



MUHAMMAD IQBAL

ESSAYS ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF
MODERN MUSLIM THOUGHT

EDITED BY
H. C. HILLIER & BASIT BILAL KOSHUL

Muhammad Iqbal

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Modern Muslim Thought**

**Edited by H. C. Hillier and
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Contents

Preface	vii
1 Introduction <i>Riffat Hassan</i>	1
2 The Human Person in Iqbal's Thought <i>Ebrahim Moosa</i>	12
3 Achieving Humanity: Convergence between Henri Bergson and Muhammad Iqbal <i>Souleymane Bachir Diagne</i>	33
4 The Contemporary Relevance of Muhammad Iqbal <i>Basit Bilal Koshul</i>	56
5 Pragmatism and Islam in Peirce and Iqbal: The Metaphysics of Emergent Mind <i>Richard Gilmore</i>	88
6 Between Hegel and Rumi: Iqbal's Contrapuntal Encounters with the Islamic Philosophical Traditions <i>Sajjad Rizvi</i>	112
7 Reconstructing Islam in a Post-metaphysical Age: Muhammad Iqbal's Interpretation of Immortality <i>Christopher Scott McClure</i>	142

8	Iqbal, Bergson and the Reconstruction of the Divine Nexus in Political Thought <i>H. C. Hillier</i>	167
9	Muhammad Iqbal: Restoring Muslim Dignity through Poetry, Philosophy and Religious Political Action <i>Dayne E. Nix</i>	201
	Index	235

Preface

There are few moments in human history where the forces of religion, culture, and politics converge to produce some of the most significant ideas and movements in the world. India in the early twentieth century was one of these moments, where the rise of activist-thinkers like Nehru, Jinnah, and Gandhi not only liberated human lives but their minds as well. Among them was the poet, philosopher, and politician Sir Muhammad Iqbal (widely known as Allama Iqbal) (1877–1938). He is widely considered one of the most original and influential Muslim thinkers of modern times. Standing between multiple worlds – the worlds of British colonialism and post-colonial India, the worlds of Islamic and European civilisations, and the worlds of tradition and modernity (among others) – Iqbal aspired to build bridges where others only saw divides and thereby transform the way that we know our world and the manner in which we act in it.

Commonly known as the ‘spiritual father of Pakistan’, the philosophical and political ideas of Iqbal not only shaped the face of Indo-Pakistani Muslim nationalism, but also the direction of modernist reformist Islam around the world. As a subject under the colonial British Raj, the immediate threat perceived by Iqbal was not merely religious but also intellectual and sociopolitical. While Muslims and Hindus under the British Raj had some religious freedom, politically they were still a largely marginalised and disempowered population who were denied full civil participation. From

this context, Iqbal understood his project as contributing to a wider political debate on the place of the religious person in the modern political world. In order to advocate his cause and resolve the worldview crisis of modernised sociopolitical and philosophical thought, Iqbal undertakes the enormous task of the ‘reconstruction of religious thought in Islam’. To begin with, he finds warrants for this project in the history of the tradition he is reconstructing. Beginning with this warrant he goes on to combine the resources already present in this tradition with developments in Western philosophy and science in order to present a view of a historic religion. His reconstructed vision of Islam makes Islam not only consistent and relevant to the modern world but also shows that Islam can make a uniquely valuable contribution to the culture of the global village.

While Iqbal’s thought has always drawn much attention in the Muslim world, he has drawn only cursory attention in the West. However, in recent years there has been a marked increase in the study of Iqbal in Western academia. Examining Iqbal’s influence on modern philosophy and Islamic thought has seen a renaissance over the past decade. Connections are being made by new scholarship regarding both his influence on the major reformist thinkers around the Muslim world and his relationship with key European philosophers of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth. The present volume reflects and contributes to this growing interest. The volume is composed of chapters by both established and emerging scholars from various academic fields (philosophy, political science, religious studies and so forth) whose voices relate to Iqbal in different ways. Consequently, this book offers both varied and novel examinations of the ideas that lay at the heart of Iqbal’s own thought on topics such as religion, science, metaphysics, nationalism, and religious identity. In this text, the reader will (re)discover many new connections between the ‘Poet of the East’ and some of the greatest thinkers and ideas from both the Islamic and Western traditions.

This book opens with an ‘Introduction’ by Riffat Hassan (University of Louisville, United States), a pioneer in Iqbal studies and women rights advocacy around the world. In her essay, Hassan highlights Iqbal’s paradoxical extraordinary uniqueness as both a poet and philosopher. The ability to communicate both logical and symbolic concepts, even those that shy away from logical assertion, is exceptional in its own right. Yet to also inspire

and energise millions, places him in an exclusive position within human history. Hassan continues to highlight Iqbal's most significant intellectual contributions to humanity, notably his concept of *khudi* (selfhood), *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), mysticism, and a commitment to a religion that empowers believers. From these, one can still see how Iqbal becomes a renewed source of inspiration for those today torn between tradition and modernity, between their own culture and Westernisation.

In Chapter 2, Ebrahim Moosa (University of Notre Dame, United States) examines the philosophical anthropology of Muhammad Iqbal's theory of *khudi* (selfhood or personhood). Asserting that this is Iqbal's greatest contribution to philosophy, Moosa shows how Iqbal rehabilitated the concept and used it as the source of inspiration for the social reconstruction of Muslim society. Stripped of its selfish egotism, and rooted in Iqbal's epistemological metaphysics of intuition, *khudi* now becomes a positive signifier for a renewed identity for the individual and also the impetus for a creative revolution (or a revolution of creation) in the world.

In Chapter 3, Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Columbia University, United States) highlights the 'convergence' between the philosophers Muhammad Iqbal and Henri Bergson on key philosophical concepts. At the centre of this encounter is the theory of the self (*khudi*). This vision of ego-unity challenges the empiricist and rationalistic theory of the self as a unity of consciousness and is rooted in the intuitive experience of reality rather than the fragmented sense-based experience of the world. For both philosophers, this intuitive experience of reality reveals an inherent unity of the vitality-empowered cosmos. In a vision that seeks to free the interpretation of the Qur'an from the cosmology of Greek philosophy, Iqbal sees the cosmos as being fundamentally characterised by continuous creation, novelty, and originality. According to both Bergson and Iqbal, this cosmology manifests itself in human societies, where the intuitively inspired creative openness of mystics and prophets founds and drives them forward towards new possibilities and horizons.

In light of renewed interest in his thought, Chapter 4 has Basit Bilal Koshul (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan) analysing Muhammad Iqbal's continuing relevance. Asserting that the centre of this continuing relevance has its roots in the ability of Iqbal's philosophy to bridge

the divide between religion and science, Koshul divides his analysis into three parts. The first part examines the 'One/Many' problem in the universe through Iqbal's concepts of *khudi* and the reality of God. Using the analysis offered by Robert Whitemore and Muhammad Rafiuddin, Koshul shows how Iqbal's philosophy is (in Whitemore's words) an 'achievement possessing a philosophical importance far transcending the world of Islam'. The second part of the chapter offers an illustrative example of how religion and science come into dialogue in Iqbal's thought. Koshul shows Iqbal critiquing and repairing the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments for the existence of God by combining the findings of modern science with the wisdom of the Qur'an. In the third part of the chapter, Koshul suggests that the dialogue between religion and science at the core of Iqbal's thought can be better understood through the lens provided by Charles Peirce's pragmatism. If Peirce does indeed clarify the critical aspects of Iqbal's thought, the implications are far reaching in terms of Iqbal's contemporary relevance, as there has been resurgence of interest in Peirce's thought in recent years also.

In Chapter 5, Richard Gilmore (Concordia College, United States) seeks to map the philosophies of Muhammad Iqbal and Charles Peirce upon each other by identifying parallels between the two. Gilmore begins by asserting that both philosophers root their systems in a theory of 'mind' as a driver of metaphysical change. Moreover, he identifies the methodological parallel between Iqbal's understanding of Islam and American pragmatism in emphasising the 'by their fruits, ye shall know them' evaluation of human actions and beliefs. This parallel is brought to the fore when Iqbal's conception of *tauhid* ('oneness (of God)') and Peirce's conception of 'personality' are compared. Gilmore identifies and discusses additional parallels between Iqbal and Peirce, including nature possessing signs of transcendence, rejection of scientific mechanical cosmology, creative development of the ego, and teleological drive of the cosmos towards harmony. Gilmore further develops implications of this last parallel and shows how both authors demonstrate that the creative work of God (the ultimate ego) facilitates the emergence of the emergent within a cosmos being moved towards greater unity and harmony (*tauhid*) and thereby provides humanity with a moral imperative to do the same. Ultimately, Gilmore argues that Iqbal and Peirce share a common mission of repair (*tikkun*), repairing what modernity had damaged by refocusing our

attention upon the genuinely progressive teleological causality at the heart of the cosmos.

In Chapter 6, Sajjad Rizvi (University of Exeter, United Kingdom) examines Muhammad Iqbal's place in South Asian thought, via his interaction with contemporary Muslim and European ideas and thinkers. Rizvi argues that Iqbal transcends all attempts to limit his philosophy to a particular school or influence. Thus, Iqbal becomes one of the few South Asian intellectuals who reassessed their heritage and sought for it a space within European thought. Rizvi then divides Iqbal's intellectual history into three phases: early Indian, middle European, and late Indian. In each phase Rizvi contrasts Iqbal with particular individuals and schools to show that Iqbal neither returned to religious tradition nor completely embraced modernity, but may be described best as a Muslim existentialist in light of his doctrines of *khudi*, free creative power, and open possibility.

In Chapter 7, Christopher Scott McClure (Harvard University, United States) examines the doctrine of immortality in Muhammad Iqbal's thought, flushing out its religious and social impact. McClure asserts that Iqbal presents a thoroughly modern theory of immortality – one rooted in teleology rather than metaphysics. Immortality is understood in two ways, as personal immortality and immortality in history. These two kinds of immortality exist in tension with each other. Iqbal reinterprets the traditional Islamic conception of immortality and resurrection as a reward to it being a culmination of the life-process of the ego. However, this vision of immortality depends upon human actions and these actions happen within a society and may be even political. The implications are far-reaching for religion and society, including the believers' freedom to interpret their own religion (that is, *ijtihad*) and asserting a place in India's future.

In Chapter 8, H. C. Hillier (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada) examines the reconstruction of the divine nexus in political thought in Muhammad Iqbal and Henri Bergson. Articulated in Mark Lilla's book *Stillborn God* (2007), the divine nexus (that is, the intersection of God, man, and the world) in Western political thought was abandoned in the early modern period and no thinker has effectively re-conceptualised it since. Contrary to Lilla, Hillier argues that through their shared metaphysical and epistemological ideas (for example, fundamental unity of human experience, the singularity of reality,

intuition, cosmological change and duration, *élan vital* (vital impetus/force), and the *khudi* ego-self) Iqbal and Bergson form a new philosophical foundation that puts God at the centre of cosmos. In this, both identify the centrality of prophecy/mysticism in the collective life of society and show the indispensable role that religion plays in challenging those political realities in the world that threaten human dignity, freedom, and well-being.

In the final chapter, Dayne E. Nix (Naval War College, United States) seeks to show how Muhammad Iqbal aimed to re-establish Muslim dignity under the British Raj. Nix argues that Iqbal diagnosed a wound within the modern Muslim soul, caused by two injuries – first, a paternalistic colonialism justified through particular sociopolitical, philosophical, and religious doctrines and, second, the intellectual laziness and lack of courage on the part of the Muslims themselves. The medicine that Iqbal prescribes is the empowerment of the self (that is, *khudi*). These newly empowered Muslims will be able to revitalise the community and confidently assert themselves against oppressive rule. In order to see a *khudi*-empowered community realised, however, Indian-Muslims need to be committed to instilling the necessary character traits within themselves.

In these chapters, we hope that readers will see the numerous nuances of Iqbal's thought, the multiplicities of connections that exist with major strands of twentieth-century philosophy, and come to appreciate how satisfying it is to become lost in the thought of this intellectual giant. With this, we would like to thank Edinburgh University Press (EUP), our editors Nicola Ramsey and Ellie Bush, and to everyone at EUP involved in this volume for their commitment to expanding Islamic Studies and their patience with our efforts in doing so. Finally, we would like to thank our families for their enduring support and unconditional devotion.

H. C. Hillier
Toronto, Canada

Basit Bilal Koshul
Lahore, Pakistan



Introduction

Riffat Hassan

University of Louisville, United States

Iqbal – poet, philosopher, educator, lawyer, political activist, social reformer – is unmatched in his versatility and breadth of knowledge and vision. He was the last and greatest thinker of the historic ‘Aligarh Movement’ that brought about a paradigm shift in the consciousness of Indian Muslims and transformed their destiny. However, Iqbal’s place in history is not limited to his role as a modernist, reformist Muslim thinker in India. In my judgement, he is the most outstanding poet-philosopher of the world of Islam, and probably of the world in general, since the death of his *murshid* (spiritual guide) Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (b. 1207) in 1273.

Iqbal is exceptional in many ways. He was a poet and thinker of extraordinary stature. The fact that he was able to combine poetry and philosophy as well as he did is a phenomenal accomplishment. By its very nature, poetry, working through symbols, avoids statement and prefers suggestion, whereas philosophy, dealing with logical categories and concepts, demands preciseness in thought and expression. Therefore, in a sense, a poet-philosopher is a paradox.

However, this paradox finds its basis in human nature itself. There is, in human beings, a straining both towards, and away from, definition of thought and feeling. This psychological phenomenon has found different expressions in the history of literature and philosophy. Sometimes it has led to poetry becoming philosophical or to philosophy becoming poetical, and

sometimes to a complete bifurcation between poetry and philosophy (the quarrel between the poet and the philosopher being an ancient one). The joining of poetry and philosophy in an integrated whole – as in the case of Rumi and Iqbal – is a rare accomplishment.

There is one way in which Iqbal is not just extraordinary, but unique. No poet or philosopher in the history of the world has inspired and energised millions of people as he did. What he did constituted historic action, for, as Alfred Lord Tennyson proclaimed, ‘A song that nerves a nation’s heart is in itself a deed’ (2014). From a young age, he became the voice of the Indian Muslims who felt like ‘a caged bird’ (Iqbal 2008), having lost their political position, economic opportunity, and cultural autonomy to the British colonisers. Iqbal understood their feelings and represented them poignantly. However, his mission was to awaken and energise Indian Muslims who had become deeply despondent in the aftermath of the disturbing events of 1857–8 that had made them the chief target of British wrath and discriminatory legislation. His passionate voice made them conscious of what they could achieve individually as well as collectively by developing their *khudi* (selfhood). He motivated them not only to strive to free themselves from the bondage of imperialism and colonialism, but also to challenge other forms of totalitarian control, such as traditionalism, authoritarianism (religious, political, economic), tribalism, racism, classism or caste system, and slavery. This concern is reflected in much of Iqbal’s writing. He believed passionately in freedom, which he considered to be ‘the very breath of vital living’ (Saiyidain 1960: 40). Believing fervently in human equality and the right of human beings to dignity, justice, and freedom, Iqbal empowered the disempowered to stand up and be counted.

Iqbal’s uniqueness lies not only in the fact that he was able to infuse his emotional and spiritual zeal in others, but also in that he was able to place before them a concrete course of action for the attainment of their objectives. The first line of his memorable lectures *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* states, ‘The Qur’an is a book which emphasizes “deed” rather than “idea”’ (Iqbal 1999: xxi). Iqbal’s work as a poet-philosopher is both highly reflective as well as analytical, but its fundamental goal was practical, aiming at the inner and outer transformation of the individual and community. A rare tribute was paid to Iqbal by the British poet, essayist, and literary critic,

Sir Herbert Read in the context of evaluating a poet's work by assessing its applicability. Stating that Iqbal was the only poet in the world whose work met the ideal of 'workability or direct use', Read said,

Applying it here and now, I can think of only one living poet who in any way sustains the test . . . I mean Muhammad Iqbal whose poem *Asrar-e-Khudi* crystallizes in its beauty the most essential phases of modern philosophy, making a unity of faith out of its multiplicity of ideas, a universal aspiration cut of the esoteric logic of the schools. (Anand 1937: 31)

Central to Iqbal's vision is his philosophy of *khudi*, which is his greatest contribution to world thought. Developed in a certain historical context wherein the most burning questions that confronted Indian Muslims were concerned, directly or indirectly, with politics, this philosophy was Iqbal's intellectual response to the political and cultural realities of his time. But as he grappled with the particular issues that confronted the Muslim community of India during the final, and most difficult, phase of its struggle for freedom from alien domination – whether of the British or of the Hindus – *Iqbal developed a philosophical vision that was not bound to any land or time*. That is why his message is of crucial importance and relevance not only to Pakistanis and Muslims, but also to the world at large.

Iqbal presented a detailed exposition of his philosophy of *khudi* in *Asrar-e-Khudi*, his first book of poetry published in 1915, in which he pointed out that *khudi* 'has the quality of growth as well as the quality of corruption' (Iqbal 1964a: 239). This view echoes a core Qur'anic concept, namely that humanity 'made in the best of moulds' has the potential to rise to be God's *khalifa* (vicegerent) on Earth, but can also sink to become the 'lowest of the low' (Qur'an 95: 4–5). Iqbal believed that *khudi* was strengthened by the inculcation of positive characteristics and weakened by having negative traits. In elaborating upon these characteristics and traits, Iqbal presented his blueprint for action that would lead to intellectually sound, ethically based, and spiritually grounded development of individuals and communities.

The publication of *Asrar-e-Khudi*, in which Iqbal had undertaken to shake millions out of slumber and sloth, was a momentous event. His biographer, Iqbal Singh, notes that in Iqbal's view, 'The world of Islamic thought

had to be purged of all that was impure, meretricious and alien' (1951: 82). In particular, the false and delusive metaphysics that overlaid the core of Qur'anic teaching, destroying the health and vitality of the Muslim people, had to be purged. With its publication, Iqbal's commitment to the philosophy of *khudi* (with all that its practical application entailed) was complete. He had become fully conscious of his mission. He was to be an awakener, a revealer of the secrets of reality, who came 'forward as an apostle, if not to his own age, then to posterity' (Nicholson 1964: ix) as observed by Professor R. A. Nicholson.¹ This translation, which was published in 1920 along with Professor Nicholson's detailed introduction, made Iqbal the focus of serious attention in Europe.

Iqbal ardently believed that human beings were the makers of their own destiny and that the key to destiny lay in one's character. In one of his best-known couplets, he said:

Your *Khudi* elevate to such a height that ere each Judgment
 God Himself asks of His creature 'What is your desire?' (Iqbal 1966:
 81–2)

As pointed out by E. M. Forster, Iqbal regarded *khudi* as 'a fighting unit' (1961: 296). His philosophy was essentially a philosophy of action concerned primarily with motivating human beings to strive to actualise their God-given potential to the fullest degree. He constantly referred to the Qur'anic verse, 'Verily God will not change the condition of a people till they change what is in themselves' (Qur'an 13: 12). The goal of Iqbal's philosophy was personal and social transformation inspired by the Qur'anic vision embodied in the proclamation, 'Toward God is your limit' (Qur'an 53: 42).

