr. William C. Chittick (USA), Dr. M. Baqai Makan (Iran), Alian Desoulieres (France), Prof. Ahmad al-Bayrak (Turkey), Prof. Barbara Metcalf (USA)

Advisory Board

Munib Iqbal, Barrister Zaffarullah, Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Soomro, Prof. Fateh Muhammad Malik, Dr. Moin Nizami, Dr. Abdul Rauf Rafiqi, Dr. John Walbrigde (USA), Dr. Oliver Leaman (USA), Dr. Alparslan Acikgenc (Turkey), Dr. Mark Webb (USA), Dr. Sulayman S. Nyang, (USA), Dr. Devin Stewart (USA), Prof. Hafeez Malik (USA), Sameer Abdul Hameed (Egypt) , Dr. Carolyn Mason (New Zealand)

IQBAL ACADEMY PAKISTAN

The opinions expressed in the Review are those of the individual contributors and are not the official views of the Academy

IQBAL REVIEW
Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan

This peer reviewed Journal is devoted to research studies on the life, poetry and thought of Iqbal and on those branches of learning in which he was interested: Islamic Studies, Philosophy, History, Sociology, Comparative Religion, Literature, Art and Archaeology.

Manuscripts for publication in the journal should be submitted in duplicate, typed in double-space, and on one side of the paper with wide margins on all sides preferably along with its CD or sent by E-mail. Abstracts in English should be typed double-spaced on a separate page. It is assumed that the manuscripts sent to *Iqbal Review* are not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Publication of material in *Iqbal Review* means that the author assigns copyright to *Iqbal Review* including the right to electronic publishing. Authors may, however, use their material in other publications acknowledging *Iqbal Review* as the original place of publication.

In order to facilitate academic review and production, authors must conform to the following: 1) the name of the author, address, phone numbers, title, and name(s) of universities must appear on the title page of the article; 2) footnotes are to be numbered consecutively and must appear at the end; 3) all foreign words must appear underlined/Italic with properly placed diacritical marks. Ten off-prints of the articles and two copies of book reviews will be sent to authors.

All contributions should be addressed to the Editor, Iqbal Review, 6th Floor, Academy Block, Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex, Egerton Road, Lahore, Pakistan.

Tel: 92-42-36314510, 99203573, & Fax: 92-42-36314496

Email: into@iap.gov.pk Website: www.allamaiqbal.com

Published annually: *Iqbal Review* Two issues (April and October)
Iqbaliyat Two issues (January and July)

ISSN: 0021-0773

Iqbal Review April/Oct. 2011: Published on May 2016

Subscription

PAKISTAN

Per issue Rs.30/-
Per year Rs.100/- (for one year.)
(Postage included)

FOREIGN

Per issue \$ 6.00
Per year \$ 20.00 (for one year.)
(Postage included)

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- Iqbal's Concept of Khudi (Ego)
Ghulam Sabir 05
- Image of God:
A Note on Scriptural Anthropology
Muhammad Subeyl Umar 27
- The "Apologists"
Khurram Ali Shafique 55
- A Forgotten Debate On Wahdat Al-Wujud
In Contemporary Perspective:
Dr. Tabir Hameed Tanoli 73
- Iqbal's Concept of Ego in the Light of
Traditional Metaphysics and Sufism
M. Maroof Shah 87
- Multiple Intelligences According to Iqbal
Khurram Ali Shafique 123
- Allama Iqbal and his views on Islamic Nationalism
Dr. Ali Muhammad Bhat 131
- A Relational Response to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's
Critique of Iqbal's Reconstruction
Shifa Amina Noor 145
- ### GUEST SCHOLARS
- The Quranic Conception of the Spirit and
Human Creativity According To Ibn Al-'Arabi
Dr. Ayesha Leghari 175

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Ghulam Sabir

Thyrasvej 17, DK-4173,
Fjenneslev, **Denmark**
Phone: 0045--86209929
Cell: 0045-5-0 11-77 71

Dr. Ayesha Leghari Saeed

H No. 2, VIP Avenue,
Danepur Road,
Lahore
Pakistan
Cell: 0331-5303664

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

Ex-Director, Iqbal Academy
Pakistan, Lahore
Pakistan

Khurram Ali Shafique

A30, al-Azam Apartments,
Block 13-A, Gulshan-e-Iqbal
Karachi-74300
Pakistan
Cell: 0321-2943188
Email: khurramsdesk@yahoo.com

Dr. Tahir Hameed Tanoli

Iqbal Academy
Pakistan, Lahore
Pakistan

Dr. M. Maroof Shah

Kunan Bandipore, Baramulla
Jammu & Kashmir, Pin 193502
India,
Email: marooof123@yahoo.com

Dr. Ali Muhammad Bhat

Asstt. Professor, Dept. of Islamic
Studies, IUST, Awantipora,
Pulwama, Sirinagar,
Jammu & Kashmir 192122
India

IQBAL'S CONCEPT OF KHUDI (EGO)

Ghulam Sabir

ABSTRACT

We, the human beings on the earth, consist of a small part of universe; the individual is just a tiny atom in it, but in relation to the society of mankind the significance of the individual increases. However, this happens only when the ego (self) is developed in a man to make him an active organ of the body of mankind so that he is able to play his constructive role in society. The development of such an ego in the individual ultimately culminates in the development of a collective ego in a group of people, which strengthens moral values in the society and makes the nation strong in every respect. By developing the collective self or ego, differences between the individual selves are eliminated, and in such a society the desire of an individual does not clash with the collective desire of the society; the 'self' and 'other' become a collective *self* in the individuals. This is the higher stage of the voyage to selfhood that starts with an individual's efforts to awaken in him the consciousness of self-understanding after overcoming his own weaknesses and short-sightedness.

The significance of the Self in an individual is that it is the source through which we can bring ourselves closest to the Ultimate Reality. Iqbal recognised the immense power and potential of the human self and focused his energies on studying its nature. In fact he has gone so deep into the ocean of the self that it has become difficult for a common person to accompany him to that depth at the intellectual level. This is why he had to face severe criticism during his lifetime, particularly from the orthodoxy. Iqbal possessed a very high aesthetic sense, on account of which he adopted a highly literary and poetic method to explain his creative ideas with respect to developing the rich faculties of the human mind through the self. Since the language used by him contains very rich poetic imagination, it creates some difficulty for the reader to understand him, especially when it comes to the expression of his intuitive ideas.

Iqbal's famous book on *Khudi* in Persian language is *Asrar-i Khudi*. His learned teacher Professor R. A. Nicholson of Cambridge translated the book during Iqbal's lifetime and named it *Secrets of the Self*. While translating the book, Professor Nicholson wrote a letter to Iqbal in search of certain answers. The reply from Iqbal received by Professor Nicholson was so interesting that he published the whole of it in the introduction to the *Secrets of the Self*, which was published at London in 1920. The introduction to this book alone covers twenty-five pages. Since we are trying to understand the nature of human Self, a few words from the translator about Iqbal's idea are quoted hereunder:

Everyone, I suppose, will acknowledge that the substance of the 'Asrar-i-Khudi' is striking enough to command attention. In the poem, naturally, this philosophy (i.e. Self) presents itself under a different aspect. ... its logical brilliancy dissolves in the glow of feeling and imagination, and it wins the heart before taking possession of the mind.¹

S. S. Hawi, a prominent modern writer, says about Søren Kierkegaard, the great Danish philosopher, that "Kierkegaard recognised the limits of science and reason in understanding the self and the apprehension of religious faith." For Kierkegaard and Iqbal he asserts that "their humanistic psychology is a victory over the brute facts of science and behaviourism." A passage from the said article of Hawi, quoted below, will help us to understand the dynamic power of the self which Iqbal advocates in his various verses that will come under review later in this article. He writes:

Along with the dynamic concept of the self, if we explore further horizons in Kierkegaard's writings, the self emerges as a vital entity in the individual, an entity which is energetic and productive. Therefore, at the heart of Kierkegaard's conception of the self is a definite element of vitalism. Such a vitalism renders the self an internal dynamic activity with intensity of volition, feeling and thought.²

The above passage highlights the dynamic power of thought and feeling of the self emerging as a vital entity. Iqbal has similar feelings about the dynamic power of the self, but with it he includes Love as an essential ingredient for development of the self.

According to Iqbal, man is the caretaker of all possibilities of life:
Your nature is the caretaker of the possibilities of life.

(Teri fītrat ameen hai mumkinat-i zīndgani ki)

In fact the human being is the master of the seen and the unseen as well as capable of exploring what is still unknown to the temporal eye. It is one's self that is capable of seeing and doing what apparently looks to be a miracle. The self in an individual is speculative and also possesses a sharp insight that enables it to see the whole. It sees not merely the observable part of an object but the whole of it. According to Kierkegaard, if a person possessing such an insight stands on a high point and gazes out over a flat region he will see roads running parallel to each other with fields in between. But a person lacking this insight will either see only the roads and not the fields, or just see the fields and not the roads.

There are signs of God's existence everywhere in the universe, even in man himself. God says to us:

On earth and in yourselves, there are signs for firm believers. Can you not see? ³

Your real existence is your own self. If you want to understand God you first have to understand yourself. To understand and then awaken your *self* you have to pass through strenuous stages; and the most difficult task for you is to fight against yourself. Although such a fight may look odd, it is actually all about self-control. Iqbal says:

Self control in individuals builds families; in countries, it builds empires.

The self is not a ghost in you but it is you in real, it is your very existence, of which you are unaware. Your awareness about yourself is the discovery of the self in you, and for that purpose you have to undergo a long fight against external forces. These external forces determine your actions as long as you are unaware of the power of your self. Once you are free of the grip of external forces you are the master of your destiny. There are different methods for achieving this freedom, including meditations and prayers. However faith and love play a major role in this direction. On this way, says Kierkegaard, "the first part is ethical and spiritual growth, after that

the growth of love.” Defining the process in respect of “upbuilding belief which builds up love in the believer,” he writes:

Spiritually understood, what are the ground and foundation of the life of the spirit, which are to bear the building? In very fact it is love; love is the origin of everything, and spiritually understood love is the deepest ground of the life of spirit. Spiritually understood, the foundation is laid in every person in whom there is love. And the edifice which spiritually understood, is to be constructed, is again love.⁴

This means that love is the foundation material of every thing including self-knowledge. Iqbal says:

Love is the foundation of life, Love is the flashing sword of death. The hardest rocks are shivered by love's glance.⁵

Transparency or purity of heart is one of the subjects widely dealt with by Iqbal. The place of God, as regarded by Iqbal, is the human heart. It is love that purifies the heart, cleans it up, clears it from worldly rubbish, and makes that heart a worthy place for God. The meanings of the term ‘heart’, as far as it is used by Iqbal, according to Iqbal Academy Pakistan Director Suheyl Umar, “range from a seat of emotions and feelings to the centre of human interiority, the deepest seat of consciousness and also the secret of God.” Therefore its purification is the foremost step towards self-awareness. Trying to know the self with an impure heart, says Kierkegaard, is ‘self-deceit’, which he considers a tragedy. Kierkegaard connects the Self, edification, spirit, upbuilding, belief, transparency and purity of heart with love. Iqbal carries the concept of love further to the highest point and connects it with God. In one of his verses he says that the “beginning of the journey to the self is love and the end is Beauty.”

The way of approaching the self is communication with one's own self. In order to understand the real self, the individual must question himself and the responses he gets will vary from time to time and state to state. A person is the best judge of himself, and by questioning himself he knows about his weaknesses and his sins. This is a part of the process of cleaning up the heart, which involves a hard struggle against the external forces that drag the individual towards the wrong path. In this way one is able to keep himself within the norms of morality and religious limits.

The process of edification is a process of constant deepening. It can also be described as a process of increasing self-transparency, of making oneself increasingly transparent to oneself. In a beautiful image, Kierkegaard writes:

Purity of heart, it is a figure of speech that compares the heart to the sea, and why just to this? Simply for the reason that the depth of the sea determines its purity, and its purity determines its transparency... As the

sea mirrors the elevation of heaven in its pure depths, so may the heart when it is calm and deeply transparent mirror the divine elevation of the Good in its pure depths.⁶

Benjamin Nelson comments:

Freud longed to add a grain to man's self-knowledge. Toward this end he struggled to plumb the depths of the unconscious and scale the heights of creativity. Midway on his journey he stumbled upon a clue: the road to the heights was by way of the depths.⁷

Another philosopher comments, presenting the same idea in these words: "For thought rises to the heights, when it descends into itself." His 'itself' is Iqbal's Self. Kierkegaard stated:

The dynamic character of existence is manifested paradigmatically neither in society nor in the 'crowd' but in the inner individual (*Den Enkelte*) who strives to exist as an authentic person. In the subjective intensification of existence, truth comes to be in the life of an individual.⁸

Iqbal says:

Dive into your own self, it is the very secret of life.

(Khudi men doobja ghafil ye sirr-i zindgani hay)

It is love that deepens the transparency of an individual, and with the passage of time his or her heart becomes more and more transparent; the person, in this process, veers nearer and nearer to his origin until a time comes when he sees God in his own self. And then, as Kierkegaard once said, the person sees no more. He also said that "the process of deepening transparency is a process of increasing silence." Historically speaking there have been persons—men of God, loving and pious intellectuals— who stand witness to this phenomenon. A famous poet-saint of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, named Shah Bheek, in two of his verses said: "The one who talks about (Truth) he knows not, but the one who knows he speaks not." Another world-known poet-philosopher, Jalaluddin Rumi of Persia said that he delivered long lectures on the Ultimate Truth to his pupils but when the Reality was revealed to him he laughed at himself (on what he had been preaching).

As for the journey to selfhood, we have seen earlier that according to Iqbal its "beginning is love and the end is Beauty." The destination, according to Iqbal, is Beauty (i.e. God). Kierkegaard states the same in different words:

There is a limit to the process of deepening transparency. The limit is reached when a man, to speak figuratively, achieves a conception of himself— his real self— that is so transparent he sees clear through it, it vanishes as an object and obstacle to his vision, and he sees only the absolute Truth. He sees God.

This becomes possible when man's right to choose is applied within the ethico-religious limits. Thus the edification of belief paves

the way for transformation of the heart. The transparency of the heart is continued till the heart mirrors the self that leads the person to see God; as *"the self has its origin in God."* Iqbal adds further to this idea:

The eternal secret of the ego (self) is that the moment he reaches this final revelation he recognises it as the ultimate root of his being without the slightest hesitation. Yet in the experience itself there is no mystery. Nor there is anything emotional in it.⁹

To Iqbal life is an ever flowing river, which has no beginning and has no end, both its beginning and the end lying in eternity. Rest is not in its nature. Iqbal says that rest means death and death is nowhere in the life of the self. Iqbal says that soul is in constant motion, and that is the fate of the soul. Hegel held a similar belief. In his 'Philosophy of Spirit' he says that spirit is not something motionless; it is 'absolute unrest'. Iqbal says it is hope or longing for hope that keeps man alive. Hopelessness is the result of spiritlessness; but "spiritlessness is not as being without spirit, it is stagnation of the spirit in a man," as maintained by Kierkegaard. It is this hope, which Iqbal narrates in his following couplet:

My sins did not find refuge in the whole world,
The only place where I found shelter - O my Lord! - was Thy forgiveness.

*(Na kabeen jahan men amaan mili, jo amaan mili to kabaan mili,
Meray jurm-i khana kharab ko teray afvi banda nawaz men.)*¹⁰

According to Kierkegaard, greater the conception of God, more is the self. He says that 'the self is created and sustained by God,' and asserts that more the conception of God, more is the self; and more the self, more is the conception of God.¹¹ He says:

God who holds every thing together in His eternal wisdom and who assigned man to be lord of creation by his becoming God's servant and explained Himself to him by making him His co-worker, and through every explanation that He gives a person, He strengthens and confirms him in the inner being.¹²

According to Hegel:

The self is a unified plurality and a pluralised unity in which universality and particularity are reconciled in concrete individuality. The self can be for itself only insofar as it is for others.¹³

Iqbal also has the same view. His idea of a collective self and an individual self, or the universal self and the individual self, highlights the importance of his understanding of the full scope of the 'self':

Individual self, consists of the feelings of personal life, and is as such, a part of the system of thought. Every pulse of thought, present or perishing, is an indivisible unity, which knows and recollects. ... Inner experience is the ego at work. We appropriate the ego itself in the act of perceiving, judging, and willing.¹⁴

A fully developed ego at its height, says Iqbal, is able to retain self-possession, even in the case of a direct contact with the All-embracing Ego (God). Man, without losing his identity, remains a part of the Organic Whole. The ego of man, i.e. his self, is deeply related to the Ultimate Ego or the All-embracing Ego, which is the source that “awakens in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe. The self is a synthesis of ideality and reality, infinitude and finitude, possibility and necessity, eternity and time, universality and individuality.”¹⁵ The individual self derives attributes from the All-embracing Ego.

Dr. Jamila Khatoon says:

Divine attributes do not savour of limitations and finitude. Iqbal depicts God as the Dynamic Will, as Thought, Light, Love and Beauty. God is not identified with any one element but all the above-mentioned elements are comprehended in His Essence. Further, He is attributed with Creativeness, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Eternity, Freedom, Wisdom and Goodness. But these attributes and aspects do not imply limitations or restrictions, differentiations, distinctions or duality in the Divine Essence. God is one Organic Whole in which all the above mentioned attributes are comprehended.¹⁶

The role of the self in this world is constructive and is defined by a fight against destructive forces. In order to perform its role in entirety the self must be a part of the society of mankind. Being individual and remaining individual it must nevertheless also be universal as a part of the Whole. Keirkegaard says:

The deepest reason for this is to be discovered in the essential characteristic of human existence, that man is an individual and as such is at once himself and the whole race, in such a way that the whole race has part in the individual, and the individual has part in the whole race.¹⁷

We learn from history that sometimes a whole nation is faced with the misery of occupation by a foreign nation. According to Hegel such a misfortune as a result of the defeat or fall of a nation, is always due to fragmentation of the individual, which in turn is the result of spiritlessness within the individual. Spiritlessness, as already explained earlier, is not being without spirit, it is the stagnation of spirit. The spirit is “pure self-recognition in absolute otherness - it is that which relates itself to itself and is determinate, it is other-being and being-for-self, and in this determinateness or in its self-externalisation, abides within itself.”¹⁸

Iqbal, Hegel and Kierkegaard, all three of them, pointed out the damaging fragmentation of the individual of their respective countries. For Denmark Kierkegaard remarked that his country was stuck on the mud-bank of reason. In fact his remarks were applicable

not only to his country but also to many other nations during the 19th and the 20th centuries. This is the reason that the philosophy of the self with all three of them revolves around the centre of ethico-religious thought. By applying this method Hegel and Iqbal achieved what they desired, and to a great extent they succeeded in integrating the fragmented individual and managed to build a united society. But Kierkegaard was not fortunate enough to see a change in his nation during his lifetime. It is my hope that we eventually understand what he meant by saying: "My whole life is an epigram to make men aware."

We, the human beings on the earth, consist of a small part of universe; the individual is just a tiny atom in it, but in relation to the society of mankind the significance of the individual increases. However, this happens only when the ego (self) is developed in a man to make him an active organ of the body of mankind so that he is able to play his constructive role in society. The development of such an ego in the individual ultimately culminates in the development of a collective ego in a group of people, which strengthens moral values in the society and makes the nation strong in every respect. By developing the collective self or ego, differences between the individual selves are eliminated, and in such a society the desire of an individual does not clash with the collective desire of the society; the 'self' and 'other' become a collective *self* in the individuals. This is the higher stage of the voyage to selfhood that starts with an individual's efforts to awaken in him the consciousness of self-understanding after overcoming his own weaknesses and short-sightedness and then developing his self by cleaning his heart from the dust of egotism in order to make it transparent. Thus when the heart is transparent, man is able to discover the right path and then continue his journey onward with God-given power, wisdom and courage to fulfil his duty and work as a representative of God on this earth. To be clearer at this stage we quote hereunder an extract from 'Wafaring', which is part of the book *Journeys to Selfhood, Hegel Keirkegaard* by Mark C Taylor:

As soon as a person accepts responsibility for himself as a free agent, other dimensions of selfhood come into sharp focus. Most importantly, the subject clearly distinguishes what it is from what it ought to be by differentiating its givenness and its possibility, its reality and its ideality. The self that the ethicist wills to become is not an abstract self which passes everywhere and hence is nowhere, but (is) a concrete self which stands living in reciprocal relation with these specific surroundings, these conditions of life, this natural order. This self which is the goal (*Formaalet*) is not merely a personal self, but a social, a civic self. He has,

then, himself as a task for an activity in which, as this definite personality, he grasps the relations of life.¹⁹

Iqbal says:

The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpens his will with the creative assurance that the world is not something to be seen or known through concepts, but something to be made and remade by continuous action.

It is a moment of supreme bliss and also a moment for the greatest trial for the ego. Iqbal in his following verses explains the way of such trial (self-examination). This is translation of his Persian verses done by Iqbal himself:

Art thou in the stage of 'life', 'death', or 'death-in-life'.

Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify thy 'station'.

The first witness is thine own consciousness—

See thyself, then, with own light.

The second witness is the consciousness of another ego—

See thyself, then, with the light of an ego other than thee.

The third witness is God's consciousness—

See thyself, then, with God's light.

If thou standest unshaken in front of this light,

Consider thyself as living and eternal as He!

That man alone is real who dares—

Dares to see God face to face!

What is 'Ascension'? Only a search for a witness,

Who may finally confirm thy reality?

A witness whose confirmation alone makes thee eternal.

No one can stand unshaken in His Presence;

And he who can, verily, he is pure gold.

Art thou a mere particle of dust?

Tighten the knot of thy ego;

And hold fast to thy tiny being!

How glorious to burnish one's ego.

And to test its lustre in the presence of the Sun!

Re-chisel, then, thine ancient frame; And build up a new being.

Such being is real being;

Or else thy ego is a mere ring of smoke.²⁰

The life of the self receives importance in relation to its practical involvement in the affairs of society. Kierkegaard maintains:

The more of the universally human an individual is able to realize in his life, the more extraordinary he is. The less of the universal he is able to take up in his life, the more imperfect he is.²¹

In the latter case, he may become an extraordinary person in the eyes of people due to certain reasons but surely "not in a good sense," says Kierkegaard.

During the journey of *self-development* the individual is alone, and despite all the hustle and bustle of life around him he remains mostly

alone throughout this journey. Mark C. Taylor has described Kierkegaard's views:

The journey to selfhood winds along 'a solitary path, narrow and steep,' where the individual wanders 'without meeting a single traveller.' To follow the way is to embark upon an extraordinary (*U-almindelig*) pilgrimage, a venture that suspends one 'above seventy thousand fathoms of water, many, many miles from all human help.' However to Kierkegaard this is the only way that 'holds the promise of a radical cure for spiritlessness'.²²

Iqbal's conception of self— particularly with regard to collective selfhood— is very much similar to that of Hegel. Both of them belonged to their age as much as they belong to us today. They were indeed great reformers who not only offered reforming ideas but saw their lives as a mission to guide the people of their respective countries towards the right path. On the contrary, Kierkegaard, as stated earlier, did not belong to his age and as such could not possibly move his fellow countrymen. It was almost a century later that his nation started understanding the essence of his moral and religious teachings.

One thing common to the aforesaid three philosophers was their respective countries' fragmented individual. Since they were basically reformers of their time, they wanted to gather together the fragmented splinters of the individuals of their society. This they believed was the result of stagnation of spirit. According to them, men with stagnant spirits were the cause of misfortune for the whole nation. Hegel and Iqbal maintained their unique mystical and religious approach, while at the same time remained involved in the affairs of their respective society. Iqbal made himself a real force of change in the society and ignited the power of the collective self within his countrymen. His final goal was to create a realisation of the importance of the collective self at a higher level in the society of mankind as a whole. This is the concept of belonging to a single family on this planet. "To be is to be related," opined Mark C. Taylor. After quoting Hegel's view point on the development of the self, he observes that selfhood is essentially social and that the individual self remains totally abstract, utterly indefinite, and completely incomprehensible in the absence of creative interrelation.²³ Hegel spent much of his time contemplating 'how can we restore the unity of man?' If every one of us keeps this question in mind, we may be able one day to find the answer to the existing misfortune of the scattered family of mankind.

According to Iqbal, when the individual assumes responsibility it is the courage in him and the force of his passion that carry him towards the final goal, and the final goal of Ego is the individual's

direct relationship with the Divine Ego. Then his self-knowledge becomes ‘God knowledge’, and the entire world, as Socrates said, is centred in him. It is courage through which one attains his place in this world as well as in the world hereafter. The credibility of a person among his fellow beings as well as before God is always relative to the amount of courage in him. In the following verses Iqbal highlights man’s creditability in this world:

Those with elegant courage do not accept even ocean,
Oh neglected one, how long would you hold dew in your skirt
like the flower bud.

(*Himmat-i Aali to darya bhi naheen karti qubul,
Ghuncha-san ghafil teray daman men shabnam kab talak.*)²⁴

About man’s credibility before God, when he attains the status of immortality after developing his self, Iqbal says,

When your ego becomes self-observing, self-building and self-examining,

It is just possible that you do not die.

(*Ho agar kbud nigar-o kbudgar-o kbud-gir kbudi,
Ye bhi mumkin hai key tu maot sey bhi mar na sakey.*)²⁵

Infinity is not beyond the reach of the finite man, but of course it is only possible when he qualifies for it by developing his inner power and transparency of heart. Einstein’s four-dimensional space-time then becomes meaningless to such a person. Bergson is also of the same view:

We can go beyond ourselves and extend our time in both directions; the way down leads towards pure homogeneity or pure repetitiveness, that is, materially; on the way up we come closer and closer to living eternity.²⁶

Iqbal says the same in a beautiful way:

In the world of love the *Time* is not limited to past, present and future,
There exist other *times* as well, which have no names.

(*Ishq ki taqveem men asr-i rawaan key siva,
Aur Zamaney bhi hain jin ka naheen koi nam.*)²⁷

When the person achieves that end, i.e. as soon as he is ‘closer to living eternity’, as Bergson said, his time extends in both directions. He is then able to see beyond the temporal past and future; he can see all at once, as the ‘eye with which he sees becomes God’s eye.’²⁸ Such a person holds an intuitive eye, which can see things that one’s temporal eye is unable to see; his instinct works like the instinct of a bee. The intelligence in a person, as Bergson maintains, is just ‘the human way of thinking’. This intelligence is transformed into a sort of revelation, a bee-like instinct– intuition. In Bergson’s view just denying the characteristics of matter does not serve the ultimate purpose for the human mind; the best way lies in cultivating and

developing its faculties by giving attention to the power of the mind itself that leads to creation of the intuitive power. He remains related to the transcendent without breaking his ties with the physical world.

According to Kierkegaard, the self is the immediate man “whose essential structure is an internal dynamic activity with intensity of feeling and thought.”²⁹ Kierkegaard’s ‘immediate man’ is Iqbal’s *Mard-i Momin* (perfect man). In his famous long poem ‘Masjid-i-Qartaba’ (Mosque of Cordova) Iqbal says that the marvellous beauty and architecture of this historic mosque came into existence through the hands of a perfect man. It is a living example of the ‘internal dynamic activity with intensity of feeling and thought’ of the men who built it. These were the people “who lived in the hope for eternal via the moment, yet retained touch with temporal.” It is simple to understand Iqbal’s contention that “truth exists only as the self produces it in action.” In the absence of self-knowledge man is incomplete— rather he is non-existent; as such he is bound to play in the hands of his aesthetic first self, seeking moments of pleasure in immediacy, with the result that as soon as such a moment is over he is desperate, with a feeling of guilt at times; but soon after he again desires repetition of the same enjoyment and again he is faced with the same fate. This goes on until the moment of death arrives and the man is doomed forever.

The man himself is the architect of his fate. He can make either paradise or hell for himself, since the power of choice rests with him. As described by Iqbal, in one of his flights of imagination he was taken to the paradise where he saw everything promised by God. He then wished to see the hell also, so his guiding angel took him into hell. To his utter surprise Iqbal found the place so cold that its inhabitants were almost freezing. He therefore said to his guide that he had heard a lot about the intensity of burning fire in the hell but he could not see any fire at all there. The angel replied to him:

The people who come here from the earth
Bring their own burning ember with them.

(*Ahl-i dunya yahan jo aatey hain,
Apney angar sath latey hain.*)

Iqbal’s every verse carries a universal message. The poem mentioned above also gives us a message that tomorrow we will reap the fruit of seed that we are sowing today. It is the activity or the movement of one’s first self towards the right direction that can achieve perfection and become an authentic *self*. The individual then becomes a ‘perfect man’. However Iqbal stresses that the movement of the self must strictly remain within the domain of the ethico-religious. The individual is an integral part of society, he is a limb of

the body of mankind, which loses its identity if detached from the body and becomes a thing of no value. As for religion, Iqbal says:

The religion is not merely a body of dogmas or rituals; it is rather a form of experiences which ensures a grasp of nothing short of a direct and immediate illumination of the very core of Reality.³⁰

The illumination is not a mysterious thing but it is as much 'cognitive as other forms of experience'. Religion keeps one's self within the norms of morality; this leads to cleaning up of the heart and making it transparent to grasp the Reality. Faith and belief play a major role in this; the expectancy of faith, Kierkegaard says, is victory. He says that doubt is guileful, on secret path it sneaks around a person, and when faith is expecting victory, doubt whispers that this expectancy is a deception. But he believes that doubt cannot disturb the expectancy of the faithful as it comes from the outside and the belief of the believer is from inside. However one should guard himself against the deception of doubt, as it is a 'crafty passion'.³¹

To guard oneself against the influence of doubt, Iqbal says:

O Man! Thou art the hand of God and also His tongue,
Create expectancy of faith in you and don't be the victim of doubt.

*(Khuda-i Lam Yazal Ka dast-i qudrat too zaban too hai,
Yaqeen paida kar aye ghafil ki maghloob-i guman too hai.)*³²

In another beautiful verse he is saying:

A believer's expectancy of faith is in this world of doubts,
The candlelight of a hermitage in a dark night of the desert.

*(Guman abad dunya men yaqeen mard-i Musalman ka,
Biaban ki shab-i tareek men qandeel-i rubbani.)*³³

The self is fundamental to Iqbal. It is the most important and dominant area of his philosophy. Iqbal himself had passed through various stages of developing his own self. Whatever he wrote about the self was from the knowledge achieved through his own experience and his dialectic was not merely a literary work or philosophical theory. To Iqbal pantheism is not the way to Reality; he is against the very root of it, since "pantheism does not admit any finite centre of experience neither it attributes any objective reality to world." Iqbal is very clear on this issue. How realistic on his part to say that "the sense-data and the perceptual level of thought cannot be regarded as unreal." The world exists, he says, and we cannot doubt this fact.

The second vital condition and an unimpeachable certainty against pantheism is the reality of the self or Ego that even pantheism cannot wholly deny.³⁴

Pantheists regard the world as being something that merely appears to us but does not actually exist. Iqbal asserts forcefully that

“the world exists,” but at the same time, he says, the *self* also exists beyond any doubt. The self plays a constructive role in the world by virtue of being itself a part of society. The *self* being individual and remaining as individual has got to be universal as a part of the Whole. Iqbal is not in favour of self-negation for the sake of a closer relationship with God, which is in fact a pantheistic belief. It was this that influenced the two great religions of Christianity and Islam by creating among the believers a groups of mystics and Sufis believing in pantheism of a Neo-Platonism trend of mind that ignores the world and with that destroys the inner power of self or ego to become the favourite of God. To Iqbal:

The moral and religious ideal of man is not self-negation but self-affirmation and he attains this ideal by becoming more and more individual.³⁵

According to Iqbal, “being real and existent its end cannot be self-absorption in the Absolute, as the pantheists maintain,” as that would imply the very negation of the ego; ego or self does exist, it is real, and gives man the status of being ‘existent’. Descartes said, “I think, therefore, I exist.” According to Iqbal:

All thinking presupposes a subject who thinks; therefore, the subject of our thinking process does exist.³⁶

Earlier it has been said that ‘the self is the actuality of man; self itself is man himself’. In relation to God, Kierkegaard says:

Man is for ever captive in the presence of God and there is no possibility for him to make himself unobserved before God or to run away from Him, for God is there with him behind and before.

The absolute self stands simply as a synonym of God; I chose the Absolute, which chooses me, I posit the Absolute, which posits me.³⁷

Iqbal highlights this relation of man’s ego with God’s Ego. He points out that ‘the Qur’an declares the Ultimate Ego to be nearer to man than his own neck-vein,³⁸ and goes on to say:

I have conceived the Ultimate Reality as an Ego; and I must add now that from the Ultimate Ego only egos proceed. The world, in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego, is the self revelation of the great ‘*I am*’, i.e. God... every atom of Divine energy, however low in the scale of existence, is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of egohood. Throughout the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man.³⁹

The concept of self can be easily understood, but it remains in the mind as a mere concept. Iqbal says that we can go further and “we can intuit the self. We can directly see that the self is real and existent. Indeed our selfhood is the most real thing we can know. Its reality is a fact.”⁴⁰ Bergson also says that “intuition is only a higher

kind of intellect.” Besides the self being understandable through intuition, Iqbal firmly asserts that we can see the self, which is revealed as the centre of our activity and action. He says:

It is ego, which acts in our likes and dislikes, judgements and resolutions. Thus the ego is directly revealed to be existent and real. The knowledge of the existence of the ego is in no way an inference, it is a direct perception of the self itself.⁴¹

Professor Nicholson explains Iqbal’s conception of the self in these words:

Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained career, but he is not yet a complete individual, because he is away from God. The greater his distance from God, the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the completest person. Nor that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary, he absorbs God into himself. The true person not only absorbs the world of matter by mastering it, he absorbs God into his Ego by assimilating Divine attributes.⁴²

How to be a self in terms of space-time?, Iqbal explains:

To exist in pure duration is to be a self, and to be a self is to be able to say “I am”. Only that truly exists which can say “I-am”. It is the degree of the intuition of “I-am-ness” that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being. We too can say, “I am”; but our “I-am-ness” is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not self. The Ultimate Self, in the words of Qur’an “*can afford to dispense with all the worlds*”. To Him the not self does not present itself as a confronting “other”, or else it would have to be, like our finite self, in spatial relation with the confronting “other”. What we call Nature or the not-self is only a fleeting moment in the life of God. His “I-am-ness” is independent, elemental, and absolute.

Iqbal says that Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self, and the knowledge of Nature is the knowledge of God’s behaviour.⁴³

Iqbal considers matter as the greatest obstacle in the way of life. He says that his criticism of Plato is directed against those philosophical systems, which hold up death rather than life as their ideal— systems which ignore the greatest obstacle to life, namely, matter, and teach us to run away from it instead of absorbing it.⁴⁴ According to him, a true person absorbs the world of matter and by mastering it he absorbs God Himself into his ego. The life of ego, he maintains, “is a forward assimilative movement and it removes all obstructions in its march by assimilating them; even the death which is also an obstacle is removed away in its onward march.” Actually, death to an existent ego is a moment of transit, says Iqbal; it is not the end of life for a truly existent person. “The personality is a state of tension,” and according to him, the essence of the life of *self* or ego lies in a “continual creation of desires and ideals.” If the state of

tension is maintained life continues, and if not relaxation would ensue. To Iqbal relaxation is death. He says that the personality or the state of tension is the most valuable achievement of man and he should see that he does not revert to a state of relaxation. The idea of personality (self) gives us a standard of value; it settles the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad.⁴⁵

Iqbal says that maintaining the state of tension is to make a person's life immortal. He says that after death there may be an interval of relaxation, an intermediate state, which lasts until the Day of Resurrection. The belief in Day of Resurrection as well as resurrection of human bodies is fundamental to all religions. Bergson also says that resurrection of the body is possible. There must be no doubt that the Day is bound to come and everybody from us will be there in person. This is the promise of God, Who says:

To Him will be your return—of all of you. The promise of God is true and sure...⁴⁶

Man says: "What! When I am dead, shall I then be raised up alive?" But does not man call to mind that We created him before out of nothing?⁴⁷

The self remained the focus and centre of the entire philosophy of Iqbal in his works of poetry and prose. Iqbal's famous Persian work *Asrar-i Khudi*, (Secrets of the Self), has been translated in various languages of Europe and other continents, and innumerable treatises and books have been written on Iqbal's philosophy of the self. Iqbal's way of development of personality, i.e. person's ego or self, is similar to that of Kierkegaard, namely, it is ethico-religious. According to Iqbal there are three stages in the movement of ego towards its perfection. A person on arriving in the final stage becomes a perfect man. These three stages are following:

1) Obedience of Law.

2) Self-control, which is the highest form of self-consciousness or ego-hood.

3) Divine vicegerency.

The third stage, i.e. divine vicegerency, is the last stage in the process of development of the self when man becomes the vicegerent of God on earth.

[He is then] the completest Ego, the goal of the humanity, the acume of life both in mind and body; in him the discord of our mental life becomes harmony. He is last fruit of the tree of humanity, he is the real ruler of mankind; his kingdom is the kingdom of God on earth.⁴⁸

The rule of God can only be promulgated on earth by people developing in them the ego or self to the extent that they can sacrifice all their means of worldly comfort for the sake of common good. The kingdom of God on earth, Iqbal says, means true

democracy, a democracy of “more or less unique individuals, presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth”—the individual possessing the authentic *self*, who is the ideal of Iqbal.

The ego or the self is not only a subject but the object as well. Fichte says:

The ego is at once as subject and object. Our ideas of things are produced by the activity of thought, and there can be nothing in the ego which is not product of the ego’s own activity.⁴⁹

Iqbal agrees with Fichte and regards ego as a unity of subject and object. According to him you can see the self yourself. He says:

Self does not belong to this phenomena,
Our senses do not come between us and it.
Our eyes have no access to its secret chamber,
You see the self without the help of the physical eye.

(*Khudi az kaa-i-naat-i rangi bu neest*
Hawaas-i maa mian-i maa-o ou neest.
Nigab ra dar hareemash nest rah-i,
*Kunee khud ra tamaasha bey nigahay.)*⁵⁰

Iqbal says that the world of object is not alien to the self. He explains one-ness between the relation of the ego and non-ego beautifully in his *Asrar-i Khudi*, which has been translated by Prof. Nicholson in English:

The form of existence is an effect of the Self,
Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self.
When the Self awoke to consciousness,
It revealed the universe of Thought.
A hundred worlds are hidden in its essence;
Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.
By the Self the seed of opposition is sown in the world:
It imagines itself to be other than itself.⁵¹

The journey to selfhood must in no case seek an end; Iqbal says that the self is lost in the search of an end. It is a journey to the land of love and the traveller in this vast land of love must never try to relax, as relaxation brings one to an end, and the end of the journey becomes death. A spiritless person’s life comes to an end with death, but the one with an authentic self in possession of a transparent heart never dies. Iqbal says that “action alone is the highest form of contemplation.” If man wants eternal life, he should never relax. Man’s authentic self is never asleep; his inner eye is always open. His life does not end with the death and destruction of his finite body. Death is a moment of transit for him; he enters the eternal as soon as the moment of death is past. Death, says Iqbal, “is renewal of the life” that takes the man to a New World which is more illuminated than our earth.

In one of his articles 'Self in the Light of Relativity', Iqbal says that the study of empirical science is an indispensable stage in the moral evolution of man. However, he attaches a condition to the study of empirical science:

This scientific study should be only for moulding the stimuli to ideal ends and purposes, and it is thus only that the total self of man realises itself as one of the greatest energies of nature. In great action alone the self of man becomes united with God without losing its own identity, and transcends the limits of space and time. Action is the highest form of contemplation.⁵²

In the following verses of his book *Bal-i Jibreel* (Gabriel's Wing), Iqbal says:

There are as yet many worlds to be manifested,
For the womb of Being is not empty.
Every world is waiting to be attacked by you,
To feel the sharpness of your thought and deed.
This is the object of the revolutions of day and night.
That your self may reveal itself to you.

*(Jahaan aur bhi hain abhee bey namud,
Ke khalee naheen hai zameer-i vajood.
Har ik muntaẓar teri yalghar ka,
Teri shokhiy-i fikro kirdar ka.
Ye hai maqsad-i gardish-i rooẓgar,
Ke teri khudi tujh pe ho aashkaar.)*⁵³

Transparency of the heart is the first and foremost step towards the journey into selfhood. As said earlier, love is the tool to clean your heart. Kierkegaard says that 'love edifies self' and 'self edifies love.' Kierkegaard has also used the term 'love and love'. Out of the two kinds of love as specified by Kierkegaard, the love '*Kjarlighed*' i.e. divine love or pure love has been the focus of our discussion, and the same kind of love relates to Iqbal's philosophy of the self. This love is above our sensuous feelings:

It is not love which man feels for the fair sex however spiritualised. It is a cosmic force, which moves heavens and stars. It is operative in all the universe.⁵⁴

Iqbal in his famous poem 'Masjid-i-Qartaba' from his book *Baal-i Jibreel* explains this fact in the following two verses:

The song from the strings of life is the result of the plectrum of love,
The light and flame of life are all due to love.
*(Ishq key mizraab sey naghma-i taar-i hayaat,
Ishq say noor-i hayaat, Ishq say nar-i hayaat.)*⁵⁵

To Iqbal love proves the fact that 'I am'. He agrees with Kierkegaard that 'love edifies the self'. Iqbal, however, believes that self, life and love are not three different things. He says that in the end they become one— *the man*, Nietzsche's 'Super Man',

Kierkegaard's 'Authentic Person' and Iqbal's 'Perfect Man'. Such a man is 'God's vicegerent'. To Iqbal the self is incomplete without love and love is incomplete without the self. Without the destination in view man's life is not the life that ought to be and for what God made him superior to all of His creations. He has to build himself; he is his own architect. In a perfect man, intellect comes under the governance of love and love edifies intellect. In the absence of love man is lost; without love intellect leads man astray. However, when love accompanies intellect the individual is at once a man and an angel. Preaching such an intellect, Iqbal says:

What an intellect! that both the worlds are assimilated in it; with it goes the angelic light and it has the company of Adam's burning heart.

*(Aey kebush aan aql ki pehna-i do aalam baa oost,
Noor-i afrishta-o soz-i dil-i- aadam baa oost.)*

Before Bergson (1859-1942), materialism prevailed in the West so thoroughly that spiritual love (*Kjærlighed*) had lost its meaning. It had no place in the mind of the so-called modern world. Bergson was among the few persons who were fortunate enough to receive the divine inspiration of love, which is the most important part of human life, and without which man is incomplete. He realised the importance of the force of love for the human intellect. He believed that life revolves between the two poles of the attachment and detachment of intellect and love.⁵⁶ Intellect alone is not the right source for exploring secrets of the universe. It is in fact love that develops the ego through which man attains the power to move a mountain. However, man must not ignore acquisition of knowledge from empirical sources; true freedom demands accurate judgement for choosing the right path. It is love that directs the intellect to the right path. Therefore, we must widen our intellectual outlook and at the same time delve into the deeper levels of consciousness. Iqbal says:

Plunge into the inner depth of yourself and get the secret of life.

(Apney man men doob kar paajaa suragh-i zindagi.)⁵⁷

God has given proportion and order to the human soul, He is constantly revealing right and wrong to it. Surely he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it.⁵⁸ According to Fichte, "pure ego holds the key to the universe." Pure ego is the *self* which is 'authentic', the awakened self of the individual. And when the self awakens, it becomes a moving force in the practical world; the individual is then fully engaged in playing his role— a role assigned to him by God; he is then His co-worker, since God "assigned man to be lord of creation." For such an individual the visible world is not only a place; he can see far ahead to a new world, a wonderful world.