Iqbal is sometimes described as a 'committed' poet, which means that he is committed to a defence or vindication of Islam. As Robert Whitemore rightly observes, Iqbal's work is 'from first to last, the work of a Muslim. At every point he is at pains to indicate his conviction that his teaching is in all respects harmonious with the spirit and teaching of the Qur'an. He speaks and writes always from a standpoint within Islam' (1966: 76). Iqbal, no doubt, begins and ends with Islam, but his interpretation of Islam differs very widely from the narrow meaning that is sometimes given to it. For Iqbal, Islam is not just the name for certain beliefs and forms of worship. The differ-

ence between a Muslim and a non-Muslim is not merely a theological one – it is a difference of the fundamental attitude toward life. We hear Iqbal saying repeatedly that a person who does not love or does not participate in creative activity is not a Muslim. We also hear him saying in classic lines, ‘The infidel with a wakeful heart praying to an idol is better than a religious man asleep in the sanctuary’ (Iqbal 1947: 40).

In other words, Iqbal begins with Islam because he regards it as a universal religion that repudiates the idea of race, colour, and country and does not separate the religious and political life of humanity. If Iqbal never went beyond Islam, it is only because he believed that Islam, if properly understood and practised, could satisfy all human needs and aspirations. Although he was a devout Muslim, there is in Iqbal’s words a message even for those who do not share his religious beliefs. E. M. Forster points out that Iqbal, ‘whatever his opinions, was no fanatic, and he refers to Hindus and Christians with courtesy and respect’ (1961: 296).

Since *Rumuz-e-Bekhudī* (1916), in which Iqbal focused on the development of communal Selfhood, was dedicated to the Muslims, he was accused by some non-Muslim critics, such as Lowes Dickinson at the University of Cambridge, of being narrow and exclusive in his ideals. Strongly denying the allegation, Iqbal stated in a letter to Professor Nicholson:

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 . . . with a society exclusive in the sense of having a creed and a well-defined outline, but ever enlarging its limit by example and persuasion; such a society, according to my belief, is Islam. All men and not Muslims alone are meant for the Kingdom of God on earth, provided they say goodbye to their idols of race and nationality and treat one another as personalities. The object of my Persian poems is not to make out a case for Islam, my aim is simply to discover a universal reconstruction, and in this endeavor, 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 unworldliness so absolutely essential to man in his relations with his neighbors. (Iqbal 1964b: 98–9)

Today, as millions of Muslims, especially the youth, are at a crossroads, torn between traditionalism and modernity, loyalty to their own culture and Westernisation, seeking to have a new understanding of who they are, what Islam is, and what direction they should take, Iqbal's wisdom is needed more than ever. His message is more relevant and important to them than that of any other Muslim thinker of the past and present because he faced the challenges of both traditionalism and modernity fearlessly by building his philosophy on the integrated vision of the Qur'an. He had always regarded the Qur'an – of which he had been a dedicated reader since childhood – as the fountainhead of his philosophy. It was the purpose, in a sense, of his whole life to rediscover the wisdom of the Qur'an. As pointed out by the Italian scholar of Islam Alessandro Bausani: 'Iqbal's insight into the genuine spirit of the book (the Qur'an) was better than that of a good many Muslim theologians, past and present' (1954: 178).

H. A. R. Gibb, the well-known scholar of Islam, had pointed out that although much has been written on Muslim thought in the modern period, 'one looks in vain for any systematic analysis of new currents of thought in the Muslim world' and that '[a]lmost 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' (1946: ix). Recognising Iqbal's unique role in the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam, Gibb stated that the 'outstanding exception is . . . Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who in his six lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* faces outright the question of reformulating the basic ideas of Muslim theology' and demands 'a fresh examination of the fundamentals of Islamic belief' (ix–x). In the opinion of another noteworthy scholar of Islam W. C. Smith, theologically, Iqbal 'wrought the most important and the most necessary revolution of modern times' (1946: 122).

Gibb insightfully observed that the theology that Iqbal was aiming to reconstruct was not the orthodox theology of Islam but Sufi theology. He sought to reform contemporary Sufi thinking and practices in the light of his understanding of the Qur'anic perspective of the relationship of humanity to God and creation. He was a reformer not only of Sufi theology but also of what was taken by many to be Sufi ethics. Iqbal is essentially a mystic both in

thought and action because he considered the relation between humanity and God to be a personal one and attached great importance to prayer in his philosophy. Iqbal believed that, through prayer, human beings could attain the *me'raj* (ascension) into the presence of God and that this experience would transform their inner being that, in turn, would enable them to fulfil their role as God's *khalifa* (vicegerent) on Earth. Iqbal's deep personal relationship with God is manifested in his poems in which he addresses God directly with a candour and boldness that is not found in the words of any other poet in the world. Only a person who had profound faith in, and love for, God could have written a poem such as 'Shikwa' ('Complaint to God') (Iqbal 2008: 158–64). Without doubt, the depth and uniqueness of Iqbal's relationship to God is the most important source of the astounding power of his words.

In a sense, Iqbal is a mystic in revolt against mysticism. He protests unceasingly and vehemently against the ideal of passive contemplation and self-renunciation so dear to many mystics. He refers to the Qur'an's emphasis on 'deed' and says that it is contrary to the true spirit of Islam to turn away from the joy and struggle of actual living and seek refuge in otherworldliness. Iqbal's ideal person does not retreat from the world but regards it as the training ground for spiritual development.

However, despite all his attacks on what he calls 'degenerate Sufism', Iqbal belongs, as his translator A. J. Arberry has stated, 'to the history of Sufism, to which he made both scientific and practical contributions' (1942: 47). Iqbal acknowledges his indebtedness to 'higher Sufism', which did so much to check hypocrisy and artifice in religion. In a letter to Professor Nicholson, Iqbal stated that his philosophy of *Khudi* was a 'direct development out of the experience and speculation of old Muslim Sufis and thinkers' (1964b: 101). Arberry rightly observes that eager as Iqbal was to purge Islam of all alien obscurantist elements, in formulating his own philosophy 'not only did he turn back to Rumi and the medieval mystics to discover antecedents within Islam for the system for which he sought acceptance, but he cast his thoughts in the mould of Sufi allegory that has been sanctified by centuries of Persian poetry' (Arberry 1950: 133).

The Muslim modernist reformers of the last three hundred years, acutely conscious of the stagnation and decadence that had sapped the creative energy of their societies, had looked back at the stupendously successful early

centuries of Islam when Muslims had founded not only an empire stretching from Spain to India, but also a great civilisation. They attributed the extraordinary success of the early Muslims mainly to their fidelity to Qur'anic principles and the Prophetic example, as well as to their spirit of free enquiry. To infuse the spirit of the early Muslims in their own community, they adopted 'Back to the Qur'an, Forward with *ijtihad*' (independent reasoning) as their slogan or rallying-cry. They wanted to rediscover the fundamental principles and teachings of the Qur'an that had been obscured and overlaid by later accretions, and apply their reason to determine how these principles or teachings could be implemented in their contemporary society. Iqbal, also, was an ardent believer in going back to the Qur'an and going forward with *ijtihad*, which he called 'The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam'. Therefore, while strongly advocating a return to the Qur'an that he regarded as fundamental to Islam, he also sought to re-infuse the dynamism of original Islam through the application of 'modern', 'liberal' ideas. This can be seen in the following memorable statement from Iqbal's *Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

I know the 'Ulama of Islam claim finality for the popular school of Muslim Law. For fear of . . . disintegration, the conservative thinkers of Islam focused all their efforts on the one point of preserving a uniform social life for the people by a jealous exclusion of all innovations in the law of *Shari'at* as expounded by the early doctors of Islam . . . Since things have changed and the world of Islam is today confronted and affected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all its directions, I see no reason why this attitude (of the 'Ulama) should be maintained any longer . . . *The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to re-interpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and altered conditions of modern life, is in my opinion, perfectly justified. The teaching of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems.* (Iqbal 1999: 133–4; emphasis mine)

Iqbal was a visionary and courageous thinker, an imaginative and innovative poet, and a master educator, who can teach contemporary humanity so

many things that it needs to know. In a bitterly divided world, Iqbal – both as a poet and as a philosopher – undertook the task of uniting faith and knowledge, love and reason, heart and mind. It would be true to say that in modern times if any thinker has succeeded – to whatever degree – in the task of building a bridge between East and West, it is Iqbal. For this task, few are qualified, and even for those who are qualified – as Iqbal pre-eminently was – the journey is full of hazards and the road is long, lonely, and arduous. His life – from beginning to end – was an extraordinary life in which he confronted multi-faceted challenges, difficulties, and disappointments. However, Iqbal's profound faith in *tawheed* (oneness of God) that implied the unity and equality of all humankind, kept him faithful to his ideal of universal love. This made it possible for him to envision a world no longer divided into irreconcilable oppositions, a world in which human beings were at peace with themselves, with their fellow beings, and with God.

Paying high tribute to Iqbal who strove for the unification of diverse aspects of life, the late Mr Zakir Hussain, a former president of India, said:

What is it that Iqbal does not give to him who seeks? He gives strength to the weak and a meaning to strength. He awakens the urge for a full, all-round, harmonious development of personality, for the devoted and selfless service of social ideas which alone make life worth the living. He gives to the pale, anemic calculations of the intellect the possibility to draw upon the unlimited resources of emotion and instincts, disciplined, chastened, ennobled by faith, and by creative activity. (Hussain cited in Sinha 1947: 449)

Likewise, I would like to end my brief introduction on Iqbal with a personal statement. I believe that Iqbal is an invaluable resource not only for Pakistanis who regard him as the 'spiritual founder' of their country, but for all humanity. His breadth of vision and depth of wisdom have lifted his philosophy to a plane where great minds of all times meet despite the differences of environment and circumstance that separate them otherwise. While it is not possible for me to recount in a few words what Iqbal means to me and the myriad ways in which he has influenced my life and thought, I would like to pay heart-felt homage to him for taking such joy and pride in being a human being. I do not believe that in the vast annals of history one can find anyone who could say – with so much power and passion – what Iqbal proclaimed:

Priceless treasure is the agony and burning of passionate desire –
 I would not exchange my station as a human being for the glory of Godhead.
 (Iqbal 1966: 21)

Note

1. R. A. Nicholson, who translated Iqbal's *Asrar-e-Khudi* into English, was a professor at the University of Cambridge and was regarded as the greatest authority on Sufi mysticism of his day.

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2

The Human Person in Iqbal's Thought¹

Ebrahim Moosa

University of Notre Dame, United States

Henri Bergson, the renowned French philosopher, wrote that each philosopher has only one great thing to say. This may also be true of Muhammad Iqbal (1875–1938) who greatly admired his French contemporary. In his own writings on poetry, philosophy, and politics, Iqbal had a singular preoccupation: the self or selfhood, called *khudi*, but that would be discussed in today's lexicon under the rubric of personhood, the human person, or the human condition.

Iqbal's contribution to modern Muslim philosophy and thought was not only his relentless effort to understand the impact of modernity on Islam and Muslims, but his writings also reveal his own titanic struggles to come to terms with a modern Muslim self and the construction of personhood in the early twentieth century. Iqbal was fully aware that ideas and concepts and the lifeworlds that humans inhabit were not givens but rather constantly constructed: societies were retooled conceptually and technologically; communities were constantly reconstructed in tandem with the evolution of the imaginaries and spirits of individuals.

Therefore, Iqbal could confidently appeal to Muslims to construct a new thought. He wrote challengingly saying: 'Nor can the concepts of theological systems, draped in the terminology of a practically dead metaphysics, be of any help to those who happen to possess a different intellectual background' (Iqbal 1999: 78). He fully understood the fact that the lived conditions

of each epoch generated their own founding myths and metaphysics, even though there was also a succession of ideas, or what we would call the continuity and discontinuity of thought. When Iqbal offered some brief outlines of the ideas of pioneering figures who, in one way or the other, had renovated religious thought in Islam in the past, he was clearly trying to urge Muslims to find the optimal set of ideas for the human condition as experienced in his day. In his critical readings of scripture, theology, prayer, philosophy, and ethics in his pioneering lectures published as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal offered hints and delicately suggested pathways that he hoped others would pursue. The world of Islam, he proposed, 'should courageously proceed to the work of reconstruction', which was more than 'mere adjustment to modern conditions of life' (Iqbal 1999: 142). Encouraging the next generation of thinkers, he wrote with hope but also categorically that

[t]he task before the modern Muslim is therefore, immense. He has to rethink the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past. Perhaps the first Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit in him was Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi . . . The only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of that knowledge, even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us. (Iqbal 1999: 78)

The Human Person and the Paradox of Revelation

Iqbal made the notion of the self a keystone concept for Muslim selfhood. He rehabilitated the Persian notion of *khudi* by divesting it of its negative meanings of selfishness and egotism, two prevalent meanings in Persian and later Urdu uses of the term. He subverted *khudi* into an affirmative and constructive rendering. Iqbal reconstructed and then redeployed *khudi* in multiple uses and forms, making it the centrepiece of both his poetic and political aesthetics. In this sense, Iqbal produced an intellectual masterstroke by repetitively brandishing the notion of selfhood and the self as the essential element of the human condition to his multiple audiences. Bereft of self and selfhood, the human was a mere husk. But his intellectual gesture was carefully calibrated; it was a reflexive one, caught between the security of tradition and the self-questioning impulses of modernity. He was fully aware of the

fact that to question or alter the inherited notion of the self would have multiple cultural and philosophical implications. But with one eye on history, he was fully aware of how Muslim mystics, philosophers, and the pious in every age forged a notion of the self. Since he frequently referred to al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Rumi, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche he was not unaware of their roles as architects and thinkers who devoted their energies to understanding the human person and the human condition. It was an issue that preoccupied individuals and societies in the modern age and still persists. For most of the twentieth century, scholars of religion, philosophy, and literature, indeed nearly all thinkers in the human sciences, social sciences, and even in the natural sciences spilt a good amount of ink on one subject, namely, the theme of the human self.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that in his many poems and in his path-breaking text *Reconstruction*, all of these efforts cumulatively indexed Iqbal's mutating voice to explain how the self worked in the world. In his use, *khudi* traced how selfhood navigated the world. His was not an illusory, abstract, mystical, or merely philosophical construction of selfhood but a concrete search. As part of Iqbal's metaphysical apparatus, *khudi* aroused the mythopoeic stratum in culture. Here, the categories 'true' and 'untrue' were inapplicable. For *khudi*, in Iqbal's usage, referred to a non-empirical reality. *Khudi* was now part of a new metaphysical constellation that the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski (2001: 2) described as a 'non empirical unconditioned reality'. As an organ of culture, metaphysics is an extension of humanity's mythical core that Kołakowski characterised as the concern 'with the absolutely primal conditions of the realm of experience; they concern the quality of Being as a whole (as distinct from object); they concern the necessity of events' (1).

Khudi was nothing less than the language of metaphysics, which Bergson (1912: 24–5) described as the 'science, which claims to dispense with symbols'. As a metaphysical category, *khudi* is what one would grasp without expression, translation, or symbolic representation in Bergson's view. 'There is one reality, at least,' Bergson said, 'which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures. We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, we certainly sympathize with our own selves' (ibid.).

Metaphysical reflection on the unconditioned reality helps us make sense of the world of experience. It is also how our conditioned reality becomes intelligible to us. Iqbal's usage of *khudi* then is metonymical, signifying both the unconditioned and conditioned reality: both divine-like and life-like. *Khudi* as unconditioned reality nourishes life (conditioned reality) in all its complexity and actualisation in flesh and blood. In Iqbal's view, *khudi* is about inseminating being in order that it may manifest new forms of life: ontology. Iqbal did not provide any detailed account of ontology, but neither is it absent in his writing. Indeed, ontology, the question of being in the world, pervades his poetics and is never absent from his horizon. What really interested him was to probe questions that exceeded the constraints on how one may live. Together with what one may do, Iqbal's central questions were embedded not only in *Reconstruction*, but also in his poetry and his political activism. In many ways Iqbal would have endorsed Gilles Deleuze's understanding of philosophy: it does not consist of knowing, nor is it inspired by truth. The prime task of philosophy for Iqbal was to open up new vistas of thinking.

The new thinking that Iqbal envisaged was to seek 'a spiritual basis' for society (1999: 142). This is how he made his clarion call. 'Humanity needs three things today,' he said; it required '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' (ibid.). On what grounds would such a remaking of humanity take place? Well, as Iqbal put it, 'pure reason' and 'pure thought' were both inadequate to light that 'live fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring' (ibid.). So the search for selfhood then was certainly not restricted to only an individual programme but also a larger societal programme. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Iqbal thought of spirituality as a civilisational programme, and that inspiration came directly from the teachings of Islam itself.

While Iqbal was pessimistic of Europe's leadership role in the ethical advancement of the human community, by describing Europe to be 'the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement', he was nevertheless optimistic of the effervescence and the 'awakening of Turkey' under Kemalist impulses at the beginning of the twentieth century (ibid.). While

Iqbal could not predict the trajectory of Turkey's subsequent future, he nevertheless was a firm believer in the potential of Islamic teachings. In contrast to European civilisation, Islam possessed something revolutionary. In his words:

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 Muslim] 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; and 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 . . . 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. (Iqbal 1999: 142)

The centrepiece of that unique Islamic teaching is revelation. In revelation the human person can realise his or her self-fulfilment. But one will have to be patient in order to grasp Iqbal's particular sense of what he meant by 'revelation'. For Iqbal, the human person was a spiritual being, a believing animal, whose spirituality is realised in revelation. It is crucial to grasp Iqbal's concept of revelation. He articulates it in different ways. The subject of human formation, he believed, was the 'human soul' (2000: 621). But what is going to be the inspiration and the *matériel* that will educate and shape the soul? What animates not only human beings, but all of creation in a universal mode? In Iqbal's view, 'inspiration' is a universal property of life (1999: 100). Inspiration, in his view, is the way that humans make contact with the root of their own being (Iqbal 1999). Where does Iqbal derive this insight from? It originates from his commitment to Islam and the teachings of Islam. Revelation in Islam is a product of inspiration (*wahi*), he explained. In this way, revelation becomes metonymy for inspiration; whether vegetative and animal growth or a human being receiving 'light from the inner depths of life', these are cases of inspiration of varying character according to the needs of the recipient or the needs of the species (*ibid.*).

But the most interesting, if not the most controversial, part of Iqbal's

idea, is his commitment to the artefact of revelation, namely inspiration. In other words, for Iqbal, the Qur'an stands for a certain maturity of inspiration. And the poesis or the making of the idea of mature inspiration is one that he pursues in terms of human 'full self-consciousness' that is equally dependent on human resources. It is this inspiration to fully rely on one's self, internal resources, and energies that Iqbal sees is fully manifest in the Qur'an: the big picture for him that emerges from the Muslim revelation is the emphasis on nature and history as sources of human knowledge or sources of the self (ibid.).

This is how Iqbal arrives at this insightful conclusion but one missed by many of his readers or a reading that is frequently suppressed by his admirers. His moral anthropology cum archaeology suggests to him that prophetic consciousness was developed during the 'minority of mankind', one marked by a certain economising of individual thought. This was another way of saying that ideas and choices generated by prophetic consciousness at this stage of humanity's development were regulated and therefore human beings were provided with 'ready-made judgments, choices, and ways of action' (Iqbal 1999: 100). This, he explained, was the product of the 'ancient world' that he nevertheless admired for its remarkable systems of philosophy. But this ancient world also had several drawbacks, among them the fact that it was primitive, governed by suggestion, highly abstract, and laced with vague beliefs and traditions that provided few resources to deal with the 'concrete situations of life' (ibid.). Continuing with his moral anthropology, Iqbal argued that with the birth of reason and the advent of a critical human faculty everything changed. Human beings after the event of reason, especially with the help of inductive reason, were in a position to regulate non-rational modes of consciousness. The arrival of reason for Iqbal marked the beginning of the modern world.

Where did Islam stand in relation to these developments? For Iqbal, the Prophet of Islam stood at the crossroads of the ancient and the modern world. In terms of the 'source of revelation', the Prophet Muhammad belonged to the ancient world of concreteness, where revelation provided norms for the concrete situations of life (Iqbal 1999: 100–1). However, in terms of the 'spirit of his revelation' the Prophet Muhammad belonged to the modern world. Thus, the birth of Islam coincided, in his view, with the birth of the 'inductive intellect' (ibid.).

This is what Iqbal found so attractive in the story of Islam because, in this account, he discovered what he called the ‘idea of finality’ of prophecy. The prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad pointed to nature and history as ‘sources of human knowledge’. In the substance of the Muslim revelation, Iqbal discovered a very interesting idea, namely, the realisation of prophecy to abolish itself. ‘In Islam,’ Iqbal explained, ‘prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition.’ He continues: ‘This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources’ (ibid.). The idea of finality, as Iqbal called it, also meant the abolition of hereditary kingship and priesthood. Philosophically it was a move that brought humans back to nature and history, reason and experience as the core sources of human knowledge.

The ‘idea of finality’ was meant to create ‘an independent critical attitude toward mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural history, has come to an end in the history of man’ (Iqbal 1999: 101). The purpose was to create ‘fresh vistas of knowledge’ in the domain of the inner experience of human beings. The goal was to stop looking towards the sky for new ideas, and to begin looking towards the self and the human person as the location for the sources of life. Iqbal’s desire was to shift the Muslim gaze towards self-dependence and the making of the Perfect Man. The doctrine of finality of revelation was also meant to curb the excessive messianic tendencies that were introduced into Islam due to its contact with Magianism. Such tendencies, Iqbal believed, created a ‘false view of history’ and he was thankful that the North African thinker, Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), thoroughly debunked the revelational basis for such an idea in its psychological effects (115).

Self-fashioning

Under cover of his poetry, Iqbal is perhaps more explicit about his philosophical aspirations and ambitions for reconstruction. In *Psalms of Persia*, Iqbal invites his readers to join him in a journey of ‘revolutionary changes in the world of thought and action’ (Mir 2003a: 6). In one poem he makes reference to two crucial referents in Islamic and Persian mythopoeisis. The first mythopoeisis is a Qur’anic reference to ‘two worlds’ – ‘the imperceptible

world' and 'the perceptible world'. Both referents are, in my view, parallel to what I previously described as unconditioned reality (imperceptible world) and conditioned reality (perceptible world).

The second myth is an allusion to the 'world-revealing cup' used by Jamshid, the legendary king of ancient Persia. It was a cup of clairvoyance that allowed the king to see all the events around the world. As Mustansir Mir explains, the implied contrast was for Iqbal's own and more capacious wine-pitcher to overshadow Jamshed's cup. How? Jamshed was obsessed with his cup, which signified his personal power and privilege. By contrast, Iqbal wished to selflessly share his entire pitcher, not only a cup-full, with the world. Not only did he share with this world but also with the other world. So while Jamshed could only gaze on the material world, Iqbal – in order to open up – could reflect on both the seen and the unseen world – the conditioned and unconditioned reality. The poem itself now clarifies.

Both worlds may be seen in the wine-pitcher I have!

Where is the eye to view the sights I see?

There will come another man, possessed, who will shout *hū!* (*He!*) in the city;

Two hundred commotions will arise from the obsession I have.

Do not worry, ignorant one, at the approaching darkness of nights-
For, the scar of my forehead sparkles like stars.

You take me as your companion, but I am afraid

That you are not up to the tumult and uproar I have raised. (Mir 2003a: 3)

Iqbal was not content to be a philosopher in the guise of analytic philosophy; he was impatient with learned accounts of ontologies and epistemologies, even though he had mastered this discourse in *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. His soul was instead saturated in another kind of philosophy, a nomadic approach that pursues big questions, such as: how may one live? It is a philosophy that approached life with an ontology that offered untold possibilities, rather than ready-made solutions. In *Secrets of Selfhood (Asrar-i Khudi)*, he writes: 'The dust of my being is brighter than Jamshed's cup; It is privy to the world's yet unborn events' (Iqbal cited in Mir 2003a: 3).

Crisis and Creativity

One may say that Iqbal was fond of raising the siren. He was a philosopher in the style of an intellectual. In the words of the novelist and literary critic Umberto Eco, ‘an intellectual is anyone who is creatively producing new knowledge’. Echo says,

A peasant who understands that a new kind of graft can produce a new species of apples, has at that moment produced an intellectual activity. Whereas the professor of philosophy who all his life repeats the same lecture on Heidegger doesn’t amount to an intellectual. Critical creativity – criticizing what we are doing or inventing better ways of doing it – is the only mark of the intellectual function. (Eco cited in Zanganeh 2008: 103)

Critical creativity was the leitmotif of Iqbal. His project was to reconstruct religious *thought* instead of philosophy. In this sense, Iqbal’s work has some synergy with the ideas of Deleuze. As Todd May pointed out, Deleuze distinguished thought from knowledge. Knowledge is the recognition and understanding of identities, a task that analytic philosophers have espoused. ‘Thought, by contrast,’ in the view of Deleuze explains May, ‘does not identify and so does not give us knowledge. It moves beyond what is known to the difference beneath, behind, and within it’ (2005: 21). A thinker, or a thinker-philosopher like Iqbal, was not interested in representing reality; but in the tradition of Karl Marx, he was more interested in changing reality. But, in another sense, Iqbal was also unlike Marx. For him, the deepest revolution he sought began within the self, not in material conditions. He often sought out the differences between and among things, in order to show that difference, hence creativity, was being itself: *khudi* itself is difference, movement, and creativity. In *Reconstruction*, Iqbal remained tentative in his conclusions, and that was deliberate: he was more interested in pushing the boundaries of thought by raising still more questions to highlight some interminable problems (aporias) in law, theology, spirituality, and ritual.

Iqbal always asked the disturbing question, probing the limits of the conditions of possibility in nature and the political, wildly protesting the powers of the day. First, in questions of nature and science, he did not subscribe to a static universe. There is, he wrote, no

pre-existing eternal scheme or structure in which individual events have already found their proper places, waiting as it were, for their respective turns to enter into the temporal sweep of history . . . The world regarded as a process realizing a pre-ordained goal is not a world of free, responsible moral agents; it is only a stage on which puppets are made to move by a kind of pull from behind . . . there is a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of value as the process of life grows and expands . . . The world process, or the movement of the universe in time, is certainly devoid of purpose, if by purpose we mean a foreseen end – a far off fixed destination to which the whole creation moves. (Iqbal 1999: 44)

For Iqbal, it was not only the conditions of colonialism that he so passionately resisted. He railed against the stasis in Muslim thought, which its incurably orthodox gatekeepers further aggravated and some of whom he frequently targeted in his passionate satire. For him, the crisis of Muslim thought was continuous. In that sense, Iqbal would have concurred with the French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994: 82) who argued that 'philosophy thus lives in a permanent crisis'. The two French thinkers said that philosophy 'does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by the truth', adding that 'it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure. Now, this cannot be known before being constructed' (ibid.).

Iqbal's overall concern was with 'thought' and its reconstruction. In doing so, he was drawing on a notion of a prophetic messianism evident in Sunni religious thought. This is not to be confused with Magian messianism with its gnostic dramaturgy of a world-historical struggle between good and evil, an idea that Iqbal vigorously opposed. Twelver Shi'ism also possessed a messianic dimension in the expectation of the return from occultation of the pristine political-spiritual leadership of the imam, but Shi'i theology has no notion of centennial renewal. However, Sunni Islam found the appeal of centennial renewal alluring. In order to nourish the practices of salvation (*din*) with the prophetic impulse, a report attributed to the Prophet Muhammad stated: 'Indeed, at the beginning of every century God dispatches to this confessional community (*ummah*) a person who will renew its *din* – salvation practices (religion)' (Abu Khalil 2015). Another report said: 'God shows

benevolence to the people who are part of His order of salvation (*din*) at the beginning of every century by dispatching a man from my family who will clarify to them matters related to their salvation practices (*din*)' (al-Azdi, hadith no. 4291).

Over the centuries, Muslims felt addressed by Providence to revitalise their faith for the betterment of the people who covenanted with God through Muhammad's faith community. Certain threads of dystopic thinking in Islamic thought also adopted as an article of faith a belief that, after the halcyon days of the Prophet Muhammad, religious morality would steadily decline. Yet other Muslim thinkers placed the emphasis on the forward-looking momentum of another teaching of the Prophet, which said: 'The parable of my community is like that of rain. One never knows whether the best part of a rain shower is at the beginning of it or at the end of it' (al-Ramhurmuzi 1968: 105–6).

Acknowledging the plethora of reform movements that had seized the Muslim world over the centuries, Iqbal offers both commentary on intellectual and social developments and also adds his own voice. With extraordinary perceptiveness at the beginning of the twentieth century, Iqbal understood the challenges facing modern Muslims. Armed with Western and Islamic metaphysics as well as knowledgeable in modern science, he recognised like his medieval forbear, the polymath Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), that 'when verities change, there is a need for redefinition' (al-Ghazali 1997). Iqbal realised that the Muslims of his age were ill-equipped to meet the challenges of their time. Their faith, as well as their claim to be heirs to a mosaic of Islamic cultures, Iqbal believed, constituted the cultural assets of Muslims. Yet, absent the 'probing of the spade in the dark loam', as the pre-eminent Jewish thinker of pre-war Germany Walter Benjamin put it, these ancient cultural and intellectual treasures of Islam could easily wither (1978: 26). In order to prevent the atrophy of the resources of Muslim civilisation, Iqbal imagined that only an act of translation and a series of conversations in counterpoint between the present and the past could keep the tradition alive. In one sense reconstruction at the analytical level was Iqbal's keyword for translating Islam into the present and in another sense it meant contrapuntal thinking, in other words, fostering a dialogue with tradition over time. In another sense, it was a radical project in reconstruction and reform of religious thought that would challenge many tenets of Muslim orthodoxy.

Miraculously, Iqbal, unlike many other scholars, has been saved from imprecations of heresy by Muslim orthodoxy.

With breathtaking candour and enormous courage, Iqbal traced the scope of his project *Reconstruction*. He stood out among those modern Muslim thinkers who understood the horizon of the reconstruction of religious thought that had to occur at both the metaphysical and epistemological levels, or, to put it differently, at the level of both unconditioned and conditioned reality. Iqbal's ontology was one of difference, in which the future must be concerned with experimentation, in order to experience the new and untold possibilities. He was clearly enchanted by the notion of becoming, a thread he identified in the writings of early Muslim writers, especially the scholar of the Maghreb, Ibn Khaldun.

But it was the Qur'an, Iqbal believed, that really expressed an anti-classical spirit that combated the idea of eternal recurrence or the unreality of time evident in Greek thought. Iqbal searched for the spirit of creation and boldly discounted modes of thinking that impeded creativity. 'Eternal recurrence is not eternal creation,' he objected, 'it is eternal repetition' (Iqbal 1999: 113).

Islam could not be 'inimical to the idea of evolution,' Iqbal wrote. By this ambiguous phrase, he at least meant social evolution. Despite advocating the need to 'rethink the whole system of Islam,' Iqbal also cautioned:

Only we should not forget that life is not change, pure and simple. It has within it elements of conservation also. While enjoying his creative activity, and always focusing his energies on the discovery of new vistas of life, man has a feeling of uneasiness in the presence of his own unfoldment. In his forward movement he cannot help looking back to his past, and faces his own inward expansion with a certain amount of fear. The spirit of man in its forward movement is restrained by forces, which seem to be working in the opposite direction. This is only another way of saying that life moves with the weight of its own past on its back, and that in any view of social change the value and function of the forces of conservatism cannot be lost sight of . . . No people can afford to reject their past entirely; for it is their past that has made their personal identity. And in a society like Islam the problem of revision of old institutions becomes still more delicate, and the responsibility of the reformer assumes a far more serious aspect. (Iqbal 1999: 132)

Ibn Khaldun's notions of social change together with echoes of Bergson and Heidegger on time and being, all resonated in Iqbal's long passage cited above. The question is this: is Iqbal conflicted or is he self-consciously holding on to the antinomies of the human condition and thought? I think it is the latter. Surely the element of the messianic and centennial reformer trope was effervescent in Iqbal's thought. And, he was always identifying major figures that he hoped or thought may undo the burden of history and give the green light for the forward movement of thought and practice. Among such people he recognised the eighteenth-century polymath and thinker Shah Wali Ullah of India. And Wali Ullah's natural successor, in his view, was none other than the enigmatic Iranian thinker and activist, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. The much-rhapsodised Afghani's attention, Iqbal lamented, was unfortunately divided. If only Afghani's efforts were 'devoted entirely to Islam as a system of human belief and conduct, the world of Islam would have been on a much more solid ground today' (Iqbal 1999: 78). Afghani, he thought, spent too much time as a political activist squandering his precious genius when in fact his talents were needed to dream and imagine a better Muslim future in the realm of the reconstruction of intellectual thought.

Yet Iqbal's admiration for Afghani signified at least two things. Afghani was indefatigably devoted to political reform and transformation, beginning with imperialism and seeking an end to Muslim totalitarianism. What Iqbal admired in Afghani was this revolutionary thinker's 'insight into the inner meaning of history of Muslim thought and life', which was combined with a 'broad vision engendered by his wide experience of men and manners' (1999: 78). Someone like Afghani would serve as the living link between the past and the future. Aware of the momentous changes that occurred in the course of history, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Wali Ullah and Afghani signified for Iqbal two influential men across two centuries and two geographical regions of Islamdom: East and West, South Asia and the Middle East. Each espoused pan-Islamic visions: one primarily from Delhi, while the other was more itinerant, working at times from Cairo, and then Paris, and then Beirut, and finally from Istanbul.

Aware of the way in which science, technology, and new political systems had not only changed the world but also the conception of the human person, especially by way of the major breakthroughs in modern science

and the social sciences, Iqbal acutely understood the challenge that modern knowledge of his day posed to the Muslim tradition. As a cosmopolitan figure commanding multiple knowledge traditions in philosophy, law, and literature, Iqbal was equally aware of his responsibility as an intellectual. He was responding to an 'urgent demand by attempting to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical traditions of Islam and the more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge' (Iqbal 1999: xxi). He was not only optimistic that the moment in which he lived 'was quite favorable to such an undertaking' but he envisaged some kind of conciliation between religion and science (ibid.). However, Iqbal argued that

there is no such thing as finality in philosophical thinking. As knowledge advances and fresh avenues of thought are opened, other views, and probably sounder views . . . are possible. Our duty is carefully to watch the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude towards it. (Iqbal 1999: xxii)

But this hopeful aspiration would also be the most elusive dimension for Muslim thought in the twentieth century and in the beginning of the twenty-first.

History and Prophecy

The cornerstones of Iqbal's thinking were based on the need to foster a sense of history and grasp its spirit, to develop an acute sense of the time in which one is living and also have a sense as to how one both continues with the past and differs from it in terms of thought. But more importantly was his invitation that Muslims must take philosophical thinking seriously. Yet Iqbal's idea of history cannot be delinked from revelation already discussed above and the idea of prophecy, which deserve some repetition in order to understand the radical edge of Iqbal's reformist thought and a subject least attended to in Iqbalian scholarship.

Human agency for Iqbal was cast in the image of the superman of history or the Perfect Man, *al-insan al-kamil*, an image derived from the mysticism Muhi al-Din Ibn Arabi. The Perfect Man, whom Iqbal calls the man of faith, was a figure of adventure, boldness, and courage. Why? Because the Perfect

Man is the one who relied on intuition. Intuition is the essence of instinct and the essence of reason. Iqbal used many terms to describe intuition – love (*ishq*), certainty (*yaqin*), and faith (*iman*). Intuition enabled a certain kind of transgressive behaviour and the questioning of established norms that could pave the way to both realise the potential of the human person in our age and to make the human comprehensible in relation to tradition. For this reason, Iqbal battled with the doctrine of predestination, the absence of reason in Muslim theology, and the obscurantism of the gatekeepers of religion. In *Psalms of Persia*, he occasionally defies God, objecting to the divine privilege to award paradise at will and not on the basis of the good deeds performed by humans and their just deserts. In these lines, he bares his passion and predicts that he will face the scorn of theologians who failed to understand the complexity of faith.

I am a sinner with self-respect, I will take no wages without labor;
I am scarred because my fault has been put down to His decree.

Through the bounty of love and ecstasy, I have taken thought to such
heights,
That, reaching behind, I can pluck the eyes of the world-brightening sun.

Since the First Morning, I have been a drawer of wave and vortex;
When the sea becomes calm, I invoke the storm for help.

A hundred times before now, too, I have lit a fire under the world's feet;
My high and low notes burn the world clean of peace and tranquility.

I have danced before I idols and worn the holy thread, so that
The *shaykh* of the city may become a man of God by calling me a heretic.

Now they run away from me, now they associate with me;
In this desert, they do not know whether I am hunter or prey.

A hear that lacks warmth can ill profit from the company of a man;
Come with red-hot copper, so that my elixir can work on you. (Mir

2003b: 3–5)

The fulcrum of intuition materialised in *tawhid*, that is, divine monotheism. *Tawhid* for Iqbal was the confluence and the synthesis of multiple things –

plurality in unity. Based on a theological understanding of human beings' essential bond of servitude to God, the secular manifestation of *tawhid* in Iqbal's view becomes equality, solidarity, and freedom (Iqbal 1999: 122). For, in his view, the 'spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of the mind with which the agent does it' (ibid.). What really determined the character of an act was intentionality, or what he called 'the invisible mental background of the act' (ibid.). Then Iqbal offered one of the most incisive insights in the history of political theology: 'An act is temporal or profane,' he explained, 'if it is done in a spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life behind it; it is spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity' (ibid.).

From his discussion on *tawhid*, Iqbal moves to a discussion of revelation and prophecy that are possibly the most interesting and creative aspects of his project. These ideas do have earlier precedents but they are recast in a new idiom. Two types of reason are encapsulated by prophecy. The first type of reason is dialectical reason, or what we would call discursive reason, where reason feeds off itself. The other type is intuitional reason, or what we could call Gnostic reason, where the reason of the person of faith is infused with angelic insight.

Prophecy is important because it is premised on this intuition, a form of reason infused by angelic insight and the imaginal universe. In his discussion of prophecy and prophetic consciousness, Iqbal is enamoured by the prophetic voice, the arbitrary and erratic voice of prophecy in human history. He sees the prophets to be the main movers of human history. Mysticism is equally attractive to him precisely since it developed the same sense of prophetic consciousness, for it derived from the same source from where prophecy derived its inspiration. For Iqbal, the foundation of human existence is not materiality, but psychological, and prophecy represents the apex of that psychology.