The movement of his self does not end anywhere, his journey goes on and he becomes ever closer to the Ultimate Reality. Even death does not stop his movement. He is then an existent individual and death is no more than a transitory moment for him. He is not afraid of death but welcomes it; for when death approaches him, he sees the beauty of the other world very clearly through the mirror of his transparent heart. At the time of death the sign of his victorious life, in the words of Iqbal, is “a smile on his lips”. In his letter dated 30th July 1913, Iqbal wrote to his beloved German teacher, Emma Wegenast:

You remember what Goethe said in the moment of his death— ‘MORE LIGHT.’— Death opens up the way to more light, and carries us to those regions where we stand face to face with eternal Beauty and Truth.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

¹ Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, English translation of Iqbal's *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Persian), published by Sheikh M. Ashraf, Lahore, p. xxix.

² *Iqbal Review*, April 1999, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, p.108.

³ Qur'an, 15:24.

⁴ Jeremy Walker, *Kierkegaard— The Descent into God*, published by McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, p.34-35.

⁵ Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, P.29.

⁶ Jeremy Walker, *Kierkegaard - The Descent into God*, p.121.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *On Creativity and the Unconscious*, selected Annotations by Benjamin Nelson, Harper and Row, New York, p. X.

⁸ George J. Stack, *On Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments* by Nyborg. F. Løkkes Forlag, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1976, p. 26.

⁹ Allama Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1989, p.156.

¹⁰ Allama Iqbal, *Bang-i-Dara*, Sheikh Ghulam Ali and Sons, Lahore, p.281.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.172.

¹² Søren Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA, p.87.

¹³ Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood, Hegel and Kierkegaard*, University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles, London, p.200.

¹⁴ Allama Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.81-82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁶ Jamila Khatoon, *The Place of God, Man and Universe in the Philosophical System of Iqbal*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, p.105.

¹⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, translated and edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, published by Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA, p.180.

¹⁸ Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, p.216.

- ¹⁹ Ibid, p.244.
- ²⁰ Allama Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.157.
- ²¹ Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, p.245.
- ²² Ibid, p.262.
- ²³ Ibid, p.274.
- ²⁴ Allama Iqbal, *Bang-i-Dara*, p.263.
- ²⁵ Allama Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i Iqbal* (Urdu), Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, p.43.
- ²⁶ *Leszek Kolakowski – Bergson*, Oxford University Press, New York, p.27.
- ²⁷ Allama Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), p.40
- ²⁸ Once God revealed to Prophet Muhammad: “My *Banda* (servant of God) continues to be closer and closer to Me until he becomes My loved one, and when he becomes of My loved ones, then I become his ear with which he hears, and I become his eye with which he sees, and I become his hand with which he catches, and I become his foot with which he walks.”
- ²⁹ *Iqbal Review*, April 1999, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, p.105.
- ³⁰ Dr. M. Maruf, *Iqbal's Philosophy of Religion*, Islamic Book Service, Lahore, 'Introduction'.
- ³¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, p. 23.
- ³² Allama Iqbal, *Bang-i-Dara*, p. 269.
- ³³ Ibid, p. 270.
- ³⁴ Dr. Ishrat Hasan, *Metaphysics of Iqbal*, Sheikh M. Ashraf, Lahore, p. 32.
- ³⁵ Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, p.xviii.
- ³⁶ Dr. Ishrat Hasan, *Metaphysics of Iqbal*, p. 35.
- ³⁷ Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulova Thulstrup, *The Theological Concept in Kierkegaard*, C. A. Reitzels Bohandel A/S, Copenhagen, Denmark, p. 40.
- ³⁸ Also Qur'an, 50:16.
- ³⁹ Allama Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 57.
- ⁴⁰ Dr. Ishrat Hasan, *Metaphysics of Iqbal*, p. 35.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, p.35-36.
- ⁴² Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, p.xix, 'Introduction'.
- ⁴³ Allama Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.45.
- ⁴⁴ Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, p.xxii (Introduction).
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, p.xxi (Introduction).
- ⁴⁶ Qur'an 10:4.
- ⁴⁷ Qur'an 19:66-67.
- ⁴⁸ Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, p.xxvii-xxviii (Introduction).
- ⁴⁹ B. A. Dar, *Iqbal & Post-Kantian Voluntarism*, Bazm-i Iqbal, Lahore, p.57.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, p.62.
- ⁵¹ Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, p.16-17.
- ⁵² B. A. Dar, *Iqbal & Post-Kantian Voluntarism*, p. 99-100.
- ⁵³ Ibid, p.100.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid, p.163.
- ⁵⁵ Allama Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), p.421/97.
- ⁵⁶ B. A. Dar, *Iqbal & Post-Kantian Voluntarism*, p.175.
- ⁵⁷ Allama Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), p.331.
- ⁵⁸ Qur'an 91:7-10: “By the soul and proportion and order given to it, And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it.”

IMAGE OF GOD
A NOTE ON SCRIPTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

ABSTRACT

All the Abrahamic traditions agree that it is only man who, alone among earthly creatures, is made in the image of God in a direct and integral manner. This is, however, no longer the underpinning of our prevalent view of man. Autonomous statecraft and excessive individualism in the social order were the elements that shaped a dominant paradigm that did not prove successful. A few centuries of unbridled activity has led Western philosophy to an impasse. The metaphysical doctrine of man in the fullness of his being, in what he is, but not necessarily what he appears to be, is expounded in various languages in the different traditions with diverse degrees of emphasis which are far from being negligible. Some traditions are based more upon the divinized human receptacle while others reject this perspective in favour of the Divinity in Itself. Some depict man in his state of fall from his primordial perfection. God had created Adam to be his vicegerent. Vicegerency is the birthright of his children subject to the condition of "God has promised those who have faith and work wholesome deeds to make them vicegerents in the earth, even as He made those who were before them vicegerents". To be God's vicegerent means, among other things, to manifest all the divine attributes in the form of which human beings were created. Only by embodying God's own qualities can human being represent Him. But we know that most people do not live up to their potential. Our perfection in the likeness of concentric circles and centripetal radii; both of which are disposed in view of the Divine Center.

All the Abrahamic traditions agree that it is only man who, alone among earthly creatures, is made in the image of God¹ in a direct and integral manner. This is, however, no longer the underpinning of our prevalent view of man. Somewhere, during the course of its historical development, western thought took a sharp turn in another direction. It branched off at a tangent from the collective heritage of all humanity and claimed the autonomy of reason. It chose to follow reason alone, unguided by revelation and cut off from the Intellect that was regarded as its transcendent root.² Political and social realms quickly followed suit. Autonomous statecraft and excessive individualism in the social order were the elements that shaped a dominant paradigm that did not prove successful.³ A few centuries of unbridled activity has led Western philosophy to an impasse.⁴

A similar situation could be discerned in the arena of politics, humanities, and social sciences. The impasse, though with different implications, was reached by the parallel paradigm of autonomous politics and social sciences which had refused to accept any “infusion” from a higher domain.

The need for a revision of the paradigm is being felt. The opinions about the nature and origin of the “infusions” that could rectify or change it for the better are, however, divergent. Some try to find an alternative from within the dominant paradigm. Others suggest the possibility of a search for these “infusions” in a different direction: different cultures, other civilizations, religious doctrines, sapiential traditions. SSR, true to its principle, has decided to consider to look for it in the Scriptures again, the issue being just as important for the contemporary world as it was for the past. Because we are often unaware that contemporary arguments continue in the same lines as earlier theological debates.⁵

The basic assumptions of the dominant discourse and the prevalent world-view in this regard should be brought into question.⁶ With this end in view I would like to make a probe into the viability or even authenticity and soundness of the underpinnings of the contemporary mind-set and ask the inevitable question, “What is Man” according to the Scriptures? The other inevitable question,

which dovetails the earlier one, lurks in the wings, “What is the cosmos”?

“To be human means to be more than human,” St. Augustine recalled. What does this “more” indicate? The supra individual dimensions of human personality as well as the cosmic order is linked up with the concept of reality itself: reality as a multi-storey building or as a mansion that has no upper storey. This in turn is connected to the microcosmic reality of the human self, of which we have two models. One regards the human self as the point of intersection where the Divine touches the human realm, and this view situates the human microcosm in a hierarchical relationship with other levels of being. This model and its governing concept of reality are the shared heritage of all the known spiritual, metaphysical and religious traditions of mankind. Lord Northbourne summarizes the two approaches to the question, “What is Man?” in a simple and straightforward manner:

“Are you in fact a being created by God in His own image, appointed by him as his representative on earth and accordingly given dominion over it, and equipped for the fulfillment of that function with a relative freedom of choice in thought and action which reflects the total absence of constraint attributable to God alone, but at the same time makes you liable to err? Are you essentially that, and only accidentally anything else?

Or, alternatively, are you essentially a specimen of the most advanced product so far known of a continuous and progressive evolution, starting from the more or less fortuitous stringing together of a protein molecule in some warm primeval mud, that mud itself being a rare and more or less fortuitous product of the evolution of the galaxies from a starting point about which the physicists have not yet quite made up their minds?”⁷

In other words, the two models suggest that man could either be a Viceroy, Vicegerent or Pontiff or else a cunning animal with no destiny beyond the grave.⁸ Regarding the former model, S. H. Nasr says:

“The concept of man as the pontiff, bridge between Heaven and earth, which is the traditional view of the *anthropos*, lies at the antipode of the modern conception of man which envisages him as the Promethean earthly creature who has rebelled against Heaven and tried to misappropriate the role of the Divinity for himself. Pontifical man, who, in the sense used here, is none other than the traditional man, lives in full awareness of the Origin which contains his own perfection and whose primordial

purity and wholeness he seeks to emulate, recapture, and transmit ... He is aware that precisely because he is human there is both grandeur and danger connected with all that he does and thinks. His actions have an effect upon his own being beyond the limited spatio-temporal conditions in which such actions take place. He knows that somehow the bark which is to take him to the shore beyond after that fleeting journey which comprised his earthly life is constructed by what he does and how he lives while he is in the human state.”⁹

Tremendous is the difference that separates the shared perspective of the Abrahamic faiths represented by the foregoing texts and the contemporary paradigm of progress and social development that Tage Lindbom has aptly described as “the kingdom of man.” Given that the prevalent paradigm is losing its viability and there is a growing mistrust about its future, we are hardly in a position at this juncture to reject any alternative out of hand. “Infusions” from other domains hitherto considered alien to social development may be carefully examined and we can ask ourselves individually as well as collectively which of the alternatives has a greater ring of truth? The message which this overall intellectual exercise conveys is not to underestimate the magnitude of the challenge presented by these now unfamiliar “infusions” and systematic claims of the Sriptures, past philosophies and sapiential doctrines. For what they say to the current thought and the contemporary mind-set is in effect “either accept this overall standpoint or do better by finding or inventing a superior system of thought.” The modern world, in all probability, does not have a superior system of thought that provides sufficient grounds for disregarding the traditional system.

Every ‘revealed’ tradition is agreed upon the essential structure of the human psyche, of that invisible inner universe which is the properly human kingdom, from which we have ‘fallen’ into natural life; all holding our present state of consciousness as imperfect in relation to that which we essentially are, man as first created in the order of ‘origins’, by which a temporal beginning in the sense of the scientific evolutionists¹⁰ is not of course meant, but rather the type, pattern, archetype of the *anthropos*, ‘made in the image of God’. The ‘human’, according to tradition, is not, as for our own society, natural man but the archetypal perfect humanity, of whom every average man is a more or less obscured and distorted image. Our own secular society has sought to make everyone happy by taking as the norm ‘fallen’ man, Plato’s dwellers in the Cave; but flattery of our fallen, or

forgetful condition can only superficially and briefly deceive us into believing that all is well, that we are all we should be, since each of us carries within ourselves, however obscured, the image of the *anthropos*.¹¹ The goal of human life is the total realization and attainment in our lives of this archetypal humanity, our true spiritual identity.

The metaphysical doctrine of man in the fullness of his being, in what he is, but not necessarily what he appears to be, is expounded in various languages in the different traditions with diverse degrees of emphasis which are far from being negligible. Some traditions are based more upon the divinized human receptacle while others reject this perspective in favour of the Divinity in Itself. Some depict man in his state of fall from his primordial perfection and address their message to this fallen creature, whereas others, while being fully aware that the humanity they are addressing is not the society of perfect men living in paradise, address that primordial nature which still survives in man despite the layers of “forgetfulness” and imperfection which separate man from himself.¹²

And let us not forget that the image of man is always the image that man conceives of himself. The image bears back upon its author, who thus never quite frees himself from the spell it casts upon him.¹³ In what follows I would try to have a look at the Islamic image of man preceded by a few remarks on the Jewish and Christian anthropology.

Expressions differ. But the *children of Ibrahim* share the basic insights that inform the concept of man common to all the three Abrahamic traditions. Other religious and metaphysical traditions of mankind also express the same vision though in a different mode of expression and in a different terminology but that is out of our purview at the moment.¹⁴

Dust and Divinity

Grappling with the most crucial element in human thinking, when the Jewish tradition tried to find meaning in human existence, it faced the self-directed question “what does it mean to be a human self?” Jews were intensely interested in human nature, but not for the brute facts of the case. They wanted truth-for-life. They wanted to understand the human condition so as to avail themselves of its highest reaches. They were acutely aware of human limitations. Compared with the majesty of the heavens, people are “dust”,¹⁵ facing the forces of nature they can be “crushed like a moth”.¹⁶ Their time upon the earth is swiftly spent, like grass that in the morning flourishes, but “in the evening fades and withers”.¹⁷ Even this brief span is laced with pain that causes our years to end as a sigh”.¹⁸ Not

once but repeatedly the Jews were forced to the rhetorical question: “What are human beings” that God should give them a second thought?¹⁹ “Human beings ... are only animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other”.²⁰ Here is a biological interpretation of the human species as uncompromising as any the nineteenth century ever produced. The significant point, however, is that this passing thought did not prevail. The striking feature of the Jewish view of human nature is that without blinking its frailty, it went on to affirm its unspeakable grandeur. We are a blend of *dust and divinity*. The word unspeakable is not hyperbole. The King James Version translates the central Jewish claim concerning the human station as follows: “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels”.²¹ That last word, we are told by Prof. Huston Smith, is a straight mistranslation, for the original Hebrew plainly reads “a little lower than the gods [or God].”²² Why did the translators reduce deity to angels? The answer seems obvious: It was not erudition that they lacked, but rather the boldness— one is tempted to say nerve — of the Hebrews. We can respect their reserve. Yet no amount of realism could dampen the aspiration of the Jews. Human beings who on occasion so justly deserve the epithets “maggot and worm”²³ are equally the beings whom God has “crowned with glory and honour”.²⁴ There is a rabbinic saying to the effect that whenever a man or woman walks down the street he or she is preceded by an invisible choir of angels crying, “Make way, make way! Make way for the image of God.”

We shall not have plumbed the full scope of its realism, however, until we add that they saw the basic human limitation as moral rather than physical. Human beings are not only frail; they are sinners: “I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me”.²⁵ The verse contributes something of great importance to Jewish anthropology.²⁶ Meant to be noble, they are usually something less; meant to be generous, they withhold from others. Created more than animal, they often sink to being nothing else.²⁷ Human beings, once created, make or break themselves, forging their own destinies through their decisions. “Cease to do evil, learn to do good”.²⁸ It is only for human beings that this injunction holds. “I have set before you life and death ... therefore choose life”.²⁹

Finally, it followed from the Jewish concept of their God as a loving God that people are God’s beloved children. In one of the tenderest metaphors of the entire Bible, Hosea pictures God yearning over people as though they were toddling infants.³⁰ Even in this world, immense as it is and woven of the mighty powers of

nature, men and women can walk with the confidence of children in a home in which they are fully accepted.

What are the ingredients of the most creatively meaningful image of human existence that the mind can conceive? Remove human frailty —*as grass, as a sigh, as dust, as moth-crushed*— and the estimate becomes romantic. Remove grandeur— *a little lower than God*— and aspiration recedes. Remove sin— *the tendency to miss the mark*— and sentimentality threatens. Remove freedom — *choose ye this day!* — and responsibility goes by the board. Remove, finally, *divine parentage* and life becomes estranged, cut loose and adrift on a cold, indifferent sea. With all that has been discovered about human life in the intervening 2,500 years, it is difficult to find a flaw in this assessment.

The Christian tradition has seen a different unfolding of the concept³¹ though it shares the original insight with regard to the basic meaning in human existence. ‘What is man?’ We find the question in the Book of Job, who asks, ‘*What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him?*’³² Job is quoting from a psalm (8:4) which reminds us of the paradox of human littleness and human greatness:³³

*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little **lower than the angels**,³⁴ and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.*

All these texts look back, finally, to the first chapter of Genesis,³⁵ where the creation of man is described: “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him.*” The passage goes on to describe the dominion given to man over all living things on the earth.

When Job reminds God of his exaltation of man he does so in bitterness, complaining that man is a creature of dust who goes down to the grave unregarded. Nevertheless the theme which runs through the Bible, from Genesis to the Epistle to the Hebrews is man as the image of God, bearer of the divine imprint; Jesus, as the Son of Man, is the realization of the first-created humanity, the *anthropos*, as imagined by the Creator before the Fall; which Fall is the result of Adam’s ‘sleep’, a loss of consciousness, a ‘descent’, as the Greeks would say, from a spiritual to a natural mode of consciousness, with a consequent self-identification not with the spiritual but with the natural body; which is, as Job complains, a thing of dust.

IMAGO DEI— GOD’S VICEGERENT

Turning to the Islamic tradition we find that the Prophet of Islam also referred to this peculiar characteristic of human beings— a blend of *dust and divinity*— when he repeated the famous saying found in the Bible quoted above— a saying that has played an important role in Jewish and Christian understandings of what it means to be human — “God created Adam in his own form” (*khlaqa Allahu al-Adama 'ala suratibi*).³⁶ Many authorities understand a similar meaning from the Qur’anic verse, “God taught Adam the names, all of them”.³⁷ In effect, all things are present in human beings, because God taught them the names or realities of all things.³⁸

The human being was created in God’s form, embracing all God’s attributes. The difference between the whole universe and the human being is that the signs are infinitely dispersed in the universe, while they are concentrated into a single, intense focus in each human individual.

God produces an inconceivably enormous cosmos with an infinite diversity of created things. If we investigate the creatures one by one the task can never be completed but if we speak in general terms, it is possible to classify created things into categories. The cosmos can be divided into two basic worlds, the unseen and the visible, sometimes referred to as “the heavens and the earth”, or “the spiritual world and the bodily world.” We have mentioned during our discussions that there is a third world that is both similar to and different from these two basic worlds, called the “world of imagination”. If these three worlds represent the general structure of the total macrocosm, the human being can be called a microcosm, since three parallel domains are found within each individual: spirit, soul, and body.

When we want to look at other bodily creatures; that is, those physical things that fill the visible universe we find inanimate objects, plants, and animals. What is interesting for our purposes is how these three kinds of creature manifest the signs of God; the divine attributes that become visible through them. Which attributes become visible in inanimate objects? Perhaps the best way to answer the question is to say that more than anything else, inanimate objects conceal God’s attributes instead of revealing them. They tell us what God is not rather than what He is.

In contrast to inanimate things, plants display several obvious divine attributes. It is easy to see that plants are alive, and life is the first of the “Seven Leaders”, the seven divine attributes that predominate in creation. Plants have certain knowledge. They certainly have desire: they want water, sunlight, fertilizer, and they

trace elements. If you treat them well and give them what they really desire – like nice, rich manure — they even show their gratitude by producing enormous crops; they are not ungrateful truth-concealers. Plants have power and can destroy stones and concrete, but they need time. But all these divine attributes are found rather feebly within plants, so *tanzih* outweighs *tashbih*.

In contrast, the divine attributes found in animals are much more intense. Moreover, animals add other attributes that are difficult to find in plants. The knowledge possessed by animals can be extraordinary, though it is always rather specialized.³⁹ The animal kingdom represents an incredible diversity of knowledge and skills, divided among a vast number of specialized organisms. Desire is also clearly present in animals, but each species desires different things, and thus a great natural harmony is created.

Both plants and animals represent a tremendous variety of specific signs. Each plant or animal species is a special configuration of divine attributes that is not reproduced in any other species.

Human beings are a species of animal, and they share many characteristics with them. But there is one remarkable characteristic that differentiates them from all other animals: Each animal is what it is, with little or no confusion. But human beings are unknown factors. Each species of animals is dominated by one or a few characteristics. The human being is infinitely malleable. What then is a human being? What brings about this fundamental difference between human beings and other animals? Muslims answer these questions in many ways. The easiest approach within our current discussion is to investigate the nature of the relationship between human beings and the divine attributes. Every creature other than a human being is a sign of God in which a specific, limited, and defined configuration of divine attributes is reflected. In contrast, a human being reflects God as God. In other creatures, some divine attributes are permanently manifest while others are permanently hidden. In human beings, all divine attributes are present, and any of them can become manifest if circumstances are appropriate.

When it is said that everything is within human beings, this is not meant in a literal sense. The principle here is easy to understand if we briefly look at the divine names. God created the universe as the sum total of his signs. The signs explain the nature of God inasmuch as he discloses and reveals himself. What does he disclose? He discloses his attributes, such as life, knowledge, power, and speech. The cosmos in its full temporal and spatial extension — everything other than God — illustrates all God's manifest attributes. Hence the macrocosm is an image, or form, of God.

The concentration of the attributes within human being makes people God's vicegerents, that is, creatures who can perform the same functions as God, with all due respect to *tanzih*. Human beings manifest all God's attributes, but in a weakened and dim manner, demanded by the fact that, although they are similar to God in respect of having been created in his form, they are different in respect of spatial and temporal limitations. God remains infinitely beyond any human being.

God created human beings in his own form, which is to say that he taught them all the names. Adam had an actualized knowledge of these names, but he was still susceptible to temporary forgetfulness. The rest of the human race is born into a heedlessness that is more than temporary. The divine qualities are latent within them, but these qualities need to be brought out from latency and be embodied in people's minds and activities.

God had created Adam to be his vicegerent. Vicegerency is the birthright of his children. However, they will only achieve the vicegerency if they follow the prophets. They must adopt the faith and practice given by God through the scriptures: "God has promised those who have faith and work wholesome deeds to make them vicegerents in the earth, even as He made those who were before them vicegerents".⁴⁰ To be God's vicegerent means, among other things, to manifest all the divine attributes in the form of which human beings were created. Only by embodying God's own qualities can human being represent Him. But we know that most people do not live up to their potential. Even if they do have faith and work wholesome deeds, they never become dependable servants of God, because caprice and heedlessness often make them ignore or forget their proper duties.

"God created Adam in His own form". Likewise, man virtually has all the Divine Names engraved in the very clay of his being. It is because of this divine similitude that God has called him to be His *khalifah*, his 'vicegerent' on earth. "Vicegerency (*khalifah*) was assigned to Adam, to the exclusion of the other creatures of the universe, because God created him according to His image. A vicegerent must possess the attributes of the one he represent; otherwise he is not truly a vicegerent."⁴¹ But these two favours granted exclusively to man, his divine form and his governance, simultaneously expose him to the greatest danger of his existence: the illusion of sovereignty. As the Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn 'Arabi points out on a number of occasions, being conscious of his original theomorphism leads man to forget that he was created from clay—

the most humble of substances and a symbol of his 'ontological servitude' (*'ubdiyya*). The power and the authority that his mandate grants him lead him to consider himself autonomous. The appropriates sovereignty, which rightfully belongs only to Him Whom he represents, and he betrays the oath of vassalage, actualization of the human theomorphic nature (*ta'alluh*), that he made when he replied to the question "*Am I Not your Lord?*" with "*Certainly, we are witnesses!*"⁴²

When he refuses to assume his status as 'servant of God' (*'abd Allah*), he is henceforth unworthy of being 'God's vicegerent' (*kehalifah Allah*). "The homeland of man is his servitude; he who leaves it is forbidden to take on the Divine Names."⁴³ To regain his original nobility, he must reactivate the divine characteristics inscribed in his primordial form; characteristics that his pretension and ignorance had covered up. "The Prophet said, 'I have come to complete the 'noble character traits.'" He who lives in accordance with the 'noble character traits' follows a law of God even if he is not aware of it [...] To perfect one's character means to strip it of all that tends to give it a vile status. Actually, vile characteristics are vile only by accident, while noble characteristics are noble by essence, for what is vile has no foundation in the divine while noble characteristics do have foundation in the divine. The Prophet perfected the noble character traits to the extent that he established the ways through which a character can maintain a noble status and exempt from vile status".⁴⁴

Underlying this passage is a major theme in Ibn 'Arabi's teaching.⁴⁵ It is by the strictest and most absolute observance of Divine Law that man is able to re-establish his original theomorphism. Every quality, including for example jealousy and anger, is noble in essence, since each has its root in a divine attribute. A quality becomes 'ignoble' and reprehensible only to the extent that it exists outside the limits imposed by the Law. Consequently, it is in conforming to the Prophet's *sunnah* and to the Law that was revealed to him that man re-integrates in himself the divine characteristics that lie dormant deep within him.

Here an other aspect of the same question may also be considered. Qur'an is God's Word, and God's Word is his self-expression.⁴⁶ Likewise, the human being is God's form — therefore his self-expression. But the Qur'an takes oral and verbal form, while the human being takes spiritual and bodily form. The Qur'an's outward form is fully manifest, in the sense that it was received once and for all and never changes. But no human being is fully present in this world at any time from birth to death. The

Qur'an is all there, but none of us is all here.⁴⁷ The point of this comparison between the oral word of God, which is the Qur'an, and the embodied form of God, which is the human being, is to bring out the Islamic teaching that, in the Qur'an, we see Gods self-expression fully manifest. In the human being, we cannot see the whole because we are situated on a small segment of the historical unfolding of that whole, an unfolding that precedes our life in this world and extends beyond our death. The Qur'an is thus a full image of God, but we, at any given point, are partial and incomplete images. Made in Gods form, we have the potential to bring all Gods attributes into externalized and embodied existence through our activities. But in order to grasp what those divine attributes are—attributes which comprise ourselves— we need an external model. That model, for Muslims, is the Qur'an, which displays the image openly. Muslims must follow the Prophet so that the Qur'an becomes their character and determines the way they think, feel, and act. This is not a closing down, but an opening up:⁴⁸

*whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam;
whomsoever He desires to misguide, He makes his breast narrow, tight.*

Islam is to embody the Qur'an. It is an opening up because, through imitating the Prophet and gaining the Qur'an as their character, people come to establish real relationships with every attribute of Reality; that is, everything good, beautiful, positive, praiseworthy, and lovable. When people follow any other way— or rather, any non-prophetic way they constrict themselves; they close down their personalities to many of the diverse dimensions of the divine form that make them what they are. To model themselves upon anything other than God is to fall into *shirk*. It is to be confused about their own reality; to think that they are this or that, or that they should be this or that, and to be unaware that God is not this or that, but the creator of every this and that. Likewise, his image cannot be limited to this and that, but embraces every this and that without being held back by any of them. The vision of human perfection that Islam offers is one of infinite possibility conjoined with total fulfillment, everlasting good fortune, and complete happiness.

The whole book, just as it expresses God, also expresses the perfected human substance of Gods foremost messenger Muhammad is the actualized divine form who, for Muslims, stands above the other actualized divine forms, the prophets and friends of God from Adam down to the end of time.

Muhammad is a mortal like everyone else, the Qur'an says. He is a human being.⁴⁹ But remember that human beings were taught all

the names, and the angels prostrated themselves before Adam. To be human is not exactly ordinary. It is a divine Trust, a special privilege, and very few people live up to it.⁵⁰ What distinguishes Muhammad from others is that he has lived up to the responsibilities of being human.⁵¹ Yes, Muhammad is a mortal like other people. But no, he is not forgetful and negligent like them, refusing to carry the Trust. He has carried it, and the whole world benefits as a result. The qualities he manifests are not his own qualities. They are the divine names and attributes.

The downward journey of mankind in terms of human perfection needs also to be taken into consideration and we shall turn to it shortly but here some further remarks on the Islamic conception of human beings with regard to the idea of “trust” seem called for.

THE TRUST

It is impossible to understand Islam’s conception of prophecy without understanding its view of human beings; and likewise, we cannot grasp what a human being is until we grasp the role of prophets in human history.

The story begins with Adam, as it does in Judaism and Christianity, but the Qur’an’s depiction of Adam diverges in important details from that of the Hebrew Bible. The result is an explanation of human nature that can be surprising— and even shocking — to people familiar only with certain other interpretations of Adam’s fall.

The Qur’anic details of Adam’s creation are well known.⁵² Here we can provide a few remarks that bring into focus Islam’s understanding of what it means to be human. We may remember that Adam is the first human being and the prototype for the whole race. What is said about Adam has something to do with the situation of everyone.

Human beings have specific characteristics that set them apart from other creatures. In one famous verse, the Qur’an refers to the sum total of these specific characteristics as “the Trust” (*amana*):

We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it. And the human being carried it. Surely he is very ignorant, a great wrongdoer (33:72)

In order to begin the task of understanding the sense of this verse, we have to remember that a trust is something precious that one person asks another person to hold for safekeeping. In this case, God has entrusted something to human beings, and they are to hold it for him. On the appropriate occasion, they will have to return it, as the word itself implies. The Qur’an says, “*God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners*” (4:58).

What have human beings received on trust from God? Like all other created things, human beings have received everything they have from God. Nothing good belongs to them, since “*The good, all of it, is in Thy hands.*” They will have to give back everything that they have, sooner or later, simply through the natural course of events. However, all creatures are compelled to give this kind of trust back to God, and human beings are no different here from anything else. Creatures are all *muslim* and *‘abd* in the most general sense of the terms, so they have no choice but to give back to God what belongs to Him. Hence, this compulsory trust is not at issue here, since choice does not enter into it. The verse of the Trust is apparently referring to some sort of free choice, and it clearly is talking about something that pertains exclusively to human beings.

The heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to carry the Trust. The term heavens refers to the high and luminous things of the universe and earth to the low and dark things. Mountains seems to mean everything that is neither high nor low. These three terms can be understood as referring to everything other than human beings. Human beings are neither high like the angels, nor low like the minerals, nor in between like the plants and animals. Or rather, they possess all three qualities: They are high through their spirits, low through their bodies, and in between through their souls. As microcosms, they embrace the heavens, the earth, and the mountains.

Most authorities maintain that the Trust is Gods vicegerency. Only human beings are able to carry it because the vicegerency depends upon having been taught all the names. But it is not enough simply to be human to carry the Trust. People have to accept freely to be God’s servants before they can become his vicegerents. Hence, carrying the Trust involves human freedom. Compulsory *muslims* — like the heavens, the earth, and the mountains — cannot carry it.⁵³ One must be a voluntary *muslim* through accepting the guidance offered by God and putting it into practice.⁵⁴

The verse of the Trust concludes by saying that the human being “*is very ignorant, a great wrongdoer!*” The most obvious interpretation of these qualities is that they refer to those children of Adam who do not live up to the Trust. All children of Adam have been given the Trust, but most of them pretend to be ignorant of the truth of their own situation, of the fact that they are, in essence; vicegerents of God. And they are wrongdoers; that is, they put things in the wrong places and overstep the bounds of what is true and right. They arrogate the power and prerogatives of the vicegerency to themselves. They do not treat the divine attributes that they have

received from God as a trust. On the contrary, they act as if the attributes belong to themselves and can be used in any way they see fit.

Muslim thinkers have justified this Qur'anic picture of things in many ways, but we will limit ourselves to commenting on a single Qur'anic verse that they frequently cite in the context. Having created Adam, God wanted to make clear to him and to his children why they had been created. Hence, he gathered all the children of Adam together and spoke to them. The Qur'an reports what happened as follows:⁵⁵

When your Lord took their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness concerning themselves Am I not your Lord?"-they said, "Yes, we bear witness!"

This verse indicates in mythic fashion that human beings, somewhere in the depths of their souls, have all borne witness to God's Lordship. The Arabic word employed for "we bear witness" is the verb from which the word *Shabadah* (witnessing) is derived. The event referred to here is commonly called the Covenant of *Alast*, the word *alast* being the Arabic for "Am I not?" At this time, all human beings entered into a covenant with God by acknowledging Him as the one and sole Reality and agreeing to worship none but him.⁵⁶

The verse of *Alast* continues by explaining God's purpose in calling everyone to witness:⁵⁷

Lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, 'As for us, we were heedless of this, "or lest you say, "Our fathers associated others with God before us, and we were their offspring after them. What, wilt Thou destroy us for what the vain-doers did?"

Interpretations of this verse differ, but most authorities maintain that it means that on the day of judgment, people will be held responsible for recognizing the truth of God being the one and sole Reality, whether or not they have heard the message of a prophet. However, they will not be held responsible for the specific teachings of a prophet if such teachings have not reached them.

To have a broader look of the question, by taking other traditions of mankind into considering also, the genesis of man, according to all traditions, occurred in many stages: first, in the Divinity Itself so that there is an uncreated aspect to man. That is why man can experience annihilation in God and subsistence in Him⁵⁸ and achieve supreme union. Then man is born in the Logos which is in fact the prototype of man and another face of that same reality which the Muslims call the Universal Man and which each tradition identifies

with its founder. Next, man is created on the cosmic level and what the Bible refers to as the celestial paradise, where he is dressed with a luminous body in conformity with the paradisaal state. He then descends to the level of the terrestrial paradise and is given yet another body of an ethereal and incorruptible nature, Finally, he is born into the physical world with a body which perishes but which has its principle in the subtle and luminous bodies belonging to the earlier stages of the elaboration of man and his genesis before his appearance on earth.⁵⁹

The traditional doctrine of man, in general and non theological terms, is based in one way or another on the concept of primordial man as the source of perfection, the total and complete reflection of the Divinity and the archetypal reality containing the possibilities of cosmic existence itself. Man is the model of the universe because he is himself the reflection of those possibilities in the principal domain which manifest themselves as the world. Man is more than merely man so that this way of envisaging his rapport with respect to the cosmos is far from being anthropomorphic in the usual sense of his term. The world is not seen as the reflection of man *qua* man but of man as being himself the total and plenary reflection of all those Divine Qualities whose reflections, in scattered and segmented fashion, comprise the manifested order.

Man's actions have an effect upon his own being beyond the limited spatio-temporal conditions in which such actions take place. He knows that somehow the bark which is to take him to the shore beyond after that fleeting journey which comprises his earthly life is constructed by what he does and how he lives while he is in the human state.

The image of man as depicted in various traditions has not been identical. Some have emphasized the human state more than others and they have envisaged eschatological realities differently. But there is no doubt that all traditions are based on the central and dominant images of the Origin and the Center and see the final end of man in the state or reality which is other than this terrestrial life with which forgetful or fallen man identifies himself once he is cut off from revelation or religion that constantly hearken man back to the Origin and the Center.

That primordial and plenary nature of man which Islam calls the "Universal or Perfect Man" (*al-insan al-kamil*) and to which the sapiential doctrines of Graeco-Alexandrian antiquity also allude in nearly the same terms, except for the Abrahamic and specifically

Islamic aspects of the doctrines absent from the Neoplatonic and Hermetic sources, reveals human reality to possess three fundamental aspects. The Universal Man, whose reality is realized only by the prophets and great seers since only they are human in the full sense of the word, is first of all the archetypal reality of the universe; second, the instrument or means whereby revelation descends into the world; and third, the perfect model for the spiritual life and the ultimate dispenser of esoteric knowledge. By virtue of the reality of the Universal Man, terrestrial man is able to gain access to revelation and tradition, hence to the sacred. Finally, through this reality which is none other than man's own reality actualized, man is able to follow that path of perfection which will finally allow him to gain knowledge of the sacred and to become fully himself. The saying of the Delphic oracle, "*Know thyself*," or that of the Prophet of Islam, "*He who knoweth himself knoweth his Lord*," is true not because man as an earthly creature is the measure of all things but because man is himself the reflection of that archetypal reality which is the measure of all things. That is why in traditional sciences of man the knowledge of the cosmos and the metacosmic reality are usually not expounded in terms of the reality of terrestrial man. Rather, the knowledge of man is expounded through and in reference to the macrocosm and metacosm, since they reflect in a blinding fashion and in an objective mode what man is if only he were to become what he really is. The traditional doctrine of Primordial or Universal Man with he really is. The traditional doctrine of Primordial or Universal Man with all its variations— *Adam Kadmon*, *Jen*, *Purusa*, *al-insan al-Kamil*, and the like embraces at once the metaphysical cosmogonic, revelatory, and initiatic functions of that reality which constitutes the totality of the human state and which places before man both the grandeur of what he can be and the pettiness and wretchedness of what he is in most cases, in comparison with the ideal which he carries always within himself. Terrestrial man is nothing more than the externalization, coagulation, and often inversion and perversion of this idea and ideal of the Universal Man cast in the direction of the periphery. He is a being caught in the field of the centrifugal forces which characterize terrestrial existence as such, but is also constantly attracted by the Centre where the inner man is always present.

It must be remembered that man, as first created, was fully endowed with intellectual intuition; in him the Fall had not yet obstructed the flow of remembrance from symbol to Archetype. There is consequently no fundamental difference between the Qur'anic doctrine that God taught Adam the names of things⁶⁰ and

the verse of Genesis which tells us that God brought His creatures to Adam to see what he would name them.⁶¹ The two scriptures differ simply inasmuch as Genesis is here the more fully informative in telling us that language came to Adam not by any outward revelation through the intermediary of an Archangel but through a no less Providential inward intellection. Both scriptures affirm, for Adam, a God-vouchsafed authority to give each thing its name, which amounts to saying that these names, far from being arbitrary, were the phonations that exactly corresponded to what they expressed, echoes or symbols of the verbal archetypes that are the means of celestial converse.

Turning now to the downward journey of mankind we can observe that the image of man has undergone a drastic change, first in the West and then, through its all pervasive influence encroaching on the worldviews of other traditions. In the recent decades many attempts have been made to trace the stages of the “disfiguration of the image of man in the West” beginning with the first stages of the promethean revolt in the Renaissance, some of whose causes are to be seen already in the late Middle Ages, and terminating with the infra human condition into which modern man is being forced through a supposedly humanistic civilization. The decomposition and disfiguration, in the history of the West, of the image of man as being himself *imago Dei*, came into the open with that worldly humanism which characterizes the Renaissance and which is most directly reflected in its worldly art. But there are certain elements of earlier origin which also contributed to this sudden fall, usually interpreted as the age of the discovery of man at the moment when the hold of the Christian tradition upon Western man was beginning to weaken.⁶²

The other elements which brought about the destruction of the image of pontifical man and helped the birth of that Promethean rebel with whom modern man usually identifies himself were mostly associated with the phenomena of the Renaissance itself and its aftermath or had their root in the late medieval period. These factors include the destruction of the unity and hierarchy of knowledge which resulted from the eclipse of the sapiential dimension of tradition in the West. From this event there resulted in turn the emptying of the sciences of the nature of their esoteric content and their quantification, the rise of skepticism and agnosticism combined with a hatred of wisdom in its Christian form, and the loss of knowledge based upon certitude, which was itself the result of

reducing Being to a mental concept and a denial of its unifying and sanctifying rays.

At the Renaissance man began to analyse mental reflections and psychic reactions and thus to be interested in the “subject” pole to the detriment of the “object” pole; in becoming “subjective” in this sense, he ceased to be symbolist and became rationalist since reason is the thinking ego. The transition from objectivism to subjectivism reflects and repeats in its own way the fall of Adam and the loss of Paradise; in losing a symbolist and contemplative perspective, founded both on an impersonal intelligence and on the metaphysical transparency of things, man has gained the fallacious riches of the *ego*; the world of divine images has become a world of words. In all cases of this kind, heaven— or a heaven— is shut off from above us without our noticing the fact and we discover in compensation an earth long un-appreciated, or so it seems to us, a homeland which opens its arms to welcome its children and wants to make us forget all lost Paradises; it is the embrace of *Maya*, the sirens’ song; *Maya*, instead of guiding us, imprisons us. The Renaissance thought that it had discovered man, whose pathetic convulsions it admired; from the point of view of laicism in all its forms, man as such had become to all intents and purposes good, and the earth too had become good and looked immensely rich and unexplored; instead of living only “by halves” one could at last live fully, be fully man and fully on earth; one was no longer a kind of half-angel, fallen and exiled; one had become a whole being, but by the downward path. The Reformation, whatever certain of its tendencies may have been, had as an overall result the relegation of God to Heaven— to a Heaven henceforth distant and more and more neutralized— on the pretext that God keeps close to us “through Christ” in a sort of biblical atmosphere, and that He resembles us as we resemble Him. All this brought with it an apparently miraculous enrichment of the aspect of things as “subject” and “earth”, but a prodigious impoverishment in their aspect as “object” and “Heaven”. At the time of the Revolution of the late eighteenth century, the earth had become definitely and exclusively the goal of man; the “Supreme Being” was merely a “consolation” and as such a target for ridicule; the seemingly infinite multitude of things on earth called for an infinity of activities, which furnished a pretext for rejecting contemplation and with it repose in “being” and in the profound nature of things; man was at last free to busy himself, on the hither side of all transcendence with the discovery of the terrestrial world and the exploitation of its riches; he was at last rid of symbols, rid of metaphysical transparency; there was no longer anything but the agreeable or the disagreeable, the

useful or the useless, whence the anarchic and irresponsible development of the experimental sciences. The flowering of a dazzling “culture” which took place in or immediately after these epochs, thanks to the appearance of many men of genius, seems clearly to confirm the impression, deceptive though it be, of a liberation and a progress, indeed of a “great period”; whereas in reality this development represents no more than a compensation on a lower plane such as cannot fail to occur when a higher plane is abandoned.

Once Heaven was closed a man was in effect installed in God’s place, the objective measurements of things were, virtually or actually, lost. They were replaced by subjective measurements, purely human and conjectural pseudo-values, and thus man became involved in a movement of a kind that cannot be halted, since, in the absence of celestial and stable values, there is no longer any reason for calling a halt, so that in the end a stage is reached at which human values are replaced by infra-human values, up to a point at which the very idea of truth is abolished.⁶³

All the great religious traditions have been attempts to cultivate the human soul. Our materialist civilization has concerned itself with the well-being of the naked apes, with food and shelter and the learning of the skills necessary to the survival of the body; but any attempt to bring order to the inner worlds, to nourish the specifically human, has gone by default. Not altogether so, of course, for the past is still powerful and two thousand years of Christendom and all the wisdom of the Greek and the Hebrew traditions before that are still there; or at least with the educated sections of society, who are less at the mercy of current ideologies. Pythagoras continues to impose upon the soul the order of the diatonic scale through such music as is still composed according to its laws.⁶⁴

Let me remind you that we are still considering the question ‘What is man?’ Man is, in truth, not a mortal worm but a spiritual being, immaterial, immeasurable, who is never born and never dies, because spirit is not bounded or contained within the categories of the material world of time and space, of duration and extension. In this sense, we are immortal, eternal, boundless within our own universe. Yet of the kingdom that is truly ours, specifically human, we have realized very little.

Our definition of *homo sapiens* being deformity— which makes of him a total being, hence a theophany – it is only logical and legitimate that, for the point of view of Islam, the final word on anthropology is conformity to celestial norms and movement

towards God; or in other words, our perfection in the likeness of concentric circles and centripetal radii; both of which are disposed in view of the Divine Center.

Our material secular society altogether fails to help educate the human soul, the invisible humanity, its deformity to flower. It has all to be remade; piece by piece reconstructing. This re-discovery, re-learning, is a long hard task—a lifelong task who undertake it; yet the most rewarding of all tasks since it is a work of self-discovery which is at the same time a universal knowledge, ‘knowledge absolute’ as the Vedas claim.

On earth the divine Sun is now veiled; as a result the measures of things become relative, and man can take himself for what he is not, and things can appear to be what they are not. Once the veil is torn, at the time of that birth that we call death, the divine Sun appears; measures become absolute; beings and things become what they are and follow the ways of their true nature!

*“You were heedless of this— therefore We have removed from you your covering, and your sight today is piercing”*⁶⁵

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ The Biblical expression says “in the image of God”. In the Islamic tradition it appears in the following Hadith report “*‘khalaf Allahu ‘l-adama ‘ala suratibi*”. See Bukhari, *Al-Sahih*, “Istidhan”, 1; Muslim, *Al-Sahih*, “Birr”, 115, “Jannah”, 28; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad*, Vol. II, 244, 251, 315, 323. Also see Ibn ‘Arabi, *Al-Futubat al Makkijyah*, Dar Sadir, Beirut, n.d., Vol. II, p. 124, p. 490. For an illuminating exposition of the the implications of the statement in terms of the Divine Attributes see Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2000, p. 120.

² See Martin Lings, “Intellect and Reason” in *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, rpt. (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1988, 57-68; F. Schuon, *Gnosis Divine Wisdom* London: J. Murray, 1978, 93-99; S. H. Nasr, “Knowledge and its Desacralization” in *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981, 1-64; Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 60-95. Also see his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989).

³ See René Guénon, “Individualism” in *Crisis of the Modern World*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981, 51-65. Also see Social Chaos” in the same work.

⁴ Commenting upon the situation, Huston Smith remarked, “the deepest reason for the crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason— reason without infusions that both power and vector it— is helpless. By itself, reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working, as it necessarily must, with variables, variables are all it can come up with. The Enlightenment’s “natural light of reason” turns out to have been a myth. Reason is not itself a light. It is more than a conductor, for it does more than transmit. It seems to resemble an adapter which makes useful

translations but on condition that it is powered by a generator.” (Huston Smith, “Crisis in Modern Philosophy”, in *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1990, pp. 137.) The nature and direction of these “infusions” is still being debated.

For a few more representative writings that indicate this situation, see “Scientism, Pragmatism and the Fate of Philosophy, *Inquiry*, No. 29, p. 278, cf. Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, loc. cit. p. 142; Hilary Putnam, “After Empiricism” in *Behaviorism*, 16:1 (Spring 1988); Alasdair MacIntyre, “Philosophy; Past Conflict and Future Direction,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Supplement to 16/1, (September 1987); also see *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 59 (1986), and Kenneth Baynes et al., *Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

⁵ Take, for example, the issue of free will and predestination, a central bone of contention among the schools of Kalam. This debate, which has also been important in Christian civilization, lives on in modern secular society, though it is no longer posed in terms of God. For example, many contemporary scholars—biologists, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, political scientists—are actively involved in the discussion of nature versus nurture. The basic question is simple: Does nature determine human development, or can people change themselves substantially by means of training and education? Free will and predestination, like nature and nurture, is merely a convenient way to refer to one of the most basic puzzles of human existence.

⁶ “Basic assumptions” are used here in a broader sense than regulating concepts. For a description and telling critique of the assumptions of the contemporary world, see Tage Lindbom, *Tares and the Good Grain* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1988). On another level these assumptions are challenged by S. H. Nasr’s *Knowledge and the Sacred*, op. cit.

⁷ Lord Northbourne, *Looking Back on Progress* Lahore, Suhail Academy, 1983, 47.

⁸ On the traditional conception of man, see G. Eaton, *King of the Castle*, Islamic Texts Society, 1993; “Man” in *Islamic Spirituality*, ed. S. H. Nasr, vol. I (New York: Crossroad, 1987, 358-377; Kathleen Raine, *What is Man?* (England: Golgonzoza Press, 1980; S. H. Nasr, “Who is Man...”, in *The Sword of Gnosis*, ed. Needleman (England: Penguin, n.d.), 203-217; S. H. Nasr (ed.) *The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon* (New York: Amity House, 1986, 385-403.

⁹ S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, op. cit., 161-162.

¹⁰ We have conciously avoided to comment on evolutionism and evolutionists positions though all these debates have a direct relevance to the disfiguration of the image of man. It could have taken us too far from our subject. A separate review may be in order on an other occasion.

¹¹ Called by the Hindus the Self, by the Buddhists the Buddha-nature, by the Jews Adam Kadmon, by the Christians Jesus the Christ, by Blake the ‘Divine Humanity’ etc.

¹² This is a specifically Islamic image, since Islam sees the cardinal sin of man in his forgetfulness (*ghaflah*) of who he is although he still carries his primordial nature (al-fitrah) within himself, the man as such to which infact the Islamic message addresses itself. See F. Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, pp. 13-15.

¹³ The whole course of European art, with it increasingly accelerated phases of action and reaction, is mainly a dialogue between man and his image. Islam banished all this ambiguous play of psychological mirrors at an early stage, thus preserving the primordial dignity of man himself.

¹⁴ Of special importance in this regard is René Guenon's *Man and his Becoming According to the Vedanta* (Delhi: 1990), which presents the concept of man in Hindu terminology, which, nevertheless, is shared by the other traditions as well. Also see his *The Great Triad, Quinta Essentia*, 1991, pp. 65-81 for an exposition of the concept of man from the point of view of the Far Eastern traditions. For a representative sampling of the Hindu view of the human self see the following extract:

“The Hindu doctrine of the human self postulates that the human self is a layered entity.... First and most obviously, we have bodies. Next comes the conscious layer of our minds. Underlying these two is a third region, the realm of the individual subconscious. This has been built up through our individual histories. Most of our past experiences have been lost to our conscious memory, but those experiences continue to shape our lives in ways that contemporary psychoanalysis tries to understand. With these three parts of the self, the West is in full agreement. What is distinctive in the Hindu hypothesis is its postulation of a fourth component. Underlying the other three, less perceived by the conscious mind than even its private subconscious (though related to it fully as much), stands Being Itself, infinite, unthwarted, eternal. “I am smaller than the minutest atom, likewise greater than the greatest. I am the whole, the diversified-multicolored-lovely strange universe. I am the Ancient One. I am Man, the Lord. I am the Being-of-Gold. I am the very state of divine beatitude.”...if only we could dredge up portions of our individual unconscious-the third layer of our being-we would experience a remarkable expansion of our powers, a vivid freshening of life. But if we could uncover something forgotten not only by ourselves but by humanity as a whole, something that provides clues not simply to our individual personalities and quirks but to all life and all existence, what then? Would this not be momentous? (Huston Smith, *The World Religions*, pp. 42-43).

¹⁵ Psalm 103:14

¹⁶ Job 4:19

¹⁷ Psalm 90:6

¹⁸ Psalm 90:9

¹⁹ Psalm 8:4

²⁰ Ecclesiastes 3:18-19. Considering the freedom of Israel's thought and her refusal to repress doubts when she felt them, it is not surprising to find that there were moments such as this.

²¹ Psalm 8:5

²² The number of the Hebrew word *'elohim*, is indeterminate.

²³ Job 25:6

²⁴ Psalm 8:6

²⁵ Psalm 51:5. It is totally false to claim this verse for the defense of either the doctrine of total human depravity or the notion that sex is evil. These are both imported notions that have nothing to do with Judaism.

²⁶ The word sin comes from a root meaning “to miss the mark,” and this people (despite their high origin) manage continually to do.

²⁷ Yet never in these “missings” is the misstep required. Jews have never

questioned human freedom. The first recorded human act involved free choice. In eating Eden's forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were, it is true, seduced by the snake, but they could have resisted. The snake merely tempted them; it is clearly a story of a human lapse. Inanimate objects cannot be other than they are; they do what nature and circumstance decree.

²⁸ Isaiah 1:16-17

²⁹ Deuteronomy 30:19

³⁰ *It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.
How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
My heart recoils within me,
my compassion grows warm and tender (Hosea 11:3-4,8)*

³¹ S. H. Nasr, "Man, Pontifical and Promethean", in *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp. 160-188; G. Durand, *On the Disfiguration of the Image of Man in the West*, Ipswich, U.K., 1976.

³² Job (7:17)

³³ St. Paul quotes this psalm in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in order to present to the Jews, familiar with the scriptures, the new concept of Jesus as the divine humanity incarnate.

³⁴ The King James Version translates it as follows: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels". That last word, we are told by Prof. Huston Smith, is a straight mistranslation, for the original Hebrew plainly reads "a little lower than the gods [or God]. See note 22.

³⁵ Genesis 1:27

³⁶ The Biblical expression says "in the image of God". In the Islamic tradition it appears in the following Hadith report "*khalaq Allahu 'l-adama 'ala suratibi*". See Bukhari, *Al-Sahih*, "Istidhan", 1; Muslim, *Al-Sahih*, "Birr", 115, "Jannah", 28; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad*, Vol. II, 244, 251, 315, 323. Also see Ibn 'Arabi, *Al-Futubat al-Makkiyyah*, Dar Sadir, Beirut, n.d., Vol. II, p. 124, p. 490. For an illuminating exposition of the the implications of the statement in terms of the Divine Attributes see Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2000, p. 120.

³⁷ Qur'an, 2:31.

³⁸ Genesis also tells us that God brought His creatures to Adam to see what he would name them (II:19).

³⁹ Bees can tell their hive-mates exactly where to find the best honey, but they don't know much about vinegar. Monarch butterflies know the precise location of their valley in Mexico, but they cannot be trusted to take you to New York City.

⁴⁰ Qur'an 24:55

⁴¹ *Al-Futubat al-Makkiyyah*, I, p. 263.

⁴² Qur'an 7:172

⁴³ *Al-Futubat al-Makkiyyah*, I, pp. 362, 367.

⁴⁴ *Al-Futubat al-Makkiyyah*, II, p. 562.

⁴⁵ For a detailed exposition of Ibn 'Arabi's views see W. C. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge, Self-Disclosure of God*.

⁴⁶ One can point out parallels in other religions. For traditional Jews, the Torah, in its widest sense, plays the same sort of role; and for traditional Christians, it is Jesus, the Word made flesh, who is the all-pervasive reality of the tradition.

⁴⁷ Our infancy has passed, and our old age has not yet arrived. It is difficult to imagine that the infant and the decrepit old man are the same in any real sense, but they are— in some way that is difficult to formulate. But where, you might wonder, in the midst of this (hopefully) long lifetime is the real you? In fact, an embodiment of the real you is found at every point on the trajectory of life, but the real you itself remains a mystery that correlates with the divine spirit, about which the Qur'an says:

They will ask you about the Spirit. Say., "The spirit is at the command of my Lord, and of knowledge you are given but little." (17:85)

⁴⁸ Qur'an 6:125

⁴⁹ To understand the Islamic view of Muhammad, we have to begin by looking at him in the light of incomparability (*tanzih*) the fact that God is real and everything other than God is unreal. From this perspective, all good belongs to God. Muhammad is other than God and hence, like all other created things, he is nothing compared to God. In human terms, Muhammad is a mortal like everyone else.

But there is still a major difference between the Prophet and other people. First, the Prophet is God's perfect servant. Everything in the universe is God's servant, but human beings, having carried the Trust, have to choose freely to be God's servant in order to live up to their potential. This free submission of self to God is the outstanding quality of Muhammad's character. Hence the Qur'an refers to him as "God's servant" and the Muslim consciousness pays this title the highest respect. But this is not the whole story of Muhammad. As God's perfect servant, he is also God's perfect vicegerent. Having fully actualized *tanzih*, he also embodies *tashbih*. The Qur'an illustrates these two sides of Muhammad's humanity in the verse, "Say: 'I am but a mortal like you; it has been revealed to me that your God is one God'" (18:110,41:6). Many commentators in modern times have paid attention only to the first half of this verse and ignored the implications of the second half.

⁵⁰ "Verily," concludes the verse of the Trust, the human being is "very ignorant, a great wrongdoer" (33:72).

⁵¹ He has done so— with God's guidance, of course— such that God has chosen him to be a mercy for the whole world: "We have not sent thee save as a mercy to all the world's inhabitants" (21:107). The second half of the previous verse "It has been revealed to me that your God is one God"- is all important, because it shows that Muhammad is the recipient of revelation. If there was any thought that he is just as imperfect as the rest of us, this thought is removed by the statement that he alone was chosen to receive the Qur'an .

⁵² For an excellent narrative of the account of Adam's creation and fall with all Qur'anic references see Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2000, p. 92-3, 120-21, 134-44.

⁵³ A good deal of evidence could be cited from the Qur'an and the Hadith to prove human superiority. The prostration of the angels before Adam is a point at hand. The Prophet is reported to have said, "*On the day of resurrection, no one will be greater than the children of Adam.*" *The people wondered at this and someone asked, "O Messenger of God! Not even the angels?"* He replied, "*Not even the angels. They are compelled like the sun and the moon.*" The angels have no freedom of action. They could not

disobey God if they wanted to. Hence, they can be only what they are. But human beings can overcome their own limitations and move from distance (*tanzih*) to nearness (*tashbih*), from servanthood to vicegerency. Another hadith makes a similar point: “God created the angels from intelligence, the beasts from appetite, and human beings from both intelligence and appetite. When a person’s intelligence overcomes his appetite, he is higher than the angels, but when his appetite overcomes his intelligence, he is lower than the beasts.”

⁵⁴ On the four significations of the word *islam* see Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2000, p. 4-7.

⁵⁵ Qur’an, 7:172

⁵⁶ It needs to be stressed that this intuitive knowledge of all human beings is the knowledge of *tawhid*, not the knowledge of the *shari’ah*, “right way and open road” that is specific to the prophetic teachings of Islam. In other words, it pertains to the domain of the first *Shabadah*, not to that of the second *Shabadah*, which embraces specific instructions brought by the prophets. The first *Shabadah* is known by everyone, although they usually have to be reminded about it. In contrast, the truths embraced by the domain of the second *Shabadah* have to be learned through a divine message.

⁵⁷ Qur’an, 7:173

⁵⁸ the *al-fana* and *al-baqa* of Sufism.

⁵⁹ Likewise, the Quran speaks of man’s pre eternal (*azali*) covenant with God when he answered God’s call, “Am I not your Lord?” with the affirmative, “Yea,” the “Am I not your Lord?” (*alastu birabbikum*) symbolizing the relation between God and man before creation and so becoming a constantly repeated refrain for all those sages in Islam who have hearkened man to his eternal reality in divines by reminding him of the *asrar-i alast* or the mysteries of this pre-eternal covenant. This reminding or unveiling, moreover, has always involved the doctrine of the elaboration of man through various states of being.

The genesis of man and his prenatal existence in various higher states of existence is expounded in great detail in Jewish esoterism too. See L. Schaya, “La genese de l’homme” *Etude Traditionnelles*, no 456-57 (Avril-Septembre 1977): 94-131, where he discusses the birth, descent, loss of original purity, and the regaining of man’s original state according to Jewish sources concluding that, “Ne de Dieu, letre humain estdestine, après see multiples naissances et morts, a renaitre en Lui, en tant que Lui” (p. 131); and idem, *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah*, pp. 116ff. see also F. Warrain, *La Teodicee de la Kabbale*, Paris, 1949, pp. 73ff.; and G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem, 1941, lectures 6 and 7.

⁶⁰ Qur’an, 2: 31

⁶¹ Genesis, II:19

⁶² One of the element is the excessive seperation between man as the seat of consciousness or the I and the cosmos as the “non-I” or a domain of the reality from which man is alienated. This attitude was not unrelated to the excessive seperation of the spirit from the flesh in the official Christian theology even if this chasm was filled by the Hermetic tradition, especially its alchemical aspect, and affected even the daily life of the medieval community through the craft guilds. The “angelism” of medieval theology, although containing a profound truth, considered only one aspect of the traditional *anthropos*, allowing the rebellion afianst such a view by those who thought that in order to discover the spiritual significance of nature and the positive significance of the body, they had to deny

the medieval concept of man. The Renaissance cult of the body, even if by some freak of history it had manifested itself in India, could not have been opposed to Hinduism in the way that it was opposed to Christianity in the West.

⁶³ The mitigating circumstances in such cases—for they are always present, at any rate for every new fall, the order then existing shows a maximum of abuse and corruption, so that the temptation to prefer an apparently clean error to an outwardly soiled truth is particularly strong.

⁶⁴ Christian art continues to remind of the celestial hierarchies of angels, of the lives of saints lived in accordance with the laws not of nature but of the spirit; of the Christian myth of the birth of the divine principle into the world of generation.

⁶⁵ Qur'an 50:22

THE “APOLOGISTS”

Khurram Ali Shafique

ABSTRACT

To accuse someone of being an “apologist” is outside the scope of serious scholarship and falls in the domain of propaganda. It is caricature of a perfectly normal and healthy human activity, the synthesis of knowledge and readjustment to historical truth. Despite being an unrelenting critic of imperialism, Iqbal said in a speech in 1909 that by introducing democracy in Asia, the British Empire was fulfilling a purpose of Islam which the Muslims themselves had been ignoring for centuries. The phenomenon has also been reflected in Iqbal Studies through Asian writers looking at Iqbal from the point of view of contemporary Western trends. Among them we find two schools. The first, which is sympathetic to Iqbal, approaches his works in an effort to understand it through Western methods. The other school doesn't find such similarities between Iqbal and Western trends and ends up denouncing him for that reason. What is common between them is their absolute deference to some school of Western scholarship. Practically every single strand of This criticism of Iqbal could be traced back to some Western writers.

A somewhat disturbing feature of the latter day colonial writing is the diminishing of boundaries between hate speech and serious thinking. A classic example was *Modern Islam in India* by W.C. Smith, published in 1944. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Smith was only in his twenties when he wrote that book and he moved on soon after.

Therefore it is a bit strange to find a senior scholar like H.A.R. Gibb (1895-1971) depending on polemic sources and borrowing arguments from them. In the foreword to *Modern Trends in Islam*, a set of lectures first delivered in 1945 and published in 1947, Gibb said:

Almost all the books written in English or French by Muslim writers...turn out to be apologetic works, composed with the object of defending Islam and demonstrating its conformity with what their writers believe to be present-day thought. The outstanding exception is the Indian scholar and poet, Sir Muhammad Iqbal...

To accuse someone of being an “apologist” is outside the scope of serious scholarship and falls in the domain of propaganda. It is nothing more than name calling, and like all name calling it makes caricature of a perfectly normal and healthy human activity. In this case what is being caricatured is the synthesis of knowledge and readjustment to historical truth.¹ Gibb deserves some credit for not applying the epithet to Iqbal, yet his readiness to call others by this name prevented him from seeing the obvious fact that anyone who accuses someone else of being an “apologist” may herself or himself be called the same on precisely the same grounds. Hence the only “apologists” in an academic discourse are those who call others by this name.

For instance, Gibb called modern Muslim writings “apologetic” because, according to him, they were aimed at defending Islam and showing its conformity with contemporary thought. Contempt for such writings may itself be called an “apologetic” approach rooted in the colonialist position which Gibb himself stated in these words:

...I make bold to say that the metaphors in which Christian doctrine is traditionally enshrined satisfy me intellectually as expressing symbolically the highest range of spiritual truth which I can conceive,

provided that they are interpreted not in terms of anthropomorphic dogma but as general concepts, related to our changing views of the nature of the universe.

From the “modern” Muslim perspective, this was complete “other-worldliness” that could not offer more than a sectional view of reality. More than seventy years ago, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had defined the alternate in these words:

Nature not only imprints upon our minds her truth, perfection, and the relation which her multifarious products bear to one another, but it also points out another principle, according to which we may direct our actions and thoughts; and as Nature is true and perfect, this principle must necessarily be true and perfect, and this true and perfect principle is what we call true religion...²

This aspiration for a holistic and comprehensive view of reality was shared by most “modern” Muslim writers, including many who opposed Sir Syed on other issues. In the writing of Gibb we do not find a good acquaintance with this perspective and regrettably he also lost the opportunity of making this acquaintance through Iqbal—mainly because he didn’t know much of Iqbal beyond what could be gathered from Nicholson, Smith and an outdated edition of the *Reconstruction*. Further, he restricted himself to a scrutiny of Iqbal in the light of established knowledge.

This shortcoming deserves to be understood in its historical perspective. When George Sale translated the Quran into English in 1734 he hoped that a better understanding of Islam would enable the Christian missionaries to eradicate the “false” religion and achieve through reason what their predecessors had failed to do through swords during the Crusades. Just a little more than two hundred years after Sale, sharing the same conviction about the truth of his faith, Gibb must have observed that not only his co-religionists had failed to eliminate Islam but in turn the “modern” Muslim writers were now using reason for promoting the alternate worldview which, if accepted, could force the Christian world to revise its own position on common themes.

Hence, on subjects such as “knowledge and religious experience,” Gibb appeared hesitant even to make an effort for understanding Iqbal’s ingenious perspective. He arbitrarily rejected the thesis because some Dean Lowe had said, “Once the path of mystical interpretation is entered, anything can mean anything.”³ To say the least, Gibb was approaching Iqbal like a schoolmaster judging a student’s essay by matching it against a textbook.

Some sort of agony is discernible in the lines immediately following this emotional dismissal— one can almost hear the voice of the dignified scholar cracking up like that of someone who has lost

an appeal in the high court. “Iqbal’s protest, in fact, fails on precisely the same grounds as the apologetic of the earlier modernists,” says Gibb, and then the pitch gets louder. “On the basic issue of intellectual integrity, he did nothing to correct and much to confirm the cardinal error of all modernist thought– that while you may make your own religion what you choose, when you are dealing with the historic religious community, choosing is the sign of immaturity and spiritual presumption.”⁴

Gibb had every reason to lose control. Even as his book was getting printed in the press of Chicago University, the “modern” Muslim position was receiving a favorable verdict from history itself: the birth of Pakistan, a sovereign Muslim state established not through swords but through the effectiveness of the same “modern” Muslim discourse which Gibb was trying so hard to discard as “apologetic.”

2

It would be a singularly dull-witted observer of the international scene who would still fail to realize that this new country is destined to play a very leading part in the coming drama of world-history,” A.J. Arberry wrote about Pakistan six years later in his preface to the translation of Iqbal’s *Mysteries of Selflessness* (1953). “For my own part, as a Christian not interested to persuade any Muslim to share my ancestral faith, I believe that the present discord between Christianity and Islam, if it cannot be resolved, can at least be so sensibly modified as to be removed from the perilous arena of emotion to the more tranquil debate of reason.

As a Christian not interested to persuade any Muslim to share his ancestral faith, Arberry was not giving importance to the fact that “the present discord between Christianity and Islam” had started solely due to his ancestors’ attempt to do the opposite of what he was now professing. Unfortunately his failings went further than that.

Sir Syed, Iqbal and other “modern” Muslim writers never tired of giving credit to Europe for what was good about it. Despite being an unrelenting critic of imperialism, Iqbal went as far as declaring in a speech in 1909 that by introducing democracy in Asia, the British Empire was fulfilling a purpose of Islam which the Muslims themselves had been ignoring for centuries.⁵ Arberry called these writers “apologists” for aiming at this perfectly legitimate synthesis of knowledge but he himself lifted a leaf out of their book and presented it as his own. At the same time he painted the Muslim writers as opponents of the worldview which he had actually borrowed from them! This is where scholarship gives way to

something else for which we may have only one name, and that is not a very happy one.

The allegation of plagiarism should be used sparingly because ideas do travel from one group to another in order to ensure the evolution of human civilization. Arberry is one rare example where the allegation of plagiarism seems to be justified because while borrowing the key concepts from his opponents he also tried to show that his opponents had never held such views.

In the passage quoted above, Arberry was giving an impression as if “the present discord between Christianity and Islam” was due to the “modern” Muslim writers’ preference for “the perilous arena of emotion” to which he so magnanimously offered “the more tranquil debate of reason.” Historically, the case was exactly the opposite, as Arberry himself admitted in another part of the same text where he said, “Europe for centuries was unfair to Islam...”

The solution which he was now offering was something which had been repeated countless times by those same “modern” Muslim writers whom he, just like Gibb, denounced as “apologists” (and unlike Gibb, he wasn’t willing to make an exception for Iqbal):

In the debate it will become apparent that the area of agreement between the two faiths is very much larger than the area of disagreement, generating the reasonable hope that opposition may in time give way to cooperation...

We need only compare Arberry’s lines with Iqbal’s statement in the *Allahabad Address* in order to see the similarities. Iqbal had said:

Indeed the first practical step that Islam took towards the realization of a final combination of humanity was to call upon peoples possessing practically the same ethical ideal to come forward and combine. The Quran declares, “O people of the Book! Come let us join together on the ‘word’ (Unity of God), that is common to us all.” The wars of Islam and Christianity, and, later, European aggression in its various forms, could not allow the infinite meaning of this verse to work itself out in the world of Islam. Today it is being gradually being realized in the countries of Islam in the shape of what is called Muslim Nationalism...

Arberry’s moral failing was to discredit the “modern” Muslim writers while borrowing from them without acknowledging the source. One wonders why he had to write lines such as the following— and how could *he* write them:

When Iqbal wrote, “Believe me, Europe to-day is the greatest hindrance in the way of man’s ethical advancement,” he was not saying anything that he had not said before, and he was not seeking merely to provoke and shock; neither was he a solitary voice crying in the wilderness. The present threats to the peace and security of the world are certainly not few...

Ironically, the line which Arberry quoted from Iqbal is from the sixth lecture of the *Reconstruction* where it appears in a passage which may have been the original source from where Arberry stole the olive leaf he was offering as his own. In the words of Iqbal, the passage reads like this:

Humanity needs three things today— a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic systems on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men, while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe to-day is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement...⁶

The three things which, according to Iqbal, the world needed were presented by Arberry as his own and just how much was lost through poor rewording may be assessed by looking at the plagiarized version in his preface:

...it is imperative that we should make a renewed and unremitting effort to understand each other's viewpoint, and to study what possibilities exist for, first, a diminishing of tension, next, a rational compromise, and, ultimately, an agreement to work together towards common ideals...

3

Two significant changes were noticeable in “the mind of Europe” in decades preceding Arberry. The first was that, possibly due to the diminishing control of the Church, it became possible for many Europeans to formally convert to other religions without losing their loyalty to the mind of Europe. Among the earliest examples was the French writer Rene Guenon who embraced Islam in 1911 but still was able to get married in a Catholic Church five years later while wearing a ring inscribed with the Sanskrit word *Om* right up to his death. The concept behind such conversions was best explained by Guenon's successor Frithjof Schuon who in 1932, just before his conversion to Islam at the age of twenty-five, wrote to a friend:

Have I ever said that the path to God passes through Mecca? If there were any essential difference between a path that passes through Benares and one that passes through Mecca, how could you think that I would wish to come to God “through Mecca,” and thereby betray

Christ and the Vedanta? In what way does the highest spiritual path pass through Mecca or Benares or Lhasa or Jerusalem or Rome? Is the Nirvana of Mecca different from the Nirvana of Benares simply because it is called *fana* and not *nirvana*? Do I have to explain to you once again that either we are esoterics and metaphysicians who transcend forms— just as Christ walked over the waters— and who make no distinction between Allah and Brahma, or else are exoterics, “theologians”— or at best mystics— who consequently live in forms like fish in water, and who make a distinction between Mecca and Benares?⁷

It is not difficult to see that the distinction made by Schuon between esoterics and theologians was similar to the one between practitioners of religion and scholars of comparative history of religions, which was later implied in Dr. McDonough’s position.

The second change which corresponded to this type of conversions was that after the collapse of European colonialism it became possible for a non-European to connect with the mind of Europe on the same conditions which Eliot had prescribed for a European: “continual surrender of himself” to the mind of Europe (but *not* to the mind of his own country in this case).

Students, scholars and writers in Asia used to surrender themselves to the mind of Europe even in the days of colonialism but they evoked suspicion among their country folk and contempt among the foreign masters. The basis for suspicion or contempt vanished when East and West became equals at the end of colonialism. The number of Asians surrendering to “the mind of Europe” increased dramatically and was duly precipitated by the mushrooming of area study centers, Islamic Studies centers and centers for the study of comparative history of religions in the West around the same time.

The phenomenon has been reflected in Iqbal Studies through Asian writers looking at Iqbal from the point of view of contemporary Western trends. Among them we find two schools. The first, which is sympathetic to Iqbal, approaches his works in an effort to understand it through Western methods. Typically, a writer of this school ends up with showing similarities between Iqbal’s thought and those Western trends which the writer upholds, whether it is Western philosophy, comparative history of religions or transcendent unity of religion. The other school doesn’t find such similarities between Iqbal and Western trends and ends up denouncing him for that reason. What is common between them is their absolute deference to some school of Western scholarship.

Among the most notable early examples of the first school we find the well-known Iqbal scholar Khalifa Abdul Hakeem (1893-1959) and the very talented literary critic Aziz Ahmad (1913-78).

Hakeem was a frequent visitor of Iqbal and his efforts for promoting liberal Islamic values in the early days of Pakistan may never be forgotten. Therefore one is surprised by the great extent to which he followed the opinions of Nicholson and Forster about “the influence of Nietzsche on Iqbal” in his own writings including a famous volume in Urdu, *Fikr-i-Iqbal (The Thought of Iqbal)*.

Aziz Ahmed also penned a very influential book in Urdu, *Iqbal: Nai Tashkeel (Iqbal: the Reconstruction)*, which was published in 1947, just before the birth of Pakistan. It sought to offer a creative and original exposition of Iqbal’s thought but it rested on the premise that Iqbal’s thought was in remarkable conformity with Karl Marx and that his grasp of socialism was not as bad as others were giving it out to be.

It is ironical, since these native stalwarts had a better familiarity with primary sources than those foreign celebrities to whom they were deferring. Yet a curious truth about Iqbal Studies is that external sources have often become handicap for writers who may have done better on their own.

Those “socialist friends” who had told the young W.C. Smith in the 1940s that Iqbal did not have a deep understanding of socialism may be counted among the early manifestations of the other school of pro-West Asian writers, which denounces Iqbal for his differences with some Western thinker— in this instance, Karl Marx.

Writers of this school usually follow Gibb and Arberry in making a virtue out of calling the earlier Muslim writers “apologists” and often display exceptional hostility towards Iqbal. A notable example has been Seyyed Hossein Nasr, whose *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (1988) was a diligent effort to revisit the contemporary Muslim world in the light of interpretations offered mainly by modern French writers such as Rene Guenon and Frithjof Schuon, and Englishmen such as Martin Lings (all of whom converted to Islam in the latter period of European colonialism). In the last chapter, Nasr denounced Iqbal:

who was influenced both by the Victorian concept of evolution and Nietzsche’s idea of the superman. Iqbal is an influential contemporary figure of Islam but, with all due respect to him as a poet, his ideas should be studied in the light of the *ijtihad* which he himself preached so often. He should certainly not be put on a pedestal. If we analyze his thought carefully we see that he had an ambivalent attitude towards many things, including a love-hate relationship with Sufism. He admired Rumi yet expressed dislike for a figure like Hafiz. This is due to the fact that he was drawn, on the one hand, by the Sufi, and more generally speaking Islamic, idea of the Perfect Man (*al-insan al-kamil*) and on the other by the Nietzschean idea of the superman, two

concepts which are, in fact, the very antipode of each other. Iqbal made the great mistake of seeking to identify the two. He made this fatal error because, despite his deep understanding of certain aspects of Islam, he had come to take the prevalent idea of evolution too seriously. He demonstrates on a more literate and explicit level a tendency to be found among the many modern Muslim writers who, instead of answering the fallacies of the theory of evolution, have tried to bend over backwards in an apologetic manner to accept it and even to interpret Islamic teachings according to it.⁸

Nasr did not quote any reference for what he was attributing to Iqbal. At the end of the passage a number appeared in superscript but the corresponding endnote turned out to be, not a reference, but only more unsubstantiated delineation of similar nature. Neither did the name of Iqbal occur in the “Select Bibliography” at the end of the book.

“If we analyze his thought carefully...” Nasr had said, but the phrase seemed to be rhetorical, for the text did not provide any evidence of careful analysis on part of Nasr: practically every single strand of his criticism of Iqbal could be traced back to some Western writer (from among those whom we have discussed). Also, it was amazing how similar his tone was to the hate speech of Gibb and Arberry.

Postscript: *In His Own Words*

My Dear Dr. Nicholson,⁹

I was very glad to learn from your letter to Shafi¹⁰ that your translation of the *Asrar-i-Khudi* has been favourably received and excited much attention in England. Some of the English reviewers, however, have been misled by the superficial resemblance of some of my ideas to those of Nietzsche.¹¹ The view of the writer in *The Athenaeum*¹² is largely affected by some mistakes of fact, for which, however, the writer does not seem to be responsible. But I am sure if he had known some of the dates of the publication of my Urdu poems referred to in his review, he would have certainly taken a totally different view of the growth of my literary activity. Nor does he rightly understand my idea of the Perfect Man, which he confounds with the German thinker's Superman. I wrote on the Sufi doctrine of the Perfect Man more than twenty years ago— long before I had read or heard anything of Nietzsche. This was then published in *The Indian Antiquary*¹³ and later, in 1908, formed part of my book on Persian Metaphysics.¹⁴ The English reader ought to approach this idea not through the German thinker, but through an English thinker of great merit— I mean Alexander,¹⁵ whose Gifford Lectures delivered in Glasgow were published last year. His chapter on Deity and God (ii.341) is worth reading. On page 347 he says: "Deity is thus the next higher empirical quality to mind, which the universe is engaged in bringing to birth. That the universe is pregnant with such a quality we are speculatively assured. What that quality is we cannot know; for we can neither enjoy nor still less contemplate it. Our human altars still are raised to the unknown God. If we could know what Deity is, how it feels to be Divine, we should first have to become as God." Alexander's thought is much bolder than mine. I believe there is a Divine tendency in the universe, but this tendency will eventually find its complete expression in a higher man, not in a God subject to Time, as Alexander implies in his discussion of the subject. I do not agree with Alexander's view of God; but it is clear that my idea of the Perfect Man will lose much of its outlandishness in the eye of the English reader if he approaches it through the ideas of a thinker of his own country.

But it was Mr. Lowes Dickinson's review¹⁶ which interested me most, and I want to make a few remarks on it.

1. Mr. Dickinson thinks, as I understand from his private letter to me,¹⁷ that I have deified physical force in the poem. He is, however, mistaken in his view. I believe in the power of the spirit, not brute force. When a people is called to a righteous war, it is, according to my belief, their duty to obey the call; but I condemn all war of conquest (cf. the story of Miyan Mir and the Emperor of India).¹⁸ But Mr. Dickinson is quite right when he says that war is destructive, whether it is waged in the interest of truth and justice or in the interests of conquest and exploitation. It must be put an end to in any case. We have seen, however, that treaties, leagues, arbitrations and conferences cannot put an end to it. Even if we secure these in a more effective manner than before, ambitious nations will substitute more peaceful forms of the exploitation of races supposed to be less favoured or less civilized. The truth is that we stand in need of a living personality to solve our social problems, to settle our disputes and to place international morality on a surer basis. How very true are the last two paragraphs of Prof. Mackenzie's *Introduction to Social Philosophy* (pp.367ff).¹⁹ I take the liberty to transcribe them here:

There can be no ideal society without ideal men: and for the production of these we require not only insight but a motive power; fire as well as light. Perhaps a philosophical understanding of our social problems is not even the chief want of our time. We need prophets as well as teachers, men like Carlyle or Ruskin or Tolstoy, who are able to add for us a new severity to conscience or a new breadth to duty. Perhaps we want a new Christ... It has been well said that the wilderness of the present is in the incessant war by which we are trying to make our way upwards. It is there that the prophet must be.

Or perhaps our chief want is rather for the poet of the new age than for its prophet— or for one who should be poet and prophet in one. Our poets of recent generations have taught us the love of nature, and enabled us to see in it the revelation of the divine. We still look for one who shall show us with the same clearness the presence of the divine in the human... We shall need one who shall be fully and in all seriousness what Heine playfully called himself, a 'Ritter von dem Heiligen Geist,' one who shall teach us to see the working out of our highest ideals in everyday life of the world, and to find in devotion to the advancement of that life, not merely a sphere for an ascetic self-sacrifice, but a supreme object in the pursuit of which 'all thoughts, all passions, all delights' may receive their highest development and satisfaction.

It is in the light of such thoughts that I want the British public to read my description of the ideal man. It is not our treaties and arbitrations which will put an end to the internecine wars of the

human family. A living personality alone will effectively do such a thing, and it is to him that I say:

Bring once more days of peace to the world,
Give a message of peace to them that seek battle.²⁰

2. Mr. Dickinson further refers to my "Be hard." This is based on the view of reality that I have taken in the poem. According to my belief reality is a collection of individualities tending to become a harmonious whole through conflict which must inevitably lead to mutual adjustment. This conflict is a necessity in the interests of the evolution of higher forms of life and of personal immortality. Nietzsche did not believe in personal immortality. To those desiring it he ruthlessly says: "Do you wish to be a perpetual burden on the shoulders of time?"²¹ He was led to say this because he had a wrong notion of time, and never tried to grapple with the ethical issue involved in the question of time. On the other hand I look upon immortality as the highest aspiration of man, on which he should focus all his energies, and consequently I recognize the need of all forms of activity, including conflict, which tend to make the human person more and more stable.²² And for the same consideration I condemn speculative mysticism and inactive quietism. My interest in conflict is mainly ethical and not political, whereas Nietzsche's was probably only political. Modern physical science has taught us that the atom of material energy has achieved its present form through many thousands of years of evolution. Yet it is unstable and can be made to disappear. The same is the case with the atom of mind-energy, i.e. the human person. It has achieved its present form through aeons of incessant effort and conflict; yet, in spite of all this, its instability is clear from the various phenomena of mental pathology. If it is to continue intact it cannot ignore the lessons learnt from its past career, and will require the same (or similar) forces to maintain its stability which it has availed itself or before. It is possible that in its onward march nature may modify or eliminate altogether some of the forces (e.g. conflict in the way of mutual wars) that have so far determined and helped its evolution, and introduce new forces hitherto unknown to mankind, to secure its stability. But I confess I am not an idealist in this matter, and believe this time to be very distant. I am afraid mankind will not, for a very long time to come, learn the lesson that the Great European War²³ has offered them. Thus it is clear that my purpose in recognizing the need of conflict is merely ethical. Mr. Dickinson has unfortunately altogether ignored this aspect of the "Be hard."

3. Mr. Dickinson further remarks that while my philosophy is universal, my application of it is particular and exclusive. This is in a

sense true. The humanitarian ideal is always universal in poetry and philosophy; but if you make it an effective ideal and work it out in actual life, you must start, not with poets and philosophers, but with a society exclusive, in the sense of having a creed and a well-defined outline, but ever enlarging its limits by example and persuasion.²⁴ Such a society, according to my belief, is Islam. This society has so far proved itself a most successful opponent of the race-idea, which is probably the hardest barrier in the way of the humanitarian ideal. Renan²⁵ was wrong when he said that science is the greatest enemy of Islam. No, it is the race-idea which is the greatest enemy of Islam—in fact of all humanity; and it is the duty of all lovers of mankind to stand in revolt against this dreadful invention of the Devil. Since I find that the idea of nationality—based on race or territory—is making headway in the world of Islam, and since I fear that the Muslims, losing sight of their own ideal of a universal humanity, are being lured by the idea of a territorial nationality, I feel it is my duty, as a Muslim and as a lover of all men, to remind them of their true function in the evolution of mankind. Tribal and national organization on the lines of race or territory are only a temporary phase in the unfolding and upbringing of collective life, and as such I have no quarrel with them; but I condemn them in the strongest possible terms when they are regarded as the ultimate expression of the life of mankind. While I have the greatest love for Islam, it is in view of practical and not patriotic considerations, as Mr. Dickinson thinks, that I am compelled to start with a specific society (e.g. Islam) which, among the societies of the world, happens to be the only one suitable to my purpose. Nor is the spirit of Islam so exclusive as Mr. Dickinson thinks. In the interests of a universal unification of mankind the Quran ignores their minor differences and says: “Come let us unite on what is common to us all.”²⁶

I am afraid the old European idea of a blood-thirsty Islam is still lingering in the mind of Dr. Dickinson. All men and not Muslims alone are meant for the kingdom of God on earth, provided they say good-bye to their idols of race and nationality, and treat one another as personalities. Leagues, mandates, treaties, like the one described by Mr. Keynes,²⁷ and imperialisms, however draped in democracy, can never bring salvation to mankind. The salvation of man lies in absolute equality and freedom of all. We stand in need of a thorough overhauling of the uses of science which have brought so much misery to mankind, and of a total abandonment of what may be called esoteric politics, which is ever planning the ruin of less clever or weaker races.

That Muslim peoples have fought and conquered like other peoples, and that some of their leaders have screened their personal ambition behind the veil of religion, I do not deny; but I am absolutely sure that territorial conquest was no part of the original programme of Islam. As a matter of fact I consider it a great loss that the progress of Islam as a conquering faith stultified the growth of those germs of an economic and democratic organization of society, which I find scattered up and down the pages of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. No doubt the Muslims succeeded in building a great empire, but thereby they largely repaganized their political ideals and lost sight of some of the most important potentialities of their faith.²⁸ Islam certainly aims at absorption. This absorption, however, is to be achieved, not by territorial conquest, but by the simplicity of its teaching, its appeal to the common sense of mankind, and its aversion from abstruse metaphysical dogma.²⁹ That Islam can succeed by its inherent force is sufficiently clear from the Muslim missionary work in China, where it has won millions of adherents without the help of any political power. I hope that more than twenty years' study of the world's thought has given me sufficient training to judge things impartially.

The object of my Persian poems is not to make out a case for Islam; my aim is simply to discover a universal social reconstruction, and in this endeavour I find it philosophically impossible to ignore a social system which exists with the express object of doing away with all the distinctions of caste, rank and race, and which, while keeping a watchful eye on the affairs of this world, fosters a spirit of the unworldliness so absolutely essential to man in his relations with his neighbours. This is what Europe lacks, and this is what she can still learn from us.

One word more, in my notes which now form part of your introduction to *Asrar-i-Khudi* I deliberately explained my position in reference to Western thinkers, as I thought this would facilitate the understanding of my views in England. I could have easily explained myself in the light of the Quran and Muslim Sufis and thinkers, e.g. Ibn Arabi and Iraqi (Pantheism), Wahid Mahmud (Reality as a Plurality), Al-Jili (the idea of the Perfect Man) and Mujaddid Sarhindi (the human person in relation to the Divine Person).³⁰ As a matter of fact I did so explain myself in my Hindustani³¹ introduction to the 1st edition of the *Asrar*.

I claim that the philosophy of the *Asrar* is a direct development out of the experience and speculation of old Muslim Sufis and thinkers. Even Bergson's³² idea of time is not quite foreign to our Sufis. The Quran is certainly not a book of metaphysics, but it takes

a definite view of life and destiny of man, which must eventually rest on propositions of a metaphysical import. A statement by a modern Muslim student of philosophy of such a proposition, especially invoked by that great book, is not putting new wine in old bottles.¹ It is only a restatement of the old in the light of the new. It is unfortunate that the history of Muslim thought is so little known in the West. I wish I had time to write an extensive book on the subject to show the Western student of philosophy how philosophic thinking makes the whole world kin.

Yours very sincerely,
Muhammad Iqbal
Lahore, 26th January, 1921

NOTES AND REFERENCE

¹ Iqbal treated this phenomenon very differently, for instance when he wrote in his private notebook *Stray Reflections* in 1910: "Our Soul discovers itself when we come into contact with a great mind. It is not until I had realised the Infinitude of Goethe's imagination that I discovered the narrow breadth of my own."

² Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1870), *Essays on the Life of Muhammad*, "Preface and Introduction", p.v-vi.

³ "We must surely give Iqbal credit for courage and sincerity. But courage and sincerity are not enough. Nor can we even accept the plea that in his new theology he at least laid a foundation on which others might build after him, clarifying his vision and supplying an appropriate ethical content. As Dean Lowe has said: 'However attractive it may be to find deeper, inner meanings in a limited number of passages...the risk of arbitrariness and subjectivity offsets any possible gain. Once the path of mystical interpretation is entered, anything can mean anything.'" (Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, pp.83-4; ellipses are his)

⁴ Gibb (1947), *Modern Trends in Islam*, p.84

⁵ This was "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal", a lecture delivered in 1909 and not included in the "canon" of his writings. In his private notebook a year later he tried to resolve this paradox: "A disinterested foreign rule is an impossibility. Yet the tutelage of nations is a necessity. The fee paid for this tuition is sometimes a nation's daily bread..."