Yet, prophecy is not outside history but within history. Prophets transform the human world; they return from the mystical ascent to God, *mi'raj*, in a kind of pragmatic test of their religious experience. Unlike some mystics who were more interested in repetition and intimacy with the divine, prophets were more interested in remaking the world, and Iqbal serves as a ventriloquist for them when he wrote these lines:

To me, this dust bowl is better than the lofty paradise:
It is a place of desire and longing, a sanctum of fire and passion.

At one time, I lose myself; at another I lose Him;
And yet another, I find both.

What mystery is this? What mystery is this? (Mir 2006: 3–6)

What appealed to Iqbal's temperament was that prophecy embodied a particular consciousness, one that destroyed the old and creates the new. It was perpetual inspiration (*wahi*) in its creative face that dominated. Hence, inspiration, Iqbal said, was the universal property of life. Psychic energy developed prophetic consciousness; reason tried to block and inhibit the non-rational modes of consciousness. While we are governed primarily by passion and instinct, inductive reasoning made one master of the environment. Inspiration and intuition enabled one to transcend the limitations of space.

Iqbal was not closed to mystical experiences. In fact, he valued mystical experience for its close links to prophetic consciousness. The self (*nafs/anfus*) and the world/horizon (*afaq*) were both sources of knowledge. But the idea of finality for him meant that in the final instance inductive reason would keep a critical check on mystic experience. But it did not mean emotion was displaced by reason, since that was not the meaning of the idea of finality. Without eros and emotion, there would be no momentum for history.

Continuous creation was for Iqbal at the centre of history. Creativity fired the imagination and must lead to creativity. Drawing on Ibn Khaldun, he argued that history was a collective, continuous movement, an inevitable development in time. History was not predetermined. In expressing this view, Iqbal went against the orthodox view that bracketed and suspended the movement of time-space in a divinely ordained notion of history, which then also produced a notion of sacred time. Iqbal was very much in favour of a notion of human agency, which prevented him from fostering a view of time that subdued the human will.

If the spirit represented the force that made things move in Hegel, then for Iqbal it was selfhood, *khudi*, a sense of immanence and dynamism. *Khudi* was at the core of our humanity and all human development was to actualise it. It is this perpetual dance between immanence and transcendence that

Iqbal so forcefully articulates that stands at the core of his writing and is expressed in this poem:

God has lost us-He is in search of us;
Like us, He feels need and is a captive of desire.

At times, he inscribes his message on the petals of tulips;
At times, he makes ecstatic chant in the breasts of birds.

He reposes in the narcissus, that He may view our beauty;
He is so adept at wooing that His looks make conversation.

The sighs he draws at dawn in separation from us
Are inside and outside, above and below, all around.

He has caused all this stir that He might observe the creature of dust;
The pageant of scent and color is but a pretext for watching.

He is hidden in every particle and yet is a stranger;
He is conspicuous like the moon and is caressed by town and street.

In this dust-bowl of ours is lost the pearl of life;
This lost pearl-is it we, or is it He? (Mir 2006: 3)

Conclusion

The human person in Iqbal's view is a sentient, believing, and ethical being that he framed in terms of a comprehensive spirituality. Yet his notion of spirituality is deeply embedded in an open-ended, almost evolutionary history of human self-realisation integrally connected to a scientific horizon embedded in nature. And the sources of the tradition are plastic to the needs of self-realisation, which for Iqbal poetically meant the resurrection of humankind:

If khudi/selfhood is fortified by knowledge it will incur Gabriel's envy
If it is fortified by love, then it is the trumpet of Israfil. (Iqbal 2000: 499)

In Iqbal's understanding selfhood only triumphs through love of the divine. And when selfhood is realised then it becomes equal to the resurrection of humankind. He derives this insight from Qur'anic imagery. Just as all of humanity will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment when the angel

of resurrection blows the trumpet, similarly when human beings actualise their selfhood then it is equal to a form of resurrection. But the affective self must also be equipped with learning, a quality denied to even the archangel, Gabriel. But the greater enjoyment of achieving selfhood, explained Iqbal, was in the very journey itself and in the struggle to realise the human person.

Self-making found its analogue in the story of Islam itself. The narrative of Islam, wrote Iqbal, was one of exile, estrangement, simplicity, and diversity. One high point was the sacrifice of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn in the battlefield of Karbala fighting injustice. The other counter-point is at the beginning with the readiness of Ismail, the Prophet Abraham's son, who volunteered to be offered as a sacrifice (Iqbal 2000: 500). Thus, the human person is one who riveted by passion even though this desire cannot stray too far from the demands of reason.

For Iqbal, the human being is not the measure of all things but rather 'a being that grows more perfect the closer his connection with God is' (Schimmel 1963: 382). Or, as Schimmel explains, Iqbal saw the human person as 'realizing the wonderful paradox of freedom in servanthship' (ibid.). But there are also elements of yearning for the divine without divinising the self. A poem widely remembered by many of Iqbal's devotees and admirers beautifully captures the lyrical and hymn-like yearning for the divine:

O You, the Awaited Real, for once appear in mundane garb,
For in my obeisant forehead a thousand prostrations lie astir.

Learn to desire the tumult of love;
you are the melody, be a confidant to ears
What good is a song if it lies hidden in the quiet of the instrument's frets?

Do not be too protective of it: your mirror, is *the* mirror [the heart]
if broken, it will be more precious in the eyes of the maker of mirrors.

While circling the candle, the glowworm said,
'That vintage power to move
Is absent from *your* story of burning and missing from *my* talk of melting.'

My wretched self found no quarter in the world, and when it did find
refuge,
where do you think it found sanctuary?

I found it in Your exclusive forgiveness,
where my sin-drenched life found ultimate refuge

Now, love no longer has that fervor,
nor does beauty enjoy the charm of playful mischief;

The Ghaznavi no longer has that yearning,
nor does Ayaz's tresses, possess that curl.

When sometimes I lay my head prostrate,
I hear the earth's reproach:

'Your heart is an intimate of idols,
how can *you* ever profit from prayer?' (Iqbal 2000: 398–9; Mir 2014,
emphasis mine)

Note

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3

Achieving Humanity: Convergence between Henri Bergson and Muhammad Iqbal

Souleymane Bachir Diagne

Columbia University, United States

French scholar of Islam Louis Massignon (1883–1962) has declared that a deep convergence, or what he labelled ‘a Semitic affinity’,¹ existed between the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) and the Indian poet and thinker Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). More recently, in an important work entitled *Being Human in Islam: The Impact of the Evolutionary Worldview*, in a chapter devoted to ‘Bergson and the Muslims’, Damian A. Howard notes that ‘[r]ecognizably Bergsonian ideas subtend a great deal of what Iqbal says and Iqbal frequently refers explicitly to the thought of the Frenchman’ (2011: 59). He then raises the question of the nature of that Bergsonian presence in Iqbal’s thought – a ‘catalyst’ he asks, ‘a hermeneutical key’, or ‘a confirmation’ – before concluding that at any rate ‘Bergson’s own input *was* decisive in shaping Iqbal’s theology’ and that ‘Iqbal’s reading of Bergson made a decisive difference’ (ibid.; emphasis in original).

On the other hand, in *Iqbal: An Illustrated Biography*, Khurram Ali Shafique is altogether dismissive of the whole notion of a ‘contribution of Western philosophy to the thought of Iqbal’, which has been, according to him, ‘exaggerated’ (2007: 45). Declaring that Iqbal himself had a ‘condescending attitude towards Western philosophers’, citing Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, he notes that ‘Bergson received more courtesy’ just to add that this was ‘maybe because he was still alive’ (ibid.).

Shafique needs not be so anxious and defensive as to consider that any

indication of the *simple fact* that Bergson's concepts of time, individuality, creative evolution, creative humanity, and mysticism are central to Iqbal's *Reconstruction of the Religious Thought of Islam* would signify 'deference' of the Indian philosopher to the Frenchman. To evoke an 'affinity' between the two philosophers is certainly not the same as to affirm that 'a decisive input' from Bergson 'shaped' Iqbal's thought. In fact, it is both true that Iqbal's thought is entirely organised around notions that were developed in the Islamic intellectual tradition,² and that at the same time it found 'catalyst', expression, 'confirmation' and 'an hermeneutical key' in Bergsonism.

The main theses developed in the *Reconstruction* often involve quotes from Bergson's *Creative Evolution* published in 1908. However, simple chronology would not allow to consider that the deep convergence between what both authors have to say, for example, about the figure of the mystic and her role in keeping religion dynamic and open, manifests a Bergsonian 'input' or influence. Influence from Bergson would not explain the convergence or 'affinity' between Iqbal's *Reconstruction* first published as *Six Lectures on The Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam* in 1930 in Lahore (from lectures given in 1928 and 1929) and the last book published by Bergson in 1932, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, in which the mystic appears and plays a crucial role.³ Unless, of course, on this particular and fundamental aspect of their philosophies, the hypothesis is made that the influence is from Iqbal to Bergson.⁴

Muhammad Iqbal's thought is a philosophy of the humanisation of the human and of the earth that is his realm.⁵ At its core are the following theses: (1) God or the Ultimate Ego is the only individual, while the human ego achieves humanity through the open-ended process of achieving individuality, (2) the human being is God's co-worker or collaborator in the task of achieving creation, and (3) life is continuous newness calling for a principle of movement that keeps society open: that principle, in Islam, is what is called *ijtihad*.

This paper explores what will be characterised simply and adequately as a *convergence* between Iqbal's *Reconstruction* and Bergsonism manifested in those theses concerning traditional Islamic notions central to Iqbal's philosophy. One such notion is the Qur'anic definition of God as the 'Absolute' (*samad*). A second is the idea that the human being has to achieve his or her

destination by becoming the fully accomplished human, the *insan kamil* or *homo perfectus*, in whom, as a consequence, the divine attributes will be realised: thus the prophetic injunction ‘create in yourselves the attributes of God’ (*takhallaqū bi akhlāq Allah*) is at the centre of Iqbal’s philosophy. Another such notion is the conception of a continuously creative activity of God who, as a Qur’anic verse often cited by Iqbal declares, ‘adds to creation as He pleases’ (35:1). It will be examined how those notions, unmistakably Islamic as they are, are still *also* rethought anew by being expressed in Bergson’s language or through references to the author of *Creative Evolution*. In other words: this part of the essay will show how Iqbal organises an encounter between the philosophy of Bergson and the cosmology of the Qur’an as Bergson helps understand it. Last, the similarities between the two philosophers’ reflections on the role of Mystics (in *The Reconstruction* and in *The Two Sources*) will be examined.

Vital Knowledge of Vital Unity

That only God is an individual is the idea expressed in the Qur’an, according to Iqbal, when in chapter 112, God is defined in the following verses: ‘Say: Allah is one/All things depend on Him/He begetteth not, and He is not begotten/And there is none like unto Him.’

What does it mean that these verses should be understood as God’s self-definition in the *Qur’an* as the Ultimate *individual*? The answer consists in commenting them under the light of Bergson’s concept of individuality that then appears here as offering ‘a hermeneutical key’ for the reading of that Qur’anic *surah*, called the chapter of ‘pure faith’. Iqbal evokes the ‘teaching’ of Bergson by quoting the lines from *Creative Evolution* where Bergson explains that ‘the tendency to individuate’ is everywhere at work in the ‘organised world’ along with the contrary tendency to reproduce. So because, as Bergson puts it, individuality ‘harbours its own enemy at home’ no being can fully achieve it (Bergson cited in Iqbal [1934] 1984: 50). Only God, as ‘He begetteth not and is not begotten’ is an individual, that is *non-generated*, *imperishable*, *whole*, and *of one kind* to use the terms by which Parmenides’s poem speaks of ‘the One’.⁶ The remark should be made that the translation adopted here by Iqbal – ‘All things depend on Him’ – for the Arabic word ‘*samad*’ does not serve very well his own (Bergsonian) commentary of the

Qur'anic self-introduction by God. The translation often adopted for that name of God (that, unlike the other divine attributes, has this one single appearance in the Qur'an), the 'Absolute', corresponds better to the notion here of God as the Ultimate Ego. English translator Yusuf Ali chooses 'the Eternal, Absolute' for the apax *samad* while French orientalist Jacques Berque who made the rapprochement with Parmenides's One, translates it as 'God of plenitude' (Qur'an 112: 2).

The verses of chapter 112 of the Qur'an are often presented as a Muslim response to the Christian notion of the 'son of God'. They are first and foremost the expression of what it means to be a 'perfect ego', a 'perfect individual' (1984: 50). On the other hand, for the human ego, it could only be said that 'to be is to become an individual', which is both to adopt a dynamic ontology where being is movement and becoming, and to state that the movement is endless since full individuality could never be achieved. At the heart of Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy is what he believes to be the central message of the Muslims' Book: 'the Qur'an . . . emphasizes the individuality and uniqueness of man, and has . . . a definite view of his destiny as a unity of life' ([1934] 1984: 76). Iqbal's fundamental belief would be even more precisely stated this way: the Qur'an is about the journey of life as it becomes *human* life and thus aims at achieving unity, individuality, and uniqueness. In other words again, the last born from *creative evolution*, the human being as the being in whom evolution becomes conscious of itself, is to be understood as a *movement* towards unity, as a *process* of becoming an individual, as a *journey* towards selfhood. Now what is the 'self', what Iqbal calls '*khudi*'? Of what nature is the unity called 'self'? 'Unity of life' is Iqbal's answer to those questions, although 'imperfect in its infinitude' (78). Two remarks need to be made concerning that answer.

The first remark is that to characterise the unity of the self as *vital* is to say that it is a movement. The human ego is not a thing but a process for which Iqbal coins the concept of 'ego-activity'. Because individuality, a 'characteristic property of life', is a tendency and not a state (that is what makes it difficult to define it in some 'geometrical' manner), Bergson (1944: 16) insists 'that [it] admits of any number of degrees, and that it is not fully realized anywhere, even in man'. In the same vein, Iqbal states that contrarily to the ultimate divine 'I am', the 'I am' that defines the human ego, neces-

sarily imperfect as a living unity, is a movement, an open-ended aspiration toward more unity and more consistency. Thus is defined an ontological scale depending on the degree of realisation of individuality, on the degree of what he calls 'I am-ness': 'Only that truly exists which can say "I am"', writes Iqbal, adding that 'it is the degree of the intuition of "I am-ness" that determines the place of an individual in the scale of being' ([1934] 1984: 45). First, 'I am' is to be grasped not as the permanence of a thinking *thing* or substance but as the continuous and indivisible flow of duration; second, it is endlessly conquered and built through action, which is the transformation of nature.

The second remark to be made about the notion of the self as *unity of life* is that it goes against that of the self as *unity of consciousness* that is the perspective under which both rationalists and sceptic empiricists pose the question of the unity behind the diversity of mental states. To say that the unity of the self is vital is to go against the whole modern tradition of Descartes' cogito, and the move made in the *Meditations* from 'I think' to 'I am a substance whose essence is thought'. It also goes against Kant's notion of the 'I think' that, as he says in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, must be able to accompany all my representations. Against Hume's sceptic argument that the multiplicity of mental states and representations is a fact while the statement that there is a unifying 'I' behind those representations is not grounded at all, Kant's response is the affirmation of a 'transcendental ego'. What makes even possible a representation is an 'I' for whom it is a representation, so there is a unity of consciousness in all the changes that can happen to it. And the moral consequence is that the capacity to say 'I', which Kant says at the very beginning of his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Book I, §1), is manifested by a child perhaps a whole year after 'he can already speak fairly fluently', is the most fundamental expression of our human dignity and raises us infinitely above 'all other living beings on Earth'.

Hume has made the sceptical argument that an 'I' as unifying principle of the multiplicity of our representations does not come necessarily along with those representations; to which Kant has responded that those representations themselves point towards their very condition of possibility, that is, a transcendental ego, the 'I think' that accompanies them all. There is a fundamental agreement between Bergson and Iqbal who both consider that Hume's argument and Kant's response are but answers (contradictory as they

are) to the same false problem. 'What unifies the multiplicity of the representations I call "mine"?' is a false problem or an ill-posed one because it starts with what is considered a *datum*: a quantitative multiplicity of states external to one another. The question of the self is really understood when we reach beyond that 'datum', before the multiplicity becomes a fragmented, quantitative one, when we 'place ourselves in a given reality instead of adopting points of view on it' (Bergson 1903: 3), that 'given reality' being here that of the living and indivisible movement of the self, which we thus know absolutely: that is by intuition.

To understand that the self is a vital unity is to grasp the nature of our faculty of knowing absolutely. It is true that our intellect analyses and decomposes our mental life into separate, quantitatively many states, and considers them *partes extra partes*. But we also have a faculty of intuition that is a vital knowledge that does not separate but embraces what it grasps as a unity. For Bergson, as for Iqbal, intelligence is not the only mode of knowledge. While our intellect *analyses* movement itself into immobilities, we have a faculty of intuition that, being itself an indivisible continuity grasps movement by placing itself within the undivided mobility, reaching it as pure change and duration. At the very beginning of his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (published in 1903) Bergson presents intellect and intuition as 'two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing'. He says:

The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we enter into it. The first depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the symbols by which we express ourselves. The second neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol. The first kind of knowledge may be said to stop at the relative; the second, in those cases where it is possible, to attain the absolute. (Bergson 1903: 1)

When Iqbal ([1934] 1984: 2) states that there is a distinction to be made between 'thought' and 'intuition', the first 'grasping Reality piecemeal' while the second 'grasps it in its wholeness', he evokes the saying of Prophet Muhammad whose 'constant prayer was: "God! Grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things!"' ([1934] 1984: 2). But he also makes a reference to Bergson, whose language certainly functions here as a 'confirmation' of the value and the natural character of the experience whereby a state is reached

that '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 does not exist' (15).

For Bergson as for Iqbal the intelligence that separates and analyses and the intuition that embraces need not be opposed: they have the same root, which is *élan vital*, the push of life. Intuition is in the continuity of that push while intelligence follows the inversion of the *élan* into matter and extension. So it is the faculty of intuition that comprehends the self as duration. While, for the intellect, my states are like 'well cut out crystals and freezing at the surface', my intuition grasps that '*underneath there is a continuous flow, in which each state announces what comes next and contains what preceded*' (Bergson 1903: 7, my emphasis). So what I know by intuition is that the states are 'solidly organized, so deeply animated by a *common life* that it is impossible to say where one begins and where one ends' (ibid., my emphasis).

In summary: to understand the unity of the self as *vital* is to understand that it is not a given but that it is to be achieved: It is an endless pursuit of individuality and immortality, of individuality *as* immortality. The alpha and omega of Iqbal's philosophy is the development of individual personality and the Qur'an, whose 'main purpose', he declared, 'is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the Universe' ([1934] 1984: 7), is the story of that development. Let us consider two Qur'anic narratives of what it means to have been created a human being. Unlike in biblical *Genesis*, the Qur'an presents a discussion by the angels of the wisdom of creating Adam: 'Wilt Thou place there one who will do ill and shed blood, when we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?' they argue when told by God that He is 'about to place in His stead on earth'.⁷ 'Placing in His stead' is the problem that led the angels to express what sounds like a protestation: the very fact of establishing a lieutenant. Because they are aware that being a lieutenant, one who then 'holds the stead' (that is the etymology of the originally French word 'lieutenant', which is the best translation of the Arabic *khalifa*⁸) entails that the newcomer, this 'last born of creation', will be imbued with mastery and will, in a word will be entrusted with the divine freedom to do otherwise: otherwise than 'celebrate and extol'.