⁶ Iqbal went on to say that the Muslims were in possession of "these ultimate ideas" on the basis of a revelation and therefore they ought to evolve, "out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the

¹ In his review, Dickinson had written of Iqbal: "Muhammad is his Prophet and the Qur'an his Bible. He thinks, or he chooses to affirm, that his gospel is also the gospel of that ancient book, so inveterate is the determination of men to put new wine into old bottles."

ultimate aim of Islam.”

⁷ Letter to a friend, Albert Oesch, dated May 15, 1932, quoted in Aymard & Laude (2004, 2005), *Frithjof Schuon: Life and Teachings*, p.16

⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1988), *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, published by Suhail Academy, Lahore, p.139

⁹ Iqbal wrote this letter to R.A. Nicholson regarding the ‘Introduction’ and some of the reviews on the *Secrets of the Self*. It was published in *The Quest*, London, October 1920-July 1921, Volume XII, pp. 484-492. Source: Riffat Hassan, ed (1977), *The Sword and the Scepter*

¹⁰ This must be Prof. Muhammad Shafi whom Nicholson had also mentioned in his ‘Introduction’ as “my friend Muhammad Shafi, now Professor of Arabic at Lahore, with whom I read the poem and discussed many points of difficulty.”

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), German philosopher and the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885).

¹² This is a reference to E.M. Forster’s review, which has been discussed in the previous chapters.

¹³ In September 1900.

¹⁴ *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, first published by Luzac, London in 1908.

¹⁵ Samuel Alexander (1859-1938), Australian-born Jewish British philosopher. His Gifford lectures were delivered in the winters of 1917 and 1918 and published in 1920 as *Space, Time and Deity* (reprinted with a new preface in 1927). It consisted of four books divided into two volumes. ‘Deity and God’, from which Iqbal quotes in the next lines, is Chapter 1 of Book IV (second volume) and the quoted passage occurs under the subheading, ‘Deity the next higher empirical quality than mind.’

¹⁶ Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862-1932); the reference is to his review. Later his biography of Iqbal’s teacher James McTaggart, published in 1931, was reviewed by Iqbal in a literary journal of London. His own biography was written by E.M. Forster and published as *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* in 1934. For other details, see previous chapters.

¹⁷ The letter is not extant. Iqbal used to destroy private correspondence out of courtesy for the correspondents.

¹⁸ The chapter on war in ‘The Secrets of the Self’ includes a story about the emperor of India (apparently Shahjehan) visiting a saint of Lahore to seek blessing for a war of conquest. In the meanwhile, a poor disciple comes offers a coin to the saint. The saint says, “This money ought to be given to our Sultan, who is a beggar wearing the raiment of a king. Though he holds sway over sun, moon and stars, our Emperor is the most penniless of mankind. His eye is fixed on the table of strangers; the fire of his hunger hath consumed a whole world...”

¹⁹ John Stuart Mackenzie, British philosopher (and from 1890-1896, fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, where Iqbal studied from 1905-1907); *An Introduction to Social Philosophy: The Shaw Fellowship Lectures at Glasgow* was published in 1890, and a second edition came out in 1895.

²⁰ The lines are from the section on “divine vicegerency” in ‘The Secrets of the Self’.

²¹ Perhaps in defiance to Nietzsche, Iqbal addresses the world of nature in the sixth book of his poetry, *Baal-i-Gabriel (Gabriel’s Wing)*: “For whose manifestation are the day and the night in perpetual race? Am I a heavy burden on the shoulders of time, or are you?” (Poem 4, Section 2).

²² While discussing immortality in the fourth lecture in the *Reconstruction* (1930/34), Iqbal says: “Life is one and continuous. Man marches always onward to receive

ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality which ‘every moment appears in a new glory’. And the recipient of Divine illumination is not merely a passive recipient. Every act of a free ego creates a new situation, and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding.”

²³ This was Iqbal’s way of referring to the First World War, or World War I (1914-1918). Before the Second World War, or World War II (1939-1945), it used to be known by various names including the Great War, the World War, the War to End All Wars and the War in Europe.

²⁴ In the *Allahabad Address*, while laying out the concept of a Muslim state (later named Pakistan), Iqbal stated: “One of the profoundest verses in the Holy Quran teaches us that the birth and rebirth of the whole of humanity is like the birth and rebirth of a single individual. Why cannot you who, as a people, can well claim to be the first practical exponent of this superb conception of humanity, live and move and have your being as a single individual?”

²⁵ Ernest Renan (1823-1892), French philosopher and writer best known for his writings on early Christianity and his political theories. Iqbal also mentioned him in the *Allahabad Address* (1930).

²⁶ The Quran, Chapter 3: “The House of Imran” Verse 64. Iqbal also quoted this verse in the *Allahabad Address* (see quotation in the previous chapter).

²⁷ John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) was British economist and a member of the Bloomsbury Group. His polemic *The Economic Consequence of Peace* (published in December 1919) influenced the American and British decisions at Versailles. In addition to statistics (many of which were wrong about the future) he owed his success to sarcastic jibes at President Wilson, Prime Minister George Lloyd and the French statesman Clemenceau. Apparently, he imitated his friend and lover Strachey, who also advised on the draft.

²⁸ In the sixth lecture of the *Reconstruction* (1930/34), ‘The Principle of Movement in Islam’, Iqbal stated: “...in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realize the true significance of this basic idea. Let the Muslim of to-day appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.”

²⁹ In Iqbal’s last “grand” poem, ‘The Devil’s Parliament’, the Satan commands his counselors to indulge the Muslims in abstruse metaphysical dogma in order to keep them away from the real world.

³⁰ “e.g. Ibn Arabi and Iraqi... in relation to the Divine Person”: these phrases are not found in Riffat Hassan, ed. (1977) and is only found in B.A. Dar, ed. (1977), *The Letters of Iqbal*, published by Iqbal Academy Pakistan, pp.146-147.

³¹ Apparently, “Hindustani” here means Urdu. Introduction to the first edition of *Asrar-i-Khudi* (1915) appeared in Urdu although the poem was in Persian. This introduction, along with controversial verses against Hafiz of Shiraz, was eliminated from the second edition, which is supposed to have appeared around 1917. *Payam-i-Masbriq* (1923) is now the only Persian book in the “canon” to have an introduction, and that is also in Urdu.

³² Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941), French philosopher and the author of *Creative Evolution* (1910; translated into English in 1911); Iqbal met him in Paris in 1933.

A FORGOTTEN DEBATE ON WAHDAT
AL-WUJUD IN CONTEMPORARY
PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Tahir Hameed Tanoli

ABSTRACT

Apart from the debate on *Wahdat al-wujud* and *Wahdat al-shuhud* there has been an internal debate among the followers of *Wahdat al-wujud*. This debate was initiated by the reputed scholar Abdur Rahman Lucknowi (1161-1245 AH) from Lucknow, UP, India when he wrote *Kalimatul-Haq*. In this book he supported his viewpoint with various new arguments. Lucknowi has described two new dimensions of the thesis which were not adopted by anybody before: first, that the meaning of the *kalimah-e tawhid* is *Wahdat al-wujud* and second, that it is obligatory for the whole *Umma* to adopt the same meaning. He based his arguments on linguistic logic, interpretation of Quranic concepts in historical perspective and new interpretation of Quranic terms like *iman*, *shirk*, and *kufr*. The great mystic and scholar Syed Mehr Ali Shah born in 1859 AD/1275 AH (i.e. 30 years after Lucknowi's death), gave an analyses and critique of this thesis. In his Persian book *Tabqiqul-Haq fi Kalimatul-Haq*, first published in 1897, he refuted the arguments of Abdur Rahman Lucknowi.

Wahdat al-wujud and *Wahdat al-shuhud* are two schools of thought of Islamic *tasawwuf* (mysticism) with a historical background. Despite being unanimous on many issues, they have difference of opinion about the relationship of the Creator and His creation. *Wahdat al-wujud* says that all creation is the effect of *zil* (shadow) of *asma* (names) of Real Being, and this effect is being-less being. *Wahdat al-shuhud* says that the creation is a *kbihal* (thought), but Real Being has made it manifest.

The relationship between the Creator and the creation has been described by Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyuddin Ibn al-Arabi in his *Futubat al-Makkiyya*, saying:

اوجد الاشياء وهو عينها¹

Here the word *ayn* used by Shaykh al-Akbar gives the detail of the relationship that exists between the Creator and the creation.

This word is excellently explained by great mystic and scholar Syed Mehr Ali Shah (1859-1937 AD) who said that the word *ayn* has two meanings:

Firstly, *ayn* means same, for example; everything is *ayn* of itself. It means that everything is same of itself. Secondly, it means a thing on which the other thing depends for existence. In this statement the second meaning is applicable. So according to the statement of Hazrat Shaykh al-Akbar, it means that if the contingents have no relationship with Almighty Allah, they will have no existence and in this case their being something or their nothingness will be equal. Furthermore, according to Mehr Ali Shah, Hazrat Shaykh al-Akbar says that this creation and universe is not the *ayn* of the Creator. He has explained this fact through many examples. In one of the examples he said that this universe has a relationship with its Creator as a relationship between a person and his image in the mirror. The image in the mirror is neither the *ayn* or same of the person nor *ghayr* or other of that person. We can say that the person has not advent (*bulul*) into the image in the mirror. He is neither in the image nor out from the image but even then there is a relationship between both of these ones and without that relationship the image in the mirror will not be able to exist.²

Hazrat Mehr Ali Shah in his book *Tabqiq ul-Haq* has adopted the same point of view regarding the interpretation and critique of the thought of Hazrat Abdur Rahman Lucknowi. He said that the point of view adopted by Lucknowi has created many contradictions and confusions in the thought of mystic tradition. He states that mystics' thought of *Wahdat al-wujud* is based on their spiritual revelation (*kashf*).

He has narrated that *Wahdat al-wujud* is the outcome of the spiritual revelation of perfect mystics of Islam, as explained by 15th-century famous Persian mystic and scholar Maulana Abdur Rahman Jami (1414-1492 AD) in his book *Lawa'ih* and by the famous Indian scholar Shah 'Abd ul-Haq Muhaddith Dehlawi (1551-1642 AD) in his book *Akbbar ul-Akhyar*. Another great Indian sub-continent scholar, Shah 'Abd ul-'Aziz Muhaddith Dehlawi (1745-1823 AD) wrote in his book *Fatawa-ye 'Aziziyya* – in response to the questions raised by Hafiz Sadr ud-Din Hayderabadi – that *Wahdat al-wujud* is correct and valid according to *sharia* because being has many levels of existence and every level of existence has rules and regulations. If someone interprets it in a hyperbolic way and applies the connotations relating to the Absolute Being to the creation, this will result in confusion and deviation.

Contrary to the practice of his predecessors, Abdur Rahman Lucknowi said that the interpretation of *Wahdat al-wujud* in the sense of *La ilaha illa 'llah* is obligatory and this meaning is valid according to the *sharia*. As per Lucknowi's interpretation – according to the *sharia* and the teachings of Quran and Sunna – the meaning of *La ilaha illa 'llah* is *La manjud illa 'llah*. So according to him, anyone who does not believe in this meaning of *La ilaha illa 'llah* is not a true believer. If this opinion is accepted as valid, the majority of the *Umma* will become non-believers. That is why it is widely believed and accepted that the phenomenon of *Wahdat al-wujud* is a matter of personal mystical experience. Therefore, a common man (Muslim) is not bound to understand or follow it.³

Hazrat Mehr Ali Shah negated the opinion of Abdur Rahman Lucknowi with many convincing and authoritative arguments. Shah said that as far as belief in Almighty Allah is concerned, it is fulfilled and attained when someone says *La ilaha illa 'llah* with a view that none other than Almighty Allah is qualified for worship. It means *La ma'bud illa 'llah*, because He is the Absolute Being, He is the Creator, He is the Sustainer of all creations and He and only He is to be worshipped. And this is the perspective of Oneness (*tawhid*) of Almighty Allah for which an oath was taken by all the creations on the day when God asked: *الست بربكم (A-lastu bi-rabbikum)*, i.e. "Am I

not your Lord?” (Quran 7:172). The same was sowed as the seed in the nature of humanity and the same Oneness was the objective of the interpretation, propagation and teachings of all the prophets who came to guide humanity and who addressed non-believers to guide them. It is not correct for Hazrat Lucknowi to say that this universe and its parts – like angels, stars, spirits, idols and other things – are not other than Almighty Allah. If the same point of view is adopted, the idolaters would easily find an argument to worship their desired idols along with the worship of Almighty Allah, because all of those would not be other than Almighty Allah. Another confusion attached to the point of view of Lucknowi is that if the same interpretation is adopted, then there would be no discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate, between the valid and invalid and between the permissible and impermissible. And if we take it further, then there is no necessity to follow the teachings of the *sharia* while it is evident from the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) that till his last moment he followed each and every commandment of the Almighty Allah.⁴

Abdur Rahman Lucknowi has given many arguments which are taken from the logic of linguistic and grammar to establish his point of view. Some of his arguments are given below:

Religious scholars say that the word *manjud* is implied in *La ilaha illa 'llah*, they interpret *ilah* as a Being qualified to be worshiped and interpret *illa* as other one instead using it for exception. In that way the meaning of *La ilaha illa 'llah* becomes “There is no god to be worshiped other than Almighty Allah”. While all of these three interpretations of *ulema* are incorrect, Lucknowi says that the word *ghayru'llah* is implied in the phrase *La ilaha illa 'llah*, and this was the belief of the idolaters of Makka. In this sense, the meaning of *La ilaha illa 'llah* will be: No god is other than Allah – i.e. the gods that you consider other than Allah (*ghayru'llah*) are His *ayn*. Proceeding forth, Lucknowi says that since gods are contingents and all the creation is also contingents, so the identity (*ayniyyat*) between Almighty Allah and all the creation is established.⁵

After proving rationally that it is not legitimate to imply the presence of the word *manjud* in the *Kalima Tayyiba* (i.e. in the Islamic creed *La ilaha illa 'lla*), Lucknowi gives arguments from traditions, some of which are given hereunder:

1. The saying of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) *La ilaha ghayruke* (no god except Allah) is an interpretation of the *Kalima Tayyiba* (the formula of Islam) and there is no possibility of considering the word *manjud* (existing) in it. Because the word *ghayruke* (except You) in this narration is in *halat-e rafei* (a grammatical structure

showing subject) and it is the *khabr* (detail) of *la* (Arabic word meaning No). Therefore, it will be wrong if someone considers the meaning of *ghayruk* as *siwak* (except You) and considers it an adjective of the word *ilab* (god) which is common or *mankur* (which is common noun) since, in this structure of the sentence, an adjective follows the *irab* vowel symbols of Arabic (of its noun or *mamsuf* (noun of adjective), so *ghayruk* will be read as *mansub* (with symbol of object) and in fact the word *ghayruk* is *marfu* (with symbol of subject). So, *La ilaha ghayruk* means: no god is *ghayr* or 'other' than Almighty Allah. ⁶

2. Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran (23:23): مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ آلِهَ غَيْرِهِ; i.e. there is no God for you except Almighty Allah, and the similar fact is described in many other verses of the Holy Quran like: لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (22:21). These verses describe conclusively that there is no otherness between Almighty Allah and other *ilab* and it is consensus of the *ulema* and scholars that the words *La ilaha* have to be interpreted as 'other than Almighty Allah'.

The tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the verse of the Holy Quran لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا mention the meaning described in the arguments given before. One would have to consider the word *manjud* implied in *La ilaha illa 'llab*, which is against the understanding of the addressees, i.e. the idolaters of Makka, who were of the view that there is otherness (*ghayriyyat*) between idols and Almighty Allah. Therefore, in the light of the argument taken from linguistic analysis and the tradition, it is proved that the consideration of the word *manjud* or *mumkin* as implied is a mistake of the scholars. ⁷

Lucknowi says that the word Allah and the other words which are part of the *Kalima Tayyiba* are also an argument for *tawhid* because the alphabetical structure of these words also indicates this meaning. The oneness of the being can be inferred and described from the four words which are found in the *Kalima Tayyiba: La ilaha illa Allah*.

Except for the word *Allah*, the other three words of the *Kalima Tayyiba* are: *la*, *ilab* and *illa*. All of these three words are taken from the word Allah by omitting the other alphabets. For example, if the alphabets *alif lam* is omitted from the word *Allah*, it results into the word *la* and if the alphabets *ba* is omitted from the word *Allah* and *kasra* is given to *hamza* it results the word *illa*. So the inclusion of all the words *la*, *ilab* and *illa* in the word *Allah* shows that nothing exists except Him. Similar is the case that nothing exists in anything except Almighty Allah. Hence we have found the oneness even from the words which are found in *La ilaha illa Allah*. This interpretation of

the words of the *Kalima Tayyiba* is a figurative aspect of the narration.⁸

After interpreting the *Kalima Tayyiba*, Lucknowi explains the term *shirk*. He says whenever the word *ilah* is used as *mankur*, i.e. a common word, it represents two kinds of *shirk* (associating partners with God): *shirk* in existence and *shirk* in worship. So *shirk* can be of two kinds: *shirk fi'l-wujud* and *shirk fi'l-'ibadat*.

The word *ilah* includes both of these kinds of *shirk* because the idolaters of Makka believed that the being of idols is other than the Being of Almighty Allah. They were committing the *shirk* in the existence of Almighty Allah and since they were worshipping the idols so they were also committing *shirk fi'l-'ibadat*. In the *Kalima Tayyiba* both of these *shirk* were negated with the one negation and it was not possible but with the statement of *La ilaha illa 'llah*. To negate both of these *shirk*, two negations were required; one for *shirk fi'l-wujud* saying *La mawjud illa 'llah* and other for *shirk fi'l-'ibadat* saying *La ma'bud illa 'llah*. Here, according to Lucknowi, Almighty Allah expressed both of these negations with the statement *La ilaha illa 'llah*.

Lucknowi further narrates that the *Kalima Tayyiba*, i.e. *La ilaha illa 'llah*, implies the incapability of all beings except Almighty Allah to be worshiped, and in this way it is proved that nothing (or no being) exists other than Almighty Allah and that nothing except Almighty Allah is able to be worshiped.⁹

After establishing that there is no otherness between Almighty Allah and other things, Lucknowi says:

1. The reality of Almighty Allah and His beingness is not existing beyond the existence, but it is concentrated in the existing ones. If the reality of Almighty Allah is not concentrated in the existing ones, then it will be other (*ghayr*) of the existing ones, and it is not possible.
2. Similarly, no being can exist beyond the reality of Almighty Allah, but its existence is concentrated in the reality of Almighty Allah if any existing one has no existence in the reality of Almighty Allah, then it would be considered as other to the reality of Almighty Allah, which is impossible. So the existence of all existing ones is concentrated in the reality of Almighty Allah and the reality of Almighty Allah is concentrated in the existing ones and in this way all the creatures are identical in their existence with the Almighty Allah.

Giving the arguments about the identity between the creations and Almighty Allah, Abdur Rahman Lucknowi says that the reason for the concentration of the existence of reality of Almighty Allah in

manjud – or the reason of the concentration of the *manjud* in the reality of Almighty Allah – is that *manjud* and *wujud* are identical and they are equal. Similarly, *manjud* and *wujud* are equal and neither of these two can exist beyond the other but instead, *manjud* and *wujud* both are the same, and no *wujud* can exist without *manjud* as it is a principle that *شئ ما لم يجب لم يوجد*. It means nothing can exist until its existence is necessary since the contingent is also included in the existent things. So when the contingent was equipped with the attribute of existence or *manjudiyyat*, it became equal to the necessary; but the necessary can't exist beyond the reality of Almighty Allah. Therefore, the contingent, whose existence is considered besides the reality of Almighty Allah, is actually found in the reality of Almighty Allah and nothing was found beyond it. Furthermore, the definition of contingent – i.e. that its existence or non-existence is not necessary – is based on the principle that the Absolute Reality is described in three kinds: necessary (*wajib*), contingency (*imkan*) and impossibility (*imtinā'*) and it is considered that *wujud* (being) is one of the attributes of the Absolute Reality while the analysis of this principle proves that this classification is not correct.¹⁰

Here the four fundamental formulae of mystics, which are the origin of all their thought and principles, are established as true because they are inferred from one formula *La ilaha illa 'llah* and these four formulae of mystics are:¹¹

لا وجود الا الله، لا موجود الا الله، لا واجب الا الوجود، لا وجود الا
الواجب

Hazrat Mehr Ali Shah gave a detailed analysis of the arguments presented by Abdur Rahman Lucknowi in *Kalimat ul-Haq* by stating the following basic points in his reply *Tahqiq ul-Haq fi Kalimat ul-Haq* (Research about *Kalimat ul-Haq*).

1. Maulana Abdur Rahman Lucknowi is not divergent from the mystical tradition in the sense that he has belief in *tawhid-e wujudi*.

2. He is divergent from the tradition in two perspectives: first that, according to the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the meaning of the *kalimat-e tayyiba* (also called *kalimat-e tawhid*, i.e. *La ilaha illa Allah*), is *tawhid-e wujudi*, and second, that it is obligatory for the entire *Umma* to believe in this meaning of the *kalimat-e tayyiba*.

After introducing the conceptions of Abdur Rahman Lucknowi, Hazrat Mehr Ali Shah gave a detailed analysis of Lucknowi's arguments, concluding that they are not valid.¹²

Mehr Ali Shah says that according to the Arabic language the word *ilab* is used for all those things which are worshiped – whether *wajib* or *mumkin* (necessary or contingent) – and according to the sharia this word is specifically used for Almighty Allah because the

human nature (*fitrat-e salima*) denies to worship such a being who is not equipped with all the perfect attributes like ‘sustaining’ and ‘giving life’ and ‘death’ etc. And these can be inferred from the verses of Holy Quran which are as following:

ام جعلوا لله شركاء خلقوا كخلقه (13:16)

Or do they assign to Allah partners who created the like of His creation, so that the creation (which they made and His creation) seemed alike to them.

ام اتخذوا آلهة من الارض هم ينشرون (21:21)

Or have they taken (for worship) gods (*alibah*) from the earth who raise the dead?

قل اتخذتم من دونه اولياء لا يملكون لانفسهم نفعا ولا ضرا (13:16)

Say (O Muhammad PBUH): Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth? Say: (It is) Allah! Say: Have you then taken (for worship) protectors other than Him, which, even for themselves, have neither benefit nor hurt?

These Arabs believed that idols are not creators; they also had no belief in life after death.

Hazrat Mehr Ali Shah says that in the Holy Quran and Hadith, the word *ilab* is never used simultaneously for Almighty Allah and the idols which were worshiped by the Arab idolaters. It is used only in a very specific meaning, which is called *makhsus mafhum kulli*. This principle states that if a word is coined for a broad, inclusive meaning (*mafhum kulli*) and is used for any part of that meaning, this use will be figurative or *majazan*. When we say اياك نعبد (*iyaka na'budu*) the understanding of *ilab* would be in the sense of its entirety which is referred only and exclusively to Almighty Allah.

Similarly, in the verse لو كان فيهما آلهة الا الله the word *alibah* (Plural of *ilab*) refers to the beings which are considered worthy of worship, and these are idols as considered by non-believers and idolaters. Since the idolaters of Makka believed that idols are capable of being worshiped, here *ilab* refers to them too. But it is wrong to say that here the word *ilab* has *ishtirak-e lafzi* (applying the same meaning to two things) because in this case it is to be established that the same word is coined and used for two different things. If a word is used for more than two things in the context of *ishtirak-e lafzi*, then we have to establish that same word is coined for those different things and is attributed to them.

Hence, the view of Maulana Lucknowi that the word *ilab* is used with the same meaning for Almighty Allah and for the creation with the principle of *ishtirak-e lafzi* is not supported with the evidence given. If Maulana Lucknowi derives this point from the verses which he quoted, it is not understandable because the description of *tamhid*

and eligibility to be worshiped and the being worshiped proves that the word *ilab* is not coined for the idols but it is and can be used in its entirety for the Absolute Being who is Almighty Allah.

After analyzing the arguments and statements of Abdur Rahman Lucknowi, Mehr Ali Shah says that the meaning of the *kalimah tayyiba* is belief in the oneness of Almighty Allah as it is given by the *sharia*. It means that no one can share the right of worship with Almighty Allah. It cannot be an argument for identity because identity, according to Lucknowi, is based on three things: *ishtirak-e lafzi*, *ishtirak-e ghayriyyat* and the status of *mankur* for the word *ilab*, which according to him refers to idols. But all of these three things are not established here. Afterwards he analyses the verses of the Holy Quran quoted by Abdur Rahman Lucknowi as evidence for his opinion.¹³

Discussing the verse *هو الاول والآخر والظاهر والباطن* (57:3), Mehr Ali Shah says the immediate meaning of this verse is that the absolute and perfect beginning or *anwalyyat-e kamila* is with Almighty Allah. It refers to non-beginning, i.e. no one is before Him. Similarly He is attributed with absolute and perfect ending or *akhiryyat-e kamila*. It means that none is after Him, whether someone has reached annihilation (*fana'*) or any other stage. In His absolute and perfect manifestation (*zabur-e kamil*) none is *zahir* more than Him and He is entitled for the attribute of absolute and perfect hiddenness (*butun-e kamil*); and none is more *باطن* (*batin*) than Him and no human intellect or reason can recognize His *butun*. Therefore, all of these things refer to the Oneness of Almighty Allah and there is no possibility to establish an identity between Almighty Allah and creation.¹⁴

Discussing the verse *اينما تولوا فثم وجه الله* (2:115), Mehr Ali Shah says that this verse explains omnipresence (*'umum-e kayanat*) and not the identity that the creation is identical with Almighty Allah.¹⁵

Discussing the verse *قل هو الله احد* (112:1), he says that this verse and Sura is not favoring Lucknowi; rather it is an argument against him. Here *احد* refers to *abadiyyat fi-zat wa-s-sifat*, and *لم يلد ولم يولد* (112:3) refers to *ghayriyyat* since these verses are *ayat-e mubkamat* so no *ta'wil* is permissible here. When the meaning of the *ayat-e mubkamat* is obvious, these are not permissible for *ta'weel*. Then he comes to *ما يكون من نجوى ثلاثة* (58:7) and says that this verse refers to omniproximity (*'umum-e ma'riyyat*). If, number given is three, the fourth is Almighty Allah, and number given is five, the sixth is Almighty Allah, and so forth. Hence here too the relationship with Almighty Allah to the three or the four or the five is of proximity

(*ma'yyat*) and not of identity (*'ayniyyat*). Shah concludes that this verse doesn't support the opinion of Abdur Rahman Lucknowi.¹⁶

Mehr Ali Shah then discussed the Hadith *qurb-e nawafil* and established that this is also an argument for *ghayriyyat*, not *'ayniyyat*. This Hadith gives the meaning of *taqarrub* (vicinity), and whenever we talk about *taqarrub* it is between two different things because duality (*ithnayniyyat*) is always in *ghayriyyat* and not in *'ayniyyat*. So when the Hadith narrates that كنت سمعه then this is *taqarrub* – maybe in its ultimate level. If instead of *taqarrub*, we consider that Almighty Allah Himself becomes ear and eye and hand and foot of the man, common sense doesn't support and appreciate it, because it becomes an evidence of fractioning the One (*juziyyat-e Wahid*). Therefore, we have to go for *ta'wil*. Here it means that these parts of the body of *mard-e mu'min* get the vicinity (*taqarrub*) of Almighty Allah and they are given – a sort of divine – force through it.

At the end, Mehr Ali Shah gets back to the *Surah al-Ikhlās* and states that in response to the question of the idolaters of Makka, Almighty Allah asked the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to explain to them the meaning of *tawhid* through the *Surah al-Ikhlās*, saying that, when people asked “Who is Almighty Allah?”, say: قل هو الله احد (He is alone in His being and attributes) الله الصمد (He is *al-Samad*, the Transcendent, the Far-Superior). لم يلد (He has given birth to none) لم يولد (He is born from none) ولم يكن له كفوا احد (and no one is equal to Him in his attributes).¹⁷

The word *wujud* can be understood in two ways: first in the meaning of fruition (*tabaqquq*) and resultant (*busul*), and this is relating to mind entities, i.e. beings which exist only in the mind. In this sense, *wujud* does not exist outside of the mind. Secondly, *wujud* is taken as ‘Real Being’, and it means ‘the being whose existence is in itself, and none exists except Him’ – all other creation is a gradual manifestation of the Real Being. The word *wujud* is used for Almighty Allah only in the latter sense, i.e. He is the Being Who exists in His Self.¹⁸ Here, *wujud* is the Absolute Reality. No knowledge of any human being can understand Him. The significance of the word ‘*wujud*’ in this meaning is neither universal (*kullī*) nor fractional (*juzi*), neither absolute (*mutlaq*) nor restricted (*muqayyad*), neither one nor of multiplicity. Instead, all these meanings are the exponents of different levels of His *ta'ayyunat* and the word رفيع الدرجات shows the same meaning. There is no intermediary between Him and nothingness. There is no contradiction (*naqiz*) or similarity (*mumathil*) of Him. He is above estimation of our senses, as the Holy Quran says (42:11): ليس كمثل شيء

The Real Being is everlasting (*azal*) and eternal (*abad*). Otherwise it may have some creator or inventor and thus an end. This distinction of the Real Being is in itself, and it is a base or origin for all *tajalliyat-e asma'iyya* and *sifatiyya* as well as *mazahir-e 'ilmiyya wa 'ayniyya*. There is Real Oneness for this being which is not due to any multiplicity against Him.

When it is established that none exists except the Necessary and Real Being, the meaning of *خلقكم* is the manifestation of attributes (*sifat*) as *ta'ayyunat-e kawniyya*. In other words, the annihilation of beings – i.e. *fana'* or *'idam-e manjudat* – means the reversal of that manifestation from *ta'ayyunat-e shahadiyya* to *savar-e ghaybiyya*. So in the Reality of the Real Being (*nafs-e haqiqat*), there is no contention (*tashkik/tafawat*), because this exists only in the descending levels of manifestation. Also, there is no contention in the essence of humanity (*nafs-e insaniyyat*), which is in all human beings, but it exists in its manifestation in different human beings.

Almighty Allah has made three categories of *Wujud-e zilli*. One is this temporal world, second is the mediatory world (*barzakat*) which is *'alam-e mithal* and *'alam-e malakut*. Third is the coming world i.e. *'alam-e akhirat*. It is *'alam-e jabarut*. Almighty Allah has made man all-encompassing (*jami'*) of all these worlds. The different roles of the best creation of Almighty Allah, i.e. *Mard-e mu'min*, signifies different aspects of these worlds. For example, the body represents this temporal world (*'alam-e asbab*), the *nafs* represents *'alam-e mithal* and *'alam-e malakut*, and the soul represents *'alam-e jabarut* and *'alam-e amr*. This resemblance of man with the rest of the worlds is an indication that if man is able to transcend from his illusionary being (*hasti-ye mawhum*), then there is none except the Real Being i.e. *الملك لمن غلب*.

Mystics unanimously agree that if *qurb* means 'approaching Almighty Allah', then it is impossible. Wherever mystics talk about 'observance of the Absolute Being' (*mushahida-e Zat*) it means the subtraction (*zuhul*) of the presence of any being other than Real Being. And the Real Being is beyond the perception of senses. So the way of achieving proximity to Almighty Allah is:

تو مباحث اصلا کمال این است و بس
رودر و گم شو وصال این است و بس²⁰

You must remove the sense of your illusionary being (*hasti-ye mawhum*), and this is the real perfection (*kamal*). You must annihilate the barriers of self-existence in a spiritual journey (*suluk*), and this absorption and annihilation (*istighraq*) is, in real sense, the proximity (*wasl*) to Almighty Allah.²¹

The contemporary relevance of Mehr Ali Shah's interpretation is multidimensional. It fulfils the doctrinal necessities and also qualifies for a protocol of self-development with reference to *Wahdat al-wujud*. The negation of the illusionary self and the assertion of Absolute Self can enable *salik* to materialize the doctrine of *sibghatu'llah* which is a criterion of spiritual elevation for *Mard-e mu'min*.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

-
- ¹ Ibn al-Arabi, *Futubat al-Makkiyya, Vol. I, Muqaddima*, Beirut, Dar ul-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2006.
 - ² Shah, Syed Mehr Ali, *Tabqiq ul-Haq fi Kalimat ul-Haq*, Lahore, Pakistan International Printers, 1997, p. j.
 - ³ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. z-s.
 - ⁴ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. s.
 - ⁵ Khan, Muhammad Asadullah, *Tanqih al-Tawhid, Khwaja Syed Mehr Ali Shah*, Lahore, Androon-e Taxali Darwaza, 1956, p. 17f; 22.
 - ⁶ Lucknowi, Abdur Rahman, *Kalimat ul-Haq*, Lahore, Allah-wale ki Qomi Dokan, p.83.
 - ⁷ Lucknowi, *Kalimat ul-Haq*, p. 83.
 - ⁸ Lucknowi, *Kalimat ul-Haq*, p. 179.
 - ⁹ Lucknowi, *Kalimat ul-Haq*, p. 180.
 - ¹⁰ Lucknowi, *Kalimat ul-Haq*, p. 182.
 - ¹¹ Lucknowi, *Kalimat ul-Haq*, p. 183.
 - ¹² Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 4.
 - ¹³ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 5f.
 - ¹⁴ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 42.
 - ¹⁵ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 43.
 - ¹⁶ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 45.
 - ¹⁷ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 46.
 - ¹⁸ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 80.
 - ¹⁹ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 81.
 - ²⁰ Fareedudin Muhammad bin Ibraheem Attar, *Mantiq Ter, fi al-Towheed Bari Tala*, Verse-130
 - ²¹ Shah, *Tabqiq ul-Haq*, p. 92-95.

IQBAL'S CONCEPT OF EGO IN THE
LIGHT OF TRADITIONAL METAPHYSICS
AND SUFISM

M Maroof Shah

ABSTRACT

Iqbal's individualist metaphysics and personalist philosophy is unprecedented attempt to secure for man as an ego the metaphysical status in the history of Islam. No one has sought to reinterpret/reconstruct traditional religious thought in Islam in the light of dualist philosophy of ego. A full fledged philosophy of ego revealing the influence of modern Western philosophers coupled with its philosophical and theological dualism that Iqbal's is seems unprecedented in the history of Muslim theology and mysticism. His appropriation of Sufism is quite unorthodox. This paper attempts a metaphysico-mystical critique of his concept of the ego and his personalist appropriation of the concept of religious experience. In the light of certain insights from perennial philosophy and orthodox Unitarian Sufism certain limitations of Iqbalian personalist philosophy are also highlighted.

Iqbal is a great believer in man coming close to Greek and modern humanism. His personalistic philosophy is unprecedented attempt to secure for man as an ego the metaphysical status in the history of Islam. No Muslim philosopher or Sufi or theologian has such a conception of ego's metaphysical stature, his freedom and thus faith in man in the modern humanistic sense. Iqbal is unique in the history of Islamic thought in his humanistic philosophy of ego. No one has sought to reinterpret/reconstruct traditional religious thought in Islam in the light of dualist philosophy of ego. A full fledged philosophy of ego revealing the influence of modern Western philosophers coupled with its philosophical and theological dualism that Iqbal's is seems unprecedented in the history of Muslim theology and mysticism. His appropriation of Sufism is quite unorthodox. In this paper we will attempt to see how far Iqbal's faith in man is conceived from the perspective of philosophy of ego is tenable.

When Iqbal deals with the question of genesis of the ego he seems to give an account that largely reflects quite questionable methodological and philosophical assumptions of modern science. A sort of naturalist/ reductionist explanation is given by him in the fourth lecture. The colony of subegos leads to the emergence of higher egos.¹ One fails to understand how Iqbal would have responded to the query regarding the genesis of the Ultimate Ego and why the emergence of egos stops at the human ego.

It is because of the limited and individualistic metaphysical view that he takes that he gets trapped in the notorious soul-body problem. He seems to take the binary of soul and body rather than the spirit, soul and body for granted. Here he is farthest from the traditional metaphysics. Ibn Rushd as the generality of Muslim philosophers and metaphysicians have not been trapped by these fruitless debates that post-Aristotelian Western philosophy has been plagued by. The traditional metaphysical conception of the Intellect, the supra-individual faculty which alone is uncreated and immortal is not accepted by Iqbal.² The Unitarian perspective and metaphysical realization are something that Iqbal come close to approaching but ultimately misses. The way his understanding of the famous expressions of unitive experience in Islam such as "I am the creative truth" 'Glory to me' etc. comes quite close to traditional metaphysical understanding of the same. But his individualist personalist dualist

metaphysics soon comes in his way of full fledged understanding of metaphysical truth.

It is because of his personalist philosophy that Iqbal upholds the conception of personal immortality. He is worried about the assurance of the continuance of the content of our actual experience.³ Iqbal takes the Quranic view of immortality to be personal immortality and asserts that there should be no difference of opinion on the three points that he enumerates as follows:

1. That the ego has a beginning in time and didn't preexist its emergence in the spatio-temporal order
2. That there is no return to this earth
3. That finitude is not a misfortune.⁴

All these points need certain qualification or at least rephrasing. What Iqbal calls the ego seems to have a beginning in time but then one can't equate the ego with the Spirit, the *Ruh*. One can't explain the verse that speaks of metahistoric covenant with man. One can't make sense of so many prophetic traditions. About the second statement it may be remarked that of course there is no return to this earth of the person So and so but that doesn't mean that the Eastern conception of rebirth stands rejected by the Quran. In fact there is a profound similarity between the Semitic/Quranic and non-Semitic religious eschatologies. Coomaraswamy has masterfully argued this point in his famous essay "One and Only Transmigrant." Schuon has also argued this point quite forcefully. The evolution of soul continues after death and the ledger is not closed or sealed for good at the time of death. The posthumous life of soul spent in *barzakh* comes close to the account of the same one finds in other religious traditions. The popular Hindu conception of rebirth is quite unorthodox and unsound as Coomaraswamy has argued and it needs to be read in the light of monotheistic eschatologies and a clear distinction between the soul and Spirit rigorously maintained. Conversely the simplistic understanding of rebirth by certain Muslim authorities also needs to be scrutinized in the light of Eastern metaphysical doctrines.

Iqbal is quite emphatic in his assertion that the final fate of man, in the Quranic view, doesn't involve the loss of individuality and that the complete liberation from finitude is not the highest state of human bliss.⁵ According to his reading of the Quran "the 'unceasing reward' of man consists in his gradual growth of self possession, in uniqueness, and intensity of his activity as an ego."⁶ In a great feat of ingenuity he interprets the climax of ego development in a dualistic framework. Basing his position on the verse that speaks of the Prophet's vision of the Ultimate Ego "His eye turned not aside, nor

did it wander” he asserts that the climax of the development of ego is reached when the ego is able to retain full self possession, even in the case of a direct contact with the all embracing Ego.⁷

Iqbal anticipates the difficulties that “pantheistic” Sufism suggests in such a dualistic view and replies by clarifying the true nature of the Infinite as consisting in intensity and not extensity. He then asserts that the finite ego must be distinct though not isolated from the Infinite.⁸ A few observations are in order on his rebuttal of pantheistic Sufism here. The first point is that Sufism is antithesis of pantheism as it never denies the transcendence of God. It is the orientalist discourse that has perpetrated the accusation of pantheistic character of Sufism by misusing both these terms. The quarrel is not that the finite ego is not distinct but that it has no essential reality in itself, that it is ultimately unreal and must be annihilated in the vision of the Infinite. Its separation from the Most Real that is illusory. Only God exists; He is the sole Reality, the essence of every existent. So realizing *tawhid* in the orthodox Sufistic sense of the term demands transcendence of all separative principles such as ego.

Iqbal notes that the idea of ego or the unity of human consciousness which constitutes the centre of human personality has never really become a point of interest in the history of Muslim thought.⁹ He asserts that the finite centre of experience is real and this ego reveals itself as a unity of mental states.¹⁰ It is clear that he doesn't recognize the domain of no-mind when he argues for the metaphysical reality of the self. It is the unique interrelation of our mental states that Iqbal designates as 'I.' His approach to the problem of finding the nature of this 'I' is psychological and not metaphysical. The latter approach he sees in Ghazali and criticizes it for its postulation of a static entity.¹¹ He rightly remarks that our conscious experience can give us no clue to the ego regarded as unchanging soul substance.¹² But where he errs is in foregrounding or privileging our conscious experience (ordinary state of consciousness) for exploring the metaphysical constitution of man. The traditional metaphysics and mystical philosophy reaches quite a different conclusion when they analyze conscious experience. In fact the Buddha's acute analysis of conscious experience leads to a diametrically opposite conclusion. In fact it is the interpretation of conscious experience which is the only road by which we can reach the ego as Iqbal says But the interpretation of higher levels of conscious, unconscious and superconscious experience doesn't lead to the idea of the ego. Modern psychology and psychoanalysis on the whole has only reaffirmed the stand of mysticism in regard to the

ultimate unreality of the ego. Western Idealistic philosophies as well as modern psychology have led on the whole to disbelief in the reality of independent metaphysical reality of ego. So Iqbal's appropriation of modern philosophy and psychology is quite marginalizing. The Spirit or Self is not something individual and specific, with all the variations in range, balance, and effectiveness of its unity. It is supraindividual and universal. It is not subject to change. It doesn't act and it is not a thing either. It is personality that constitutes itself by an act not so the Self. The Self is not dependent on or affected by or constituted by experience as the ego is. Mysticism and traditional metaphysics reject such an idea. The Self doesn't act so how can one's whole reality lie in my directive attitude as Iqbal asserts about the ego.¹³ One can't say that the Self has will-attitudes, aims and aspirations which Iqbal construes to be the defining characters of the ego. He maintains that the ego grows and it is "only as an ever growing ego that he can belong to the meaning of the universe."¹⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the traditional understanding of the reality of the Self, our deepest self, the ground of our being. He also maintains that the soul or ego can be corrupted and it could be saved from corruption by action.¹⁵ "It is the deed that prepares the ego for dissolution or disciplines him for a future career."¹⁶ All the traditions, in contrast, are unanimous in maintaining that actions can't save. In fact action implies becoming and salvation is in being. It is God's grace rather than the personal efforts (*aamal*) that save ultimately as the Prophet of Islam said. Because of these assumptions Iqbal is led to assert that personal immortality is not ours as of right and it needs to be achieved by personal effort.¹⁷ In contrast to this the sages have universally maintained that we only need to recognize the fact of our immortality and that no effort is needed for this and no action will lead to it. Immortality is ours despite our nonrecognition of the fact that we are immortal. We have to relax into our being in an act of let go to see God. One wins Enlightenment in a flash. Even a simple sight of a flower may be enough to grant us the vision of Eternity. The whole mystical literature testifies that one need not do anything to see God. Or simply contemplate. Contemplation is not action and may be in fact opposed to it. God can come uninvited in a state of utter relaxation. One needs to be still to receive God. But Iqbal doesn't perhaps, if he is to remain consistent to his personalist dualist philosophy, admit that the mystics see God or the ego is illusory and a hurdle in the way of realization of God.

Iqbal's assertion that the Quranic view of destiny of man is partly biological and partly ethical¹⁸ needs serious qualification. He

especially refers to Rumi's biological approach to the question as distinct from the metaphysical approach of certain Muslim philosophers¹⁹ and asserts that the question of immortality as one of biological evolution, and not a problem to be described by arguments of purely metaphysical nature.²⁰ The Spirit whose realization is the goal of all religions transcends the biological or psychological domains. It is not a phenomenon, either biological or psychic. It even transcends ethical categories of good and evil. It ever remains uncorrupted. It being the Divine Spark in us can't be affected by our moral choices though it may be buried under the cloud of passions but in itself it doesn't get affected by action whatsoever. The following statements (quoted from W. N .Perry's *The Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* (1979)of the sages make this point clear.

What after all, is right and what is wrong? That thought or action which takes you towards God is right and that thought or action which takes you away from God is wrong. You can find out for yourself whether you are progressing towards God, or going away from Him. There is no thought of right and wrong after you have reached God: all thoughts cease and all duality is transcended. Your life then flows spontaneously for the good of all. You live and act in the divine consciousness. The so called sin has no significance for the saint who realized God. His life becomes totally pure and holy. His entire life is an offering at the feet of God.

Swami Ramdas

Him (who knows this) these two do not overcome Neither the thought 'Hence I did wrong' nor the thought 'Hence I did right': verily he overcomes them both. What he has done and what he has not done don't affect him.

Brihad Aranyaka Upanisad IV,IV,22

One who hath here escaped attachment whether to virtue or vice ... him I call Brahman.

Dhammapada, XXVI, 412.

The perfect Man in himself stands over against all the individualizations of existence.

Jili

He (Bayazid) was asked concerning the command to do good and shun evil. He answered, 'Be in a domain where neither of these things exists: both of them belong to the world of created beings: in the presence of Unity there is neither command nor prohibition.'

Attar

Now, the Self (Atman) is the bridge, the separation for keeping these worlds apart. Over that bridge there cross neither day, nor night, nor old age, nor death, nor sorrow, nor well doing nor evil-doing.

Chandogya Upanisad VIII, V.1

Uncontaminated whether by virtue or by vice-self cast away, for such there is no more action needed here.

Suttanipata

The vision of God transcends virtues.

Meister Eckhart

If God keeps the ego in a man, then He keeps in him the sense of differentiation and also the sense of virtue and sin. But in a rare few He completely effaces the ego and these go beyond virtue and sin, good and bad. As long as man has not realized God, he retains the sense of differentiation and the knowledge of good and bad.

Sri Ramakrishna

As long as it is man and not God who chooses our actions can not be wholly good in the real sense of term. Not ours but God's will has to be done and that means ego which differentiates between good and evil and asserts its will vis-à-vis God's will, in defiance of what the Quran calls submission, has to be dropped. The question of morality is the question of being or consciousness. The mystic is not in a realm where one needs to do good rather he is goodness himself. Nothing but goodness can flow from the self realized soul. Animal symbolism of Sufism (wooden dress of the Sufis may be interpreted as implying transmoral state of the animal) emphasizes transcendence of self or ego or willing or choosing self. The self as the chooser of good and evil has to go in *fana* so that it subsists in the Self or God which by definition in *coincidentia oppositorum* or one beyond all such opposites as good and evil. Everything becomes lawful for a person whose hands are God's hands, who sees with God's eyes. All things are lawful for him who has transcended his self or desiring ego in *nafsi amara*. Evil could be chosen by the desiring self only. Evil comes only from our own selves; from God only goodness can come because God or existence can not be but good as traditional metaphysics tells us. The state of pure consciousness (which is called as heaven or self-realization or vision of God in theological language) can not be but fountain of goodness as *tanhas*, attachments, desires, time all are to be transcended to attain that. In heaven (and heaven is realizable here and now; one needs to die before death and see God in *miraj* every moment) one need not choose between good and evil. Innocence of becoming or the repose of being that characterizes *ibn-ul naqt* Sufi is innocent of choice and consequent sin and evil. The Sufi by appropriating divine attributes can not live and breath but goodness. Ordinary morality presupposes dualism of actor and act or subject and object. Actor could choose evil as long as he has his own will intact, as long as he lives in time, as long as he is outside Divine Environment, the state before Adam ate the fruit of separative autonomous consciousness, as long as he

has some interest at stake. But when there is no longer any subject or actor but only pure act, the holy act of being, the benediction of living outside of time in eternity one transcends morality. Transmoral conscience rather than an uneasy conscience that sees the obligation of acting on the law imposed from without is the ideal of religion. Iqbal himself in his perceptive observations on the stages of religious life in his last lecture recognized this point. From the Sufistic perspective man will not become truly moral as long as he is trapped in the world of immanence, of finitude, of ego, of time and does not transcend mind that calculates, manipulates and sees in terms of "I-thou" and clings to ego, to desires, to attachments, to time, to the realm of the known.

Iqbal advocates the idea of strong personality or superman. He knows that ordinary weak mortals are incapable of sustaining a strong personality. He coolly dismisses them to hell and doesn't bother to extricate them out of it. The character of ego trapped in finitude and the realm of immanence needing such relaxants as sleep to maintain the continuity of its tension, so frail that an insignificant stimulus may disrupt its unity and nullify it as a controlling energy belies the sanguine estimate of Iqbal in it. That is why he postulates many different kinds of environment for its organization as a perfect unity.²¹ Iqbal is compelled to be an evolutionist to pave way for the arrival of superman, the perfectly developed ego who is otherwise nowhere in sight. The kind of music has yet to be born in the world of Islam that behoves a strong personality according to Iqbal. Man has yet to become man and to fulfill himself to realize his real destiny. He wants iron will and character from man. In Nietzsche he finds some glimpses of such a vision. The weak personalities count for nothing in such a perspective. They just provide fuel for the strong ones. Only strong personalities are capable of winning immortality. And that toughness of character, that steel frame, that immense stamina for appropriating the whole universe along with its pain and suffering is rare indeed in men. Heaven defined by Iqbal as a state of triumph over forces of disintegration is indeed difficult to get for most men and indeed most men are condemned to hell.²²

We may ask of any personalist philosophy 'What does man as an ego accomplish?' History offers a dismal record and rudely challenges any sanguine estimate of it. The ego counts for nothing in Nature's scheme of things. But man is in no way to be identified with the ego. The immortal Spirit or Self is never born and never dies. It isn't by becoming or in the realm of time that one attains heaven or immortality. It isn't actions which save ultimately. The ego as unity of mental states is simply not there in many cases to be

perfected by any kind of discipline whatsoever. Man is nothing if we see him as an ego that stands over and against or separate from Existence or God. A drop doesn't count in the ocean of existence. It is only when the drop consents to relinquish its separate existence, its "I"ness (defined vis-à-vis the Existence or God which is taken as object) could it count. (However Iqbal sees God as an Ego and the finite egos living as beads in God, deriving their 'I amness' from God. He becomes a panentheist here and comes close to Sufi position though he uses the otherwise libeled term of ego. Otherwise man is nothing (*faqeer*) according to the Quran. Only God is rich. Ego, despite what Iqbal might take it to be, is the principle of alienation as long as it takes God as the other, as long as it insists on not merging with the Ultimate Ego, as long as it doesn't dissolve itself into nothing and let only God to assert through it that "I am that I am." It behooves only God to say "I am." The ego has to be transcended in that discipline of *fana* to subsist eternally in God. This idea is appropriated by Iqbal in his *Asrari Khudi* in the framework of personalist philosophy. There is no cure for alienation, the pain of *hijr* (despite Iqbal's assertion to the contrary) in a dualistic worldview. Apart from God nothing exists and man can have authentic existence only if he cultivates *akhlaq-allah*, if he accepts to be naughted by the All-Encompassing. God is the other pole of man and the mystics experience this. Iqbal seems to grant all these points though he is keen to assert at the same time the autonomy of ego. The ego as something independent or autonomous reality or for that matter any real thing as such is not, only the Ultimate Ego is. The onus lies on the former to realize or experience this and this is the end of mysticism. In countless situations the ego encounters its own nothingness and the dazzling reality of God who alone exists. Despite Iqbal's romanticizing of the achievements of ego and his great attempt to secure its independent status vis-à-vis universe and God the fact remains that pessimistic conclusion is unavoidable in a worldview that reduces the Spirit or Self to the ego and posits unbridgeable dualism. The life of ego is a life of suffering and it is only the mystic who by dissolving ego conquers suffering. As long as one asserts one's ego over and against the Existence, there is bound to be suffering. "Birth is painful, decay is painful, disease is painful, union with the pleasant is painful; painful is the separation from the pleasant and any craving that is unsatisfied that too is painful. In brief the five aggregates which spring from attachment are painful (i.e., body, feeling, perception, will and reason)" as the Buddha has put it. While we wander and stray on this long pilgrimage of the earthly career of ego more tears have been shed

than is water in the world oceans. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, as the author of Ecclesiastics has put it.

The Buddhist solution to the problem of evil as the extinction of ego is completely rejected by Iqbal as the preservation and development of ego is the be all and end all or *raison d'être* of his whole philosophy and his understanding of religion. Iqbal, therefore, cannot conceive of the extinction of ego. Nature or the ruthless logic of evolution, as history of mankind shows and anthropological evidence also fortifies it, hardly cares or favors the preservation of ego. Individual's self-multiplication which Iqbal, like Shakespeare in sonnets, sees as one of the ways of ego preservation, is denied to many individuals. This "collective immortality" does not guarantee or mean the individual ego's immortality which is the real concern of Iqbal's own philosophy of ego. The "mutual conflict of opposing individualities" which constitute "the world pain" darkens the career of life, though it may illuminate it for a chosen few. The Superman, not man, can bear the trust of personality as Iqbal understands it. Ordinary average men, in strictly Iqbalian terms, are not eligible candidates for immortality. To preserve ego and thus enter the Kingdom of Heaven as Iqbal visualizes it is not the prerogative of the ordinary mortals. Preserving ego is in itself a painful act and for most people it is itself a hell. To be born, as an ego and trying to preserve it against heavy odds (classical and especially modern literature shows numerous concrete examples of this fact) is the greatest misfortune as Maari, Hardy and Buddhist and Hindu philosophies assert and this is true for most ordinary mortals. The very act of suicide, taking arms against the slings of fate by choosing not to be, despite all the forces of instinctual "life's irresistible desire for a lasting dominion, an infinite career as a concrete individual"²³ speaks volumes against Iqbal's proposed heaven as a state of perfected and integrated ego) as an answer to problem of evil. For Iqbal the Buddha did not find his way to heaven. What a judgment on the whole eastern religious consciousness!. Since the mystics of all religions (even theistic mysticism leads to practical Sufistic dissolution of ego) do not consider winning an individual, separate personality or ego as a legitimate goal, they fail to be admitted to the immortal Kingdom of Heaven! Mystics are in hell! This conclusion follows from all personalistic individualistic ego centred humanist or anthropocentric philosophies and Iqbal's can't be an exception. *Akhirat* or the other worldly oriented thrust of all religions and mysticism, and their refusal to be trapped or too much involved with ceaseless becoming, with the realm of impermanence or *maya* (without the concept of *maya*, some difficult metaphysical problems

of traditional religion, including Islam, as Schuon explains in *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, cannot be solved) and the realm of time and ever changing life cannot be squared with Iqbal's divinization of time and advocacy of becoming.

Iqbal does not allow a man to curse impersonal forces of universe or Fate and get absolved of tremendous guilt of not sustaining or winning an ego. Man is the architect of Fate and himself responsible for future hell. There is no consolation in Iqbal's philosophy for weak willed ordinary men. The traditional conception of *taqdir* as a consolation for smaller misfortunes or evil which man suffers Iqbal perhaps does not accept, or interprets in a very different sense. He despises any escape from the burden of responsibility and choice through bad faith, conformism or group identity (where individualism or individual or personal effort is stressed) or herd mentality. Iqbal, like Nietzsche, knows his philosophy of self and will to power, is not for men but only for Supermen, strong personalities, for whom "the fleetest horse which takes one to perfection is suffering." They are very lonely and love solitude as Zarathustra does. Man has to work out his own salvation; even God can offer no help. God is almost irrelevant and not interested in our deliverance from pain. Strong personalities live very subjective lives. However Iqbal's concept of love qualifies his faith in deeds alone. Love transports us to heaven in a flash. Salvation could be got by one glance from a *Mardi-Mumin*. Prayer can be employed by the ego as a means for escaping from mechanism to freedom.²⁴ So Iqbal sees possible response to evil in both the rigid discipline and patience under hardships and also some kind of Grace through love.

The Absolute, the Beyond-Being cannot be conceived as ego or ultimate ego and even as an all-inclusive ego, as Iqbal conceive God to be. The very term ego seems anthropomorphic. This is a creative ego for Iqbal that can't be identified with the Beyond-Being. And since Iqbal doesn't conceive God as Beyond-Being (which can't be characterized as good or rationally directed will), he encounters quite difficult problems such as the problem of evil and the problem of free will in relation to God's omnipotence. For Iqbal personality or egohood of God is the central thing about Him. He writes: "The world in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego, is the self-revelation of the great I am."²⁵ Of course, but we need to note that in the traditional metaphysical and mystical conceptions it is only God who can really say 'I am.' Man can't utter it as an ego but only in the capacity of the spirit. But this spirit is not man's though it is in him. This point will be elaborated later.

Iqbal fails to see the enormous religious significance of the crucial religious doctrine of hell. Unfortunate egos must suffer in hell (and from Iqbal's own extremely demanding criteria of defining a strong personality, a superman or perfect immortal ego, almost all are unfortunate; very few are chosen reminding us of Jesus' verdict and also of Shelley's sombre and tragic vision in "The Triumph Of Life", according to which only the sacred few of Athens and Jerusalem, martyrs to vision like Socrates, Jesus and a chosen handful are saved). Although Iqbal says that "it is highly improbable that a being whose evolution has taken millions of years should be thrown away as a thing of no use"²⁶ but then he makes chances of immortality and escape from hell (which all religions aim at) meager by his tough standards and need of enormous struggle for winning ego-hood. Most egos would suffer dissolution in the process, in this vale of soul making, and heaven as "the joy of triumph over the forces of disintegration" is denied to most egos. Nietzsche is consistent with his doctrine of superman when he sees the value or function of multitudes or common men in only preparing the way for the superman, which are themselves not worthy of that high station and only as raw material or fuel of hell, not withstanding the tragedy and misery (dimly shown in Hitlerian farce, though in a parodied form) which it implies.

Most people are living a paltry and sordid life, conformist life of "one in they," life devoid of care and conscience as Heidegger calls it, and inauthentic life as Sartre calls it, and life of reason and not of imagination, as Blake and Shelley complain, life of "lusting fighting and killing animal" as Hemmingway says. He forgets that most egos are creatures of circumstance, wretched of the earth, the humiliated. Religion achieves salvation for such egos through such ways and means which in the Iqbalian perspective are not assimilable e.g., Buddhism and Hinduism speak of and aim at every soul's salvation through "rebirth" or what Islam calls, as Schuon says, some sort of posthumous evolution/punishment in grave or hell. Hell is ultimately emptied in Islam also and if there is no eternal damnation in it, as Iqbal himself says, there must be universal salvation for all egos including weak and unfortunate ones whom Iqbal seems to disqualify from the station of perfect ego-hood. Religion recognizes hell, the fallen state man is in and seeks to redeem him. Iqbal does not seem to entertain the traditional religious conception of the fallen state, the corrupt world or the world as hell bereft of Grace, where Adam and Eve placed "themselves outside the Divine center" and thus were cut off in practice, albeit in illusory fashion, from God²⁷ (as Schuon interpret the primordial act of disobedience).

Iqbal has too much faith in deliverance by deed but these deeds are themselves not always distinguishable from routine, meaningless Sisyphean drudgery of thankless work. The ordinary diversions from these deeds by means of some kind of entertainment like music to defeat Schopenhaurian will to live are, though requirement of most men, hardly acceptable to Iqbal as they don't lead to sustaining of ego. The *via contemplativa* hardly figures in Iqbalian deed centred philosophy. What does Iqbal mean when he says (possibly under the influence of Goethian *Faust* who wants the first verse of the Gospel of John that "in the beginning was the Word" to be rewritten as "in the beginning was the deed" and when he says that the Quran is a book which emphasizes deed rather than idea.²⁸ What Iqbal calls idea is what the Easterners call contemplation. Has Iqbal Hamlet in mind? Can only action save soul from corruption, as Iqbal asserts? Is not the remembrance of God, *samadhi*, withdrawal into the meditative pose of Buddha and Sufis and absolutely calm and unanimated mind the key to salvation and what Iqbal calls action only the effect of this and also the means, or is religious discipline of meditation to be equated with action? Meditation and contemplation are hardly reconcilable with the notion of ego. Guenon in his *The Crisis of Modern World* points out the limitations of action centered modern approach. One thing is clear that Buddhist and mystic attitude to action and Iqbal's attitude are at variance with each other. So religion does not see action as necessarily leading to salvation and may dub it as evil and hurdle for salvation sometimes. Actions are done by and to *nafs* or soul. The Spirit doesn't act and actions don't affect it. Endless becoming and action would seem to endlessly postpone final attainment of salvation or deliverance from *samsaric* entanglements and world separated from God. What can be the meaning or need of action in the presence of beatific vision? Time's reign never ends in Iqbalian vision of afterlife. The ego's career is never finished and the need of time and action never relinquished. The end of the cycle of rebirths is not a desirable ideal in Iqbalian universe. "Every act of a free ego creates a new situation and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding."²⁹ Iqbal denies that rest and repose could be enjoyed without any action in heaven even. This is quite in contrast to the Sufi's viewpoint of "paradise as prison." One could genuinely ask what then is the joy of triumph over the forces of disintegration ever attained if new action is needed against ego dissolving forces every single time. It seems like Heideggerian vision of the wandering needful, projective and finite *Dasein*. Iqbal is emphatic that he will not exchange finitude (*bandagi*) for Godhood. This is a daringly radical vision of man's destiny and

eschatology. It will, however, satisfy only a few souls who share Iqbalian constitution and psychological make up. The Bible tells us that as a “punishment” (which in the Quran is called ordeal) man has to work on this earth but Iqbal makes heaven out of this earth. His interpretation of the Fall as if all is well with humans on earth and the spirit of earth greets man without any tears and sighs in the background is not fully justified, both on scriptural grounds and what plain common sense and history tell us regarding man.

Melancholic strain and tragic poignancy and pathos in great literature, in almost all the spontaneous outpourings of human souls, in our sweetest (which happen to be the saddest also) songs, in all great religious literature, especially the sacred scriptures, demands an answer at a plane which no ego-building functionalist perspective can give. In the Iqbalian perspective, the tragic sense of life (as a tragedy without its soul-elevating cathartic function) is just unavoidable.

The ego, in his struggles against the hostile environment, either invents the methods for self-forgetting and the sleep of all kinds – entertainment, drinks, gossip, drugs, festivals, rituals etc. to avoid the consequent pain which produces so much tension in it or some method of selfish aggrandizement like dirty power politics, rivalries, jealousy and hatred of all kinds. Universal corruption on every sphere, where peace and equilibrium are exceptions rather than the rule, has been the tragic lot of the ego’s career in this world. It is the Hobbesian world where all are at war against all and the Sartrean world where “hell is the other.” This is the world where the ego’s conquest of Nature is more likely to lead to environmental disaster. Modern imperialistic attitude towards Nature is an example of modern man’s very poor ethical sense and his faulty personalist metaphysics. Iqbal’s very description of the relationship of ego to its environment speaks of his anti-environmentalism and this is true of all ego-centred or man-centred personalist philosophies. He says that the life of ego consists of a kind of tension caused by the ego invading the environment and the environment invading the ego.³⁰ This speaks of “aggressive” outlook on environment in contrast to general mystical, transcendentalist (like Thoreau) especially Advaitic vedantic and nature-mysticism’s approach (like that of Wordsworth and Jafferys) towards the environment. Iqbal is too keen to emphasize our individuality, privacy and separation from nature and from other egos and also from God.

Iqbal celebrates the ego’s triumphant march, and its great victories stamped on the face of earth (especially in his poetry e.g. his poem *Abaram-i- Misr*). But he forgets that these ego-building activities may involve great magnitude of evil e.g. the sighs and sobs

of poor, starving slaves who built the pyramids. Iqbal enumerates various demonstrations of Man's grandeur but hardly anywhere indicts man for his Faustian pride and ignoring the rights of nature and other creatures. Traditional art and architecture stress different principles than what Iqbal would like to see. Power, not harmony, he would like to be symbolized. For him Islamic art, especially the Islamic music is yet to be born! This remark if contrasted with Nasr's picture of Islamic civilization, its sacred art and architecture, which presuppose the nothingness of man in comparison to almightiness and richness of God will show how different and modern Iqbal's sensibilities are.

Iqbal passes hurriedly over the two important questions regarding the ego's beginning or genesis and his final end and both are crucial for a consistent and complete solution to the problem of evil. When does the career of ego begin? In mother's womb? At puberty? What about idiots? What about those who fail to mature psychically and intellectually even after forty years of age? As no particular point of time could we specify the ego's beginning. When do ego strengthening acts start to build a character? Souls have no "beginning" as the traditional religion affirms; otherwise what is the meaning of the Quranic story of God's covenant with man. The ego as a finite center of experience and unity of mental states must have a beginning in temporal framework and this creates many metaphysical problems which Iqbal doesn't address. Similarly the ego's career is never, in all eternity, going to end according to Iqbal. There is no final destiny. This almost leads to Nietzsche's idea of Eternal Recurrence. Endless novelty is impossible to conceive. It too becomes repetitious act; it too is a boring. How is this new creative activity of ego purposive? Iqbal doesn't answer.

The Quran represents man as accepting the trust of personality but with a qualifying clause that "man has proved unjust, senseless" in accepting this trust. Iqbal forgets this later part of verse (33:72). Man has committed this blunder and now suffers. The Quran further elaborates: "we created man in difficulty." Thus consenting to accept the trust of personality was perhaps the original sin of man. The mystics interpret the original sin in similar terms. It is so difficult to bear the burden of self-consciousness. Suffering is the origin of self-consciousness as Dostoevsky says. To be thrown as aliens in this foreign universe leading to existential nausea; trying to be against the hostile entropic universe; escaping from freedom, from choice and responsibility; from the hell of subjectivity – all these are implied in this acceptance of trust and man has not proved worthy of this great task. He creates thousand means for losing his individuality (ego).

Mysticism, psychedelic drugs, festivals, work, talking and conversation, poetry, love, neurosis, psychosis, schizophrenia, reproduction, sleep, could be seen as attempts to reject/transmute/forfeit our individuality or ego. History confirms the Quranic verdict that man has proved unjust and senseless. He has been fighting a losing battle, on the whole, against evil inherent or implied or consequent of accepting this trust. "Verily man is in loss," the Quran says as a general truth regarding humanity excepting a few, very few "who have faith and do good deeds" because the Quran itself says that very few are the really grateful to God, or believers and God has created most people for hell. Christianity has seen human nature as contaminated by original sin or corrupt and Islam as prone to evil, forgetful of God, hasty, ignorant and *zalim* (transgressor). Buddhists are even more pessimistic. Most prophets have failed in reforming man and they have left dejected and some even cursing humans. The Prophet (SAW) used to weep, and spend long long hours weeping and praying for this sordid state of affairs. He is represented as remembering his *umma* at the time of his ascension (*Miraj*) and prostrating for long long period for sinners in hereafter. While lesser men like Beckett and Golding would be content with just despair at human predicament, the prophets try to labor for salvation and redemption. The absurdists and nihilists have always misunderstood the meaning of the prophets' endeavours. The Buddha's concern was salvation or Nirvana despite his "nihilistic" or "absurdist" initial premises of *annata* (no soul) and no God which are much misunderstood by all personalist and anti-religious philosophies, optimists and pessimists alike. Iqbal's faith in man as ego seems to be at variance with human situation in concrete historical, existential and psychological context.

Life as a routine, mechanical, drab calculated economical affair, as we are condemned to live (one recalls Heidegger's description of our daily working life as inauthentic, not participating in being) for most of the time can hardly be what Iqbal calls ego- strengthening enterprize; only prayer is ego strengthening act. Love too is ego-constructing act (paradoxically, however, as psychologically speaking most of our love is due to collapse and not expansion or strengthening of ego boundaries) for Iqbal. If we apply Iqbal's tests to enumerate ego-strengthening acts, we arrive at a dismal picture, seeing the victory of ego-destroying acts everywhere. Sleep and business are not ego strengthening acts. And what are we doing except sleeping and doing ego-denying business. Fret and fever of waking life cannot be ego-strengthening. Struggling to keep

breathing, as someone has defined life, is not synonymous with building of ego and character. We can not bear to face the solitude of the self in its all nakedness; it being the prerogative of very few souls. Men need not only the relaxation of sleep from the crushing burden of tension-full ego, as Iqbal himself concedes but also music, drinks, countless entertainments, work, idle gossip etc. so as to forget the ego or self. Most of our routine acts are really attempted at forgetting the self or ego. Narrow selfish individualistic business, to which most men are condemned for whole life, is not synonymous with ego building vital acts.

Eastern religions in general (and some eastern religious appropriation of Semitic religions also) see our birth (the birth as ego) due to some sin committed in “previous” life. The traditionalists or perennialists like Coomaraswamy (e.g. in his essay “Nature of Rebirth” and Schuon in his *Dimensions of Islam*) argue in similar vein. Religion pleads for “rebirth” in this very life so that we, through that baptism, become holy and worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. So all the pessimists and theologians are unanimous in seeing our ordinary life as ‘sin’ or punishment but religion, then, does not stop at this diagnosis of ‘disease’ only; it asks us to die before we are dead, to relinquish our ordinary self and all claims to a distinctive autonomous finite self, to die here in order to live eternally, for death in life so as to be ‘reborn’ ‘twice-born’ ‘baptized’ ‘consecrated’ ‘brought into the fold of Buddha’ ‘reverted to Islam’ i.e., to transcend this life, and share in higher life of *iman*. Gnosis only comes after crossing the dark night of the soul, after ‘ascetically’ withdrawing into one’s own self as the Prophet of Islam did, to contact the oversoul, or to realize the Divine spark in our souls to participate in the life of ultimate ego or Being. Iqbal tries to achieve this through prayer but at the same time, not conceding much value to these orthodox religious “pessimistic” formulations.

Theology is more or less anthropomorphic or anthropocentric, even good and evil are defined with respect to man taken as the measure of all things (and even here man is identified with his self and not Spirit). God and enlightened man are beyond good and evil. Buddhism emphasizes this fact. Everything falls in perfect harmony if we conceive God and the universe as unity as Ibn Rushd argues. We as the desiring egos (extinction of which is the aim of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism) want to dictate terms to God. We do not want to surrender to God or Reality. We impose our categories on existence. We mould the image of good God (all theism succumbs too readily to this *shirk*) in our own image. God can be seen only through God’s eyes, as Meister Eckhart said and God can be

perceived only when we leave ourselves behind as Ba Yazid said. Even the most sublime theism is unable to relinquish anthropomorphism. Iqbal's anthropocentric and anthropomorphic tendencies are too evident to need discussion in detail. And he has to pay the price. Personalism whether applied to man or to God leads to difficult metaphysical problems. Only the Absolute, the Impersonal Absolute, the Impersonal Self that is the sole reality dissolves all dualities including the duality of god and evil. And it is here that one needs to transcend the theological plane and rise to the metaphysical plane. The riddle of existence or life is not understandable at a purely theological level. The pure truth, the absolute truth is beyond individual variations, sentimentalities and mental constructions and any kind of change. It is metaphysics as expounded by the perennialists and not the dogmatic theology that is primarily intended for saving people that caters to this truth.

Iqbal's faith in life or the ego despite all the resistance that it encounters in this tough world, coupled with his dynamism make things a bit comfortable to him. Tagore's following observations in *Sadhana* represent Iqbalian position also.

Evil is ever moving; with all its incalculable immensity it does not eventually clog the current of our life... when science collects facts to illustrate the struggle for existence that is going on in the animal world 'red in tooth and claw.' But in these mental pictures are given a fixity to colours and forms which are really evanescent Life as a whole never takes death seriously. It laughs, dances and plays, it builds, hoards and loves in death's face. Only when we detach one individual fact of death do we see its bleakness and become dismayed... within us we have hope which always walks in front of our present narrow experience, it the undying faith in the infinite in us ...it sets no limits to its own scope, it dares to assert that man has oneness with God... if existence were an evil; it would wait for no philosopher to prove it. It is like convincing a man of suicide, while all the time he stands before you in the flesh. Existence itself is here to prove that it cannot be an evil.

This is the ego's answer to all pessimists. The ego and love conquer everything according to Iqbal.

The key notion of surrender and submission to Reality in Islam is the religious response to suffering and it demands effacing the ego. Promethean revolt and Faustian transgression are rejected as naïve and facile attempts to evade and escape the Truth. Resisting the innocence of becoming will create only resentment and that creates anguish. Absolute stillness on our part in our encounter with God is what solves this problem. Sometimes he gives such brilliant interpretations as to dissolve all problems. The ego encompasses even God by virtue of love and faith. Only he remains, no "other" is

there to create a hurdle in his onward march. Evil loses its meaning. As there is no “other” for God, encountering Him from a distance, so to speak, as Iqbal says, and thus many difficult theological problems get a solution. Similarly, on such supreme moments, all “others” disappear before *kbudi*. Iqbal’s concept of *kbudi* comes close to what has been called mystical *kbudi* or ego. His concept of ego is much influenced by Sufistic thought or metaphysical intuitions and is clearly distinct from modern humanistic construction of the self that is not grounded in the Divine Self and not able to transcend the narrow circuit of individuality and finitude by virtue of love or *ishq*. Iqbal comes close to the mystical conception of self at many places. In his last years he had come very close to traditional Sufism. His celebration of love echoes his spiritual mentor Rumi of whom he was avowedly a disciple (*mureedi bindi*).

Iqbal assimilates the whole universe as his own as the expression of Divine Life and Immanence of God. Time, looked from or grounded in the perspective of Eternity (pure duration) loses its traditional association with pain and suffering, Iqbal’s divinization of time seems to be his way of marrying time and eternity. It is his translation of mystical idea of eternal now or finding eternity here and now. Eternity doesn’t dissolve the reality of time at its own plane but eternalizes every moment as belonging to the life of God. Iqbal concept of appreciative self transcends the binaries of permanence and change, being and becoming, time and eternity.³¹ The perfected ego appropriates the whole universe. He declares in one of his quatrains that not only the earth, the sky and the divine throne but also the whole domain of God belongs to the perfected ego (*zameen asman arsh-o- kursi / kbudi ki zud masi hai sari kbudayi*). Evil loses its absolute character and becomes relative and is ultimately conquered. God’s goodness has the last word. Man ascends to Perfection and God is the witness of it. Rather God guarantees that and ensures that evil becomes nought and man attains the Beatific vision in which sorrow is no more. Slowly but surely man is led to the perfection that is his destiny. “God is equal to his purpose, but most men don’t know.” Man has to be true to his theomorphic constitution even at the cost of hell. God ensures that men say yes to the trust of personality or be true to his self and is ultimately rejoined with his Origin and End (the Self). The ego cannot be thrown like a cabbage. Evil and pain is the unavoidable cost of soul-winning endeavour. Iqbal’s concept of love could well dissolve usual charges that his philosophy of ego would seem to raise. However he was uncomfortable with traditional Sufi notions of self and unity of Being. His individualistic metaphysics makes his position problematic

and limitations of personalist individualist thought are clearly exposed as it encounters such problems as the problem of evil. However the strong undercurrent of mysticism in Iqbal somewhat salvages his position. His concept of *ishq* is an expression of this mystical current. This comes close to deconstructing humanistic conception of the self and reassertion of traditional Islamic position. In fact Iqbal's poetry, especially his later poetry, could well be seen as a critique of certain theses that he upholds in his *Reconstruction*. *Ishq* dissolves evil but then one can hardly accommodate it in the philosophy of ego, despite Iqbal's belief in the contrary. Sufism has cogently demonstrated that self and Self aren't synonymous and thus there is no deliverance from the realm of becoming or time, from suffering or the possibility of Self realization or vision of God in dualistic personalist philosophy of ego. However, Iqbal is himself a Sufi, at least in some of his great poetic moments and there with the sword of love he defeats evil. In the experience of God as transcendent, there can be no distinctions among the knower, the known, and the act of knowing, as God is the non-dual reality. He alone is as the Sufis would put it. A famous Sufi Maroof Karkhi has put the point that subject and object become one most provocatively in the otherwise theistic tradition of Islam. And Iqbal has criticized this position as plain disbelief or *kufjr*. Ba Yazid and Mansoor have made this point in their own ways.³² This is how the Sufis would interpret the first part of Islamic *shahada* which a Sufi metaphysician like Schuon translates as there is no reality but Reality.³³

We will now discuss the conception of self in traditional metaphysics and mysticism and compare it with Iqbalian concept. The limitations of dualist personalist philosophy are foregrounded here as in its encounter with the problem of evil. If one holds the possibility of mystical experience as Iqbal does it is quite difficult to go too far with any conception of ego. We will see how far Iqbal's attempt to hold to the reality of both the self and the Supreme Self succeeds. The important point that problematizes dualist personalist theological and philosophical position (the personalist philosophy can't be but dualist) most forcefully is the transcendence of subject-object duality in mystic experience. Iqbal tries all his ingenuity to somehow explain it away and retain the self-centric dualist worldview. Iqbal thus rounds off this important point that otherwise threatens to deconstruct Iqbalian position: "Mystic state is a moment of intimate association with a Unique Other Self, transcending, encompassing and momentarily suppressing the private personality of the subject of experience."³⁴ He also writes, "The mystic state brings us into contact with the total passage of reality in which all the

diverse stimuli merge into one another and form a single unanalyzable unity in which the ordinary distinction of subject and object doesn't exist.”³⁵ The tone suggests that Iqbal is for maintaining the separateness or autonomy of the subject or self. This amounts to the rejection of the very *raison d'être* of mysticism. Another point that Iqbal interprets heterodoxically is the question of relationship between eternity and serial time. Iqbal is trying to somehow bridge the unbridgeable; somehow see serial time's reign in the realm of timeless. He says, “The mystic's intimate association with the eternal which gives him a sense of the unreality of serial time doesn't mean a complete break with serial time. The mystic state in respect of its uniqueness remains in some way related to common experience.”³⁶ What is intended here by referring to Iqbal's concept of self is to foreground its heterodoxy from the vantage point of orthodox mystical or Unitarian viewpoint. Religious experience has very different import or significance in the Iqbalian worldview. Major objections against religious experience's veracity, cognitivity and significance can't be answered in any self-centric or subject centric paradigm. In the orthodox Sufism subject disappears in the experience of *fana* (extinction of selfhood) and then alone is God, the Supreme Self, the all-inclusive Reality revealed. One becomes pure consciousness, not conscious of something but simply pure consciousness. Indian tradition calls such an experience of objectless consciousness called *turiya*. This will be discussed in detail later. As Ghazzali has said, the mystic is doubly unconscious—unconscious when he is experiencing the divine and unconscious of being unconscious. That is why the problem of cognitivity or the question of nature of object of experience doesn't arise and if we go by the history of religion need not arise. The Buddha considered these questions irrelevant. For him the experience is all. All the theological and metaphysical questions are irrelevant as far as the goal of the mystic is concerned. The goal is the vision of God, of Nothingness or *Shunya*. Stace and from a different perspective the perennialists consider *Nirvana* and God as identical entities. For the West consciousness is constituted by the other; consciousness is always consciousness of something as Sartre put it in his *Being and Nothingness*. It is the objectifying and objectivist Western mind that is not comfortable with the phenomena of silence and objectless consciousness. The logical, dualist, outward looking or extrovert, demystifying scientific, anthropocentric, humanistic individualistic framework that modernity more or less takes for granted cannot be assimilated with the Eastern tradition, its foregrounding of the negative divine and its notion of metaphysical realization. No “T”

remains, no *seeker* of God or Truth remains there to ask the questions that trouble our apologists and critics of modern concept of religious experience. In the Eastern traditions the divine is approached when conscious mind is not there to apprehend or interpret and thereby distort as in dreamless sleep or utter silence. What matters is silence and that bliss and peace that follows that utter silence, that negation of desire and ego. The mediator doesn't aim at knowing something but being. He is not worried about knowledge and verification or cognitivity of his transformed state. It is the principle of *Tawhid*, interpreted in metaphysical terms as oneness of reality with which Iqbal disagrees, and thus misses the most fundamental things of mysticism, as Shuja Alhaq notes in his perceptive study of Iqbal vis-à-vis mysticism.³⁷ No Sufi has ever regarded it possible to know God as one knows an object in the conventional cognitive sense. Only God knows God—this is frequently asserted by the Sufis. Only the infinite can “know”—because it is—the infinite. The Sufis focus on the spiritual as opposed to mere theological meaning of *Tawhid*. On the spiritual plane *Tawhid* means realizing that there is but one Reality. Attainment of identity with the sole Reality might be said to flow from this principial truth in the measure that the illusion of the autonomous existence of the world and the ego is concretely effaced. Ibn Arabi puts it thus, “The final end and ultimate return of the Gnostics ... is that the Real is identical with them, while they don't exist.”³⁸ Zun Nun makes the same point, when he says that *arifân* aren't themselves, but in so far as they exist at all, they exist in God. Their movements are caused by God, and their words are the words of God.³⁹

Iqbal fiercely opposes the doctrine of unity as the hallmark of Sufism as it provided the ideological basis for denying the notion of self. If all is one, or, if God is the ultimate Reality of all things, then belief in the reality of human self as other than God's reality is tantamount to disbelief or *kufr*. For Iqbal *shariah* is uncompromisingly dualist and takes God and the world as separate realities. According to his interpretation of the Quran “the world is related to God not in the relation of unity but createdness.”⁴⁰ And elsewhere he observes that “according to my religion God isn't inherent in the universe but its Creator.”⁴¹ The most outstanding feature of Iqbal's thought is its dualist character. The individual self has a separate reality from God and it must be affirmed as such. The Perfect Man absorbs God Himself into his Ego, rather than vice versa as Sufism asserts. Thus subject-object duality is there to stay. God-man polarity is absolute in Iqbal but not so in Sufism which in

fact transcends Lord-servant or Creator-created polarity. From the perennialist perspective Mansoor's famous utterance of *Ana'l Haqq* (I am the Truth or God) is understood as an instance of metaphysical realization. It is the Spirit which says: "I am the Truth" or "Glory be to Me." It is through the metaphysical realization that one realizes that the Self withdraws from the "servant-Lord" polarity and resides in its own transpersonal being. The subject-object dichotomy is transcended by virtue of pure intellect or Spirit, which is identical with the divine Essence.⁴² Mystic or individual realization, is through self, ego, soul or what the Quran calls *nafs*. It realizes the way from man to God. It manifests a temporary identity with the Lord. Complete identity is impossible in the axis servant-Lord. Such an experience momentarily suppresses the soul or *nafs* of the subject and in this single unanalyzable unity the ordinary dichotomy of subject and object ceases to exist and there is a sense of the unreality of serial time. Iqbal's description fits quite well with this description of mystical realization. This realization of *nafs* is no match for the Self realization which is universal. One must keep in mind that traditional metaphysics operates with the ternary of body, soul and Spirit against Cartesian binary of body and soul. Most modern accounts of mysticism and religious experience presuppose this Cartesian binary paradigm which cannot but lead to problematic (theologically as well as metaphysically) thesis. Descartes' metaphysics that looms large on the modern philosophical consciousness is simply inassimilable to concept of religious experience. He eliminated both intellect and revelation by appealing to the individual consciousness of the thinking subject. He made the

thinking of the individual ego the center of reality and the criterion of all knowledge, turning philosophy into pure rationalism and shifting the main concern of European philosophy from ontology to epistemology. Henceforth, knowledge even if it were extended to the farthest galaxies, was rooted in the cogito. The knowing subject was bound to the realm of reason and separated from both the intellect and revelation, neither of which were henceforth considered as possible sources of knowledge of an objective order.⁴³

In this background both the subject and the nature of the object of religious experience are differently construed, or constructed. We will further discuss the nature of subject who encounters the divine.

From the metaphysical viewpoint 'T' is not real but an imagination though not totally groundless as 'T' is not the Reality itself but vaguely and indistinctly reflects the latter on the level of imagination. It is only a symbolic reflection of something truly real it is not the soul or *nafs* but the Spirit or Intellect which attains

universal realization. The reality of the 'I' doesn't belong to man or *nafs* but to the Spirit which is the divine spark at the center of man's being identical with the unmanifest consciousness or Divine Essence. To quote Huston Smith on the distinction between soul and Spirit:

If soul is the element in man that relates to God, Spirit is the element that is identical with Him, not with his personal mode, for in the celestial plane God and soul remain distinct, but with God's mode that is infinite. Spirit is the *Atman* that is *Brahman*, the aspect of man that is the Buddha-nature, the element in man, which exceeding the soul's full panoply is that 'something in the soul that is uncreated and uncreate' (Eckhart).⁴⁴

The Sufi conception of religious experience involves annihilation of self as something separate. Man ceases to be for the final goal of union which constitutes metaphysical realization. Sufism and indeed all mysticism demonstrates that man can undo the existentiating and cosmogonic process inwardly so as to cease to exist or be "annihilated" in *fana*. It should also be remarked that metaphysical realization is not against the essential reality of 'I' or the person whose roots are contained in the Divine Infinitude but dissolves its independent separate nature in the face of the Reality which alone is as Islamic *shabadab* implies before whose "Face" all things perish according to the Quranic verse "All things perish save His Face." Once the soul or *nafs* has withered away in the experience of *fana*, the self-identity of mystic realization is transformed into the Self-identity of metaphysical realization. Iqbal is too keen to preserve soul or self-identity and vehemently opposed its merger or transformation into Self-identity. For him it would compromise monotheism itself. In the Unitarian metaphysical conception man subsists in the Divine Consciousness as realized possibility. Originally he is nothing but a mere name of the Divine unrealized possibility. This possibility is partially realized in mystic and completely realized in the metaphysical realization. (The term intellect in Sufistic metaphysical perspective is not to be confused with the conceptual intellect or reason. It is transcendent universal or supra-individual faculty that directly perceives metaphysical truths. Unlike discursive nature of rational faculty it is not mediate and thus fallible but is commensurate with absolute metaphysical certainty.) In the dualist perspective of Iqbal man identified with the ego or *nafs* is finite and God infinite with no possible union between the two. But Sufism, and indeed all mysticism, is the expression of human yearning that is rooted in the knowledge that the ultimate ideal is union with God. Shuja critiques Iqbal on this point. To quote him:

Under this influence Iqbal tried to evolve a theory of human individuality in the light of what may be termed perverted dualism by bringing God into man instead of man going to God. From this inflated vision of the human self he composed poetry which often appears to be a parody of Sufi poetry ... That it is the I of Pharaoh and not that of Mansur that Iqbal is idealizing is once again evident in the following passage from *The Reconstruction*. In the history of religious experience in Islam, which, according to the Prophet, consists in the creation of Divine attributes in man, this experience has found expression in such phrases as I am the creative truth (Hallaj), I am time (Muhammad), I am the speaking Quran (Ali), Glory to me (BaYazid). In the higher Sufism of Islam unitive experience isn't the finite ego effacing its own identity by some sort of absorption into the infinite ego, it is rather the infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite....From the Sufi angle and from the common sense point of view it is simply impossible to think that the whole can be absorbed into a fragment. It is like ocean coming into the 'loving embrace' of a drop. This is precisely the claim for which the Sufis denounce Pharaoh. Rumi's vindication of Hallaj is based on the understanding that he effaced his finite self to let the Infinite speak in him. Iqbal, on the other hand, is trying to put the Infinite in the bosom of the finite, which is like father running into the 'loving embrace' of his infant son.⁴⁵

Shuja argues that spiritual (mystic) experience stands on the theoretical foundations that God and man aren't essentially different beings, for otherwise one's experience of the other isn't possible. Further, this experience is characterized by individual's loss of consciousness of his own self due to an awareness of all pervading Reality. It therefore affirms that the individual self has ultimately no reality of its own, that Reality only belongs to God and that the individual attains this thorough self-effacement and unity with Him.⁴⁶

However, Iqbal comes close to the Sufi position at many places in the *Reconstruction* and it is not quite warranted to say that he is idealizing Pharoic ego. At least it was not his intention at all. But we are compelled to admit that he contradicts himself as he is committed to the thesis of *Asrari Khudi*. His spiritual mentor, Rumi, holds diametrically opposite view on the reality of self vis-à-vis the Supreme Self. Compare, for instance, the following verses, quoted by Shuja, which typically underlines Rumi's concept of the self and his longing for unity, in opposition to Iqbal's notion of the self. "Pour out wine till I become a wanderer from myself,/For in selfhood and existence I have felt only fatigue. And "O lovers, come out of the attributes of self-hood— obliterate yourselves in the vision of the living God's Beauty."⁴⁷ Shuja sums up contrast between Rumi's and Iqbal's views on the reality of ego: "for Rumi 'the life of the ego is the death of the spirit'."⁴⁸

Iqbal's fear about the loss of self in Sufism is not warranted. Whereas the Sufi's own personality, the human self, the person So and so, the identifiable ego, is no doubt obliterated, it becomes the embodiment of divine personality. Thus he comes close to the understanding of the Sufi position, which in classical Sufi sources is frequently seen as the replacement of human attributes by the divine attributes. In other words, the Sufi notion of self-effacement implies what may be termed as self-replacement i.e., the human being becomes the image of God, the perfect manifestation of his true essence.