Do otherwise and go off-track: the humans certainly did. Or rather: they revealed themselves as not-beings-for-tracks. Instead of 'celebrate and extol'

they discovered that they were at liberty to disobey and transgress. But in so doing they also discovered that, in addition to their capacity of naming things that the angels did not know, they had that of making their return to God.⁹ The capacity to go astray and to return were two manifestations of the same definition of what it means to be human: to be made for and by the journey from selflessness to the realisation of what one is entrusted with as the lieutenant of God on Earth, which is personality, individuality, or selfhood. Quoting the Qur'an, Iqbal notes that the trust of personality that the human ego accepted from his Lord had been proposed 'to the Heavens, to the earth and to the mountains', which all 'refused the burden and feared to receive it. Man alone undertook to bear it, but hath proven unjust, senseless' (Qur'an (33: 72) cited in Iqbal ([1934] 1984: 9)).

Another Qur'anic narrative presents the human ego as constituted by a primal consent to God, a 'yeah' to his creator's question 'Am I not your Lord?' before being engulfed in forgetfulness after entering life on Earth. Transgression followed by exile, forgetfulness of who we are and who the Lord is, being reduced to the lowest state¹⁰ are all figures of the lack of unity, the state of disjunction and dispersion that the human has the task to overcome on her journey to the consistency of selfhood. And that means immortality through the very movement that is life, a notion best expressed in Iqbal's poetry, for example in the image of the wave that only exists as it moves.

The human ego as journey towards selfhood is thus Qur'anic. It is also Sufi, in an active sense of Sufism for which the 'knowledge of the ultimate nature of things' is an active, vital process, the end of which is not contemplation but being. The goal of the ego is not identification with and absorption in the reality contemplated; it is to become the accomplished human being, the *insān kāmīl* of the Sufi tradition. Certainly, for Iqbal, the reconstruction of the religious thought of Islam needs to be conducted against Sufism as, in a parallel way and for the same reasons, it has to be conducted against the intellectual tradition created in Islam by Greek philosophy, Neo-Platonism in particular. But it must be clarified that the attack is truly directed at a Sufism of dispossession (the form of mysticism that pursues precisely the dissolution of I am-ness) and can be said to be carried in the name of a Sufism of self-realisation, self-possession. The opposition between those two forms of

Sufism corresponds to the two opposite views of Husayn Mansûr al- Hallâj's experience presented by Iqbal first in *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* in 1908, and then, twenty years later, in *The Reconstruction*. Reflecting on the metaphysics of Sufism in his *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (page 89 of the dissertation he wrote in 1907; third reprint 1964), Iqbal writes that a characteristic feature of one of its main schools is the idea of 'impersonal absorption'.¹¹ He then considers that the logion of Husayn Mansûr al-Hallâj – 'I am *Haqq*', that is 'I am the [creative] Truth'¹² – because of which he was tried as heretic and eventually executed in Baghdad in 922, encapsulates this doctrine of the disappearance of the self into the Truth, like the moth into the flame or the drop of water into the ocean: the testimony for the Ultimate Truth, infinite as He is, cannot come but from the Truth Himself and Hallâj, literally, was not himself when he uttered the words that led him to his death.

Hallaj's experience is seen under a completely different light, twenty years later, in *The Reconstruction*, where he represents a testimony to the philosophy of self-possession and self-realisation. His utterance, 'I am the creative Truth' is not seen now as an expression of the enthusiasm (in the etymological sense) of pantheistic Sufism, does not mean 'the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and bold affirmation in an undying phrase of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a profounder personality' ([1934] 1984: 77). In September 1900, Muhammad Iqbal wrote in the *Indian Antiquary* an article entitled 'The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as Expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani'¹³ presenting the book by al-Jilani (or al-Jili as he is often called), *The Perfect Man*, as an illustration of the significance of mysticism that he considers 'metaphysics hidden under the veil of religious phraseology' (Iqbal [1944] 2009: 78). In his presentation he recalls 'the condensed statement' by al-Jilani himself 'of his doctrine' contained in the following words: 'Divine nature soars upwards, human nature sinks downwards; hence perfect human nature must stand midway between the two; it must share both the divine and the human attributes – in one word perfect man must be the god-man' (79). As god-man, the human ego in the words of al-Jili quoted by Iqbal 'becomes the paragon of perfection . . . the preserver of the universe'. And Iqbal translates that notion by saying that 'man [who] has become perfect has amalgamated himself with the Absolute Being, or *has learnt what Hegel calls the Absolute Philosophy* . . . He is the point where Man-ness and God-ness

become one and result is the birth of the god-man' (91; emphasis in original). The task of the human ego as God's trustee and lieutenant is to realise in herself the divine attributes and as god-man continue the work of creation. Bergson and Iqbal share the idea that as in the human being *élan vital*, the push of life, becomes conscious of itself, humanity has the responsibility of pursuing and amplifying the free creative movement. In humanity, life has found a creative rebound.¹⁴

Time and *Ijtihad*

Bergson's philosophy of time constitutes a break in the history of thought in the West since Aristotle (Iqbal writes that Bergson is 'the only thinker who has made a keen study of the phenomenon of duration in time' ([1934] 1984: 37)) because it broke with the privilege of immobility and vision in the definition of human knowledge. How could there be a science of movement and time if, as Heraclitus famously said, there is only change in the continuous flux of things? Aristotle made it possible by immobilising things, and time itself, defined as the 'number of movement with respect to the anterior and the posterior': flux was domesticated when time was thus spatialised as an *interval*, and movement considered a juxtaposition of immobilities. 'Of immobility alone,' Bergson wrote, 'does the intellect form a clear idea' (Bergson 1944: 155). That is because our intelligence is the faculty by which we pursue and acquire a mastery of a universe of measure and instrumentality, of things that we can manipulate and utilise to our advantage. To know through the intelligence is to hold still under the sight, and the science of the physical world is made possible as the medium of knowledge became the sight and its end contemplation.

For Iqbal, Islamic thought has encountered Greek philosophy for its greatest good but also for its greatest ill because Greek and Hellenistic intellectualism has led it towards a path of contemplation integral with a static cosmology: if God's creative act is finite and accomplished, all that is left is for Him 'to see that it is good' and to contemplate what has been called into being *ex nihilo*. In the Newtonian system of the universe, there was a need for God to intervene from time to time in order to wind up the mechanism. Laplace's celestial mechanics did not need that hypothesis anymore as the scientist famously declared to Napoleon asking for the role of God in his

cosmology: the system of the world was a self-sustaining mechanism eternally identical to itself, offered to the comprehension of our intelligence and to our contemplation. Laplace could then quite naturally draw from such a model the notion that a perfect, ideal intelligence to which all the different parameters concerning all the particles of the universe would be presented at one given moment would *ipso facto* have knowledge of all of the states of the universe, past and future. To that maximum of intelligence, or Laplace's demon as it is called, everything would be on display for it to foresee, that is, simply, to *see*. With such a deterministic cosmology comes fatalism, which rests upon the conception of a closed universe where the future, predetermined, is simply stocked and ready to go according to a fixed and inevitable order of events, an order that has bound God's creative act itself. That is a cosmology for astrologers because only for them does the notion of pre-vision make sense as they view things in time in the same way they see them in space. Because our intelligence and our language (language is a manifestation of that faculty of analysis) present us a spatial, serial, and cinematic conception of time only our intuition can give us the sense of 'the universe [as] a free creative movement' (Iqbal 1934: 51).

Against that representation, Iqbal states, Bergson's revolution in the history of Western thought restoring duration to time,¹⁵ has allowed us to break away from that cosmology left by God to its mechanism and to think a world that is open, continuously emerging, and producing newness. Again, for Iqbal, Bergson's philosophy provides a language of 'confirmation' but the evolutionary cosmology of a free creative movement is, he explains, Islamic. He claims it to express the true meaning of the Qur'anic notion of creation. Evolutionary worldview, he affirms, is an essential aspect of the teaching of his guide, Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī, whose following verses he quotes as evidence:

First man appeared in the class of inorganic things,
 Next he passed therefrom into that of plants.
 For years he lived as one of the plants,
 Remembering naught of his inorganic state so different;
 And when he passed from the vegetative to the animal state,
 He had no remembrance of his state as a plant,
 Except the inclination he felt to the world of plants,

Especially at the time of spring and sweet flowers;
 Like the inclination of infants towards their mothers,
 Which knew not the cause of their inclination to the breast.
 Again the great Creator as you know,
 Drew man out of the animal into the human state.
 Thus man passed from one order of nature to another,
 Till he became wise and knowing and strong as he is now.
 Of his first souls he has now no remembrance,
 And he will be again changed from his present soul. (Rūmī cited in Iqbal
 ([1934] 1984: 97)

More importantly, it is the Qur'an itself that speaks the language of a free and continuously creative movement. Among the many possible quotes from the book, he often invokes the following verses: 'He adds to His creation as He pleases' (35: 1); 'Everyday some new work employs Him' (55: 29). To which must be added the very hadith already cited and that interested Bergson so much when Iqbal quoted it for him: 'Do not revile time; time is God.'¹⁶

Precisely, what would it mean to revile time? That would be to consider it the enemy of the perfect being, as 'from our point of view life is change and change is essentially imperfection' (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 47). As a consequence, we will hold that the first generation of the 'pious ancestors' (the *salaf*) represented the perfection to which could then only succeed diverse figures of the loss of the primal meaning (a continuous collapse down the scale of perfection, from the 'generation of the followers' to that of the 'followers of the followers', and so on). Hence a need to press against time with what French philosopher Gaston Berger has called a 'retrospective stubbornness' upon which salvation will depend: any innovation is necessarily blameworthy since, by definition, newness is loss, the only good thing being fidelity conceived as static imitation.¹⁷

That is the paradigm out of which Iqbalian and Bergsonian philosophies of life allow us to escape. The model is not anymore that of celestial mechanics but living fermentation where *élan vital* is continuously at work. Because life is newness, because 'every moment in the life of Reality is original, giving birth to what is absolutely novel and unforeseeable' (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 40),

human action must aim at continuously being level with the very movement of life. That is in particular what it means for Islam to deploy its modernity, which is not a simple adaptation to some external model. The concept of 'reconstruction' is not to be understood as imitation and mechanical adaptation but as the resumption of a living movement, leading out of the petrification that happened in the thirteenth century. That is the definition, before and beyond its juridical meaning, of *ijtihad*, a word that has as its fundamental meaning 'to struggle with oneself' and that has come to mean 'effort to produce independent reasoning'.

In the domain of jurisprudence, *ijtihad* is usually explained by evoking the name of Muādh ibn Jabal and the prophetic tradition about him. It is thus narrated that before sending him to Yemen to lead and guide the local populations there who had freshly converted to Islam, the Prophet wanted to ensure that he would be teaching a living reality. So he asked, 'How will you judge?' Muādh answered, 'According to the Qur'an.' He asked, 'And if you find no answer therein?' The reply was, 'I will judge according to the tradition of the Prophet of God.' He asked, 'And if you find no answer therein?' The reply was, as Muādh's final answer, and being one with which the Prophet was very pleased and reassured, 'Then I will make the effort of forming my own judgment.'

To that tradition another could be adjoined that declares that when the jurisprudent forms an independent reasoning and reaches a correct conclusion, he obtains double reward; but if at the end of his effort his conclusion is not correct he still gets a reward. Both traditions insist on the value of the reasoning that accepts novelty. The most important aspect of the prophet's insistence with Muādh is the refusal of the 'all has been said' attitude, which characterises those who press against time. Here the point is not to make the unknown come down to the known, to flatten 'what is absolutely novel' upon a precedent. The point is to affirm the radical newness of what, literally, has no precedent. That is what Iqbal's philosophy of movement teaches, and in an emerging cosmology, *ijtihad* is the response to absolute novelty. As early as in 1904, in an article published in *Qawmi Zindagi*, Iqbal expressed his view of the issue of *ijtihad* and life as newness:

Most of the opinions offered by the jurists from time to time on the basis of the vast sources of the Qur'an and Hadith were indeed suitable and

practicable for particular periods, but they did not respond to the needs of modern times.

If we ponder over the present life conditions, we find that similar to the need for a new theology to support the principles of religion, we require a great jurist for a modern interpretation of Islamic law. This jurist must possess rational and imaginative faculties to such a vast extent that he may be capable not only to organize and arrange Islamic law anew but also broaden, with ingenuity and imagination, the principles so as to encompass all possible situations of the social necessities of the modern times. As far as I know, no jurist with such extraordinary intellectual caliber exists in the Muslim world. If we realize the importance of such a task we may see that it is the task for more than one mind. (Mas'ud ([1995] 2003: 84)

Two important points in the passage need to be emphasised. First, the insistence that this is 'the task of more than one mind' must be brought out, as it means that modern performance of *ijtihad* in Islam is an intellectual and social movement. Second, the fact that the task of *ijtihad* and that of producing 'a new theology' are two enterprises internally connected needs to be stressed. The goal is not to technically adapt the law to 'modernity', it is to produce a holistic reappraisal of the thinking, of the cosmology. That is why the conditions for *ijtihad* cannot be those traditionally imposed by the schools of jurisprudence: the knowledge by the mujtahid (the performer of *ijtihad*) of all Qur'anic verses dealing with legal issues, plus that of 500 hadiths, that of the abrogated verses, of the reasons and circumstances of their abrogation; that of the different cases of consensus and divergences between scholars and of all secondary sources of law and jurisprudence; last, but certainly not least, the condition is added of absolute morality and mastery of the highest purposes of the law. Of course one who undertakes such important a task as interpretation is required to fulfil the criteria of competence and intellectual honesty. But Iqbal insists on the fact that what is crucial is the capacity to grasp the movement of life and the world more than the memory of acts that were once posed. To subordinate 'ingenuity and imagination' to memory would be to chain up the novel to the past and make *ijtihad* the monopoly of the intellectual caste of those for whom knowledge is recitation. Ultimately, *ijtihad* appears in its full sense only in the mystics.

The Mystic and his Politics

Of mysticism and its meaning, Iqbal and Bergson have a similar understanding, although, let it be repeated, no influence or 'direct input' could be evoked here, given the chronology. Both Bergson's 1932 book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and Iqbal's 1928 *Lectures on the Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam* insist on the crucial importance of the mystic's experience. If it obviously cannot be communicated, says Iqbal, it is nevertheless a *fact* of experience 'as real as any other region of human experience [that] cannot be ignored merely because it cannot be traced back to sense-perception' (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 18). The mystic state is 'objective' and is not 'a mere retirement into the mists of pure subjectivity' (15) and that is why, in its highest realisation, it is creative. In the same vein, Bergson insists that different from the emotion caused by representation and that could be considered 'infra-intellectual', there is an emotion that is not an effect but a power of creation that vivifies or vitalises the intellectual elements and translates into representations. It can be characterised, by contrast, as 'supra-intellectual'.

Bergson writes in the concluding lines of the first chapter of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*:

If society is self-sufficient, it is the supreme authority. But if it is only one of the aspects of life, we can easily conceive that life, which has had to set down the human species at a certain point of its evolution, imparts a new impetus to exceptional individuals who have immersed themselves anew in it, so that they can help society further along its way. Bergson 1935: 82)

Those exceptional individuals who can get back into the creative impetus itself to re-open society and revitalise it, to re-dynamise religion that is always under the threat of getting petrified and becoming static, those of whom Bergson says that they are more than men, are the Mystics.

For Iqbal, the first of the Mystics in the Islamic world was the Prophet himself. But he makes a distinction between the creative prophetic experience and mystical experiences that have no consequences for society.¹⁸ There is the mystic who reaches the end of self-realisation and that is literally the end. There is the mystic whose self-realisation is inseparable from the transformation of the world or even the creation of a new world: prophetic experience

is the one that produces a new world after immersion in the creative impetus itself. That is the experience in which reformers partake, who are rightly called then, in the language of *élan vital*, ‘revivificators’.¹⁹ Those are, Bergson says, the men and women of ‘superabundant activity’, such as St Paul, St Teresa, St Catherine of Siena, St Francis, or Joan of Arc (1935: 207). As to Iqbal, the opposition he establishes between the Sufism of ecstasies and the Sufism of transformative action is best explained by the declaration that he cites by the Muslim mystic Abdul Quddus of Gangoh: ‘Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned’ (Iqbal ([1934] 1984: 99). For both philosophers, the true mystic is the one who does not think like Plotinus that ecstasy is as far as one can get, that ‘to go further would be to go downhill’ (Bergson 1935: 188–9) and that ‘action is a weakening of contemplation’ (189):²⁰ it is the one who ‘returns’ from having been ‘swept back into [the] vast current of life’ (207) because it is his or her responsibility to bring life and openness into what is petrified and closed.

Henri Bergson’s *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* contains the author’s *social* philosophy. Whether a Bergsonian *politics* can also be inferred from the book is a question. On the other hand, the historical circumstances of British colonialism led Muhammad Iqbal to playing a very important political role in the separate independences of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. He is considered the father of the very idea of a Pakistan as a state separated from India on the basis of religion. That idea is at the core of his ‘Presidential Address’ delivered at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League on 29 December 1930, as he famously delineated in his speech what the borders of *autonomous* Muslim regions *within* India should be.

Iqbal Singh Sevea writes that Iqbal’s historical role in the decolonisation of India made him ‘one of the most controversial figures in modern South Asian history’ (2012: 27). He also recalls that he has been called by the Iqbal scholar Rafiq Zakaria a ‘casual politician’. Iqbal does stress in the very first words of his ‘presidential address’ that he is not a politician but just a scholar who hopes to enlighten by his knowledge of the history and spirit of Islam the decisions of the assembly. Nevertheless he expresses himself with great force when he presents Islam, on the one hand, as a radical rejection of nationalism, and, on the other, ‘a people-building force’ (Iqbal [1944] 2009: 4) and a

complete system in which 'God and the universe, spirit and matter, Church and State, are organic to each other' (Iqbal [1944] 2009: 4). Of course, there is potential for contradiction here. On the one hand, the need for *ijtihad*, meaning *reconstruction* and revivification, demanded that the Muslim community of India play a crucial role in the movement of reappraisal of the thinking and reconnection with the Islamic principle of movement; and it only could do so if it enjoyed autonomy of decision and orientation.²¹ On the other hand, and at the same time, creating the conditions for such autonomy should absolutely not be confused with an Islamic nationalism or 'pan-Islamic' politics. Iqbal insisted that the universalising ethics and polity that continuously springs from the Prophet's creative experience would be petrified by the edification of nation-states, the way, he says, 'the universal ethics of Jesus is displaced by national system of ethics and polity' ([1944] 2009: 5). Universalisation means 'humanisation' for Iqbal, while nationalism, be it pan-Islamic transnationalism, is solidification of ethnic differences, what he labels 'racialisation'. In that sense Islam is not a static and territorial entity but a 'social experiment', Iqbal declares, a 'model for the final combination of *humanity* by drawing its adherents from a variety of mutually repellent *rac*es, and then transforming this atomic aggregate into a people possessing a self-consciousness of their own' (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 132–3).