The deepest realization of all mystics is that our being is a non-being. Osho makes this point quite pithily. "To say it is a being is wrong because it is not something, it is not like something. It is like nothing: a vast emptiness, with no boundaries to it. It is an anatma, a no-self, it is not a self inside you."⁴⁹ Most people are afraid of meditation because it is the death of the ego. The divine is neither 'I' nor 'thou'; it is one.⁵⁰ The question of individuality or ego has been dealt by the mystics with great subtlety and depth in all its aspects, psychological and metaphysical. The West, especially the modern psychology and philosophy, is quite unaware or has only a vague apprehension of certain of these dimensions of our existence. In fact as Iqbal himself recognized the Western psychology has only touched the outer fringes of religious dimension of our life.⁵¹ The sages have identified as many as seven bodies—the physical, the etheric, the astral, the mental, the spiritual, the cosmic and the nirvanic. There is a detailed and systematic science of all of them and the travelers on the Path are become acquainted with all of them. The analytical tools of profane philosophy are crippled in making sense of this science in its entirety. Modern psychology can't appropriate the realm of the spirit. Iqbal has however been too loyal to modern psychological and philosophical thought when he talks about mysticism. It is only upto the fifth body that the selfhood, the individuality can be carried. If one insists to retain individuality or ego he can't taste of the higher realms still to come. And so many spiritual systems including the one that Iqbal advocates stop with the fifth. As Osho remarks: "All those who say that the soul has its own individuality, not embodied with your physical being but embodied in your selfhood – any system that says this stops with the fifth"⁵² The concept of God as the cosmic no-individuality, as the totality of existence is not applicable at this plane. The assertion of individuality at the level of the sixth body is against "the oceanic existence, against an oceanic feeling – a feeling without limitation, a feeling that is beginningless and endless, a feeling not of 'me' but of 'we.' And the

‘we’ includes everything. Not only persons, not only organic beings, but everything that exists. ‘We’ means the existence itself.”⁵³ The drop must lose itself to become an ocean. It is not annihilation as Iqbal thinks of unitarain (which he mistakenly characterizes as pantheistic) as it is not really losing itself though it seems so from the standpoint of the drop. The drop gains the ocean, the drop becomes the ocean as Iqbal would also wish. The drop appropriates the ocean; the finite ego appropriates the Infinite in his perspective. The danger with this mode of thought is well pointed out by Shuja as discussed here.

It is the seventh body called nirvanic body which is the climax of self realization is quite foreign to the personalist philosophies. It is here that one encounters the Essence, the Beyond-Going, the Void. It is the *tamashye zat* which Mustafa demanded as Iqbal also recognized though his concept of *zat* and the vision of *zat*, (though it is quite improper to call it vision of something as it annihilates all vision and bewilders every seeker. As Osho says that in the sixth, the seeker has lost himself, but not the existence. He *is* – f not as an individual, but as the cosmic being. The existence is there. There are philosophies and systems that stop with the sixth. They stop with God or they stop with *moksha*, liberation. The seventh means to lose even the existence into the non-existence. It is not losing oneself; it is just losing. The existential becomes non-existential. Then you come to the source from which all existence comes and goes. This is the original source. Existence comes out of it, non-existence goes back into it: to the womb.”⁵⁴ Here in the seventh only does one touch the Absolute, the undifferentiated Godhead, the One beyond existence. Nothing can be predicated of it. It is unknowable. The so-called attributes of God are the dimensions through which we experience the divine. They don’t belong to the divine as such but are our perceptions. This is very much emphasized by Ibn Arabi.”To know the total is to become nothing. Only nothingness can know the wholeness at all. It is where the domain of silence is. Nothing answers the question what is “It” as al-Jili said. Here the laws of logic have no say. It is *coincidentia oppositorum*. It is unmanifest Godhead, the Hidden treasure. It is pure consciousness, pure existence. Here we may refer to Stace’s beautiful explication of this ultimate reality that is the subject of religion though not of rational science of theology. Here we see how far away from the target is any personalist dualist philosophical and theological approach to the divine, the Absolute. Stace says:

The religious impulse in men is the hunger for the impossible, the unattainable, the inconceivable – or at least for that which is these

things in the world of time. And anything which is less than this is not religion – though it may be some very admirable thing such as morality.... Religion seeks the infinite. And the infinite by definition is impossible, unattainable. It is by definition that which can never be reached. Religion seeks the light. But it isn't a light which can be found at any place or time. It isn't somewhere. It is the light which is nowhere. It is "the light which never was on sea or land." Never was. Never will be even in the infinite stretches of future time. This light is non-existent Yet it is the great light which lightens the world. Religion is the desire to break away from being and existence altogether to get beyond existence into that nothingness where the great light is. It is the desire to be utterly free from the fetters of being. For every being is a fetter. Existence is a fetter. To be is to be tied to what you are. Religion is the hunger for the non being which yet is So long as there is light in your life, the light has not yet dawned,. You must see that all things all places, all times, all experiences are equally dark. You must see that all stars are black, only out of the total darkness will the light dawn. Religion is that hunger which no existence past, present or future, no actual existence and no possible existence, in this world or in any other world on the earth or above the cloud and stares material or mental or spiritual, can ever satisfy. For whatever is or could be will have the curse of thisness or thatness.⁵⁵

Though Iqbal has emphatically critiqued Buddhist notion of *annata* it may be argued that his own conception of self is not totally incompatible with Buddhist conception of the Great Self. The latter though described in negative terms is shared by other religious traditions as the perennialists like Coomaraswamy have argued. Suitably interpreted Iqbal's conception of self would seem to closely approximate the traditional metaphysical conception of Self and non-Self. As far as Iqbal accepts essential Sufistic conception of Self he implicitly accepts Buddhist version of the same also. However it must be noted that by and large Iqbal does retain to the end the dualistic metaphysics and theology that is at variance with traditional Unitarian Sufism.

From the traditional metaphysical perspective Iqbal's fundamental assumptions about the Spirit and the soul and his reduction of the Spirit and soul to what he calls the ego and then his attempt to build his metaphysics not from the strictly Unitarian and universalistic but individualistic and dualistic basis and committing himself to rational and inductive methodology that ignores metaphysical understanding of man's intellectual constitution are problematic. His rational treatment of the Absolute, emphasis on the individuality of God, privileging of individual mystical over universal metaphysical realization and thus his personalist concept of man's ultimate destiny and salvation are also quite problematic. The Intellect is supra-

individual faculty that comprehends things in their totality and doesn't take only a piecemeal view of things. He has not touched pure metaphysics or traditional metaphysics. Iqbal's starting point is Divinity or differentiated Reality (personal God conceived as the Ultimate Ego) rather than the Absolute, the Supreme Principle, the Essence or Pure Being or Beyond-Being. He doesn't take into consideration the metaphysical Reality of man which is constituted by Intellect or Spirit (*ruh*) which is in man but not his. This universal element or Self in man transcends individuality. He translates *ruh* (Spirit) as *nafs* (soul) and rereads traditional idea of soul as ego. He does reach at certain moments the threshold of traditional metaphysics but in the absence of intellectual perspective falls back to his essentially individualistic approach as Shahzad Qaisar, a Pakistani perennialist critic of Iqbal, to whom I am indebted for appropriating certain remarks from a perennialist perspective on Iqbal in this paper, notes.⁵⁶

Iqbal is a notoriously difficult and complex position as he changed his views on important issues, especially his standpoint vis-à-vis Sufism many times. He started as some sort of Unitarian Sufi and then became a strong critic of it but again by the end of his life he had again come closer to it. He used the notorious term of ego to characterize his more or less mystical conception of self. He never fully abandoned though he never accepted quite unproblematically the philosophical and theological dualism. He approached self denying Sufism from a personalist standpoint yet built his argument for the existence of God on mystical experience. There is discernable divergence between his poetical writings which are suffused with traditional spirit and imagery and his standpoint on certain issues in his *Reconstruction* though he has on the whole come closer to Sufistic viewpoint in *Reconstruction*. He is on the border line of mystic and theologian. But approaches both mysticism and theology from his unique and unprecedented philosophical perspective. So our treatment of him may sound incoherent. He has critiqued certain theses of his own at many places.

Iqbal's faith in the ego is associated with his denial of the Fall as traditionally understood and praise, mostly unqualified, of the world of matter. Traditionally, religions consider the world to be separated from God as "it involves a partial and contingent aspect of badness because, not being God despite its existence, it sets itself against God or is a would-be equal of God; as this is impossible as all phenomena and ultimately the world itself – are touched by impermanence."⁵⁷ So this world cannot be good. The crucial notion of Beyond-Being is necessary for solution to the problem of evil (Iqbal does not concede

this). Why is man exposed to evil? Schuon answers that this is because "...he is the handiwork, not the Principle, which alone is good, he can neither be, nor experience, good alone ... In a certain sense, the function of evil in the world is to serve as a reminder that 'God alone is good'; otherwise the world would be good..."⁵⁸

Iqbal's concept of *ishq* understood in relation to the existence of evil salvages his "theodicy." In the opening lines of *Javid Nama* we see love alone as a way out of the life's absurdity and pain and loneliness. As man can love and shake hands with the Ultimate Ego he is able to make peace with life. A relationship of trust and faith is possible with the universe and its sustainer. Life becomes an adventure, a celebration, a benediction by virtue of love. The ego can transcend the limitations of finitude by appropriating or embracing the Infinite. Man is no less than God's co-partner. Religion in Iqbalian view is "only a search for a larger life" and God is the ideal pole of man, the limit or Ultimate Ego towards which the finite ego must travel though it will never be reached as *wasl* or merger with God is death as that will put end to life that is creative and dynamic and ever in its new glory. The ego goes on and on but never reaches any final destination or stopping point. He must go on ceaselessly creating (it is co-partner of God in creation). Religion is, as Whitehead says, a hopeless quest, God ever unreachable though the greatest of present facts. God is the limit of perfection towards which we must ever strive. Iqbal's God is not the static absolute but infinite creativity. If evil is encountered on the way it need not deter us. However in a completely Unitarian perspective the subject-object duality disappears completely. Love too is transcended in metaphysical realization as it too presupposes the reality of the distinct existence of the lover and the beloved, the dualism of 'I' and 'Thou.' The finite is dissolved into the Infinite. Greeting the infinite implies a certain separation remains. Finitude can't be finally transcended in a dualist personalist worldview. The element of pain and suffering continues on the plane of love. The final state is merger as orthodox Sufism maintains. No trace of separate individuality or 'Iness' should remain for the traveler on the path. Any relationship is bound to be dualistic but to realize God means to realize that none exists save Him; only God is and man is not. So the relationship of created-Creator or servant-Lord is bound to be in the domain of Maya or Divine Relativity. To reach the Essence, the Absolute one has to be outside this domain and it is here that Iqbal can no longer concede the thesis of orthodox Sufism. Ibn Arabi or Mansoor here part with Iqbal. He cannot even follow his Murshid Rumi also who was for a unitarian *wujudi* or metaphysical conception

of *tawhid*. Ba Yazid's famous statement that he knocked for thirty years at the gate of God but was not let in until he was prepared to leave himself, his ego behind puts Iqbal's position in sharp contrast who is not prepared to sacrifice his personality, to be annihilated in the All-Encompassing.

Iqbal's concepts of appreciative self and pure duration or non-successional change deconstruct his own avowed privileging of time and becoming. Despite seeing Love as beyond all determinations and change and becoming, he, as a philosopher, tries time and again to uphold time and divinize it. As a poet, he does want to transcend time (e.g., in his poem "Mosque of Cordova" and many poems of *Bangī Dara*). He wants to defy time through Love and art. He sees, as many others (philosophers, mystics and prophets of religion have seen) time's and especially serial time's mechanizing effect as evil and regards prayer as an escape from this mechanizing evil effect of time. Solving the problem of evil becomes very difficult if time is divinized and its reign accepted even in heaven. Iqbal knows this but he has other compulsions to see time as a question of life and death for Muslims. Iqbal believes in *faqr*. The ego's onward march goes on without complaint of hardship and pain. He is "patient under hardships." He is co-partner of God in creative work. He does not feel Sartrean nausea in his sojourn to life eternal. In Whitmanian and Oshoian sense he blesses the existence and is at peace with God given life which is always worth living for a Muslim as he is the one who has submitted or surrendered to Existence's or God's call of saying yes to existence, to becoming with all its pain and trials. Islam emphasizes innocence of becoming by asking for merging our self will with God's will. There is no resentment against the "given." However, the Quran is pessimistic due to man's unwillingness to surrender or submit to God. Very few indeed are Muslims, most are disbelievers, transgressors, ignorant, not paying thanks, who deny their selves and thus they are condemned to hell. God has given man freedom not to be, not to recognize the value of soul-making. The Quran declares that man is indeed in a loss excepting only those who believe and enjoy good. But very few count as believers and doers of good according to the Quran. Religion ensures that man will recognize his disbelief or his failure to win the ego and then work for winning it (religion uses the term salvation for it). But Iqbal's eschatology being based on Muslim exoteric theological sources (ignoring esoteric and metaphysical dimension of Islamic eschatology which is similar to other traditional religious eschatologies which ensure universal salvation) ends in destroying most egos. Within the modernist humanist context which colors Iqbalian reading of Islam

to some extent there is no satisfactory solution to life's enigmas including the enigma of evil.

This reminds us of the enlightened Sage or the Perfect Man who enjoys a sort of lordship in the whole universe before whom even gods come to bow. God's function, as the Prophetic experience of ascension (*mi'raj*) shows, is to be witness of the ego's power and glory. He becomes heir to eternity and thus not susceptible to evil or corruption. It is a moment of supreme bliss when the ego through this vital act (*iman*) conquers space and time and gets a station where the categories of good and evil are transcended (as in stations of the mystic). How profound Iqbal can be in facing the ultimate questions, "the greatest trial for the ego" and achieving "supreme bliss" of heaven and thus conquer evil is seen in the following verses from *Javid Nama*.

Art Thou in the state of 'life, death, or 'death in life' invoke the aids of
three witnesses to verify thy 'station,'
The first witness is thine own consciousness
See thyself, then, with thine own light
The second witness is the consciousness of another ego –
See thyself, then, with the light of an ego other than thee
The third witness is God's consciousness –
See thyself, then, with God's light
Consider thyself as living and eternal as He!
That man alone is real who dares –
Dares to see God face to face!
What is 'Ascension' only a search for witness
Who may finally confirm thy reality –
A witness whose confirmation alone makes thee eternal
No one can stand unshaken in His Presence
And who he can, verity he is pure gold.
Art thou a mere particle of dust?
Tighten the knot of thy ego
And held fast to thy tiny being!
How glorious to burnish one's ego
And to test its lustre in the presence of the Sun!
Re-chisel, then, thine ancient frames And build up a new being
Such being is real being
Or else thy ego is a mere ring of smoke.⁵⁹

Thus Iqbal's concept of ego as an appropriation of traditional Islamic, Eastern and modern Western philosophical and scientific ideas though problematic from various accounts is something that is still a great feat of philosophical and theological genius. Dualist framework creates problems for him though at certain moments he has transcended dualist standpoint. His is not a very coherent and plausible account of the ego and its destiny though he must be given

the credit of trying to seriously grapple with the major currents of modern thought while sticking to his own philosophical version of Islam.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

-
- ¹ Iqbal, M., *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Ed. and Annot. Mohammad Saeed Sheikh, Adam Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1997, p.84.
- ² Ibid., p.89.
- ³ Ibid., p.90.
- ⁴ Ibid., p.93.
- ⁵ Ibid., p.93.
- ⁶ Ibid., p.93.
- ⁷ Ibid., p.94.
- ⁸ Ibid., p.9.
- ⁹ Ibid., p.77.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p.79.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p.80.
- ¹² Ibid., p.80.
- ¹³ Ibid., p.82.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.95.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p.95.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p.95.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p.96.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.92.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.97.
- ²⁰ Ibid., pp.96-97.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 95.
- ²² Ibid., p.16.
- ²³ Ibid., p.69.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p.87.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p.57.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p.95.
- ²⁷ Schuon, F., *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, World of Islam Publishing Company, 1976, p.188.
- ²⁸ Iqbal, M., *Reconstruction*, preface.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.98.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p.82.
- ³¹ Ibid., p.78.
- ³² Iqbal, M., *Tarikhi Tasawwuf* compiled by Sabir Kalori, Farid Book Depot, 2003 (1914), p. 56.
- ³³ Schuon, Frithjof, *Understanding Islam*, Suhail Academy Pakistan, 1985, p.16.
- ³⁴ Iqbal, M., *Reconstruction*, p.15.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.15.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p.18.
- ³⁷ See the first chapter of his work *A Forgotten Vision: A Study of Human Spirituality in Light of Islamic Tradition* Vol. I. (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.)
- ³⁸ Quoted in Kazmi, Reza Shah, "The Notion and significance of *Marifa* in Sufism" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13:2(2002)

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Shuja, op. cit.p.80.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Qaisar, Shahzad, *Iqbal and Khanja Ghulam Farid on Experiencing God*, Iqbal Academy, Lahore, p.30.

⁴³ Nasr, S.H., *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1988, p.41.

⁴⁴ Smith, Huston, *Forgotten Truth, The Primordial Tradition*, Suhail Academy, Lahore,1981.

⁴⁵ Shuja, op. cit., p. 82.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Shuja, op. cit., p. 88.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Osho, *Tantra:The Supreme Understanding*, Full Circle, New Delhi, n.d.,p.13.

⁵⁰ Osho, *Psychology of the Esoteric: New Evolution of Man*, Orient Paper Backs,1978.p.18.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.153.

⁵² Osho, *Psychology of the Esoteric: New Evolution of Man*, p.140.

⁵³ Ibid., p.141.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 142.

⁵⁵ Stace,W. T., *Time and Eternity: An Inquiry into the Philosophy of Religion*, Princeton University Press, London,1952, pp.4, 5,6,7,8,9.

⁵⁶ Qaisar, op. cit., p.95.

⁵⁷ Schuon, op. cit., p.166.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.171.

⁵⁹ Quoted by Iqbal in his *Reconstruction*, p.157.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES ACCORDING
TO IQBAL

Khurram Ali Shafique

ABSTRACT

In *Javid Nama*, the spirit of Rumi takes Iqbal on a journey in search of immortality. The itinerary includes the spheres of Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, and finally "Beyond the Spheres". On the Sphere of Moon, which is the first stop in the journey, they come across seven visions. All of these demonstrates a specific type of intelligence. The similarities between *Javid Nama* and the theory of multiple intelligences need not surprise us too much because some of the earlier work in the domain of human intelligence, which was either developed further by Gardner or refuted by him, had already started by the time Iqbal took up the writing of *Javid Nama* in 1927. Several references in his prose work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930-34), written simultaneously with *Javid Nama*, indicate his familiarity with this type of work being carried out in his times.

In *Javid Nama*, the spirit of Rumi takes Iqbal on a journey in search of immortality. The itinerary includes the spheres of Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, and finally “Beyond the Spheres”. On the Sphere of Moon, which is the first stop in the journey, they come across seven visions. The following table shows how each of these demonstrates a specific type of intelligence:

- a. The first column lists the seven visions encountered on the Sphere of Moon
- b. The type of intelligence corresponding to each vision is described in the second column.

THE SPHERE OF MOON	MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES
THE CAVE OF VISHVAMITRA: the great <i>brahmarishi</i> is in meditation, which has filled the cave with a celestial light, illuminating not only objects but also their shadows. He opens his eyes, talks about the destiny of India, interviews Iqbal regarding a number of things, offers nine sayings, and goes back to meditation.	RATIONAL-INTUITIVE INTELLIGENCE: to find out the truth through thought and intuition. Mathematics, logic and philosophy are some common examples of this type of intelligence.
THE MUSIC OF SAROSH: the angel of poetic inspiration is singing a sublime melody. Quite interestingly, the angel is depicted as having two long tresses, each flowing down to the small of his back from either side of his head – hence symbolizing the division of the left brain and the right brain.	MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE: the ability to appreciate the rhythms of sound even for their own sake. This intelligence is usually ascribed to the right brain, which responds to unusual and novel situations.

THE SPHERE OF MOON	MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES
THE POETRY OF SAROSH: the ghazal sung by Sarosh consists of seven couplets, corresponding to the visions of the Sphere of Moon as well as the number of stages in the overall journey of <i>Javid Nama</i> .	LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE: using language as a medium. Verbal arts of all sorts, including poetry and storytelling, are some common examples.
THE TABLET OF BUDDHA: Buddha is offering sermon to a coquettish dancer, who repents and asks Buddha to take over her heart.	BODY-SPIRIT INTELLIGENCE: the use of one’s body as a tool for achieving a higher purpose. Some common examples are worship, dance and martial arts.
THE TABLET OF ZARATHUSTRA: Ahriman, the equivalent of the Devil in Persian mythology, tries to dissuade Zarathustra from going out to the people, but Zarathustra is adamant.	INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE: appreciating the “other” as a medium for realizing one’s own self. Many forms of ethical social interaction are examples of such activity.
THE TABLET OF JESUS: The Russian reformer Tolstoy sees in his nightmare that the Western civilization has crucified the soul of Jesus.	INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE: appreciating one’s own self as a medium for realizing the “other” – as evident in dreaming, mystic experience, spiritual psychology and the ability to connect with the environment.
THE TABLET OF MUHAMMAD: Abu Jahl, the leader of the infidels of Makkah, is standing before Kabah, asking the idols to stay there but if they must leave the holy precinct then they should at least stay in the hearts.	SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE: using the space as a medium. Architecture, geometry, drawing, painting, calligraphy and navigational skills are some of the most common examples.

Multiple Intelligences in Personal Development

It may be observed that the sequence in which these seven intelligences are presented on the Sphere of Moon is the same in which they are acquired by an individual as one grows up from infancy to maturity.

A newborn child cannot express a thought in words, music, controlled body language or drawing and painting, but presumably some kind of thinking process must be at work although it cannot be expressed at this stage. Hence, the rational-intuitive intelligence is the first to be acquired by a newborn. Soon, it will enable itself to start responding to music, develop speech a little later and then finally gain control over body movement as well. Hence the musical, linguistic and body-spirit intelligences will be acquired and mastered.

Maturity, and tactfulness in handling people, comes with years. Hence excellence in the interpersonal intelligence is acquired next. Strains that test relationships, and heartaches of that sort, eventually provide reality check about one's own personality – and hence, excellence in the intrapersonal intelligence.

Spatial intelligence, in its broader sense, may include an ability to place not only the physical objects but also the immaterial things in their proper place. This is a higher level of maturity, where a person is said to have finally “settled down”.

Points for Discussion

It can be a very interesting activity to compare the following passages from *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* with the various types of intelligences demonstrated on the Sphere of Moon in *Javidnama*.

Rational-Intuitive Intelligence

Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. (Lecture 1: ‘Knowledge and Religious Experience’)

Musical Intelligence

It appears that the time of the appreciative self is a single ‘now’ which the efficient self, in its traffic with the world of space, pulverizes into a series of ‘nows’ like pearl beads in a thread. Here is, then, pure duration unadulterated by space. (Lecture 2: ‘The Philosophical Test of the Revelations of Religious Experience’)

Linguistic Intelligence

“The Sufi's book is not composed of ink and letters: it is not but a heart white as snow. The scholar's possession is pen-marks. What is the Sufi's possession?—foot-marks. The Sufi stalks the game like a hunter: he sees the musk-deer's track and follows the footprints.” (Rumi, quoted in Lecture 3: ‘Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer’)

Body-Spirit Intelligence

The ego, as an individual, is inconceivable without some kind of local reference or empirical background ... In view of the past history of man it is highly improbable that his career should come to an end with the dissolution of his body. (Lecture 4: 'Human Ego – His Freedom and Immortality')

Interpersonal Intelligence

A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries, and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. (Lecture 5: 'The Spirit of Muslim Culture')

Intrapersonal Intelligence

The search for a purely psychological foundation of human unity becomes possible only with the perception that all human life is spiritual in its origin. (Lecture 6: 'The Principle of Movement in Islam')

Spatial Intelligence

It may be that what we call the external world is only an intellectual construction, and that there are other levels of human experience capable of being systematized by other orders of space and time... (Lecture 7: 'Is Religion Possible?')

Disclaimer

The concept of Multiple Intelligences was famously articulated by the American neuropsychologist Howard Gardner in 1983, with the identification of seven types of intelligences (and addition of two more later on). The model emerging from *Javid Nama* is radically different from Gardner's, especially on the following points:

- a. NAMES, DEFINITIONS AND THE NUMBER: Gardner named the initial seven intelligences as spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Naturalistic and existential were later added to this list, and it has not been claimed that the list is final ("ethical" intelligence is one possibility that has been considered inconclusively). Iqbal's list (i.e. the list derived from the Sphere of Moon in *Javid Nama*) would consist of seven only, many of which would need to be named and defined differently from Gardner's.
- b. SEQUENCING: Gardner has proposed that these intelligences need not be treated in a fixed sequence. However, the sequence in which the intelligences appear in the Sphere of Moon turns out to be important, because it seems as if the sequence is not only being followed consistently elsewhere in

the works of Iqbal but also in history and personal development.

- c. UNITY OR DICHOTOMY: The above-mentioned differences between Iqbal and Gardner seem to be derived from the general differences between the worldview of Iqbal and the Western milieu on the issues of whether there is an organic unity between matter and spirit, though and intuition, and the self and the “other”. Western thought tends to favor separation between these. Hence, the multiple intelligences as proposed by Gardner seem to be tilting either towards the material or the spiritual:

MATERIALISTIC	SPIRITUAL
Logical-mathematical	Musical
Linguistic	Intrapersonal
Psychomotor kinesthetic	Naturalistic
Interpersonal	Existential
Spatial	

- d. UTILITY: Especially in the Pakistani society, the model derived from Iqbal may have some special implications for use in education which Gardner’s model may not be offering at present. For instance, since the model derived from Iqbal offers a fixed number of intelligences in a sequence consistent with history, literature and personal development, it may help us integrate the syllabus in a manner not possible otherwise.

The similarities between *Javid Nama* and the theory of multiple intelligences need not surprise us too much because some of the earlier work in the domain of human intelligence, which was either developed further by Gardner or refuted by him, had already started by the time Iqbal took up the writing of *Javid Nama* in 1927. Several references in his prose work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930-34), written simultaneously with *Javid Nama*, indicate his familiarity with this type of work being carried out in his times.

ALLAMA IQBAL AND HIS VIEWS ON
ISLAMIC NATIONALISM

Dr. Ali Muhammad Bhat

ABSTRACT

Contrary to the contemporary thought of nationalism Allama Iqbal ascended very high, gave mankind a practical philosophy of life based on the values and fundamentals of Islam. He wanted people of the east to return to early phase of Islam without losing some of the best features of it. He was both versifier of Islam and the poet of mankind and tried to get rid Muslim community from the hibernating mood of life. Being a recognized poet of east and the Wiseman of the Ummah on the grounds unchallengeable qualities, he believed that it was the narrow conception of patriotism that was responsible for all strife's and wars in the world and thought it was an insult to Divine Unity that humanity should be divided into so many sections or tribes or nations. Allama felt restless as he found humanity groaning under the burden of materialistic system of the west with their terrible features of colonialism, imperialism and a soulless) civilisation. To him it was nothing short of a crusade to breakdown all the barriers that unfortunately divided humanity even to this day. He condemns European materialistic and politico-economic theories and institutions for the reason that they had initiated and increased strife, degeneration and indigence in the Eastern hemisphere. Allama emphasised that Islamic community will achieve strength and perfect solidarity by adopting the universal code of conduct free from any biased approach. He vehemently opposed the western nationalistic concept of life because it provides unlimited powers to the powerful and corrupts the liberty of weak people.

Born in Sialkot, India, (1877-1938) Presently in Pakistan under British colonial rule, Allama Sir Muhammad Iqbal studied literature, law and philosophy at Government College at Lahore, Cambridge University, and then University of Munich.¹ He wrote originally in Urdu, then in Persian in order to reach a wider Muslim audience. Iqbal admired the role of Jamal-ud-din Afghani who was the first to harmonise his philosophy of Pan-Islamism. He further harmonised it and evolved what came to be known as (*Ummah*). He expressed his confidence that the new philosophy of the *Millat-e-Islam* he had propounded in his Rumuz would certainly prove an eye-opener to those whom he describes as Muslims belonging to the new school to the real nature of Islamic nationalism. This concept is totally in contradiction of which Europe was not proud. He rejected western thesis of nationalism as political ideology and did not concede its superiority over Islam. He told, acceptance of western nationalism as supreme value leads to fascism.

The existing Muslim states are no more than colonial encroachments on the ruins of an Islamic entity. These encroachments were erected only to make Muslims feel at home rather than to have them think about living as one Ummah. Presently, there are 57 Muslim countries, with 57 policies and 57 Shirk-infested national anthems, divided interests and unclear strategies. The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League are useless for the same reason. Ummah, thus, is the most dreaded word for those who harbour hatred for Islam and consider followers of Islam as communal and terrorists.²

To the anti-Islam alliance of Christian-Zionists and capitalists, the ideology of Islam is the challenge to overcome it. According to the principles of Islam, there is no basis for division among Muslims with respect to place of birth, ethnicity, culture, language, national boundaries or nationality.

ان هذه امتكم امة واحدة وانا ربكم فاعبدون

Indeed this community of your is one community and I am your Lord: So worship Me alone. But the people(of their own accord) out asunder their own (One) creed into many religions: they have all to return Us.(Al-Anbiyaa: 91)

This ideology also quash the concept of nation-states as a major foundation for division among Muslims. These modes and systems of identification are invalid because not only they would force Muslims to worship their respective states and their secular laws, but

also because they would divide their interests. That is why the United States and its allies shiver to the core when Muslims refer to the concept of the Ummah and establishing an Islamic state or Khilafah.

In fact the concept of Ummah runs contrary to the Christain-zionists designs of the religiously motivated persons on the media, academia, political and military form of the war on Islam. Muslims from last one and half century are continuous to walk with difficulty along a treacherous path that has been constructed for them by others. The destination for this course is one that they have led us to believe is beneficial and worthy of striving for. The fuel for this journey is extracted from the false concepts put forth by imperialists implanted in the Muslim world. Among these concepts one of them stigmatizes the Prophet's Ummah is Nationalism. It is a dangerous concept that has become the emotional basis for the state of the Ummah today and one, which visibly fortifies the division among those who profess to believe in the same ideology. Allama Iqbal pointed his views in this way:

بتانِ رنگِ وِخوں کو توڑ کر ملت میں گم ہو جا
نہ تورانی رہے باقی نہ ایرانی نہ افغانی³

He Stessed upon the Muslims to shun down their difference and work under the banner of Ummah, because the faith did not depend upon the region, caste and colour.

The Muslim Ummah was never confronted with such a dilemma in the past during Islamic rule. They never suffered from disunity, widespread oppression, stagnation in earlier period. Nationalism has not developed its roots naturally, nor did it come about in response to any hardships faced by the people, nor due to the frustration they felt when Europe started to dominate the world after the industrial revolution. Rather nationalism was planted in the Muslim minds through a well planed thought-out scheme by the European powers, after their failure to destroy the Islamic State by force. Nationalism cannot unite the people because it is based on quest and creates a struggle between the people and leads to conflicts.

Allama Iqbal's conceptual goal was to analyze the reasons for the decay of Muslim culture and provide the tools by which Muslims may reclaim their faith and reorganise themselves under the banner of Ummah. He had greatly contributed to Islamic revivalism in order to build a nation state on the ground of Pan-Islamism. He must be considered most important Muslim thinker of the twentieth century, who strongly condemned Muslims for failing to live up to the ideals of Islam. He also condemned the various aspects of Western

thought, especially the secularism and Nationalism of the West and its materialistic ideology that lead to colonialism and racism. He rejected the culturally centered views of western thinkers such as George Friedrich Hegel and Augustus Comte on the basis that they lead to a fatalistic and deterministic understanding of man's evolution, denying human freedom and creativity. He emphasized that unlike Christianity, Islam came with "legal concepts" with "civic significance," with its "religious ideals" considered as inseparable from social order, therefore the construction of a policy on national lines, if it means displacement of the Islamic principles of solidarity, is unthinkable to a Muslim.

ان کی جمعیت کا ہے ملک و نسب پر انحصار
قوت مذہب سے مستحکم ہے جمعیت تری⁴

Allama stressed not only the need for the political unity of Muslim community, but blending the Muslim population into a wider society based on the Islamic Principles in order to unify in to a single Ummah. He thus became the first political ideologue, and stressed that Muslims are a distinct nation and thus deserves Political independence on religious grounds. Being extremely sensitive, as a born poet he had diverse current of thought abroad. It is surprising that Allama during his poetic career, spanning some four decades had imbibed, approved, applauded and commanded a great many ideas. Ideas which occupied various positions along the spectrum on the philosophic, social and political plane. He denounced nationalism and propagated pan-Islamism. and exhorted for the building up of a single Ummah and his clarion call for neeling unity among Muslims. Being a charming personality he left unforgettable impression on the Muslim mind by thought and ideas, and radically modified by his study of the religious philosophy of Islam. He firmly believed that it was sure to lift the noblest of the creatures from the pitfall of mundane needs and get rid of every kind of bondage. For the attainment of self-realisation, he thought freedom of the soul as an unavoidable necessity. He expressed his feelings in this way:

پانی پانی کر گئی مجھ کو قلندر کی یہ بات
تو جھکا جب غیر کے آگے نہ من تیرا نہ تن⁵

According to him the advice of the Kalandar had melted me because whenever Muslim accepted the subjugation of others, they lost their self realisation, their idealism and consciousness.

In thought and idealism, Allama Iqbal ascended very high, gave mankind a practical philosophy of life based on the values and

fundamentals of Islam. He wanted people of the east to return to early phase of Islam without losing some of the best features of it. He was both versifier of Islam and the poet of mankind and tried to get rid Muslim community from the hibernating mood of life. Being a recognized poet of east and the Wiseman of the Ummah on the grounds unchallengeable qualities, he believed that it was the narrow conception of patriotism that was responsible for all strife's and wars in the world and thought it was an insult to Divine Unity that humanity should be divided into so many sections or tribes or nations. Allama felt restless as he found humanity groaning under the burden of materialistic system of the west with their terrible features of colonialism, imperialism and a soulless (soured) civilisation. To him it was nothing short of a crusade to breakdown all the barriers that unfortunately divided humanity even to this day. He condemns European materialistic and politico-economic theories and institutions for the reason that they had initiated and increased strife, degeneration and indigence in the Eastern hemisphere. Giving his explanation on hating the western system of political life, he once said:

I am opposed to nationalism, as it is understood in Europe, because I see in it the germs of atheistic materialism, which I look upon as the greatest danger to modern humanity. So long as this so-called modern democracy, this accursed nationalism, this dragged imperialism are not shattered, so long man will never be able to lead a happy life and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.⁶

Allama reacted violently against imperialism and materialistic beast. He expressed his view that western life style have abandoned all the ideals dear to a religious-minded, humanity-loving people. Keeping in view this approach of his life, it was not surprising that after returning from Europe his poems contain such couplets. He expressed his thought in this way.

ہر ملک ملک ماست کہ ملک خدائے ماست⁷

(Every country is my country, because every country belongs to my Allah)

تفریقِ ملل حکمتِ افرنگ کا مقصود

اسلام کا مقصود فقط ملتِ آدم⁸

the aim of European wisdom division of nations while as the quest of Islam is universal brotherhood (Ummah).

He expressed his inner feelings on each of these as freely and fearlessly as he could. He had a remarkable knowledge of history and the institutions of the East and West. For instance, he verses

condemned every corrupt and violent thing in the western system and exclaimed these

تو نے کیا دیکھا نہیں مغرب کا جمہوری نظام
چہرا روشن اندرون چنگیز سے تاریک تر⁹

Have you not seen the democratic system of west its face illuminated but its inner consciousness is darker than Berbers who devastated the humanity.

The technological revolution of the Europe did not impressed the Allama at all. He eloquently expressed that European society lack cantonment, true human spirit and enlightenment:

یہ عیشِ فراواں، یہ حکومت، یہ تجارت
دل سینہ بے نور ہیں محروم تسلی!
تاریک ہے افرنگ مشینوں کے دھوئیں سے
یہ وادی ایمن نہیں شایانِ تجلی!¹⁰

Allama regretted that the Europeans, despite their scientific outlook and politico-economic theories, had miserably failed to find out a solution of their own problems

ڈھونڈنے والا ستاروں کی گزرگاہوں کا
اپنے افکار کی دنیا میں سفر کر نہ سکا
اپنی حکمت کے خم و پچ میں الجھا ایسا
آج تک فیصلہٴ نفع و ضرر کر نہ سکا¹¹
یہ علم، یہ حکمت، یہ تدبیر، یہ حکومت
پیتے ہیں لہو، دیتے ہیں تعلیم مساوات¹²

Although Europeans put forth theories to the effect that the souls of human beings could find their peace simply by filling their belly. He turn down the message of Karl Marx which is based on only physical needs of equality, because he was the harbinger of human freedom which indirectly leads to freedom from abject ideas, from slavery, corruption, imperialism and from ignorance and stagnation. He pointed out a free and self reliant man is superior to a passive slave in several respects. He made a difference between a bondman and a freeman in the following couplets:

آزاد کا ہر لفظ پیامِ ابدیت
مخکوم کا ہر لفظ نئی مرگِ مناجات¹³

Allama strongly condemned all those Muslims who left their countries and took rehabilitation in West. He pointed out that they sold their consciousness and they did not realise the significance of their Holy book.

ان غلاموں کا یہ مسلک ہے کہ ناقص ہے کتاب
کہ سکھاتا نہیں مؤمن کو غلامی کے طریق¹⁴

He passionately hope for an eventual Islamic Renaissance and was sure about the rejuvenation of the Muslim community. He firmly believe that the young generation of the Muslim community will prove himself instrumental of achieving the goals of the Muslim community.

He positively pointed out that Muslim soil is more fertile than any one else and expressed his view in the following couplets:

عطا مؤمن کو پھر درگاہِ حق سے ہونے والا ہے
شکوہ ترکمانی، ذہن ہندی، نطقِ اعرابی¹⁵
نہیں ہے نا امید اقبال اپنی کشتِ ویراں سے
ذرا نم ہو تو یہ مٹی بہت ذرخیز ہے ساقی
زندہ کر سکتی ہے، ایران و عرب کو کیونکر
یہ فرنگی مدنیت کہ جو خود ہے لبِ گور¹⁶

Allama Iqbal emphasised that one get true education when it will be liberated from the influence of West. He very emphatically declared that Church managed instructions were a pre-planned conspiracy against the teachings of Islam and against the character of Muslims.

اور یہ اہل کلیسا کا نظامِ تعلیم
ایک سازش ہے فقط دین و مرآت کے خلاف!

Allama very harshly opposed the materialistic way of life and considered it main obstacle in the development of faith. His idea of the perfect man is one who believes in revolution and develops perfect faith in the teachings of Lord. His concept of perfect man is

an idealist, a man of action, highly characterized and enlightened. He must have qualities of forbearance and perfection so that he changes the destiny of the people. He differentiates between the materialistic person and a real human although he considered both are performing their activities in this universe:

کوئی اندازہ کر سکتا ہے اس کے زور بازو کا
نگاہِ مردِ مومن سے بدل جاتی ہیں تقدیریں¹⁸
پرواز ہے دونوں کی اسی ایک فضا میں
کر گھس کا جہان اور ہے شاہیں کا جہاں اور¹⁹

Allama forced Muslims to think about their political greatness, forbearance, and the impact they had on others, but Oh! Muslim have lost your greatness.

تیری نگاہ سے دل سینوں میں کانپتے تھے
کھویا گیا ہے تیرا جذبِ قلندرانہ²⁰

His chief aim was to strengthen the reunification of Muslims as single community Mankind as per his views has reduced to insignificant beings on biased approach. He tried to awaken the Muslims in order to play the ambassadors role in propagating love, loyalty and affinity.

ہوس نے کر دیا ہے ٹکڑے ٹکڑے نوعِ انسان کو
اخوت کا بیاں ہو جا، محبت کی زباں ہو²¹

Allama very harshly opposed the growing thought of regionalism among Muslims and tried to persuade them to form a single community and believe on the concept of Ummah. He stressed upon Muslims to work against the imperialist forces and develop the faith on the Islamic law and depend on the concept of self realisation in order to protect the nerve centre of Muslims:

ایک ہوں مسلم حرم کی پاسبانی کے لیے
نیل کے ساحل سے لے کر تابخاک کا شجر
نسل اگر مسلم کی مذہب پر مقدم ہو گئی
اڑ گیا دنیا سے تو مانندِ خاک رہ گزر
پھر سیاست چھوڑ کر داخل حصار دین میں ہو

ملک و دولت ہے فقط حقیقہ حرم کا اک شمر²²

He stressed upon Muslims that you are a single unifying force and your thinking is universal and there is no division among the Muslims because they are joint by faith of Kabah (House of Allah).

According to Allama Mullah's and Sufi's has dominated on the fertile brains of Muslims and left the affairs to the second rate people unaware from the teachings of Islam. He stressed that society and state must be based on the true spirit of Islamic democracy established by the Muslims chosen people of Allah, the vicegerents on the earth. Because a true Muslim is personification of the good of the entire world. He emphasised that in modern democracy only heads are counted but not qualification of mind. He did not believe on the modern concept of existing socio-economic and political orders because there is no universality in these orders

آئین جوان مرداں، حق گوئی و بے باکی

اللہ کے شیروں کو آتی نہیں رُوہا ہی²³

Where there once were schools for lions and emperors. Those shrines are now the hunts of foxes alone.

اٹھا میں مدرسہ و خانقاہ سے غم ناک

نہ زندگی، نہ محبت، نہ معرفت، نہ نگاہ²⁴

I came out of Madrassa and Khanqah very dejected/disappointed, There's no life, no affection, no agenda and broadmindedness.

The philosophy of "self" according to Allama Iqbal is much significant from the political point of view based on three things "Self-affirmation, Self-expression and Self-development." According to him these three are the driving force for the Muslim up-liftment and freedom from medieval and modern political hegemony. He strongly opposed the western culture and civilization and considered the symbol of the values of the materialism. He vehemently said, "capitalism is responsible for the emergence of the nation-state". He outwardly rejected the modern concept of nationalism which provides base for the psychological and political justification for capitalism states. These capitalist states create rage among the nation states and results in the bifurcation of the world on the material gains. He strongly opposed materialism, the product of western ideology and considered it dangerous to the interests of humanity and sounded that nationalism is the creed of west which is based on materialism and exploitation. He exposed that the democratic rights given to the people rely on the economic power concentrated in the

hands of few. According to him, western democratic theory of equality is misleading and did not take into account the inherent capacities and the endowments of the individual. He viewed that western democracy is another form of imperialism and furthers the interests of the exploiters and has no spiritual content.