It is certainly worth noticing that for Iqbal a State of the Muslims should not mean an Islamic State defined as such by an adoption of the rules established as Sharia. Thus, in the 'Presidential Address' he insists that the Hindus 'should not fear that the creation of autonomous Muslim states [would] mean the introduction of a kind of religious rule in such states' (Iqbal [1944] 2009: 12). As an illustration he quotes an article of the *Times of India* that he considered a good way of judging 'the character of a Muslim state'. The article in question, cited by Iqbal, reads: 'In ancient India, the State framed laws regulating the rates of interest; but in Muslim times, although Islam clearly forbids the realization of interest on money loaned, Indian Muslim States imposed no restrictions on such rates' (ibid.). So, for Iqbal, the point was not to mechanically introduce rules established for other circumstances and other times but to seize the opportunity offered to Islam 'to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilise its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with

its original spirit and with the spirit of modern times' (13). We can understand 'Arab imperialism giving its stamp to Islam' here as meaning the re-tribalisation and 'racial' re-petrification of the impetus that once had meant radically transforming the closed society of pre-Islamic Arabia resting upon tribal law by the creation of the new forces of dynamic religion for an open society.

All that being said, Iqbal's declarations as a 'casual politician' have been historically translated into both nationalism and Islamism and I. S. Sevea points out that the philosopher-poet's political statements – and his enigmatic call for a 'spiritual democracy' that ends his sixth lecture (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 142) – have been appropriated in their own divergent ways by many movements from the whole religious and political spectrum: the Nationalists, the Islamists, the Progressives, the Socialists, the Ahmadī even (although he wrote against their movement), the State of India (as an Indian patriot) and the different regimes of Pakistan (as a founding father figure).

Javed Majeed has eloquently written about 'the tense connections between Indian nationalism, Muslim separatism and pan-Islamic geography [that] are evident in the relationship between two of Iqbal's best known poems, "Tarāna-e-Hindī" and "Tarāna-e-Millī"' (2009: 82). He goes on to explain how the two poems, which are 'inextricably linked through their mutual opposition . . . imply each other through their opposition', manifesting 'the tension within Indian Muslim separatism itself, which stemmed from the securing of a nationality within India on the basis of an ideology which saw itself as the antithesis of the idea of nationalism' (82–3).

The political translation of Iqbal's message of continuous humanisation, certainly, is contradictory.²² But beyond the significance given to it (including by himself) by the circumstances and times when that translation took place,²³ its ultimate meaning as the demand that 'what is essentially mobile in its nature' be revitalised (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 117) is not. And there lies the deep affinity between Iqbal and Bergson.

Notes

1. Iqbal (1955: 3).
2. Shafique quotes a letter from Iqbal to R. Nicholson in which the poet insists that his ideas are to be explained 'in the light of the Qur'an and the Muslim Sufis and

thinkers', adding that 'even Bergson's idea of time is not quite foreign to Sufis' (2007: 45).

3. Damian A. Howard cites the last pages of Bergson's *Two Sources* where Bergson speaks of the responsibility of men 'for deciding if they want merely to live, or intend just to make the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods' (Bergson cited in Howard 2011: 56). He rightly comments that 'one can imagine the tremendous attraction – and ambivalence – which their stentorian gravity might arouse in a Muslim heart' (55). We will see that such a notion that the creative activity of humans to transform a continuously emerging universe also means turning themselves into 'gods' is profoundly Iqbalian, too.
4. It is worth recalling that the great interest that they showed in each other's thought when they met can be characterised, indeed, as a manifestation of a deep 'affinity'. Massignon narrates the circumstances of that encounter between the two men that took place in 1932, at a time when Iqbal had presented and published his lectures on the *Reconstruction* and two years before the publication of Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Louis Massignon has devoted an immense work to the Sufi Husayn Mansur al-Hallāj (who died in 922) that Iqbal discovered with huge interest, hence their correspondence. As to his relationship with Bergson here is Massignon's account of a visit to Paris by Iqbal (from the 'preface' he wrote in 1955 to Eva Meyerovitch's French translation of *The Reconstruction of the Religious Thought of Islam*; see page 3): 'Iqbal knew Bergson and in spite of a very deficient English translation (repudiated by Bergson) he had come to feel for Bergson a spiritual "Semitic" affinity; so he ended up coming to Paris to talk with him. But he also wanted to talk to me about Hallāj. He had written to me previously, from Lahore, on 18-2-1932 the following: "I am sending you a copy of (my) latest work 'Javid Nama' which I hope will interest you, especially the part relating Hallāj and Nietzsche [. . .] I have allowed the former to explain himself, and as to the latter I have tried to show how a Muslim Mystic would look at him. The book is a kind of Divine Comedy of Islam. It is a pity I was not able to meet you in London. I am now thinking of making a tour to Spanish Morocco and if possible to French Morocco. This will give me an opportunity to meet you in Paris.'" And I did see him, in my home, on the 1st of November, 1932.' [Iqbal's letter is quoted in the original English by Massignon: SBD.] Iqbal's son Javid gives an account of the meeting in the biography of his father that he wrote under the title *Zindah Rūd*,

indicating that in spite of serious ailment Bergson had two hours of conversation with his visitor and his two companions. Javid Iqbal also recounts that the discussion was about Bergson's notion of time and that the Frenchman was deeply impressed when Iqbal mentioned to him the following saying from Prophet Muhammad: 'Do not revile time; time is God.'

5. In the 'Prelude in Heaven' in Iqbal's *Javid Nama* (or *The Book of Eternity*) Heaven rebukes Earth that has become Man's abode, saying: 'Be earth high as Alvand, yet it is only earth,/it is not bright and eternal as the skies' (1932: verses 141–2). And the meaning of the humanisation of Earth is then described in the consolation sung to Earth by the angels: 'The lustre of a handful of earth one day shall outshine the creatures of light;/earth through the star of his destiny one day shall be transformed into heaven./His imagination, which is nourished by the torrent of vicissitudes,/one day shall soar out of the whirlpool of the azure sky./ Consider one moment the meaning of Man; what thing do you ask of us?/Now he is pricking into nature, one day he will be modulated perfectly,/so perfectly modulated will this precious subject be/that even the heart of God will bleed one day at the impact of it' (verses 174–82).
6. See Ali (1992); and Berque (2002).
7. Passages from Qur'an (2: 30–3) are quoted in (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 10).
8. Because of that etymology precisely, in his French translation of the Qur'an (arguably the best in that language), Jacques Berque adopts *lieutenant* instead of the more frequent *vicegerent*.
9. It is said in Qur'an II: 37 that even as he is going to cast him and Eve out and condemn them to fall, God entrusts Adam with 'words of inspiration' by which he will be able to turn back towards his Lord who is 'Oft-returning, most merciful'. We note that those names of God cannot be comprehended by angels who, unlike humans who can go astray, do not know their Lord with respect to forgiveness or mercy.
10. Iqbal cites Qur'an (95: 4–5) that reads: 'That of goodliest fabric We created man, then brought him down to the lowest of the low' (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 9).
11. He distinguishes different aspects of Sufi thought, depending on which aspects of the Ultimate Reality (Will, Beauty, Light, Knowledge, and so forth) emphasis is put on. Impersonal absorption still remains in most of them the main feature, except, maybe, for Suhrawardi's illuminationist philosophy: although he is pantheist 'in so far as he defines God as the sum total of all sensible and ideal existence' he maintains that 'the world is something real, and the human soul is a distinct individuality' (Iqbal 1934: 114).

12. This is the way in which French orientalist Louis Massignon renders *haqq*, literally 'truth', to express the idea that *al-Haqq* is to be opposed to *al-halq* as the Creator to the creation.
13. The article is reproduced in the volume, compiled and edited by Latif Ahmed Sherwani, of *Speeches, Writings & Statements of Iqbal*, published by Iqbal Academy Pakistan. The first edition was published in 1944, the latest in 2009.
14. See Kisukidi (2013).
15. Iqbal ([1934] 1984: 40) opposes to serial time 'time as felt and not as thought and calculated'.
16. About this hadith, Annemarie Schimmel writes that it 'has accompanied Iqbal throughout his life' ([1962] 1988: 290).
17. Gaston Berger writes: 'Our civilization is stubbornly retrospective. It needs to become "prospective"' (cited in Berger *et al.* 2007: 53).
18. Bergson thus opposes an 'incomplete' and a 'complete' mysticism.
19. It should be noted that 'revivification' or *ihya*, a familiar notion in Islamic tradition (see Al Ghazali's main title *The Revivification of Islamic Sciences*), could be a meaning that Iqbal has in mind when he speaks of 'reconstruction'. The revivicator of the religion, *muhyiddin*, is a name given to prominent Islamic scholars and/or mystics such as Ibn Arabî.
20. Bergson quotes here Plotinus, *Enneads*, III, viii, 4.
21. Iqbal raises the question in his sixth lecture when he remarks, concerning the need to 'stir into activity the dormant spirit of life in our legal system, and give it an evolutionary outlook' that 'in India, however, difficulties are likely to arise; for it is doubtful whether a non-Muslim legislative assembly can exercise the power of *ijtihad*' (Iqbal [1934] 1984: 138).
22. Questioned on the contradictions in his position concerning the Ahmadiyya movement, Iqbal explained that he was at first sympathetic to it, seeing it as a manifestation of *ijtihad*, before he was 'revolted' against the claim, made by one of its branches at least, that it was straight out about a new prophet. Then, he declared: 'If my present attitude is self-contradictory, then, well, only a living and thinking man has the privilege of contradicting himself. Only stones do not contradict themselves, as Emerson says' (Iqbal [1944] 2009: 206).
23. We must always remember that, as he declared himself, his message bore 'things that are yet unborn in the world' (Iqbal 1915: verse 12) and was 'addressed to the future' (Diagne 2010: 1).

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4

The Contemporary Relevance of Muhammad Iqbal

Basit Bilal Koshul

Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan

Charles Taylor argues:

We must reread Iqbal. For a time we could imagine him forgotten, consigned to the oubliettes with the other figures of Islamic modernism from the beginning of this century. But he had to come back. (Taylor 2010: xi)

The reason that Iqbal ‘had to come back’ is because he speaks to us today. Taylor notes that while Iqbal could be read for different reasons ‘we also have shared reasons, Western, Muslim and Eastern merged together, in reading this remarkable man’ (Taylor 2010: xi). These shared reasons are the result of the modern cultural condition that is characterised by ‘a deep and mutual mistrust’ of the alien other. The source of this mistrust is the way in which the modern self constructs its identity:

This distrust is partly derived from our own uncertainty regarding our identity, which sometimes gives us a feeling of insecurity under the gaze of others. It’s this feeling that can lead to a sort of hyper-confidence, tightening around a rigid identity, and the belligerent rejection of the other as the bearer of evil. (Taylor 2010: xi)

In constructing its identity, the modern self requires that the alien other be neglected/rejected, marginalised, and eventually demonised. Taylor argues that we need a radical change in perspective in light of the fact that in the

contemporary cultural condition we constantly come face to face with the alien other. We need a way/method of constructing our identity that makes it possible for us to 'seek out and define oneself using references found in the other's tradition' (Taylor 2010: xi). In this way, instead of the 'gaze of others' being a cause of fear, suspicion, and xenophobia, it becomes a resource of self-discovery, self-awareness, and self-affirmation. Given the dominant orthodoxies in philosophy, religion, and science this appears to be logically, theologically, and sociologically impossible. Taylor argues that Iqbal's thought opens up possibilities that the dominant orthodoxies close down:

In this atmosphere of suspicion and anger, it is a joy to hear the voice of Iqbal, both passionate and serene. It is the voice of a soul that is deeply anchored in the Qur'anic Revelation, and precisely for that reason, open to all the other voices, seeking in them the path of his own fidelity. (Taylor 2010: xii)

Iqbal's voice, echoing the message of the Qur'an, calls upon individual human beings, different communities, and different traditions to build a 'renewed self' that views an affirmation and acceptance of the alien other as a uniquely valuable resource for increased self-awareness, deepened self-understanding, and genuine self-affirmation. This scripturally grounded and philosophically articulated conception of the self and its relationship to the alien other is something that is sorely needed in the West, the world of Islam, among believers and non-believers alike. Because he responds to this very global need of the hour, Iqbal had to come back, even if many had thought that he had become irrelevant.

Taylor's perceptive (but brief) analysis of Iqbal's thought and its contemporary, global relevance is offered at the beginning of the twenty-first century and it focuses on the sociocultural significance of Iqbal's work. An analysis of Iqbal's thought offered by two thinkers in the middle of the twentieth century – Robert Whitemore and Muhammad Rafiuddin – suggests that Iqbal's thought is of similar contemporary, global relevance in intellectual, philosophical terms. Working independently, Whitemore and Rafiuddin reached virtually the same conclusions about the contents and relevance of Iqbal's work, at virtually the same time (the mid-1950s). In the words of

Whittemore, Iqbal's philosophy is 'an achievement possessing a philosophical importance far transcending the world of Islam' (1956: 682).

The first part of this chapter will summarise the arguments put forward by Whittemore and Rafiuddin about Iqbal's continuing relevance. This relevance centres on the manner in which Iqbal's *falsafa-e-khudi* (philosophy of self) helps us to see relationships between religion, philosophy, and science that otherwise remain hidden. The remaining part of the chapter will show how Iqbal's philosophy brings religion and science into a mutually enriching dialogue by offering an illustrative example. Iqbal articulates a critique of the traditional cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments for the existence of God using the findings of modern science. This critique helps us to move beyond finite/infinite, designer/designed, and ideal/real dichotomies that are at the heart of the traditional arguments and see relationships in the universe that these dichotomies obscure. Iqbal's reconstructed argument for the reality of God integrates the wisdom of scripture with the findings of modern science using the tools of philosophy. The third part of the chapter will deepen the insight offered by Taylor, Whittemore, and Rafiuddin about the contemporary, global relevance of Iqbal by summarising Charles Peirce's conception of a 'religion of science' and his 'Neglected Argument for the Reality of God'. Even a cursory look at Peirce shows that there is significant affinity (in both logical and methodological terms) between the works of Iqbal and Peirce – given their standing in their respective traditions, the implications are quite far reaching. Iqbal is widely considered to be the most original modern Muslim thinker and Peirce is widely considered to be the most original American contribution to Western philosophy. If the hypothesis of significant affinity in the thought of Iqbal and Peirce is even partially correct, then a possibility emerges of opening up novel venues and avenues of dialogue, exchange, and perhaps even cross-fertilisation between Islam and the West.

The Scope and Relevance of Iqbal's Philosophy

Whittemore describes the key problem faced by twentieth-century philosophy in these words:

The universe is One and a Many, a plurality of interacting subject selves and their unity, and how it can be both at once is, as James Ward has remarked,

the philosophical problem of the twentieth century. (Whittemore 1975: 113)

He goes on to note that the cosmologies offered by F. H. Bradley, A. N. Whitehead, Sri Aurobindo, Nikolas Berdyaev, Josiah Royce, and R. Radhakrishnan seek to resolve this very problem. For Rafiuddin the problem of the One and Many is far more than a pressing problem for twentieth-century philosophy – it has been the central concern of human enquiry since the dawn of history. Rafiuddin notes:

Ever since the human being started to reflect on the world around him, his thought has been always accompanied by an intuitive sense. This intuitive sense suggests that even though there is almost an infinity of diversity and plurality around him, this variety is actually the manifestation of some One and all the plurality will eventually return to this single source. But what is the actual reality of this One? This problem has always been the central concern of human reflection.¹ (Rafiuddin 1961a: 60)

In working through the problem of the relationship between the One and the Many, Iqbal is aware of the answers proposed in the Islamic and Western intellectual traditions. In formulating his own response he takes advantage of resources in both traditions and his response is as much a part of Western philosophy as it is of Islamic philosophy.

Comparing Iqbal's response with that of other modern philosophers, Whittemore notes:

In one way, the task that Iqbal sets himself is even more difficult than that confronting these others, for he seeks not only a reconciliation of the Many and the One, not simply to account for the interaction of the finite selves with the Ultimate Self, but to do so in such a manner as to render his conception consonant with the teaching of the Qur'an. (Whittemore 1975: 113)

Rafiuddin concurs with Whittemore's observation about the centrality of the Qur'an in Iqbal's thought and the fact that the use of revealed scripture in his philosophy sets him apart from other philosophers:

Very much like the systems of other philosophers, Iqbal's philosophy is an example of systematized wisdom. But there is a difference between Iqbal

and the other philosophers. The difference is that for Iqbal the teachings of the Qur'an is that it is the Reality of God which underpins the unity of the universe or that Reality which transforms the Multiplicity of the universe into Oneness. (Rafuuddin [1971] 1992: 9)

The fact that the Qur'an is the central pillar around which Iqbal's philosophy is built is further evidenced by the fact that in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Iqbal 2012) the Qur'an is by far the most often cited text. Whittemore affirms Rafuuddin's observation that Iqbal's philosophy is rooted in a very particular religious tradition:

[Iqbal's] work is, from first to last, the work of a *muslim*. At every point he is at pains to indicate his conviction that his teaching is in all respects harmonious with the spirit and teaching of the Quran. He speaks and writes always from a standpoint *within* Islam. (Whittemore 1975: 125; emphasis in original)

Iqbal is a Muslim thinker standing firmly within the Islamic tradition and from this particular vantage point offers the concept of *khudi* to bring the One into relationship with the Many.²

At the same time that they agree that Iqbal's philosophical insights are firmly rooted within the Islamic tradition, Rafuuddin and Whittemore also agree that the relevance of Iqbal's philosophy far exceeds the world of Islam. Iqbal's work can be seen to have extra-Islamic relevance because it addresses some of the key issues that Islam shares with other monotheistic faiths:

That God (whatever its nature) is One, that this universe is animated (for better or worse) by purpose, and that it has a positive character and value, that this value is evidenced by the testimony of God to man in Scripture – in these convictions Islam and the religions of the west find common ground. (Whittemore 1956: 698)

But the 'extra-Islamic significance' of Iqbal's thought is not the result of merely addressing a set of concerns that are common to Islam and other religions:

To ascribe, however, an extra-Islamic significance to Iqbal's thought is to claim that his viewpoint contributes in important measure to the clarifica-

tion and understanding of these common convictions, not only as regards their internal coherence but as regards their harmonization with secular knowledge as well. (Whittemore 1956: 698)

In other words, Iqbal's achievement helps different religious traditions to better understand and address the common theological issues. But even more so, Iqbal is able to bring the 'common convictions' of the Abrahamic religions into conversation (and perhaps harmony) with secular knowledge.

Thus far we have described the significance of Iqbal's philosophy of self from the perspective of theology and religious thought. But 'to say that Iqbal has given new plausible meaning to old paradoxical doctrine is but to state half the case' (Whittemore 1956: 698). The relevance of Iqbal's thought to the understanding of secular knowledge is the other half of the case. Whittemore argues that Iqbal's philosophy is directly relevant to secular knowledge as well:

[I]n showing that nature and spirit are not alien to one another, and hence that it is not necessary for the man of religion to say no to his environment, he has pointed the way to a solution of the perennial conflict between science, philosophy, and religion. (Whittemore 1956: 698)

Whittemore describes the significance of Iqbal's achievement in the context of the history of Western thought:

The continuing value of Iqbal's *Reconstruction*, and the measure of its author's philosophical standing, is his having shown that the proper understanding of the meaning and relation of religion, science, and philosophy will be attained only when men come to realize that each is only a perspective, but a perspective for the lack of which Reality would be the less. (Whittemore 1975: 130)

Rafiuddin echoes Whittemore's valuation of Iqbal's achievement for understanding secular knowledge:

The *last* of the prophets who gave a perfect concept of Reality to mankind is the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The *first* philosopher who made this perfect concept of Reality, received through the agency of Prophethood, the basis of his philosophy in this age of the progress

of science, is Iqbal. And this philosophy which organizes the scientific data according to the perfect concept of Reality is the philosophy of ‘Self’ (*Khudi*). (Rafiuddin 1961b: 160–1; emphasis in original)

If one does not allow the exuberance of Rafiuddin’s words to cloud the issue, one can see that the point he is trying to make is that Iqbal’s *falsafa-e-khudi* is a milestone in the history of human thought. Iqbal has succeeded in integrating religion, science, and philosophy in a way that was not possible before the discoveries of modern science. In more sober words, Rafiuddin notes:

Iqbal’s philosophy of the ‘Self’ provides an explanation of the Prophetic concept of the universe into which all true scientific facts known so far have been integrated and there is no reason why true scientific facts to be discovered in the future will not be similarly integrated into it.

This union between Philosophy and Prophetic Teachings is a landmark in man’s intellectual progress and it has ushered in a new era in man’s intellectual history – a new era whose pioneer and herald is Iqbal. (Rafiuddin 1961b: 117)

The term ‘*khudi*’ (variously translated as ‘self’ and ‘ego’) captures the unique and defining characteristics of Iqbal’s philosophy:

All that Iqbal has presented as a thinker has its roots in one concept alone to which he has given the name of *Khudi* or ‘Self.’ All the philosophical ideas of Iqbal are derived from, and rationally and scientifically related to, this one concept, the concept of ‘Self’. (Rafiuddin 1961a: 86)

Rafiuddin also notes that ‘Iqbal’s concept of reality is the God of Islam for which he uses the philosophical term “Ultimate Ego”’ (Rafiuddin [1971] 1992: 59). Whittemore argues that Iqbal’s philosophical conception of *khudi* is as relevant to (and corrective of) the traditional, theological conception of God as the modern, materialistic, conception of the universe:

But I cannot here forebear to remark my own conviction that Iqbal’s conception of the One and the Many and their relation is a significant event in the history of philosophical theology. His notion of God as Absolute Ego, whatever its offense to the religious sensibilities of the mullah, the rabbi, and the priest, gives concrete meaning and plausibility to man’s cherished

belief that God is Love. His conception of purpose as the realization by Self of value and character, however dubious it may appear to the materialist, does explain the relatedness of all things to God and of God to all things in such a manner as to avoid the paradoxes inherent in the scholastic conception of God as simple, immutable perfection. (Whittemore 1975: 128–9)

Modern Science and the Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God

A look at Iqbal's project of philosophical reconstruction shows that his project is as much the outcome of a soul deeply rooted in the Qur'an as of mind open to the findings of modern science. One can illustrate the impact and role of modern scientific thought on Iqbal's philosophy in a number of different ways because its influence is so wide-ranging. Iqbal's use of the findings of modern science to critique and reconstruct the classical arguments for the existence of God, offers a clear illustration of this influence. Iqbal notes that the dominant modes of rationally understanding the attributes of God in the post-Prophetic period have proven to be woefully inadequate. Here he is specifically referring to the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments for the existence of God. For Iqbal these arguments are demonstrably deficient, first, because each one of them is fraught with internal contradictions. These arguments divide reality into the irreconcilable opposites of cause/effect (cosmological), designer/designed (teleological), and ideal/real (ontological), thereby dividing experience into an irreconcilable dualism of thought and being. Second (and perhaps more importantly), the traditional arguments also 'betray a rather superficial interpretation of experience' (Iqbal 2012: 23).

For Iqbal these arguments (as well as the dualisms present within them) are the products and continuing legacy of the pre-scientific age of philosophy. While the philosophy of the pre-scientific era made valuable contributions to human civilisation, it is a product of its time and has severe limitations:

There is no doubt that the ancient world produced some great systems of philosophy at a time when man was comparatively primitive and governed more or less by suggestion. But we must not forget that this system-building in the ancient world was the work of abstract thought which cannot go beyond the systematization of vague religious beliefs and traditions, and gives us no hold on the concrete situations of life. (Iqbal 2012: 100)

Iqbal proposes that the only way to avoid the shortcomings of received philosophical wisdom is to combine the knowledge produced by modern scientific examination of experience with the wisdom gleaned from revelation. Iqbal proposes that our understanding of God should not be based on philosophical categories, concepts, and ideas derived largely from the pre-scientific era of history. Instead, in our attempt to understand God we should construct a philosophical method that begins with taking the scientific description of experience seriously and interpret this experience ‘following the clue furnished by the Qur’an which regards experience within and without as symbolic of a reality described by it, as “the First and the Last, the visible and the invisible” [57:3]’ (Iqbal 2012: 25).

Here Iqbal is offering an interesting proposal – in trying to rationally understand God, we rethink the age-old dualistic categories of cause/effect, designer/created, and ideal/real. In their stead we approach the Divine by interpreting experience of the world around us and the experience within us as the symbol of a Reality that is fundamentally relational in character – ‘the First and the Last, the visible and the invisible’. At this point Iqbal turns to the scientific exploration of three regions of experience (for example, matter, life, and consciousness). First, he summarises the latest findings of modern science and gives the reader a macro-level view of how contemporary physics understands matter, biology understands life, and psychology understands consciousness. Then Iqbal turns to the implications that the scientific description of the different realms of experience has for our understanding of God if the scientific description of matter, life, and consciousness is viewed as the symbol of a Reality that is ‘the First and the Last, the visible and the invisible’. Hence, Iqbal is offering an alternative that is more faithful to both the scientific understanding of empirical reality and wisdom of revealed scripture than the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments. In the following pages I will summarise Iqbal’s use of modern science to critique and repair the three classical arguments for the existence of God.

The description of Nature provided by physics has undergone substantial modification since the days of Newton. Classical physics presented a picture of Nature as being composed of inert, dead, enduring stuff (called matter) suspended in an absolute, empty void (called space). Iqbal notes that the ‘scientific view of Nature as pure materiality is associated with the Newtonian view of

space as an absolute void in which things are situated' (Iqbal 2012: 28). Iqbal notes that Berkeley and Whitehead had offered a sound philosophical critique of this materialistic theory of matter. As sound as the philosophical critique is, the materialist conception of Nature 'has received the greatest blow from the hand of Einstein . . . whose discoveries have laid the foundations of a far-reaching revolution in the entire domain of human thought' (Iqbal 2012: 27). At this point Iqbal quotes Bertrand Russell as acknowledging that Einstein's theory of relativity has done more to undermine the classical understanding of matter and substance than 'all the arguments of the philosophers' (Russell cited in Iqbal 2012: 27–8). Iqbal uses the summary offered by Whitehead to describe the revised conception of matter, substance, and space that emerges in the aftermath of Einstein's discoveries:

According to Professor Whitehead . . . Nature is not a static fact situated in an a-dynamic void, but a structure of events possessing the character of continuous creative flow which thought cuts up into isolated immobilities out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of time and space. Thus we see how modern science utters its agreement with Berkeley's criticism which it once regarded as an attack on its very foundation. (Iqbal 2012: 28)

In the words of Russell, '[a] piece of matter has become not a persistent thing with varying states, but a system of inter-related events' (cited in Iqbal 2012: 28). As the understanding of Nature offered by physics has evolved from Newton to Einstein to post-Einstein, it becomes obvious that 'the empirical attitude which appeared to necessitate scientific materialism has finally ended in a revolt against matter' (Iqbal 2012: 27).

The cosmological argument conceives of God as the infinite, uncaused first cause and Nature as the finite effect. Looking at Nature as a 'system of inter-related events' allows Iqbal to conceive a different relationship between Nature and God. Iqbal notes:

Nature, as we have seen, is not a mass of pure materiality occupying a void. It is a structure of events, a systematic mode of behaviour, and as such organic to the Ultimate Self. Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the Qur'an it is the habit of Allah. (Iqbal 2012: 45)

Here Iqbal has transformed the cause/effect dualism in the cosmological argument to a person–universe–habit relationship between God and Nature. In the midst of apparent arbitrariness, randomness, and senselessness in our world, attentive observation reveals certain patterns and harmonies. The Qur'an describes these patterns and harmonies as *sunnat Allah*, or 'the habits of Allah' (33: 62; 35: 43; 48: 23, and so on).

Just as he uses the findings of physics to critique and correct the cosmological argument, Iqbal uses the findings of modern biology to do the same with the teleological argument. The teleological argument infers the existence of an intelligent designer from the experience of a well-designed universe and it apparently avoids the pitfalls of the cause/effect dualism plaguing the cosmological argument. However, Iqbal's analysis shows that the dualism has insidiously survived in the teleological argument in the form of the designer/designed distinction. In addition to a number of logical fallacies plaguing the teleological argument (Iqbal 2012: 24), Iqbal describes the shortcomings of the argument from the perspective of modern science. A review of the history of biology reveals that from its very inception biology had to discard the materialist notion of Nature as being fixed, static, and unchanging – a conception inherited from the intellectual legacy of Newtonian physics. Everywhere that one looks in the organic, natural world one sees growth, variation, and adaptation. But Darwinian biology has replaced the materialism of Newtonian physics (and one may add Aristotelean metaphysics) with a mechanistic conception of the natural world:

The discoveries of Newton in the sphere of matter and those of Darwin the sphere of Natural History reveal a mechanism. All problems, it was believed, were really the problems of physics. Energy and atoms, with the properties self-existing in them, could explain everything including life, thought, will, and feeling. The concept of mechanism – a purely physical concept – claimed to be the all-embracing explanation of Nature. (Iqbal 2012: 33)

This mechanistic conception of the natural world, like the materialist conception of the universe, sees all events through the lens of a 'rigid determinism' that leaves 'no scope for human or even Divine freedom' (Iqbal 2012: 43). From the Newtonian and Darwinian perspectives causality in

the world of Nature could be understood in purely deterministic, mechanistic terms. Iqbal acknowledges the fact that the ‘concept of “cause”. . . the essential feature of which is priority to the effect’ is well suited for studying a certain class of phenomena in empirical reality – for example, the motion of billiard balls on a pool table. But, he goes on to note, ‘when we rise to the level of life and mind the concept of cause fails us’ because ‘the behaviour of [a living] organism is essentially a matter of inheritance and incapable of sufficient explanation in terms of molecular physics’ (Iqbal 2012: 34). It is not just the phenomenon of inheritance that cannot be explained mechanistically employing the notion of ‘cause and effect’, Iqbal notes that the behaviour of the organism itself cannot be explained in these terms either: ‘The action of living organisms, initiated and planned in view of an end, is totally different to causal action’ (ibid.). A scientific account of such behaviour ‘demands the concept of “end” and “purpose,” which act from within unlike the concept of cause which is external to the effect and acts from without’ (ibid.). Here Iqbal is stating his case for jettisoning the concept of ‘cause/effect’ and adopting the concept of ‘end/purpose’ when studying the emergence and evolution of life. Then he goes on to offer the scientific grounds for his position.

After acknowledging that ‘I am no biologist and must turn to biologists themselves for support’ (Iqbal 2012: 34), Iqbal offers the insights of the biologists Haldane, Driesch, and Carr in support of his position. Haldane notes that there are certain processes in a living organism that can be explained using the conception of cause/effect as it is understood in physics and chemistry. But there are other processes that require going beyond the mechanistic conception of cause/effect. For Haldane the two processes that cannot be explained in terms of cause/effect are the two characteristics that separate a machine from a living organism: self-repair and self-reproduction. The passage of time and the change of environment present unforeseeable challenges and opportunities for the living organism. And the organisms that survive, flourish, and evolve are the ones that can respond creatively to the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities. An adequate account of the way that life interacts with its environment is only possible when the notion of ‘ends/purpose’ is employed. Whether it is responding to unexpected challenges or taking advantage of novel opportunities, the behaviour of the organism is determined by its ability to choose a particular end (in the future), in light of

a general purpose (usually determined by past experience) in order to shape its present behaviour. Combining Haldane's observations with Driesch's description of life as 'factual wholeness', Iqbal notes:

Life is, then, a unique phenomenon and the concept of mechanism is inadequate for its analysis . . . In all the purposive processes of growth and adaptation to its environment, whether this adaptation is secured by the formation of fresh or the modification of old habits, it possesses a career which is unthinkable in the case of a machine. (Iqbal 2012: 35)

Iqbal then uses the insights of Wildon Carr to deepen his critique of applying mechanistic conceptions when dealing with the phenomenon of life. For Carr the evolution of life as understood by modern biology clearly and obviously necessitates jettisoning the mechanistic conception of cause/effect. Carr argues that it is not logically possible for a mechanistic process to have been the cause of the origin and evolution of biological life – and the scientific mind that studies this process. Combining the insights of Haldane, Driesch, and Carr Iqbal comes to the conclusion that the attempt to explain the behaviour of living organisms in mechanistic terms breaks down completely when we consider the ability of living organisms to discover, invent, and create:

In fact all creative activity is free activity. Creation is opposed to repetition which is characteristic of mechanical action. That is why it is impossible to explain the creative activity of life in terms of mechanism. (Iqbal 2012: 40)

Given the inadequacy of the concepts of a designer who is the cause and the designed that is the effect to provide a coherent account of observed reality (especially that part of reality that is the subject matter of biology) Iqbal offers the alternative of 'ends and purposes'. Iqbal states that 'ends and purposes . . . form the warp and woof of our conscious experience' (2012: 42). Iqbal supplements the evidence provided by practising biologists in this regard with the insights of a philosopher who takes modern biology seriously:

The element of purpose discloses a kind of forward look consciousness. Purposes not only colour our present states of consciousness, but also reveal its future direction. In fact, they constitute the forward push of our life, and

thus in a way anticipate and influence the states that are yet to be. To be determined by an end is to be determined by what ought to be. Thus past and future both operate in the present state of consciousness, and the future is not wholly undetermined as Bergson's analysis of our conscious experience shows. A state of attentive consciousness involves both memory and imagination. (Iqbal 2012: 43)

It is only through this non-mechanistic and non-deterministic conception of behaviour that a coherent explanation can be given for the ability of living organisms to pursue an attractive 'ought' in the face of an obstructing 'is'. For Iqbal, the evolution of life over the eons is the result of the conscious and wilful action of living organisms to continuously struggle to modify the actual 'is' and bring it closer to an imagined 'ought'. And this action is explicable only by employing the concepts of end and purpose that 'act from within' as being the determining factors in shaping the behaviour of the organism. This is due to the fact that the imagined 'ought' is the end (or purpose) towards which the action is aimed.

For Iqbal the 'quality of Nature's passage in time is perhaps the most significant aspect of experience which the Qur'an especially emphasizes' (Iqbal 2012: 36). It is in keenly observing this quality of 'passage in time' (that is, the process of evolution) which reveals that the patterns and harmonies in Nature discovered by physics (for example, the 'habits of Allah') are animated by a sense of purpose. In other words, biology's discovery of the central role of ends and purposes in the process of evolution suggests that a close study of the 'habits of Allah' shows that the universe is not the result of mere sport. In this regard Iqbal cites a number of different passages. One of them is the following:

Verily in the creation of the Heavens and of the earth, and in the succession of the night and of the day, are signs for men of understanding; who, standing and sitting and reclining, bear God in mind and reflect on the creation of the Heavens and of the earth, and say: 'Oh, our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain' (3: 190–1). (Iqbal 2012: 8)

In short while the designer/designed distinction helps us to understand the relationship between humans and machines, it is completely inadequate in

helping us to understand the relationship between human beings and their natural environment and even less so the relationship between God and the universe. Looking at the characteristics of life as described by modern biology and combining it with the wisdom gleaned from the Qur'an allows Iqbal to transform the designer/designed dualism at the heart of the teleological argument into a person–universe–purpose relationship.

For Iqbal, the ontological argument for the existence of God is no less logically flawed than the cosmological and teleological arguments. While there is sufficient reason to reject the ontological argument because of its inner incoherence, for Iqbal, we cannot sidestep the ontological problem of 'how to define the ultimate nature of existence', because since the universe is 'external to us, it is possible to be sceptical about its existence' (Iqbal 2012: 37). The external universe displays characteristics that constantly impinge upon our inner life and threaten its stability and coherence. The threat of the external 'real' universe to our inner 'ideal' world is such that the former confronts the latter in the form of an ultimate threat – the threat of death and annihilation. Under these circumstances, the question naturally arises as to the ultimate nature of reality; is it a stable, fixed 'ideal' unaffected by change or is it a constantly changing 'real' where all appearance of stability and coherence is an illusion? In a very real sense the ontological problem is also a psychological problem. But, in this regard, he finds the progress of modern psychology to be woefully inadequate because in the study of human consciousness 'modern psychology has not yet touched even the outer fringe of the subject' (153). Consequently, Iqbal proposes that we subject conscious experience to philosophical scrutiny in light of the (corrected) biological understanding of life and the (corrected) understanding of matter in order to deepen our understanding of the ultimate nature of existence.

Iqbal's philosophical analysis of consciousness and time leads him to identify two types of consciousness (that is, the efficient self and the appreciative self) and two types of time (that is, serial time and pure duration). Then he turns to the Qur'an and notes that 'in its characteristic simplicity' the Qur'an 'alludes to the serial and non-serial aspects of duration' (39). Here he cites a passage that states that Allah created the heavens, the earth, and what is between them 'in six days' (25: 58–9). Then he cites another passage that states that when Allah created all things his 'command was but one, swift

as the twinkling of an eye' (54: 49–50). After citing these two passages in juxtaposition, Iqbal goes on to comment:

If we look at the movement embodied in creation from the outside, that is to say, if we apprehend it intellectually, it is a process lasting through thousands of years; for one Divine day, in the terminology of the Qur'an, as of the Old Testament, is equal to one thousand years. From another point of view, the process of creation, lasting through thousands of years, is a single indivisible act, 'swift as the twinkling of an eye'. (Iqbal 2012: 39)

Iqbal recognises the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to understand and appreciate pure duration using language that has been shaped, primarily, to help us deal with serial time. He tries to overcome the difficulty by offering an illustration:

According to physical science, the cause of your sensation of red is the rapidity of wave motion the frequency of which is 400 billions per second. If you could observe this tremendous frequency from the outside, and count it at the rate of 2,000 per second, which is supposed to be the limit of the perceptibility of light, it will take you more than six thousand years to the finish the enumeration [*sic*]. Yet in the single momentary mental act of perception you hold together a frequency of wave motion which is practically incalculable. That is how the mental act transforms succession into duration. (Iqbal 2012: 39)

This illustration demonstrates that there is a part of the self that can transform 'practically incalculable' motion, change, and flux into stability, coherence, and permanence in 'the twinkling of an eye'. It is in this sense that the appreciative self is that part of consciousness where 'the self in its inner life moves from the centre outwards'.