ای کہ میداری کتابش در بغل
تیز تر نه پا بیدان عمل
فکر انسان بت پرستی، بت گری
هر زمان در جستجوی پیکری
باز طرح آذری انداخته است
تازه تر پروردگاری ساخته است
کاید از خون ریختن اندر طرب
نام او رنگست و هم ملک و نسب²⁵

Thou who has Book under thine arms should step forward in the arena of action.

The human mind is always after carving a new idol;
Man's quest for a new image has not ceased in any age
Again he has rebuilt the temple of Adhar (the idol-maker)
And has moulded a god, newer than others,
whose joy lies in shedding the blood of his worshippers.
His are numerous names: colour, country and race.

He emphasised that, Government based on the concept of oneness of Allah will be more stable and better than democracy of the western philosophy. The living force and principles of Islamic democracy are obedience to Allah, equality, tolerance and universalism. In Islamic democracy every one is duty bound to follow the basic creed of shura and election must be held on the same line in order to provide world a universal code of conduct. In this form of individual not law maker and self is restricted for the welfare of human beings. He also pointed that modern concept of socialism whose roots lie deep into individualism makes government satanic and lead the social disunity. Allama Iqbal emphasized that Pan-Islam signifies the humanitarian ideal which means winding of politics to religion. It stands for the movement towards political unity of all the Muslims in the world. The establishment of Pan-Islamic society, constitutes on the principles of spirituality and faith. He stressed in the mean time that reveal of the society to bring about a rapprochement between knowledge and the vision is the fruit of

love and intuition. According to Allama, it is necessary because power without vision (divine guidance) tends to become destructive and inhuman therefore unity of both knowledge (rationality) and vision (divine guidance) is necessary for the spiritual expansion of humanity. Instead of the present day Muslims and non-Muslims enthusiastic promotion of different versions of Islam, the cardinal point of Allama Iqbal's political philosophy is millat/Ummah fraternity of belief, colour, region and matter. To Iqbal the core of the Ummah is Islam the Ka'bah and the person Prophet Muhammad(PBUH). He believes that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had not segregated Muslims into region based and so forth a loaf suffering or success of each other.



اپنی ملت پر قیاس اقوامِ مغرب سے نہ کر
خاص ہے ترکیب میں قومِ رسولِ ہاشمیؐ
دامنِ دین ہاتھ سے چھوٹا تو جمعیت کہاں
اور جمعیت ہوئی رخصت تو ملت بھی گئی
ملت کے ساتھ رابطہ اُستوار رکھ
پیوستہ رہ شجر سے، اُمید بہار رکھ!²⁶

Do not consider the Muslim Ummah like a Western nation. The Muslim nation that is founded by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is different in form and substance. Organisation of the nations from the west depends upon state and race. But power of religion is the main binding force in order to resolute rapport with Ummah. So it is necessary to be serried with ummah, in order to achieve the bright future.

Allama Iqbal had strongly opposed the western concept of nationalism. He emphasised that Muslim Nationalism was organised by Prophet Muhammad (PBHU) and considered it core of Muslim unity. He also realised that western concept of Nationalism is based on regionalism and race, but the Muslim Nationalism is fortified by the thought of religion. He stressed upon Muslim that if Muslim break-off their religious life, the concept of their universal nationalism (Ummah) itself vanishes and ultimately led to the decay of Millat.

قوموں کے لیے موت ہے مرکز سے جدائی
ہو صاحب مرکز تو خودی کیا ہے؟ خدائی²⁷

Islamic political order is not organized through human laws but is spiraled through the Quran and Hadith. According to Allama Iqbal, Unity of Man with Allah guides one's secret powers and derives wisdom, law unfailing vigour, power and authority. Allama Emphasised that Islamic community will achieve strength and perfect solidarity by adopting the universal code of conduct free from any biased approach. While analyzing Allama's views on nationalism his approach towards Islamic Ummah is dynamic. He advocated the universal political order which is possible only through the Islamic Ummah. His cry was not merely to go, "back to Quran" but to, "go ahead with Quran". He vehemently opposed the western nationalistic concept of life because it provides unlimited powers to the powerful and corrupts the liberty of weak people.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

¹ Iqbal, Sir Muhammad (1876-1938), *Dictionary Of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, London 1949, pp. 1931-1940.

² Abid Ullah Jan, *Afghanistan: The Genesis of The Final Crusade*, Pragmatic Publishers Canada 2006, pp. 20-30.

³ Bang-i' Dara included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), Kitabi Duniya Delhi, 2004, p. 382.

⁴ Bang-i-i Dara included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 352.

⁵ Bal-i-Jibril, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 460.

⁶ Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal, *Peace Realm*, Idarah-i Adbiyat-I Delli, 1995, New Delhi, p 11.

⁷ Payam-i-Mashriq, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Persian), Shaikh Gulam Ahmad Sons (Ptv.) Ltd, Lahore, 1990, pp 129/299.

⁸ Zarb-i- Kalim included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), Kitabi Duniya Delhi, 2004, p. 694.

⁹ Arjaman-i-Hijaz included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), Kitabi Duniya Delhi, 2004, p. 820.

¹⁰ Zarb-i- Kalim, op cit included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 272.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 706.

¹² Bal-i-Jibril op cit, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p.399.

¹³ Zarb-i- Kalim, op cit, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 715.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 656.

-
- ¹⁵ Bang-i-Dara op cit, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 379.
- ¹⁶ Bal-i-Jabril, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 303.
- ¹⁷ Zarb-i-Kalim, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 548.
- ¹⁸ Bang-i-Dara, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 384.
- ¹⁹ Bal-i- Jabril included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 448.
- ²⁰ Ibid; p. 489.
- ²¹ Bang-i Dara included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 387.
- ²² Ibid., p. 276.
- ²³ Bal-i Jabril, included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 492.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p.479.
- ²⁵ Asrar-i Khudi, included in *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Persian), Shaikh Ghulam Ahmad Sons (Ptv) Ltd, Lahore, 1990, p. 140.
- ²⁶ Bang-i Dara included in Khawaja Abdul Hamid Yazdani, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Urdu), p. 352-53.
- ²⁷ Zarb-i Kaleem, Op cit., p. 806.

A RELATIONAL RESPONSE TO SEYYED
HOSSEIN NASR'S CRITIQUE OF IQBAL'S
RECONSTRUCTION

Shifa Amina Noor

ABSTRACT

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is best understood, in terms of his philosophical orientation, as a leading proponent of the Traditionalist school, a religious rendition of the *philosophia perennis* movement, which posits that a perennial philosophy has been manifest throughout all the philosophical investigations of mankind. It is interesting to note that if Nasr and Iqbal were read with an eye towards their overarching authorial concerns, their thematic interests and to some degree their creative, literary expression, one would find affinities. Both are unmistakably concerned about the dire situation of religious thought in the contemporary world, and offer their respective diagnosis and remedies. Perhaps the mark of a truly subtle genius is that more insights reside in *how* he thinks, rather than *what* he thinks about. Iqbal is such a mind, and we have to significantly re-evaluate our interpretative paradigms to begin to unlock his *Reconstruction*. In the field of contemporary Iqbal studies, we should now look beyond familiar discussions of Iqbal's thematic broadness, his religious zeal, and his appropriation of Western philosophy, to investigate all of these afresh, not merely in light of propositional reasoning but of the Iqbalian method. This paper provides preliminary attempt into this investigation, but doubtless, more comprehensive studies of a similar nature, and on a wider range of themes, are required.

Despite many challenges having been posed to the perceived mutual exclusivity of the categories “Islam” and “West”, (some notable ones being Edward Said’s post-colonial breakthrough¹ in the 20th and T. J. Winter’s nuanced re-appraisal² in the 21st century, respectively), the dichotomy “between the Self and the Other” endures robustly. Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis not only survives amongst prominent intellectuals in the contemporary “West”, but continues to be enacted by a segment of its policy-makers. This stance is then mirrored in the Muslim world, by violent factions who see “the West” as the embodiment of hedonism and corruption and Islam as the bastion of purity and righteousness. It has already been noted that at the heart of such an ossifying Western Self/ Islamic Other dichotomy, or vice versa, lies a specific approach to reasoning which conflates duality with contradiction and divergence with conflict, by extending the “modern propositional model of reasoning...beyond its proper domain.”³ Thus, there is no dearth of arguments, opinions, and analyses regarding that complex matrix which “the contemporary Islam-West encounter”⁴ has become. And yet, in spite of the familiar nature of “Islam-West” debates, one text which continues to provide fresh insights is Iqbal’s major philosophical work of prose, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Indeed, Iqbal’s work engenders polarized reactions from contemporary scholars of religion. While, for some, it illustrates that few other religious thinkers have “met the challenges of modernity as successfully” as Iqbal,⁵ for others, it appears a “juxtaposition of contradictions”⁶ and an “apologetic defense of Islam and the accommodation of modernity” at the cost of a stark departure from the Islamic tradition.⁷ Therefore, it has been a challenging task for the field of Iqbal Studies to locate with precision Iqbal’s *Reconstruction* within this complex “Islam-West”⁸ intersection. Given the sheer multiplicity of responses evoked by *The Reconstruction*, an exhaustive and definitive investigation into Iqbal’s bearings within the Islam-West encounter is beyond the scope of one article, and perhaps even impossible. A more humble exercise, which this paper attempts, is to address one of the more polemical critiques of Iqbal articulated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and then allow for *The Reconstruction* to respond to this critique. Nasr’s influence on the contemporary study of Islam is widespread, for he has long been acknowledged as “the foremost

living member of the traditionalist school and... a leading spokesman for Islam not only in North America but also world-wide”, e.g. by William C. Chittick.⁹ As such, generating a dialogue centred on Nasr’s basic criticism¹⁰ of Iqbal becomes a duty of contemporary Iqbalian scholarship. However, it would be inadequate to simplistically sketch a point-by-point rebuttal of Nasr’s critique, or to reduce either Nasr or Iqbal’s complex ideas to a deterministic “answer” on what comprises “Islam” or “the West.” Rather, we must acknowledge that both are comprehensive thinkers who can be compared via multiple different paradigms, all of which are classifiable under this “Islam-West encounter”; from literary approaches that compare Nasr and Iqbal’s views on classical Persian poetry¹¹ to the two thinkers’ differing geo-political and historical contexts.¹² As such, there is the need for a specific interpretative framework to initiate our discussion. Such a framework can be found in the “scriptural reasoning”¹³ of contemporary religious scholar, Peter Ochs. Ochs has highlighted at least two different models of reasoning relevant to our comparison: propositional logic and relational logic. We will develop Ochs’ descriptive context in order to address Nasr’s critique of Iqbal’s *Reconstruction*. More specifically, we will compare Nasr and Iqbal’s differing approaches to reasoning about binaries; the purported binaries of sacred/profane, Islam/modernism and Self/Other which characterize much of the thematic discussion in the “Islam-West” encounter. By “reasoning” I mean not an elaborately enunciated system of mathematical, formal logic (for neither Iqbal nor Nasr are logicians in the technical sense), but an *approach to thinking*, a broader and more general description of logical “patterns or rules that can be seen or imitated”.¹⁴ In this sense, we will be comparing the logical *context*, the logical *ethos* of these thinkers rather than the strict logical validity of their conclusions from their premises. Ultimately, by employing Ochs’ logical descriptions, this paper will show how Nasr’s basic criticism that Iqbal is “apologetic of Islam” and unduly accommodative of modernity, stems from Nasr’s choice of a propositional model of reasoning regarding the aforementioned Islam-West binaries, while Iqbal looks beyond a propositional logical model to a more relational mode of reasoning.

What is the need for an external, descriptive model in comparing Nasr or Iqbal, when neither of these thinkers is ostensibly or primarily concerned with logical models *per se*? At first glance, it may seem like we are grafting artificial criteria upon religious thinkers, but a deeper look reveals organic affinities. In fact, Ochs’ association with *The Reconstruction* contributed significantly to the practice of

“scriptural reasoning: [a] way of studying Abrahamic scriptures” for salutary effect upon “the ills of modern academic thought.”¹⁵ Ochs has already made the recognition that *The Reconstruction* is more a “reparative theology” than a formal system of “reparative logics” such as those of “Charles Sanders Peirce, the American pragmatist whose work in the philosophy of science preceded Iqbal by half a century.”¹⁶ Elsewhere, scholars have corroborated this recognition with the view that to see *The Reconstruction* strictly as a “system guided by formal logic” is an approach “beset with all kinds of problems.”¹⁷ Although Ochs and Noman-ul-Haq both agree on the primarily “liturgical”¹⁸ and “metaphysical”¹⁹ nature of Iqbal’s concerns in *The Reconstruction*, their responses to this common recognition are sharply contrasted. For Noman-ul-Haq, this makes Iqbal’s work, despite its author’s “noble ambitions” and “invaluable concerns”, burdened by; a “speculative edifice”, “heavy metaphysical construct”, an “idiosyncratic manner” of “recasting sources”, and a “poetic fix.”²⁰ Ochs offers a more sympathetic reading of *The Reconstruction* as a work “presented in developmental stages, so that the discourse offered in the early chapters presupposes a form of cognition and reception that will not be presupposed in the latter chapters.”²¹ Although Iqbal’s primary concern is indeed a “liturgical” one, Ochs also sees *The Reconstruction* as a text which gradually calls our attention to “the limits of propositional science, warns gently of the dangers of overstepping them and concludes by introducing the remedy for overstepping: prayer itself”. In Ochs’ view, Iqbal then *directs* us to a “post-propositional” approach to reasoning, and gives us the lesson that “the reasoning that will guide us” in search for knowledge is not merely propositional but “relational, personal, interrogative, and probative.”²² Therefore, Ochs’ invaluable contribution in reading Iqbal is to show us that we may need to expand our *own* vision of logical models in order to benefit from some significant insights of *The Reconstruction*. “The error is not, therefore, to trust in formal reasoning and thus logic, but simply to have nurtured too limited a view of how to practice formal reasoning and of what logical models we can build.”²³

However, the most compelling reason to employ Ochs’ descriptive framework in understanding Nasr’s critique of Iqbal is not just Ochs’ degree of affinity with Iqbal, or his appreciation of those facets of *The Reconstruction* that have been less well noted by many Muslim scholars. Rather, the utility of Ochs’ logical descriptions is based on their general and assimilative nature. In fact, Ochs identifies the roots of a need for post-propositional logic, in a domain *outside* of scripture: “As physicists, philosophers, and

logicians have learned since early twentieth-century discoveries in quantum theory, standard propositional logics are useful for mapping only a limited range of behaviors and beliefs. In briefest terms, one could say that they are useful for mapping only those things about which we have potentially little or no doubt.”²⁴ Thus, the search for an alternate system of logics is not only a scriptural but a civilizational and scientific search. Notwithstanding their basis in scriptural reading, this makes Ochs’ findings immensely useful as a way of addressing almost any dichotomization of concepts or propositions that involves reasoning.

What precisely is this framework, and how does Ochs distinguish between “propositional” and “relational” logic? Most simply, propositional logic is characterized by an “either this or that” approach. It “maps out” only “determinate values” i.e., those propositions or claims which are either certain or beyond reasonable doubt.²⁵ Thus, a propositional logic “requires all-or-nothing judgments (obeying the law of excluded middle as well as the principle of non-contradiction).”²⁶ If one claim is true, then the negation of its “opposite” is entailed. In such a method of reasoning, self-affirmation then becomes equivalent to the negation of all that which is defined as “other”. Propositional logics, resultantly, have a tendency to make divergent claims *compete* for veracity, since the certainty of any one claim is guaranteed (or near-guaranteed).

By contrast, “relational logics” present themselves as an alternative to the rigidity of propositional logic. This alternative is necessitated because of the uncertain and “context-bound” nature of many propositions, and because an exploration of reality requires one to step outside of that “finite set” which consists only of very certain claims. Although Ochs suggests many such alternative “relational logics”, ranging from “what the philosopher Hans Reichenbach (1891–1953) called a “three-valued logic” to “Charles Peirce’s “logic of relations” ”,²⁷ he also identifies for us the crucial feature of any relational logic: “its characterization of a given practice of reasoning will include a characterization of context.”²⁸ Thus, any proposition or claim *will* be “context-bound”²⁹ in a relational mode of reasoning i.e. it will make context inextricable from meaning, and inseparably bound to it. In this way, a logic of relations is characterized by a very different *ethos* from propositional logic. Relational reasoning requires a humbling acknowledgment, on part of the proposition-maker, that their claim is tied to their individual, finite entity or context. This further leads to the recognition that multiple, possibly “nonfinite”, “readings” of the same subject are possible. However, these recognitions do not compromise the force

of any individual reading or claim, nor blur its “specificity and authority”.³⁰ Rather, they show us that “[m]eaning and truth are relational (relative to conditions) but not relativistic (arbitrary or strictly subjective).”³¹ Relational reasoning thus opens up the space for dialogue between two perceived binaries, because in allowing for the “characterization of context”, it enables a multiplicity of readings to engage, and enrich their own “context-bound” claims by interaction with others. By contrast, propositional forms of reasoning tend towards a static dichotomy, because the absence of a contextual grounding leads each reading to claim absolute or near-absolute certainty. Such a claim does not accommodate input, change or repair from any divergent reading/interpretation.

It is pertinent to point out, before we turn to a description of Nasr’s critique of Iqbal, that we are not seeking to make value-judgments about one form of reasoning versus the other. The aim is not to disparage propositional forms of reasoning, which indeed prove very useful in “bringing a finite set of judgments to our self-awareness.”³² It is to show that propositional reasoning is applicable within a “finite set”, which comprises of “judgments of certainty”³³, and that it has difficulty in mapping out less certain, and more “context-bound” claims. While propositional forms of reasoning are less conducive to dialogue than relational reasoning, not all thinkers esteem the need for an “Islam-West” dialogue as highly as others. In fact, some thinkers may prefer sustained dichotomy over dialogue, irrespective of the costs. This is why T. J. Winter can conclude: “Grounded in our stubbornly immobile liturgy and doctrine, we Ishmaelites should serve the invaluable, though deeply resented, function of a culture which would like to be an Other, even if that is no longer quite possible.”³⁴ Thus, I am not presenting relational reasoning as intrinsically superior, but as an alternative and a choice that is more useful in mapping out claims which are cognizant of context, multiplicity and dynamism. Nor is it within the scope of this paper to give a detailed account of the scriptural context in which Ochs distinguishes propositional and relational reasoning. Sufficient for our purposes, as we have done above, is to sketch an idea of the basic attributes which characterize these two approaches to reasoning. A propositional mode will make claims of certainty minus context, entail negation of the “other” in self-affirmation, and lead to a static dichotomy when two opposing claims arise. A relational mode will ground claims in contexts, allow for exploration of the context of a seemingly opposing claim, and then open up space for relational dialogue. As we look at the ways in which Nasr and Iqbal approach the sacred/profane and Islam/modernism binary, we will

keep these attributes in mind to judge whether their approaches are relational or propositional. We turn, first, to elucidate the basic features of Nasr's thought, and then to understand how these lead to his critique of Iqbal.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is best understood, in terms of his philosophical orientation, as a "leading proponent of the Traditionalist school, a religious rendition of the *philosophia perennis* movement, which posits that a perennial philosophy has been manifest throughout all the philosophical investigations of mankind."³⁵ In *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Nasr expounds on the various shades of meaning in which he understands "tradition"; it "is inextricably related to revelation and religion, to the sacred, to the notion of orthodoxy, to authority, to the continuity and regularity of transmission of truth, to the exoteric and the esoteric as well as to the spiritual life, science and arts"³⁶ and is, therefore, a broad concept. However, despite the comprehensive nature of "tradition", Nasr also defines the term "in its technical sense"³⁷ as "truths or principles of a divine origin" and "in fact, a whole cosmic sector" which "bind[s] man to his divine "Origin" and "Source".³⁸ We may infer, from this "technical" definition that Nasr does not just understand "tradition" as a mere custom or practice, but as a cosmology which contains "divine truths". In fact, these "divine truths" are not only *contained* within "tradition", but are *the* "Primordial Tradition or Tradition" i.e. the "*Sophia perennis*" or "one single truth" which is manifested differently in "the plurality of religions".³⁹ Crucially, Nasr not only believes that tradition is "closely wed...to the sacred"⁴⁰ but that "the sacred" itself is "that Reality which is immutable and eternal"; and, in the Aristotelian epithet, "the Unmoved Mover". Nasr emphasizes this primacy and immutability of the sacred in many ways; he cherishes "traditional civilizations" whose "function...may be said to be nothing other than creating a world dominated by the sacred"⁴¹ and in which "[t]here is no domain of reality which has a right to existence outside the traditional principles and their applications". Likewise, "traditional authority remains inseparable from the meaning of tradition itself"; "[i]ntellectual and spiritual authority is inseparable from that reality which is tradition and authentic traditional writings always possess an innate quality of authority".⁴² Hence "tradition", "which is by nature concerned with the sacred and is the means par excellence of gaining access to the sacred", "the Immutable and the Eternal",⁴³ "also governs the domains of art and science"⁴⁴ and therefore has hold over those facets of life which may not be ostensibly "religious" or "traditional".

Naturally, Nasr's "perspective of the traditional and the sacred" also shapes his view of "the profane."⁴⁵ He cleaves the "sacred" and the "profane" into two separate, and unequal, levels of reality. Hence, the "sacred" is that which "ultimately alone *is* while the desacralized, profane, or secular only *appears* to be."⁴⁶ Even if we do not challenge the problematic clustering of the terms "desacralized, profane or secular" as if they were roughly equivalent, we may still note how the profane is relegated to a lesser level of existence than the sacred. Nasr articulates this same judgment elsewhere, when he wonders how "an Italian by the name of Galileo, who also beheld the beauty of [natural] sites, could reduce nature to matter in motion and the beauty of nature to an irrelevant category and yet become not only a national hero, but the hero of a whole civilization."⁴⁷ Here, the scientific observation of "matter in motion" is being perceived as a form of "desecration", a reductionism, and a "loss of sacred knowledge."⁴⁸ While Nasr does believe that tradition should "govern the domains of art and science" the probability of "the profane" reciprocally informing *tradition* with a novel and valuable insight is far less likely. Thus, the "modern man" creates "unprecedented havoc over the globe", because there is "no higher knowledge to set a limit upon his profane knowledge of the world."⁴⁹

We must note first how Nasr's account of the sacred/profane binary contains valuable insights. This account is not simplistic, and one could hardly challenge his accurate assessment of the "unprecedented" ecological havoc that has been wreaked by the advent of new scientific technologies. His concern to redress these damages is noble. However, it is equally clear that he *cleaves* the sacred and profane into two sharply distinct categories. The sacred "ultimately" is real, "immutable", "eternal" and unchanging, with no room for evolution, let alone repair. By contrast, the profane only appears real, is changing and ephemeral and needs to be "limited" by the sacred, lest it devolves into "unprecedented havoc", or reduces the sacred beauty of nature to "mere matter." Clearly, Nasr envisions not a mutually informing dialogue between the material and transcendent, but a guardianship of the former by the latter. As such, we see a static hierarchy in his account of the "sacred/profane" binary, since the certainty and immutability of "the sacred" prevent the admission of any novel insight from the empirical world. There is a sharp discontinuity between what "ultimately is" and what "only appears to be", which parallels the "either/or" arrangement of binary values in propositional forms of reasoning. Elsewhere, sociologist Ali Zaidi has praised Nasr's informed critique of "scientism" i.e. "the extension of modern scientific reasoning beyond its legitimate

boundaries.”⁵⁰ Thus, we see that Nasr is cognizant of the inapplicability of binary modes of reasoning to all domains of thought. And yet, the cleft, hierarchy and dichotomization which characterize his view of the sacred and profane, all illustrate a propositional form of reasoning, and seem to belie the fact that Nasr had made such a subtle realization. May we say that he is extending this propositional reasoning beyond its proper domain, by cleaving the sacred and profane apart and establishing the sacred in a position of ascendancy? If we examine Nasr’s view of another perceived binary i.e. Islam/modernism, then it will become clearer that the dichotomization is not arbitrary, but sustained.

Nasr’s Traditionalism also shapes his definition of “modernism”, which he could not be more unequivocal in identifying as that which is “contrasted with tradition”; “that which is cut off from the transcendent, from the immutable principles that in reality govern all things and that are made known to man through revelation in its most universal sense.”⁵¹ He articulates his view of the stark incompatibility of Islam and “modern thought” in very clear terms:

The characteristics of modern thought... namely, its anthropomorphic and by extension secular nature, the lack of metaphysical principles in various branches of modern thought, and the reductionism that is related to it and that is most evident in the realm of the sciences, are obviously in total opposition to the tenets of Islamic thought, as the modern conception of man from whom issue these thought patterns is opposed to the Islamic conception.⁵²

As Nasr’s claim of “modern thought” being in fundamental “opposition” to “the tenets of Islamic thought” is a strong one, it is pertinent to ask whether such a claim precludes, for him, any possibility of a fruitful encounter between Islam and “the West”? Nasr *does*, in fact, believe in the possibility of “the successful encounter of Islam with modern thought”,⁵³ but most pertinent are the singular terms on which he believes such engagement must occur. Thus, a productive Islam-West encounter “can only come about when modern thought is fully understood in both its roots and ramifications by means of the principles of Islamic thought, and the whole of the Islamic intellectual tradition”, is “brought to bear upon the solution of the enormous problems that modernism and postmodernism pose for Islam.”⁵⁴ In other words, the Islam-West encounter must begin from an understanding of modernity through Islam, and its aim should be the rectification of “modernism” as per a diagnosis of the “enormous” ills of modernity based on “Islamic principles.” Insofar as “modernity” is viewed from the lens of “the Islamic intellectual tradition”, Nasr sees the possibility of a reparative

action, a “bearing upon” on the former, by the latter. However, this is only one side of the coin. In exploring his visualization of a productive Islam-West engagement, we must also ask: Does Nasr’s outlook allow for the *possibility* of reparative feedback in the *opposite* direction i.e. the “principles of modernity” providing a diagnosis of contemporary Islam and potentially rectifying the latter’s ailments?

Firstly, it is important to note that Nasr would probably not corroborate any articulation such as “contemporary Islam”, since for him the sacred is both “immutable” and “eternal” “, and “that *bikmah* or *baqiqah*, that lies at the heart of the Islamic revelation” and, by derivation, “intellectual tradition”, “will remain valid as long as human beings remain human beings”. In less ambiguous terms; “Islam cannot even carry out a dialogue with the secular on an equal footing by placing it in a position of legitimacy equal to that of religion.” Clearly, Nasr’s sustained emphasis is on “the primacy of the sacred”, as that which “ultimately alone *is* while the desacralized, profane, or secular only *appears* to be.” Thus, Nasr relegates the “profane”, worldly, or human, as opposed to the sacred or divine realm, to a less significant level of reality; a mere “appearance”. For this reason, Islam must recognize its own “primacy of the sacred” and “face the secular with full awareness of what it [the secular] is, namely, the negation and denial of the sacred.” Hence, the possibility of an Islam in need of repair is clearly non-existent for Nasr, let alone that of a perceived “assault of modern thought upon the citadel of Islam.” In fact, it is “modernism and postmodernism” that must allow “Islam” to rectify their ailments without reciprocity. Nasr makes an accurate appraisal: “The reductionism that is one of the characteristics of modern thought has itself affected Islam in its confrontation with modernism.” He identifies this reductionism as the conflation of “*Shariah*” with “Islam”⁵⁵; the mistaking of part for the (Islamic) whole. However, we may expand Nasr’s own recognition by noting that reductionism is not necessarily a feature of content, but of *method*. Nasr’s claim that modernistic and Islamic thought are fundamentally opposed also reveals a method of thinking that stems from reductive, propositional reasoning. It does not allow for a multiplicity of readings of either “Islam” or “modernism”, both of which are arranged as two fixed, static binaries. While he does allow for the differences in “various branches of modern thought”, Nasr considers them all united in that they are “in total opposition to the tenets of Islamic thought”. This multiplicity is being acknowledged, but simultaneously reduced to an insignificant factor which has no bearing on modernism’s inimical relationship to Islam. Hence, we see an “either/or” dichotomy which

persists even in the face of multiplicity and precludes mutually reparative dialogue.

Secondly, Nasr is less hopeful of any real, beneficial good *emerging from* modernism than from tradition. This does not mean that Nasr's Traditionalism denies the existence of any good in modernism: "[I]t does not neglect the fact that some element of a particular modern philosophical system or some modern institution may possess a positive feature or be good."⁵⁶ Rather, "one could say that the traditional worlds were essentially good and accidentally evil, and the modern world is essentially evil and accidentally good."⁵⁷ We must note the depth of Nasr's claim. He is not merely stating that "tradition" and "modernism" have some incompatible features, but that they are fundamentally opposed in their context and origins: "What tradition criticizes in the modern world is the total world view, the premises, the foundations which, from its point of view, are false so that any good which appears in this world is accidental rather than essential."⁵⁸ Here, the exploration of a possibly overlapping context has been negated *a priori*, based on the certainty and immutability which characterize "tradition" and the "sacred". This is an illustration of a propositional approach; not only is a binary erected, but the possibility of a relationship between the two poles of this binary has been dismissed based on the judgment, or "point of view" of one "side", i.e. "tradition". In addition, tradition is also understood by Nasr to possess an "innate" form of "authority",⁵⁹ which entails that its judgment cannot be effectively challenged by any claims outside the realm of "tradition".

It is in this vein that Nasr produces his basic criticism of Iqbal. In his broader criticism of Muslim thinkers who attempted to respond to the challenges of modernity, such as Muhammad Abduh, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Syed Ameer Ali, Nasr contends that "Muhammad Iqbal", "if one considers his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*", "sought to inaugurate modernism in Islamic thought" and, in doing so, "reflect[s] more the concern for an apologetic defense of Islam and the accommodation of modernity than the preservation of traditional Islamic intellectual life."⁶⁰ For Nasr, Iqbal himself, "although very philosophically minded and interested in Islamic philosophy, did not philosophize for the most part within that tradition". This applies most specifically to Iqbal's prose works, which were notably "influenced by nineteenth-century Western philosophy". Thus, Iqbal's use of "modern" philosophical texts seems to come, for Nasr, at the cost of an "eclipse of the Islamic philosophical traditions."⁶¹ Clearly, Nasr's criticism stems from his dichotomization of "Islamic tradition" and "modernism", as shown

above, and this makes him consider endeavours such as Iqbal's *Reconstruction* to be "apologetic", rather than significant contributions to "traditional Islamic intellectual life". Ultimately, for Nasr, Iqbal's perceived concern for "accommodation of modernity" is not a productive vision of the Islam-West encounter, but a project flawed in its inception because of its attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable.

Before addressing Nasr's fundamental criticism, we may highlight certain features of the *Reconstruction* which seem to support it. Nasr is not the first scholar to have noted Iqbal's references to Western philosophy, or his admiration for some of its most dynamic thinkers. Nicholas Adams notes that the *Reconstruction* is "a quite eclectic" text which "jumps with alarming ease between eleventh century Tus, in Persia and eighteenth century Königsberg, in Prussia" and "reveal[s] not only a deep knowledge of the long tradition of European philosophy, but a concern to address late modern questions posed by his [Iqbal's] contemporaries. The *Reconstruction* shows broad engagement with several figures who are widely read today, including most notably William James, Friedrich Nietzsche, Alfred North Whitehead and Henri Bergson."⁶² In fact, Iqbal's level of engagement with certain Western philosophers is not only "broad", but "deep", and as Syed Noman-ul-Haq has subtly appraised in the case of Bergson, Iqbal is "*appropriating* the French philosopher" for his own "metaphysical" aims.⁶³ Indeed, Noman-ul-Haq's assessment of Iqbal's endeavour in *The Reconstruction* has strong parallels with Nasr, and the former's judgment is that Iqbal's "harmonizing" of "Bergson with the *kalām* or sufi traditions, or with Greco-Arabic philosophy, is an impossible task due to the incompatible conceptual presuppositions upon which these various sets of ideas are severally grounded. Yet Iqbal tries to make this harmonizing possible by presenting to his audience a modern Bergsonian reading of classical Muslim thinkers; and in giving his own spin to both, in the end he effectively transmutes each beyond recognition."⁶⁴ Clearly, Nasr is not a lone voice in his assessment of Iqbalian thought as an "accommodation of modernity", or, as an attempted "harmonization" between the fundamentally discordant.

The first, and most pertinent question we may ask of this school of criticism, is whether *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is indeed, as its title temperately suggests, an exercise in transforming the *ways*, the *patterns* by which religious thought is conducted, or, as critics like Nasr imply, a "*Reconstruction*" of Islam; "some kind of magical wedding between the *Shari'ah* and modern science and technology"⁶⁵, two domains which Nasr clearly sees as incompatible. There are several obvious features of *The Reconstruction* which belie

this putative “accommodating” tendency towards modernity. Indeed, it is difficult to see *The Reconstruction* as a work of complacent “harmonizing” if we consider passages like the following:

The Great European War...must open our eyes to the inner meaning and destiny of Islam. Humanity needs three things today- a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis...The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man’s ethical advancement.⁶⁶

From this passage, we may garner two significant insights, the first of which is Iqbal’s sustained emphasis on “the spiritual” in his articulation of the basic needs of the contemporary world. Iqbal is far from de-valuing the sacred, or “spiritual.” He sees it as a vital component of life. Indeed, he shows some degree of *affinity* with Nasr in his view that “the universe”, the entire cosmos, *needs* to be (re-)interpreted spiritually. Secondly, Iqbal is no less unforgiving in his trenchant criticism of the human devastations of our time, than Nasr. He criticizes Europe, even before the calamitous outbreak of World War I, not only for its embrace of a dehumanizing technology and bureaucracy, but also for its hypocrisy in failing to live up to humane ideals, and exploiting the poor en masse for the profit of a small elite. Again, Iqbal would not disagree with Nasr in the view that the modern West has produced serious calamities, the likes of which were unforeseen in human history. In this vein, critical verses such as the following from *Zabur-e-‘Ajam* have been highlighted e.g. by M. Riaz in an article (perhaps, somewhat extremely) titled *Violent Protests Against the West in Iqbal’s Lyrical Poetry*.⁶⁷

اگر درد دل جہانے تازہ داری، بروں آور

کہ افرنگ از جراحت ہائے پنہاں بکل افتاد

است⁶⁸

If a New World thou hast
In thy bosom, declare thy faith
Wounded in heart and breast,
Europe is nigh to death.⁶⁹

Clearly, from Iqbal’s poetry and his *Reconstruction*, he is not an apologist for “the West”, when he can state that “Europe” is “the greatest hindrance in the way of man’s ethical advancement.”⁷⁰

Significantly, while Nasr contends that Iqbal is unduly “accommodative” of modernity, other scholars like Nicholas Adams have interpreted *The Reconstruction* in a very different manner, based on passages like those quoted above. For example, Adams reads Iqbal holding up “as a warning the image of Friedrich Nietzsche: a brilliant, incisive genius whose course of life was determined solely from within, and thus lacked the necessary discipline and guidance that comes from seeking spiritual direction.”⁷¹ Thus, a Western philosopher like Nietzsche, “is the archetypal European man, a Bergsonian man, genuinely full of life, but lacking a telos.”⁷² Hence, we see not just from broader passages in Iqbal’s *Reconstruction* but also from the manner in which other scholars have interpreted his critical view of individual Western philosophers, that to characterize Iqbal’s work as an accommodation and even less an uncritical acceptance of modernity would be wholly unsubstantiated.

It would be equally flawed to view Iqbal’s thought as an “apologetic defence of Islam”; an effort at tracking, shielding and explaining any discrepancies in the Islamic tradition which modernity may have exposed. Any number of verses, and in fact entire poems from Iqbal’s poetic corpus would attest to his pride in the Islamic religion, culture and civilization. Indeed, who can fail to sense the *pneuma* of a vital, “vigorous”, “young and powerful Islam”,⁷³ in the iridescent poetic “masterpiece”⁷⁴ that is *Masjid-e-Qurtuba*? Yet, to be precise, Nasr’s criticism pertains largely to Iqbal’s prose and to *The Reconstruction*, which employs Western philosophy liberally. However, *The Reconstruction* challenges this criticism even more directly. Immediately preceding the passage quoted above, Iqbal has stated: “Equipped with penetrative thought and fresh experience, the world of Islam should courageously proceed to the work of reconstruction” which, “however, has a far more serious aspect than mere adjustment in modern conditions of life.”⁷⁵ While he believes that “the idealism of Europe” never translated into reality, he exults over the opportunity now available to Islam:

The Muslim, on the other hand, is in possession of these ultimate ideas on the basis of a revelation, which, speaking from the inmost depths of life, internalizes its own apparent externality. With him the spiritual basis of life is a matter of conviction for which even the least enlightened man among us can easily lay down his life...Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in light of ultimate principles, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.⁷⁶

Clearly, not only is this “reconstruction” an Islamic project, but one which brings Islamic civilization into ever greater fruition and self-realization which the “early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realize.”⁷⁷ Iqbal’s vision of the “aim of Islam” is so vast, and his concern that it should be realized so deep, that he cannot allow us to ignore “that intellectual laziness which, especially in the period of spiritual decay, turns great thinkers into idols”⁷⁸ and which may resultantly thwart his cherished vision. Thus, his criticisms of contemporary Muslim thought are potentially self-corrective calls, to reform, reconstruct and resurge in the interest of Islam, rather than apologies for a tradition which he feels is already invested with grandeur and untapped potentiality.

Bearing in mind these characteristics of *The Reconstruction* which challenge Nasr’s critique of the work as largely non-traditional and apologetic, we have, broadly speaking, two approaches available as contemporary interpreters of Iqbal: we may choose to marginalize his criticisms of the modern period in order to see him simply as “a bridge between East and West.”⁷⁹ Or, we may take *The Reconstruction’s* criticisms of modernism seriously, and ask: If Iqbal is, in some degree of concord with Nasr, unsparing both in his regard for the spiritual and in his contempt for the destruction and greed of the modern period, *then* what is the root of Nasr’s criticism?

Nasr’s criticism, in fact, runs deeper than mere disagreement. His view, that Iqbal is making a reconciliatory attempt between the irreconcilable, stems organically from Nasr’s broader conceptions of sacred/profane and Islam/modernism, which have been elaborated in detail above. We saw that Nasr cleaves the sacred and profane, and ensconces the sacred as that which “ultimately is” while limiting the “profane” and material world to an “appearance”. Does Iqbal differ at all from this conception? Indeed, he disagrees significantly, for *The Reconstruction* tells us:

The critics of Islam have lost sight of [one] important consideration. The ultimate Reality, according to the Qur’an, is spiritual, and its life consists in temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is therefore sacred in the roots of its being. The greatest service that modern thought has rendered to Islam, and as a matter of fact to all religions... [is] that the merely material has no substance until we discover it rooted in the spiritual. There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the realization of the spirit. All is holy ground. As the Prophet

[Muhammad] so beautifully puts it: "The whole of this earth is a mosque."⁸⁰

This remarkable passage is at once a succinct and comprehensive insight into all three "binaries" which we had identified at the outset; "sacred"/"profane", "Islam"/"modernism", and "Self"/"Other". It also provides a sharp contrast to Nasr's mode of reasoning about the same "binaries". Firstly, Iqbal does not draw a cleft between the sacred and the profane. Rather, he sees them both as expressions of the same "ultimate Reality", and in doing so illustrates a relational bent of reasoning. How may we infer this? Iqbal is grounding both "the sacred" and "the profane" in the same origin, "Reality", and by tying them inseparably to this source, he is making a move parallel to grounding a logical proposition in its contextual locus. This "context-binding" was, as we saw, the characteristic feature of relational thought. Indeed, to say that "Reality" is *the* "context" of everything real, and so the context of both the sacred and the profane, is to make a sound claim. The effect of such "contextualization" is deeply reparative; it allows these two "binaries" to inform each other on terms of parity, based on their mutual beginnings. Each becomes, as Iqbal beautifully puts it, an "opportunity" for the other. This recognition then opens up the way for dialogue between a broader (and in fact ubiquitous) binary: "Self/Other".

Although a contemporary reader may find the terminological conflation of "secular" with "non-sacred" somewhat antiquated, this does not obstruct us from understanding the *method* by which Iqbal is approaching these perceived binaries. To claim that the "secular is sacred in the roots of its being", this is not only a challenge to the stark dichotomization of sacred and profane, but also to that of "Self" and "Other". *Continuity* and *parity*, not between synonymous concepts but between *opposites*, is emphasised: "Reality...is spiritual [i.e. sacred/Self]" and "its life consists in [the] temporal [i.e. profane/Other]." What Iqbal is highlighting for us, by way of this account of the sacred, is that a "Self" may find its "Other", "in the roots of its" very own "being". But to do so requires the "Self", in this case the "sacred", to have the insight that it is finite and part of a wider context, which in this case is "Reality." The further recognition that the "Other", or the "profane" *shares* a contextual paradigm with the "Self", then opens up the way for real, mutually rejuvenating exchange. This is why Iqbal's next step is to point out the dynamism which characterizes this relationship: "temporal activity" is the "life" and "realization of the spirit"; the "Other" is offering a novel opportunity for the expansion and activity of the "Self". Such a

mutual, relational exchange was absent from Nasr's conception, which adhered more to a propositional form of reasoning. The sacred was "ultimately" real (and therefore superior) while the profane was a mere "appearance". By contrast, with Iqbal, the "spiritual" and "material" are distinct but inseparable, and equally valuable facets of the same "Reality".

Iqbal's capacity to view perceived dichotomies in such relational terms stems from a characteristic feature of his thought that he in turn believes to be a feature of Islam, which "rejects the old static view of the universe"⁸¹ to arrive at the "dynamic outlook of the Quran".⁸² While Nasr characterizes the "sacred" as "immutable", "eternal", "transcendent" and the "Unmoved Mover", Iqbal's view is that "Reality" is an "Ultimate Ego", which continually "realizes and measures, so to speak, the infinite wealth of His own undetermined creative possibilities."⁸³ For Iqbal, the Divine Reality which is the very heart of the sacred, is characterized by *activity* that unceasingly actualizes "creative possibilities", rather than being a static, "immutable" Unmoved Mover which passively contemplates its own perfection for eternity. For Iqbal, it is precisely this dynamism which allows the sacred/Divine to engage deeply with the material world and to see it as an opportunity for Self-expression, to the extent that "the humble bee [is] a recipient of Divine inspiration."⁸⁴ Reading Iqbal's *Reconstruction* in view of this sustained spirit of dynamism which he espouses, enables us to see the roots of his relational approach to sacred/profane, Self/Other, Islam/ West dichotomies. An immutable conception of the sacred, as held by Nasr, would not be able to reconcile the static perfection of the sacred/Divine with any intimacy with the erratic, disorderly natural world. Iqbal, on the other hand, envisions the potentiality of Divine activity in an infinity of contexts, from the humble to the grand. Although he has provided us with no formal, logical model, he describes and illustrates the dynamic conditions which nurture such a relational approach. In one sense, this is a more valuable and basic contribution than any logical system, because it teaches us *how* to think relationally, and shows us what *ethos* underlies relational thinking, rather than simply adumbrating its features. *The Reconstruction* thus cultivates a relational approach rather than describing it. A core feature of this text which makes it relational-minded is its dynamism and positive attitude to creative change. By contrast, a propositional mode of reasoning, when it extends beyond the "finite set" of "judgments of certainty", will be displaced from its habitat. Creation, activity and change all involve a movement from the known to the unknown, from one state to its opposite. But,

propositional logic is only equipped to map out certain claims, so how could it depict this dynamic interaction between the spheres of the known and unknown? Indeed, it would see this wavering between known and unknown, Self and Other, as at best a “contradiction” between binaries. As Ochs has highlighted, “propositional reasoning cannot provide an adequate account of the relationship between known and unknown and cannot therefore guide inquiries into the Unknown.”⁸⁵ Precisely this limitation of propositional reasoning has caused critics to view Iqbal’s *Reconstruction* as “an attempted synthesis” or an “accommodation” of the irreconcilable. Yet, if we respond to Iqbal’s indications and understand these limitations, we may begin to see how he is not *endeavouring* to forge a synthesis between incompatibles, but recognizing how a deep relationship *already* exists between some binaries, and showing us the context in which this deep and mutually rejuvenating relationship operates. His work is thus aptly titled, for it truly attempts to reconstruct religious thought; the *method* by which we think about concepts and dichotomies central to Islam and modernity, rather than disfiguring either Islam or modernism “beyond recognition.”

Iqbal contrasts with Nasr on another crucial point which, perhaps more the domain of a historiographer, nevertheless significantly informs his relational approach. Nasr provides a complex account of the European Renaissance as a development characterized by many philosophical streams, such as Platonism, Aristotelianism, Scholasticism and so forth.⁸⁶ However, “[i]n the matrix of the tapestry of the Renaissance”, there “grew that humanism which has characterized the modern world since that time”, with its “essentially anthropomorphic modes of thought”.⁸⁷ Thus, Nasr sees the Renaissance as that pivotal moment in history, which shifted the focus of Western civilization from God to “man as the measure of all things as an earthly being.” The Renaissance therefore culminated in a “modern mode of thought” which was inimical to “certain esotericisms such as that of Islam.”⁸⁸ By contrast, Iqbal does not view either the Renaissance or the advent of modernity as the perfect antithesis of Islam, but identifies another contrasting historical period. For Iqbal, “the spirit of the Qur’an [is] essentially anti-classical”; which eventually culminated in an “intellectual revolt against Greek philosophy.”⁸⁹ More specifically, for Iqbal the “purely speculative”⁹⁰ character of Classical philosophy stands in direct contrast to the Qur’anic emphasis on “the sense-perception of man.”⁹¹ This Islamic “revolt” against Classical Philosophy has led, in Iqbal’s view, to “the foundations of modern culture in some of its

most important respects.”⁹² Nor is Iqbal isolated in this historical analysis. In our own time, T.J. Winter notes that the plurality and “diversity of Islamic civilizations” are in fact a direct contrast to “Rome, which was itself a kind of early monoculture” with “the forum, the theatre and the *insula*” remaining “remarkably consistent throughout the Roman Mediterranean.”⁹³ At first glance, it may appear as if Nasr and Iqbal are advocating the same position: apparently, both emphasize the uniformity of Greek thought. However, this similarity is illusory, because for Iqbal, the “speculative” uniformity of Classicalism is *opposed* to the dynamic Qur’anic and Islamic *ethos*, but for Nasr, this very uniformity makes Islamic “*hikmah*” and Classical philosophy two compatible shades of the *same* perennial wisdom. Similarly, one might hastily conclude that both Nasr and Iqbal trace the origins of modern thought to a common source i.e. both emphasize modernism’s focus on the material, empirical world. However, while Nasr *deploras* Galileo’s empirical observation of matter as mere reductionism and anti-traditionalism, Iqbal *values* this empirical spirit, and in fact sees it as an organic product of the Qur’anic emphasis on nature. Thus, we may re-assert our claim that Nasr and Iqbal have two starkly contrasting approaches to the advent of modernity, and to modernism’s relationship to Islam. If we appreciate these significant differences, then it becomes far more plausible that Iqbal should have engaged Islam and modernism in relational terms, rather than Nasr. For Nasr *cherishes* that same Classical World which Iqbal criticizes, as part of a traditional era in which “the Pythagorean and Platonic conception of philosophy”⁹⁴ provided one variant of that self-same perennial wisdom that also manifests in Islam as “*al-hikmat al-khalidat*.”⁹⁵ Therefore, Nasr’s perennialist orientation contributes significantly to his understanding of the “sacred” as “immutable” and “eternal”, which obviates any engagement of the “sacred” with the “profane”, material world on relational terms. By contrast, Iqbal’s “intellectual revolt against Greek philosophy” foreshadows the dynamism and relational nature of his thought with regard to the Islam-West encounter. His view of material, empirical reality is far more positive, for he sees the natural world as continuously receiving the most sacred of “sacreds” i.e. Divine inspiration. Ochs corroborates this reading of Iqbal with a significant insight: “The defining relationship in *Reconstruction* is indeed between scientific reasoning and...‘liturgical reasoning’. Liturgy begins in prayer; prayer, most simply put, begins in petition; and the scientific reasoner engages in petitionary prayer as soon as he or she names something out there ‘unknown’ and asks ‘how can I know you?’⁹⁶ In this vein,

Iqbal would view Galileo's observation of "matter in motion", which is a scientific exercise, as a form of "petitionary prayer" or *ibadah*, and not, in Nasr's stead, as a "reduction" or deplorable departure from the "sacred".

We have seen that Nasr and *Iqbal's* differing approaches to *pre-modernity* engender, to a great degree, their respective methods of reasoning about the contemporary, modern or post-modern, Islam-West encounter. Nasr's perennialism commits him to an immutable *Sophia perennis*, which is inimical to an equitable engagement with the premises of modernity as he sees them. *Iqbal's* anti-classicalism leads to his view that Islam, in fact, contributed significantly to important features of modernity such as the emphasis on empirical investigation. This, naturally, leads to a relational approach since "the modern world" becomes tied to Islam in its inception. An *Iqbalian* critique of modernism thus becomes a critique from *within*, and not an irrevocable sundering of Islam and the modern West. Furthermore, we have also seen the manner by which *Iqbal* and Nasr's respective approaches to the thematic dichotomies of the Islam-West encounter operate: Nasr arranges the sacred/profane, Islam/modernism and, ultimately, the Self/Other binary in a hierarchy, whereby a guardianship of the profane/modernism is possible, but not a reciprocal dialogue. *Iqbal* differs, by looking beyond the individual significance of the sacred or Islam, both of which he values immeasurably, to "characterize the context" (i.e. Reality/the Divine) of these important categories and their putative opposites. In doing so, he illustrates the core feature of a relational approach and provides a contrast to Nasr's dichotomous, "either this or that" approach, which parallels propositional reasoning. In addressing Nasr's critique of *Iqbal*, I have therefore contrasted the broader differences in Nasr and *Iqbal's* respective patterns of thought, and suggested that their varying degree of affinity with the Classical component of *pre-modernity* is a strong basis, if not the lowest common factor, of these differences. Addressing Nasr's critique of *Iqbal* hence generates, reciprocally, a critical view of Nasr's own dichotomous approach to those binaries which characterize the thematic ground of the Islam-West encounter, and also of Nasr's perennialist outlook on *pre-modernity* and modernity. In concluding our comparisons of Nasr and *Iqbal*, then, it becomes relevant to briefly link them to the broader discussion on the limitations posed by a perennialist outlook.

David Ray Griffin provides one such critique, in his assessment of Huston Smith's perennialist philosophy. For Griffin, perennialism is based on that precise logic which it critiques in modernism, but in

an inverse form: It “reacts to the onesidedness of modernity by advocating an equally onesided premodern outlook.”⁹⁷ Modernism can be critiqued for a propositional, binary mode of reasoning, which emphasises the primacy of empirical “progress” and “science” (read: modern science), and marginalises religion, tradition and belief as remnants of a primitive era. However, perennialism can be critiqued on precisely the same footing, for it emphasises not the future but “the past”, or “tradition”, by marginalising the current period of history as an aberration from the norm. This is why Nasr states: “From this point of view the history of Western man during the past five centuries is an anomaly in the long history of the human race...those who follow the traditional point of view wish only to enable Western man to join the rest of the human race.”⁹⁸ Yet, as Griffin has noted, perennialism makes too great a leap in coagulating, as Nasr has in the quote above, “the long history” of “the rest of the human race”⁹⁹ into one traditional stronghold. Griffin goes on to critique: “It does not seem plausible...to think of the various great religions as equally embodying revelations of the same divine reality. Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism are oriented primarily to a personal deity” while “Buddhism and Hinduism” largely “are oriented toward an impersonal, infinite, absolute reality. To say that devotees of both types of religion are really worshipping ‘the same God’ does not seem illuminating.”¹⁰⁰ In this way, Nasr discusses the impersonal Aristotelian “Unmoved Mover”,¹⁰¹ the term “Orthodoxy”,¹⁰² which has its roots in the authority of early Christian clergy, the Islamic “*Shari’ah* and the *Tariqah*”,¹⁰³ which are uncompromising on the Oneness of God, and the Hindu “*sanatana dharma*”¹⁰⁴ as if they were different manifestations of the same perennial wisdom. It is pertinent to note that even in the *unification* each of these starkly contrasted traditions, perennialist thought does *not* display a relational mode of thought, because it removes concepts like “Orthodoxy” or “*hikmah*” out of the unmistakably different contexts that they are organically embedded in, and presents them as if they were isolated manifestations of one self-same “*Sophia perennis*.” The characteristic feature of relational thought, as we saw, was precisely a “characterization of context”, and a dialogue or affinity that is *based on* a deep and honest introspection into context, as well as claim. Yet, Nasr’s grounding in the perennialist tradition takes him in the opposite direction; in analysing “tradition”, he abstracts traditional concepts from their differing contexts, for the sake of a non-relational “harmonization” into an “immutable” perennial wisdom. It is crucial to note that in doing so, Nasr is making a move identical to that “accommodation” of the discordant which he sees

Iqbal as attempting, and for which he critiques Iqbal. However, in analysing “modernity”, Nasr abstracts thought from context to the opposite effect, by cleaving “modernism” and “Islam” into two fundamentally irreconcilable positions. By contrast, Iqbal’s tendency to “characterize context” makes him a relational thinker who can see both deep affinities (a spirit of empirical observation) and deep contrasts (Islamic opposition to modern materialism, greed and destruction) between “Islam” and “modernism” and engage these in a mutually rejuvenating dialogue. Ultimately, Iqbal’s dynamic, relational approach makes his *Reconstruction* a truly insightful work, and one which remains liable to misrepresentation or criticism from an approach that is limited to propositional models of reasoning and interpretation.

In conclusion, this paper has been a contrast of two widely influential Muslim thinkers, both of whom shape the study and interpretation of Islamic thought in their respective time periods. It is interesting to note that if Nasr and Iqbal were read with an eye towards their overarching authorial concerns, their thematic interests and to some degree their creative, literary expression, one would find affinities. Both are unmistakably concerned about the dire situation of religious thought in the contemporary world, and offer their respective diagnosis and remedies. Indeed, for some admirers of both, it may seem surprising that Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a prominent Muslim intellectual, had ever made such a strong critique of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, whose name requires no introduction. However, we have seen the advantage of an in-depth, detailed examination of Nasr and Iqbal that is based on their logical *approaches*, on the *ethos* that they concretize in their respective reasonings about binaries. Such an examination dispels surprise, and in fact shows us how it is quite plausible that Nasr, a prominent perennialist, would have critiqued Iqbal, a dynamic, relational thinker. In this regard, we are indebted to Peter Ochs for providing us with a supple and comprehensive framework, and an invaluable set of logical descriptions and characterizations, by which our exploration of Iqbal enters a new phase. Perhaps the mark of a truly subtle genius is that more insights reside in *how* he thinks, rather than *what* he thinks about. Iqbal is such a mind, and we have to significantly re-evaluate our interpretative paradigms to begin to unlock his *Reconstruction*. In the field of contemporary Iqbal studies, we should now look beyond familiar discussions of Iqbal’s thematic broadness, his religious zeal, and his appropriation of Western philosophy, to investigate all of these afresh, not merely in light of propositional reasoning but of the Iqbalian method. This paper provides one preliminary attempt into

this investigation, but doubtless, more comprehensive studies of a similar nature, and on a wider range of themes, are required. Ultimately, the very fact that Nasr has made such a critique of Iqbal today, after the limits of propositional approaches have been discovered, discussed and elaborated, suggests that *The Reconstruction's* relational *ethos* is yet to be adequately understood and appreciated by some of the most prominent contemporary Muslim thinkers, let alone realized.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (United States: Vintage Books, 1978), p.273.

As is well known, Edward Said's postcolonial breakthrough *Orientalism* contends that "some Oriental essence" is "purposely misrepresented" in contrast to the "Occident" or "West" for the latter's gains in "in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting" (273).

² Abdal-Hakim Murad, *Faith in the future: Islam after the Enlightenment*. 23 December 2002. www.masud.co.uk.

Winter(whose Islamic name is Abdal-Hakim Murad) argues:

"Despite its Arabian origins, Islam is to be not merely *for* the nations, but *of* the nations. No pre-modern civilisation embraced more cultures than that of Islam - in fact, it was Muslims who invented globalisation."

In this vein, Winter quotes Iqbal:

"Behold and see! In Ind's domain
Thou shalt not find the like again,
That, though a Brahman's son I be,
Tabriz and Rum stand wide to me." (*Zabur-e-'Ajam*)

³Footnote 8, Peter Ochs, "Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity", *Iqbal Review* (October 2008), www.allamaiqbal.com

⁴Basit Bilal Koshul and Steven Kepnes, eds., *Scripture, Reason and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter: Studying the Other, Understanding the Self*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2007.

⁵ Ochs, "Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity", *Iqbal Review*.

⁶Dr. Fazlur Rahman, "Iqbal's Idea of Progress", *Iqbal Review*, (April 1963), www.allamaiqbal.com

⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land*

of Prophecy, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 129.

⁸ *Scripture, Reason and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter*.

⁹ William C. Chittick, Introduction, in, William C. Chittick ed., *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, (Canada: World Wisdom Publications), 2007, p. xi.

¹⁰ Ali Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity and the Human Sciences*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2011, p.61.

As Zaidi has noted, Nasr has made other critiques of Iqbal e.g. he "directs harsh criticism at Iqbal for attempting to synthesize the Islamic concept of *al- insan al-kamil*, the Perfect Man, with the Nietzschean concept of the *Uberman*, concepts

that, for Nasr, are at antipodes, one from the other (Nasr 1975: 139)” qtd., Zaidi, 61. Relevant though this criticism may be, it is a subset of Nasr’s basic critique that Iqbal is “attempting to synthesize” Islamic and modern thought. Our discussion here will be limited to Nasr’s primary critique, bearing in mind its overarching relevance. A detailed discussion of both Nietzsche’s *Überman* and Iqbal’s *kebudhi* is an extensive subject which merits a further comparative study of its own.

¹¹ Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 26.

Nasr has evaluated Iqbal’s *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, as a work “which contains important insights, although it is also very incomplete and contains certain basic errors.” Also noteworthy is the deep influence that the *Mathnawi-e-Mawnavi* of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi has had on both thinkers. A future course of study might compare the ways in which Nasr’s reading of Rumi converges and diverges with, for example, Iqbal’s *Pir-o-Mureed* dialogue in Baal-e-Jibreel.

¹² Published in 1934, *The Reconstruction* lectures had not yet conceived of a Second World War, nor seen the Partition of India, and bordered the dissolution of the Ottoman empire. A contemporary writer such as Nasr, with a fuller knowledge of developments such as postmodernism and of major geo-political shifts since the Second World War, can be contrasted significantly with Iqbal in terms of the historical contexts of his responses to modernity.

¹³ Ochs, “Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity”, *Iqbal Review*.

¹⁴ Peter Ochs, “From Two to Three: To Know is also to Know the Context of Knowing”, in Basit Bilal Koshul and Steven Kepnes, eds., *Scripture, Reason and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter: Studying the Other, Understanding the Self*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2007, p. 192.

¹⁵ Ochs, “Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity”, *Iqbal Review*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Noman-ul-Haq, “Iqbal and Classical Muslim Thinkers”, *Iqbal Review*, (Oct 2009), www.allamaiqbal.com.

¹⁸ Ochs, “Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity”, *Iqbal Review*

¹⁹ Noman-ul-Haq, “Iqbal and Classical Muslim Thinkers”, *Iqbal Review*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ochs, *Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity*, *Iqbal Review*.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ochs, “From Two to Three”, p. 188.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p.196

²⁶ Ochs, *Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity*, *Iqbal Review*.

²⁷ Ochs, “From Two to Three”, p. 197.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 192

²⁹ Ibid., p. 193

³⁰ Ibid., p. 194

³¹ Ibid., p. 197

³² Ibid., p. 189

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Timothy Winter, “Ishmael and the Enlightenment’s *Crise de Coeur*”, in Basit Bilal Koshul and Steven Kepnes, eds., *Scripture, Reason and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter: Studying the Other, Understanding the Self*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2007, p. 169

³⁵ Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity and the Human Sciences*, p. 60.

-
- ³⁶Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, (Albany: State University of New York Press: 1989), p. 68
- ³⁷ Ibid., 67
- ³⁸ Ibid., 68
- ³⁹ Ibid., 74
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 75
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 76
- ⁴² Ibid., 80
- ⁴³ Ibid., 78
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 80
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 74
- ⁴⁶Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 271.
- ⁴⁷Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.163
- ⁴⁸ Ibid 172
- ⁴⁹Ibid. 179
- ⁵⁰ Zaidi, p. 61.
- ⁵¹ Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, p.260.
- ⁵² Ibid., 267
- ⁵³ Ibid., 271
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 271
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 271
- ⁵⁶ Nasr, *Knowledge and Sacred*, p.84.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 85
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 84
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 80
- ⁶⁰ Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 128-129.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 275.
- ⁶² Nicholas Adams. "Iqbal and the Western Philosophers", *Iqbal Review*, (October 2009). www.allamaiqbal.com.
- ⁶³ Noman-ul-Haq, "Iqbal and Classical Muslim Thinkers", *Iqbal Review*.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 271
- ⁶⁶ Sir Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, (Lahore: Published by Javed Iqbal, son of late Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal. Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf Publishers), p. 179.
- ⁶⁷ Prof. Dr. M. Riaz, "Violent Protests Against the West in Iqbal's Lyrical Poetry", *Iqbal Review*, (October 1989). www.allamaiqbal.com
- ⁶⁸ *Zabur-e-'Ajam, Kulliyat-e-Iqbal*, Farsi ed. (Lahore: 1973) p. 503.
- ⁶⁹ Persian Psalms, Eng. trans. of *Zabur-e-'Ajam*. Trans. Prof. A.J. Arberry. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publications, 1968, 3rd edition), p.95
- ⁷⁰ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 179.
- ⁷¹ Nicholas Adams. "Iqbal and the Western Philosophers", *Iqbal Review*.
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*. (Brill: 1963), p. 145.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 52, 173
- ⁷⁵ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 179.
- ⁷⁶ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, pp. 179-180
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 180.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 178.

- ⁷⁹ Gerard Böwering, "Iqbal: A Bridge of Understanding between East and West," *Journal of South Asia and Middle Eastern Studies*, 1 (1977), pp. 12-21.
- ⁸⁰ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 155.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 164.
- ⁸² Ibid., 166.
- ⁸³ Ibid., 77.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 3.
- ⁸⁵ Ochs, "Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity", *Iqbal Review*.
- ⁸⁶ Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, p.168
- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 177
- ⁸⁹ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 128
- ⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Timothy Winter, "Ishmael and the Enlightenment's *Crise de Coeur*", p.167
- ⁹⁴ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 82
- ⁹⁵ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 68
- ⁹⁶ Ochs, "Iqbal, Peirce and Modernity", *Iqbal Review*.
- ⁹⁷ David Ray Griffin, "Premodern and Postmodern Philosophical Theology: A Response to Huston Smith's Program", in *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, (New York University Press, February 1990), p. 40.
- ⁹⁸ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 85.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ David Ray Griffin, p. 41.
- ¹⁰¹ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 75
- ¹⁰² Ibid., 78.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 76.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 68.

**IQBAL STUDIES:
GUEST SCHOLAR**



THE QURANIC CONCEPTION OF THE SPIRIT AND
HUMAN CREATIVITY ACCORDING TO IBN AL-‘ARABI
Dr. Ayesha Leghari

THE QURANIC CONCEPTION OF THE SPIRIT AND HUMAN CREATIVITY ACCORDING TO IBN AL-‘ARABI

Dr. Ayesha Leghari

It is important to understand the concept of human nature and the human spirit as is revealed in the Quran in order to understand how creativity is manifested in human beings and how they reach the status of becoming the *khalifatullah* or vicegerents of God on earth according to Ibn al-‘Arabi. The Quran forms the foundation and the intrinsic source of inspiration for all of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s world-view and philosophy. The Quran does not advocate a purely psychological conception of the human nature. Instead it, delves into the philosophical, spiritual cum metaphysical problem of human nature. According to the Quran, human beings first emerged in the transcendental, spiritual plane (*alam-i-arwah*) of existence before their creation in the physical realm. The Quran emphatically asserts that consciousness of God is an intrinsic part of the human personality.

And recall when (at the time of creation and in the world of spirits) thy Lord brought forth their off spring from the loins of the children of Adam. He (thus) made them testify as they themselves, say: ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, “Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto’ (Quran 8: 172).

God taught Adam the names of all things (Quran 2: 31).

The essential and primordial human personality is spiritual in nature. The Quranic verses quoted above testifies to the spiritual existence of human beings, before their appearance on earth and it also testifies to the existence of consciousness and all-encompassing knowledge in human beings. In the world of spirits (*alam-i-arwah*) human beings had a twofold dimension to their consciousness; one which made them aware of themselves, and the other, which acknowledged the Lord who created them.

The verses mentioned above clearly demonstrate that according to the Quran God-consciousness is part and parcel of the very nature of human beings. The originally monotheistic covenant between human beings and their Lord is inscribed on every human soul. To affirm the Lordship of the One, True Creator, is an inborn quality of the primordial human nature called *fitrah* in Arabic. This knowledge enters human nature via the medium of the spirit of God that was blown into human beings at the time of their creation.¹

“The Reality wanted to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names or, to put it in another way, to see His own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the whole [divine] Command, which, qualified by existence, would reveal to Him His own mystery.”²

It is essential to understand the term *ruh* while studying the concept of human nature according to the Ibn al-‘Arabi. This term is used to refer to various metaphysical, yet substantive entities like angels, divine inspiration and revelation. Often, the term *ruh* denotes the inner divine human nature. *Ruh* has also been used synonymously by Ibn al-‘Arabi to mean the ‘soul.’³ Al-Zamakhshari the famous Quranic exegetical scholar during the early period, interprets the word *ruh* to mean divine inspiration. He also indicates that it is *ruh* that gives life to hearts, which would be, metaphorically speaking, dead in their ignorance.⁴

The *ruh* is subtle, intangible and non-physical in character. To explain it succinctly, it is a divine spark in man. The existence of human beings on earth starts when the *ruh*, which originates in the transcendental world (*alam-i-arwah*) or the world of spirits, is projected into the earthly dimension by the will of God. Ibn al-‘Arabi writes:

The souls were created from one quarry, as God says, He created you from one soul [Quran 4:1]. He says, after the preparedness of the body’s creation, *I have blown into him of My spirit* [Quran 15:29]. So the mystery that was blown into the object of the blowing correctly derives from one spirit—that is, the soul. God says, *in whatever form He willed He mounted you* [Quran 82:8]. Here he means the preparedness. So the human being comes to be according to the property of the preparedness to receive the divine command.⁵

According to Ibn al-‘Arabi the governing Spirit or the All Spirit (*al-ruh al-kull*) is one, but there are many partial (*juzi*) spirits. The partial spirits are differentiated from each other by being placed in different bodies. What differentiates the partial spirits, is the bodies that accept the All Spirit in keeping with their preparedness.

The body of the cosmos came alive through the Divine Spirit. Just as the body of the cosmos comprises the bodies of its individuals, so also its spirit comprises the spirits of its individuals. *He created you from one soul* [Quran, 4:1].⁶

One of the most important attributes of the spirit is life (*hayat*).⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabi calls the Divine Spirit the ‘sphere of life’⁸ which is the Breath of the All-Merciful that permeates every created thing. All of creation comes into existence through the Divine Spirit, therefore as was observed in the previous chapter, all of God’s creativity takes place through the Divine Spirit.

God chose the Spirit above all the angels because it is blown into every form, whether angelic, celestial, elemental, material, or natural, and

through it things have life. It is the Spirit ascribed to Him, and it is the Breath of the All-Merciful from which life comes to be. Life is bliss, bliss is pleasurable, and taking pleasure accords with the constitution.⁹

Apart from the attribute of life, the Spirit also has the attribute of 'governance.' According to Ibn al-'Arabi, all bodies, in fact everything in creation has a spirit but not necessarily a 'governing spirit.' Animals have governing spirits, but minerals do not possess such spirits.¹⁰ He backs his argument with the story of Moses by pointing out that Moses was able to withstand the manifestation of God in the form of Light because he had a governing spirit that had the preparedness to accept such a manifestation. The mountain, on the other hand had no governing spirit that could accept the Light of God. Therefore, it crumbled and even its form, as a mountain, was not maintained because it is the governing spirit that maintains the form of a thing.¹¹

It is the Spirit that connects the various realms of reality and it is the Spirit that has essential governance over everything in creation. Governance belongs to the essence of the governing spirits because creativity arises from the Essence of God.¹² The Divine Spirit creates and permeates all of creation but in the human body, the light of the Divine Spirit's is split into the 'governing spirit,' which in turn, and by implication is the agent of creativity in human beings.

The Divine Spirit is called *al-rub al-ilabi* or *al-rub al-idafi*, which means the 'ascribed spirit' due to the fact that God ascribes it to Himself with the words, 'My,' 'His' and 'Our' in various Quranic verses.¹³ Ibn al-'Arabi calls this spirit the '*ya'i* spirit' because it points to the spirit that is attached to the letter *ya* in the Quran, which stands for 'My' in Arabic.¹⁴ Ibn al-'Arabi believes that this Divine Spirit is the 'one soul' (*nafs wahida*) mentioned in the Quran [Quran, 4:1, 6:98, 39:6] from which Adam, Eve and their progeny were brought forth.¹⁵

Apart from the '*ya'i* spirit' mentioned above, the Quran mentions *the spirit from His command*. Analyzing the Quranic verses dealing with the '*ya'i* spirit' and *the spirit from His command* (Quran, 40:15, 42:52, 16:2), reveals that while the first one is the Divine Spirit blown into the whole of creation, the second one refers to the specific 'revelation' that is received by God's prophets, messengers and, in Ibn al-'Arabi's terminology, the Folk of God. Ibn al-'Arabi discusses *the spirit from His command* when he is focusing on the subject of the loftiest stations of the spiritual journey reached by the Folk of God. He identifies the spirit from His command with 'knowledge' through which 'hearts come alive.'

Since hearts come alive through knowledge, just as the entities of all bodies come alive through spirits, God named knowledge a “spirit” that the angels bring down upon the hearts of God’s servants and that He casts and reveals without any intermediary in the case of His servants... When the spirit descends upon the heart of the servant through the sending down of the angel of the casting and revelation of God, the heart of the one to whom it is sent down comes alive. Then he is the companion of witnessing and finding, not the companion of reflection, wavering, or any knowledge that accepts misgivings such that the companion would be transferred from the degree of certitude to the state of consideration. Hence the knowing, chosen servant either ascends and sees, or he is descended upon in his site.¹⁶

Sura *Ma’arij* or ‘The ways of Ascent,’ expounds the belief that it is possible for human beings to ascend to the presence of God but this takes place through gradual ways and in due process of time. Time itself is explained to be a relative dimension, experienced differently at different levels of reality. A day could mean fifty thousand years, on a different plane of existence.

The angels and
The Spirit ascend
Unto Him in a Day
The Measure where of
Is (as) fifty thousand years,
Therefore do thou hold
Patience, a patience
Of beautiful contentment. (Quran, 70: 4)

The human beings are gifted with the Spirit of God (Quran, 15:29), therefore in the spiritual kingdom, they have the potential to be raised to the light of the Countenance of God, and be transformed by His Glory.¹⁷

It is the Spirit of God present within the human being (Quran, 15:29) as interpreted in the above context, which ‘ascends unto Him in a Day’ (Quran, 70:4). It ascends up to Allah, the Lord of the ways of Ascent (Quran, 70:3). God created Adam and then breathed His spirit (15:29) into the mould of water and clay. Thus the Spirit of God descended into and animated the material level of existence. Yet this same Spirit, holds the knowledge of its true Source and Origin, and therefore it seeks ways to attain the Heights from which it descended. The Spirit that was breathed into human beings, got differentiated, separated, segregated on the horizontal plane of existence, yet its connection with the vertical plane of existence, which is the plane of complete Unity (*tawhid*), has never been severed. It is the spirit’s connection with this vertical plane of existence (realm of Spirit) as differentiated from the horizontal realm

of matter, that gives human beings the knowledge, insight, desire and will to ascend upto *the Lord of the Ways of Ascent* (Quran, 70: 3).

Ibn al-‘Arabi presents the argument that the qualities that differentiate Adam from the rest of creation, are the qualities that arise from the fact that he has been created in the divine form. He believes that the Spirit of God that was breathed into Adam at the time of his creation (Quran, 15:29) and which became differentiated into the ‘rationally speaking soul’ is the spirit through whom all creativity is manifested within human existence. He writes that the Folk of Unveiling, ‘recognize that beyond the rationally speaking soul is the one that acts, and He is called “God.”’¹⁸ Like Ibn al-‘Arabi, Rumi too believes that God’s creativity, which resulted in a multiplicity of human souls, arises from the One Divine Source. He writes:

When from among them you see two friends, they are one and six hundred thousand at the same time. Their multiplicity is like that of the waves caused by the wind. The sun of the soul has been split up in the window of bodies. Differences are found only in the animal soul; the human soul is only one. God said He sprinkled His light upon them, and the Divine Light cannot be broken up.¹⁹

Ibn al-‘Arabi distinguishes between the three types of living beings: the vegetable, the animal and the human, by distinguishing between the qualities and faculties of their governing souls. The vegetal soul contains six attributes: ‘growth-producing, nutritive, attractive, expulsive, digestive and retentive.’²⁰ The animal soul contains these along with the five senses, including memory, wrath, imagination and appetite. The human soul, being the most eminent amongst the three types of souls specified here, contains all the above attributes of the vegetal and the animal soul as well as ‘reason, reflection and form-giving.’²¹ The highest of these attributes and the one nearest to God is reason or the intellect and therefore it has been used as a distinguishing attribute of the human soul and human beings are known to possess ‘a rationally speaking soul.’

In reality, according to Ibn al-‘Arabi, the interpretation of the Quranic verse that *God...gave rational speech to everything* (Quran, 41:21), is that there is nothing created which is not governed by a rationally speaking soul and therefore all manifestations of creativity take place through these rationally speaking souls. In the passage quoted below, it becomes obvious that whenever creativity is manifested through ‘a new arrival,’ it is manifested through *a spirit from His command* (Quran, 42:52). While discussing the forms of minerals, plants and animals he writes;

In actual fact, all these forms are alive and possessors of rationally speaking souls. It is impossible for there to be in the cosmos a form

that has no soul, no life and no essential and commanded worship. It makes no difference if that form is amongst the shapes to which human beings or animals give new arrival, or if the creatures give new arrival to them intentionally or unintentionally. No matter how the form is formed or upon whose hands it becomes manifest, God clothes it in *a spirit from His command* [Quran, 42:52] and makes himself known to it at once. Hence it comes to know Him from itself and it witnesses him in itself. Such perpetually is the affair, in this world and the last world, that is unveiled to the folks of unveiling.²²

Hence, all creativity in the form of ‘a new arrival’ is manifested in the cosmos and the microcosm via the rationally speaking soul governing each body, which, as has been discussed already, derives from the Divine Spirit.

While discussing the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, Ibn al-‘Arabi identifies the ‘soul of the cosmos’ to the perfected, actualized divine form. Accordign to Ibn al-‘Arabi the cosmos is a great human being only through the existence of the perfect human being, Muhammad, who is its rationally speaking soul. As has been discussed already, the soul of the human being receives its perfection from the fact that it has been created in God’s form. The soul of Muhammad, which is also the universal soul, receives its perfection from the perfection of the divine form. This perfection of the divine form reflected in the soul of Muhammad is manifested through God’s creativity, “in subsistence, in the constant variation in forms, and in the subsistence of the cosmos through him.”²³ Therefore the whole aim of God’s creativity and the creativity that is manifested at the human realm through the human spirit is for God to experience His Own Attributes within the great macrocosm and the small microcosm.

Behold ! thy Lord said
To the angels: “I am about
To create man (*basbr*), from sounding clay,
From mud moulded into shape; (Quran, 15:28)
When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed
Into him of My Spirit,
Fall ye down in obeisance Unto him.
So the angels prostrated themselves All of them together. (Quran,
15:29)

An interesting feature of these verses of the Quran is that they reveal that the Spirit of God was breathed into all human beings (*basbr*) because the word *basbr* has been used in this context, not just specifically, the historical prophet Adam. It was after God breathed His spirit into Adam (Quran, 15:29) and taught him the ‘names of all things’ (Quran, 2:31) that all the angels were asked to prostrate themselves in front of Adam (Quran, 2:34).

Evidence is given in the Quran about the God-like qualities that were given to human beings at the time when God breathed His spirit into Adam. The verses in the Quran, dealing with God's command to the angels to bow down to Adam are initiated with the words of God:

Behold, Thy Lord said to the angels *I will create a vicegerent on earth.*
(Quran, 2: 30)

When God tells the angels that he was about to create a '*kehalifa*' (vicegerent) on earth, the angels are bewildered for they know that this new creation of God will spread 'mischief' and 'shed blood' (Quran, 2:30). It is highly significant that just after this dialogue between God and the angels, the Quran mentions that 'He taught Adam the names of all things' and God challenged the angels to reveal such knowledge if they could (Quran, 2:31). The angels acknowledge their limitation, and recognize Adam's greatness of potential. Adam was, in fact asked by God to reveal to the angels, the special knowledge taught to him, and when he does so, the angels bow down in front of him. Adam was able to demonstrate that he, in fact, was the vicegerent of God on earth, given special attributes and special knowledge which made him superior to the rest of creation and even to the angels (Quran, 2:33).

All of the attributes that make human beings, potentially, superior to the rest of creation, are attributes that spring forth from these two phenomenon, when God breathed His Spirit into Adam (Quran, 15:29) and when God taught Adam 'the names of all things' (Quran, 2:31). By inference, all the attributes, qualities, faculties and knowledge possessed by the Macrocosmic Divine Spirit were now reflected within the microcosmic Adamic self. Ibn al-'Arabi gives the simile of the sun and the full moon to allude to the relationship between God and His vicegerent. He says that, 'the sun sees itself in the mirror of the full moon's essence,'²⁴ because it bestows on the moon its own light due to which it becomes the 'full moon.' Ibn al-'Arabi explains this relationship between God and the vicegerent in a way in which it becomes clear that all of God's qualities and attributes are reflected in the vicegerent.

So also the Real is seen in the essence of him whom He has taken as vicegerent, for he rules through God's ruling property in the cosmos. The Real witnesses him with the witnessing of him who has bestowed the light of knowledge upon him. He says, *I am placing in the earth a vicegerent* (Quran, 2:30). He taught him all the names, and He had the angels prostrate themselves to him, because He knew that they were prostrating themselves to Him. It is obvious that the vicegerent becomes manifest only in the attribute of the one who

appointed him vicegerent, so the ruling property belongs to the one who appointed him.²⁵

The following commentary on the verses of the Quran dealing with the creation of Adam supports Ibn al-‘Arabi’s argument that all the attributes which make human beings the ‘highest of creation’, specially such attributes as the highest of emotions: love and power of will, even the power to create and have an effect on one’s own destiny, were given to human beings when the spirit of God was breathed into Adam and he was taught the names and natures of all things. He writes:

It would seem that the angels, though holy and pure, endowed with power from God, yet represented only one side of Creation. We may imagine them without passion or emotion, of which the highest flower is love. If man was to be endowed with emotions, those emotions could lead him to the highest and drag him to the lowest. The power of will or choosing would have to go with them in order that man might steer his own bark. This power of will (when used right) gave him to some extent a mastery over his own fortunes and over nature, thus bringing him nearer to the God like nature, which has supreme mastery and will. The perfect vicegerent is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his principal.²⁶

Ibn al-‘Arabi explains this concept and the powerful role given to God’s vicegerent:

Once when Abu Yazid was in one of his placements with the Real, He said to him, “ Go out to the creatures with My attribute, so that he who sees you will see Me, and he who magnifies you will magnify Me.” To magnify the servants is to magnify their master, not them.²⁷

Analysis of the creative process reveals that knowledge is a prerequisite for the creation of anything. God creates because He has the knowledge and the will to create whatever He wants. God has the power of engendering (*takwin*), which is to say to a thing *Be and it is* (Quran, 16:40). God has knowledge of a thing and He has the ability to change this knowledge of a thing from the realm of the macrocosmic creative Imagination (*Barzakh*) to the realm of corporeal reality through the power of engendering (*takwin*). Even the word *Be* (*kun*) which is the powerful, yet simple, creative word of God, implies, that knowledge of that thing being created, was with God already.

Similarly in the passages of the Quran that were discussed earlier, Adam was given *the names of all things* (Quran, 2:31). This means that he was given knowledge of all things. The name of a thing is known in its true essence when the thing with all its qualities, attributes, variables, and its very nature is understood and recognized for what

it is, in reality. Therefore the fact that Adam was taught the 'names' of all things has been understood by commentators to mean, "The inner nature and qualities of things..."²⁸ It is because Adam was charged with the knowledge of the nature of all things that he could use this knowledge creatively through his will power, to forge the highest destiny for himself i.e. to become the vicegerent of God on earth.

The power of engendering is an attribute that belongs to some of the friends of God even in this world.²⁹ It is through their aspirations or the creative power of their hearts (*himma*) that they bring into existence whatever their hearts desire. Ibn al-'Arabi believes that every attribute of God can become reflected and manifested in the perfect servant (*al-insan al-kamil*). The only difference between the servant and the Lord in such a situation is that the first is qualified by *wujud*, while the second is qualified by non-existence.³⁰

From the above passages dealing with Ibn al-'Arabi's Quranic view of the Spirit, it can be concluded that the Universal Spirit originating from God's command is the hidden reality behind all creation. From the Universal Spirit (*ruh-i-kul*) God brought into existence the Universal Soul (*nafs-i-kul*). These correspond to the microcosmic human spirit (*ruh*) and the microcosmic human soul (*nafs*). Another dimension that can be inferred from studying Ibn al-'Arabi's works is that essentially, the relationship between God and both, the universal spirit, and the human soul, is a highly creative one, because God breathed His own Spirit within the completed form of both the universal macrocosmic Adam and the human microscopic Adam. Therefore the Spirit is the Source and Origin of all creativity. As Shahab-ud-din Umar bin Muhammad Suhrawardi, a contemporary Sufi saint and another master of the esoteric sciences writes in his *Awarif-ul-Ma'arif*, from this universal spirit God opened up the, 'great river from the sea of life...so that ever from it might seek aid of the bounty of life; might add to the parts of the universe; might convey the form of divine worlds from the establishment-place of collection (the Holy Existence) to the place of separation, (the world) might give, with the essence of abridgement, dignity in the essence of division.'³¹

God created the universal *nafs* from the universal spirit. Another reason why the relationship between the spirit and soul is essentially a creative one is because it is through the union of the active masculine principle of spirit with the receptive feminine principle of the soul that the progeny of Adam and Eve were created. To quote

Suhrawrdi, whose reading of these cosmological and ontological realities is very similar to Ibn al-‘Arabi’s,

Hawva’s birth from Adam is like unto the birth of *nafs* from *ruh*, and the effects of the marriage of *nafs* and *ruh*, and the attraction of male and of female, became assigned to Adam and *Hawva* [Eve].³²

Ruh being the hidden male, active, principle and *nafs* being the hidden, female, receptive principle; the atoms of progeny came into existence through the union of Adam and Eve. Therefore, ‘The existence of Adam and *Hawva* became the exemplar of the existence of *ruh* and *nafs*.’³³

Another result from the union of *ruh* and *nafs* was the birth of the *qalb* (heart). The form of the male out of the children of Adam is from the form of the universal spirit (*ruh-i-kuul*) and the form of the female is from the form of the universal soul (*nafs-i-kuul*).³⁴

Ibn al-‘Arabi sees Adam as one who represents the active, masculine creative principle in the universe and the one in whom God blew His own Spirit (*ruh*). Adam was endowed with the knowledge of God’s names, attributes, the inter relationships of all these attributes with each other and with all of creation through the blowing of God’s Spirit into him.³⁵ By virtue of this all-comprehensive knowledge, Adam was given command and control of all creation.

By this knowledge, Adam was given the potentiality to realize all God’s attributes, within himself. Even the knowledge of the attribute, the Creator (*al-khaliq*), and the Author (*al-bari*) and the Giver of forms (*al-musawwir*), was given to Adam by virtue of these names. Adam could act as the creator, author and giver of forms, when God willed, in the universe.

Thus the [divine] Command required [by its very nature] the reflective characteristic of the mirror of the Cosmos, and Adam was the very principle of reflection for that mirror and the spirit of that form, while the angels were only certain faculties of that form which was the form of the Cosmos, called in the terminology of the Folk, the Great Man.³⁶

When a human being actualizes the true potential of the *ruh*, which contains the names of all things, he actualizes the divine names, attributes and the relationship between these divine names and attributes in his/her specific personality. This results in the acquisition of knowledge about all the various realms of existence. Such a perfected human being realizes within himself/herself, the all-comprehensive names of Allah and becomes the vicegerent of God on earth.³⁷

The angels recognized the power and position granted to Adam, both at the macrocosmic level and at the microcosmic level and so they all bowed down to him, except for *Iblis*. God uses the angels as agents of creativity and creation, yet the angels realized that Adam had been given an all-comprehensive knowledge, far surpassing, what they themselves possessed, therefore they prostrated in front of Adam.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

¹ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom: Fusus al-Hikam*, Translated by Ralph W. J. Austin, Lahore, Suhail Academy, 1999, p.60.

² *Ibid*, p.50.

³ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, II 272. 21.Cited in Chittick, William C. *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-Arabi’s Cosmology*. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000, p. 272.

⁴ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Quran*, Gibraltar, Dar al Andalus, 1980, p.393.

⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhāt*, II 272. 21.Cited in Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 272.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhāt*, II 172.4, Cited in *ibid*. p.274.

⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhāt*, I 119.10. Cited in *ibid*. 273.

⁹ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhāt*, II 172.4. Cited in *ibid*. 274.

¹⁰ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 274.

¹¹ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhāt*, II 540.11. Cited in *ibid*.

¹² Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 274.

¹³ Quran, 4:1, 6:98, 39:6.

¹⁴ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 272.

¹⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, II 272.21. Cited in *ibid*.

¹⁶ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, III 356.2. Cited in *ibid*.,277.

¹⁷ Abdullah Yousaf Ali, trans. and commentary of, *The Holy Quran*, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1987, 1605.

¹⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, III 477.31. Cited in Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 286.

¹⁹ Jallaluddin Rumi, *Mathnawi*, II: 184-189. Cited in Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim, (Lahore: 1999), 7.

²⁰ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 286.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, III 477.31. Cited in *ibid*., 286.

²³ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, III 186.30. Cited in *ibid*., 289.

²⁴ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhāt al-makkiyya*, III 186.30. Cited in, Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 214.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁶ Abdullah Yousaf Ali, trans. *The Holy Quran*, 1605.

²⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhat*, III 186.30. Cited in, Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, p.214.

²⁸ Abdullah Yousaf Ali, trans. *The Holy Quran*, 24.

²⁹ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 48.

³⁰ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, I 733.35. Cited in, *Ibid*.

³¹ Sheikh Shahab-ud-din Umar Bin Muhammad Suhrawardi, *Awarif-ul-Ma’arif*, translated from Arabic into Persian by Mahmud Bin Ali Al-Kashani, translated from the Persian into English by Lient.Col. H. Wilberforce Clarke, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991), Chapter Marifat-I-Ruh. 135-138.

³² Suhrawardi, *Awarif*, 137.

³³ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 50.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Futuhat*, III 186.30. Cited in, Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 214.