Iqbal has used the philosophical analysis of time to provide a fuller description of consciousness and the psychological analysis of consciousness to provide a fuller description of time. He brings the two fuller descriptions into relationship with each other in these words:

The appreciative self, then, is more or less corrective of the efficient self, inasmuch as it synthesizes all the 'heres' and 'nows' – the small changes of

space and time, indispensable to the efficient self – into the coherent wholeness of personality. (Iqbal 2012: 39)

Combining this understanding of consciousness shaped by the Qur'an with the understanding of matter as a 'series of inter-related events' and of life as the pursuit of an imagined 'ought' in the face of an obstructing 'is', puts Iqbal in the position to offer his alternative conception of ontology. He notes:

We are now, I hope, in a position to see the meaning of the verse – 'And it is He Who hath ordained the night and the day to succeed one another for those who desire to think on God or desire to be thankful' [25:62]. A critical interpretation of the sequence of time as revealed in our selves has led us to a notion of the Ultimate Reality as pure duration in which thought, life and purpose interpenetrate to form an organic unity. We cannot conceive this unity except as the unity of a self – an all-embracing concrete self – the ultimate source of all individual life and thought. (Iqbal 2012: 44)

For Iqbal the ontological problem is resolved by going beyond the ideal/real dualism and discovering a conscious 'self' that the Qur'an and philosophical examination of consciousness point towards. For Iqbal the self is both prior to time and space and capable of doing what neither time nor space can do:

Neither pure space nor pure time can hold together the multiplicity of objects and events. It is the appreciative act of an enduring self only which can seize the multiplicity of duration – broken into an infinity of instants – and transform it to the organic wholeness of a synthesis. 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'. (Iqbal 2009: 44–5)

Since the self has an efficient and appreciative side, for Iqbal the self that has the ability to say 'I am' combines within itself the characteristics of movement and stability, flux and coherence, change and permanence.

In the foregoing discussion Iqbal has been critiquing the dominant positions in the ontological debate. One side in the debate associates existence and reality with the 'real' and the characteristics of change, flux, and impermanence. The other side in the debate associates existence and reality with the

‘ideal’ and the characteristics of immutability, immobility, and permanence. As he has been critiquing these positions, gradually, Iqbal has been putting into place the different building blocks of his alternative position. We can say that up until now he has been engaged in an ‘efficient’ analysis of the ontological problem. But we have reached a point in the discussion where we can offer an ‘appreciative’ statement on Iqbal’s understanding of the ‘ultimate nature of reality’. Iqbal states:

I have conceived the Ultimate Reality as an Ego and I must add now that from the Ultimate Ego only egos proceed. The creative energy of the Ultimate Ego, in whom deed and thought are identical, functions as ego-unities. 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’. 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 relative perfection in man. That is why the Qur’an declares the Ultimate Ego to be nearer to man than his own neck-vein. (Iqbal 2012: 57)

Iqbal’s resolution of the ontological problem comes in the form of transforming the ideal/real dualism into a person–universe–consciousness relationship. For Iqbal, every atom, molecule, cell, organism, plant, tree, insect, bird, animal, mountain, continent, planet, galaxy, person, tribe, society, culture, religion, and so forth, as well as the universe itself and God Himself is a *khudi* or self. This means that everything in the universe is a conscious ‘self’ or a ‘person’ capable of saying ‘I am’ – and every ego that is capable of saying ‘I am’ is for its parts ‘the self-revelation of the “Great I am”’. The following observation by Rafiuddin is an apt summary of the place of the concept of *khudi* in Iqbal’s thought, the place of Iqbal in the history of Islamic thought, and the place of Iqbal’s philosophy in the age of scientific thought:

[T]he distinction of Iqbal over other Muslim philosophers depends on the fact that by employing the philosophic term ‘Self’ [*khudi*], Iqbal has succeeded in presenting the Islamic concept of God not as a creed and dogma but as a scientific and rational fact in the context of other scientific concepts

known to humanity in this age. The result is that he has succeeded in elucidating the scientific and rational links between the Islamic concept of God and all the scientific facts of the present-day world as well as all the aspects of the natural practical life of the individual and the society. He has also succeeded, thereby, in bringing out the hidden potentiality of this concept to be the only one capable of organizing meaningfully and interpreting correctly all the facts of the universe, that is, all those facts which are in the range of human knowledge at present or will be brought into its range in the future. (Rafiuddin 1961b: 118–19.)

Iqbal's critique and correction of the traditional arguments for the existence of God by combining the findings of modern science with the wisdom of revealed scripture can be summarised as follows:

- Cause/Effect dualism into person–universe–habit relationship.
- Designer/Designed dualism into person–universe–relationship.
- Ideal/Real dualism into person–universe–consciousness relationship.

When we read Iqbal's work closely it becomes obvious that the text titled *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* could very well have the subtitle 'The Reconstruction of Scientific Thought in the West'. A brief foray into this area of Iqbal's thought is called for on two accounts. First, Iqbal was not just a Muslim; he was a Muslim living in the modern world. Consequently, his concerns cannot be limited to just critiquing and repairing the ruptures in Islamic thought; they extend to healing the ruptures of modern thought as well. Second, from the perspective of the modern university, it is Iqbal's effort to reconstruct scientific thought that makes him more immediately relevant. Leaving aside the issue of the historical origins of the university, in modern times the university is the temple of science –a temple riven with controversies, debates, and conflicts. The crisis in the university manifests itself in culture at large in the form of crises of meaning, significance, and community that have been amply commented upon and documented by notable social scientists and humanists since the very dawn of modern science. Iqbal sees the root cause of the various crises in culture at large to be a macro-level projection of crises within science itself.

The following observation by Iqbal points to the root cause of the impasse:

Natural Science deals with matter, with life, and with mind; but the moment you ask the question how matter, life and mind are mutually related, you begin to see the sectional character of the various sciences that deal with them and the inability of these sciences taken singly, to furnish a complete answer to your question . . . Nature as the subject of science is a highly artificial affair, and this artificiality is the result of that selective process to which science must subject [Nature] in the interests of precision. (Iqbal 2012: 34)

Physics can give a detailed and precise account of matter, biology of life, and psychology of mind but none of the three sciences (either separately or taken together) can give a coherent account of how matter, life, and mind are related to one another. In short, the 'sectional view of Nature' has meant rending asunder the inner relationships within science, that is, the relationship between physics, biology, and psychology, the relationship between the hard and soft sciences, and the relationship between the scientific and non-scientific spheres of culture. But to claim that this sectional view of reality (including the sectional view of science itself) is the last word on the matter is the result of a gross misunderstanding of the scope of scientific enquiry and the character of the empirical reality that science enquires into:

Science must necessarily select for study certain specific aspects of Reality only and exclude others. It is pure dogmatism on the part of science to claim that the aspects of Reality selected by it are the only aspects to be studied. No doubt man has a spatial aspect; but this is not the only aspect of man. There are other aspects of man, such as evaluation, the unitary character of purposive experience, and the pursuit of truth which science must necessarily exclude from its study, and the understanding of which requires categories other than those employed by science. (Iqbal 2012: 90–1.)

In other words, all appearances to the contrary, matter, space, and time are parts of a larger whole – a whole that also includes consciousness, will, and purpose. It is only with reference to the latter that the sharp differences between physics, biology, and psychology are harmonised into mutually

enriching relations. But these inner relationships can only come into view once the materialistic and mechanistic conceptions inherited from the age of pre-scientific philosophy are abandoned.

Iqbal goes on to note that given the character and function of science, we should not expect anything more than a sectional view of reality from science: 'Natural Science is by nature sectional; it cannot, if it is true to its own nature and function, set up its theory as a complete view of Reality' (Iqbal 2012: 34). At this juncture, the limitations of science stand in front of us in very stark terms. And it is here that science must turn to religion in order to overcome its limitations. Iqbal notes that it is religion that 'demands the whole of Reality and for this reason must occupy a central place in any synthesis of the data of human experience' (ibid.). When the naive and unreflective sectional understanding of the character of scientific enquiry is replaced with a self-conscious and self-critical (shall we say 'scientific') relational understanding, the essential first step has been taken in overcoming the fragmentary character of scientific knowledge. In more specific terms, Iqbal offers a concrete proposal that will lead to a holistic, self-conscious, and self-critical account of scientific enquiry. He explicitly identifies Whitehead's process physics (106), Emergent Evolution, and Configuration Psychology (86) as offering the most promising possibility for integrating physics, biology, and psychology. These approaches dispense with materialism, mechanistic determinism, and reductionism. This allows (perhaps requires) the different sciences to affirm their own uniqueness at the same time that they recognise their dependence on the 'alien' other. At the conclusion of his discussion, which ends with the observation that from the Qur'anic point of view Nature is nothing more than the 'habit of Allah', Iqbal makes the observation that this view has the potential of investing science with new meaning and significance:

Thus the view we have taken gives a fresh spiritual meaning to physical science. The knowledge of Nature is the knowledge of God's behaviour. In our observation of Nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship. (Iqbal 2012: 45)

Iqbal's reconstruction of scientific thought in the modern world shows science to be a meaningful and conscientious undertaking that has inner coherence, while at the same time it is related to non-scientific spheres of culture.

In sum, Iqbal's understanding of the relationship between religion and science leads to the following conclusion: if religion aspires to attract seekers whose religious faith is based on personal experience (rather than tradition, culture, and dogma), religion will have to open itself to science. If science aspires to give a coherent and holistic account of experience (rather than partial and mutually irreconcilable accounts) science will have to open itself to religion. It is only in the aftermath of this mutual opening up that the task of repairing the ruptures in the modern religious community, the modern university, and modern culture can begin. The following observation by Iqbal is an apt way to end our investigation of his 'reconstruction of religious thought in Islam' and our need for the 'reconstruction of scientific thought in the West':

The quest after a nameless nothing, as disclosed in Neo-Platonic mysticism – be it Christian or Muslim – cannot satisfy the modern mind which, with its habits of concrete thinking, demands a concrete living experience of God. And the history of the race shows that the attitude of the mind embodied in the act of worship is a condition for such an experience. In fact, prayer must be regarded as a necessary complement to the intellectual activity of the observer of Nature. The scientific observation of Nature keeps us in close contact with the behaviour of Reality, and thus sharpens our inner perception for a deeper vision of it . . . The truth is that all search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer. (Iqbal 2012: 72–3)

From a 'Religion to Science' to a 'Science of Religion'

Thus far, the argument for the relevance of Iqbal's thought has been presented by offering a close reading of Iqbal's work. This relevance can be demonstrated in at least one other way – by looking at Iqbal's work in light of the insights of Charles Peirce. Peirce is widely considered to be the most original American contribution to Western philosophy. His notion of 'a religion of science' helps us to gain greater insight into the character and significance of Iqbal's thought. Peirce begins his discussion of 'a religion of science' by highlighting what it is *not*. It is not 'a religion to which science or the scientific spirit has itself given birth; for religion, in the proper sense of the term, can arise from nothing but the religious sensibility' (6.433).³ Speaking of the 'religion of science' as an attitude, Peirce notes: '[T]his attitude, be it observed, is

one which religion will assume not at the dictate of science, still less by way of a compromise, but simply and solely out of a bolder confidence in herself and in her own destiny' (ibid.). This means that the religion of science will not be an artificially concocted phenomena produced by scientists (or social scientists).

Arising from the natural sentiment that is the source of all genuine religious sensibility, the religion of science will produce believers who are able to reconcile the progressive spirit of science with the conservative spirit of religion in their persons. Peirce describes these individuals in the following terms:

While adhering to the essence of religion and so far as possible to the church, which is all but essential, say, penessential, to it, he will cast aside that religious timidity that is forever prompting the church to recoil from the paths into which the Governor of history is leading the minds of men, a cowardice that has stood through the ages as the landmark and limit of her little faith and will gladly go forward, sure that truth is not split into two warring doctrines and that any change that knowledge can work in his faith can only affect its expression, but not the deep mystery expressed. (6.432)

For these believers every new discovery of science becomes a cause for celebration because it enriches them in the one thing that is most dear to them – their religious life. The discoveries of science provide the believers with more precise concepts and language in which to understand and communicate their initially vague religious sentiments. Peirce describes religion in these words:

And what is religion? In each individual it is a sort of sentiment, or obscure perception, a deep recognition of a something in the circumambient All, which, if he strives to express it, will clothe itself in forms more or less extravagant, more or less accidental, but ever acknowledging the first and last, the {A} and {Ö}, as well as a relation to that Absolute of the individual's self, as a relative being. (6.429)

The religious life of the adherents of 'a religion of science' is enriched by new scientific discoveries because these discoveries provide new signs, indices, and symbols that allow them to describe 'the circumambient All

... the first and last, the {A} and {Ö}'. Never losing sight of the fact that the description of the circumambient All 'will clothe itself in forms more or less extravagant, more or less accidental', it is nevertheless the case that the past, present, and future discoveries of science render that description less extravagant and less accidental. Iqbal's use of the findings of modern physics, biology, psychology, and philosophy all the while remaining deeply attached to the Qur'an provides a practical example of a 'religion of science'. As noted in the introduction, Taylor describes Iqbal's voice as 'the voice of a soul that is deeply anchored in the Qur'anic Revelation, and precisely for that reason, open to all the other voices, seeking in them the path of his own fidelity' (Taylor 2010: xii) – in the present case it is a soul that is open to the findings of modern science.

A closer look at Peirce's thought shows that just as Iqbal is not afraid to open his mind to science as he is striving to be faithful to religion, Peirce is not afraid to open his heart to religion, as he is striving to be faithful to science. In other words, we can use Peirce's own terminology and say that he is laying the foundations for a 'science of religion'. Peirce explicitly describes religion as being a 'sentiment' (6.429). After noting that poetry is 'one sort of generalization of sentiment', he goes on to note that '[t]he complete generalization of sentiment is religion, which is poetry, but completed poetry' (1.676). In the 'Neglected Argument for the Reality of God', Peirce identifies something very similar to sentiment, that is, 'instincts', as the origin of science. He notes that all the 'triumphs of science' fall into one of two categories: 'They either consist in physical – that is, ultimately, dynamical – explanations of phenomena, or else in explaining things on the basis of our common sense knowledge of human nature' (6.500). Keeping in mind that 'dynamics is nothing but an elaboration of common sense' – that 'its experiments are mere imaginary experiments', it logically follows that 'it all comes down to common sense in these two branches' (6.500). When we look at common sense in these two branches closely it becomes apparent that these are two different manifestations of human instincts: '[T]he one is founded on those instincts about physical forces that are required for the feeding impulsion and the other upon those instincts about our fellows that are required for the satisfaction of the reproductive impulse' (6.500). The conclusion that logically follows is that 'all science is nothing but an outgrowth from these two instincts' (6.500).

He concludes the passage with this observation: ‘You will see that all I have been saying is not preparatory to any argument for the reality of God. It is intended as an apology for resting the belief upon instinct as the very bedrock on which all reasoning must be built’ (6.500). To the degree that scientific reasoning is a species of reasoning it too rests on the ‘bedrock’ of instinct.

In addition to being rooted in sentiment and instincts, science and religion also share common origins in a second sense – both of them rest on the same logical pre-suppositions. Peirce describes the ‘fundamental hypothesis’ of the method of science in these words:

There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and he reason enough about it, will be led to the one True conclusion. (5.384)

This hypothesis can be summarised as follows:

- There is a Reality independent of our opinions about it.
- This Reality directly affects our senses (and by extension our minds).
- Following the scientific method leads to attaining True knowledge about this Reality.

It is difficult to identify a single passage that describes the ‘fundamental hypothesis’ on which religion rests. But one part of the Neglected Argument (6.494–504) allows us to identify the fundamental hypothesis of religion:

- God as *Ens Necessarium* is Real – God as that necessary condition that transforms potentiality into actuality.
- Contemplation of psychic-physical phenomena suggests the idea of God to our minds – continued contemplation on the idea makes all but irresistible.
- Establishing a relationship with God improves the character of the individual who is engaged in contemplation.

The question naturally emerges: is there any relationship between the two sets of presuppositions? It is difficult to answer the question directly. To answer this question from the perspective of science or religion would be to speak from the perspective of one of the parties. In this situation we will have to turn to philosophy to get some clarity on the issue. Briefly stated, Peirce's understanding of philosophy – and a philosophically informed understanding of science – cannot be separated from the knowledge of God. To begin with, the fundamental presupposition on which philosophical enquiry is based requires an affirmation of God: 'To believe in a god at all, is not that to believe that man's reason is allied to the originating principle of the universe?' (2.24). For Peirce the relationship between reason and God is deeper and more intimate than a mere hypothetical affirmation. When speaking of spirit in which philosophy should be studied, Peirce notes: '[T]he spirit in which, as it seems to me, philosophy ought to be studied is the spirit in which every branch of science ought to be studied; namely, the spirit of joy in learning ourselves and in making others acquainted with the glories of God' (1.127). In a slightly different context and in slightly different words, Peirce makes the same point – the purpose of the theoretical sciences is 'simply and solely the knowledge of God's truth' (1.239). From the perspective of his scientific philosophy it is clear that the truth and glories of God cannot be separated from the universe that God has created – the very same universe that is the object of scientific investigation. For Peirce, it is not possible to become 'acquainted with the glories of God' and 'God's truth' without becoming acquainted with the universe because the universe is 'a great symbol of God's purpose, working out its conclusions in living realities' (5.119). Being a 'great symbol of God's purpose' is another way of saying that the 'Universe [is] precisely an argument' (5.119) for the reality of God. The ultimate task of philosophy is to understand the argument that the universe is making. Since understanding the argument that the universe is making requires knowledge of the universe, philosophy has to rely heavily on the various sciences that are directly concerned with studying the universe.

Peirce goes on to describe the character of the argument that the universe represents in more detail: 'The Universe as an argument is necessarily a great work of art, a great poem – for every fine argument is a poem and a symphony – just as every true poem is a sound argument' (5.119). Here it is

worth mentioning that for Peirce the term ‘God’ has a very specific meaning. It has nothing to do with some vague, impersonal concept variously called the Prime Mover, Monad, Transcendental Ego, Universal Mind, or other such artificial concoction. We have already seen that Peirce has described God as: ‘[T]he first and last, the {A} and {Ö}’ (6.429). For Peirce, God is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, of the universe. In philosophical terms, Peirce describes the relationship between the Alpha, the Omega, and the universe in these terms: ‘The starting-point of the universe, God the Creator, is the Absolute First; the terminus of the universe, God completely revealed, is the Absolute Second; every state of the universe at a measurable point of time is the third’ (1.362). In simple terms, for Peirce this is the God of the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels – the God who created the universe, reveals Himself in His creation as well as in His scriptures, and the End towards which all are journeying.

The hypothesis that Peirce is pointing towards a ‘science of religion’ (that is, a science that revels in and is energised by the wisdom of religion) is further supported by his reflections on the relationship between the logical scientific enquiry and the reality of God. Peirce notes: ‘[T]he hypothesis of God’s Reality is logically not so isolated a conclusion as it may seem. On the contrary, it is connected so with a theory of the nature of thinking that if this be proved so is that’ (6.491). The ‘theory of the nature of thinking’ with which God’s Reality is intimately connected is the scientific method itself. For Peirce the scientific method is composed of three elements: 1) Abduction; intuitive generation of a scientific hypothesis, 2) Deduction; rational articulation of the hypothesis, and 3) Induction; the empirical testing of the hypothesis. Among other things, the ‘Neglected Argument for the Reality of God’ is an argument in which one cannot separate what is commonly called ‘religious belief’ from what is commonly called the ‘scientific method’. The Neglected Argument is a ‘nest’ of three arguments – the Humble, the Neglected, and (what we can call) the Pragmatic. Peter Ochs’s reading of this Argument shows it to be (very much like Iqbal) a critique and repair of the traditional arguments for the existence of God (1998: 230–4). Peirce himself begins his pragmatist description of the scientific method at the conclusion of his ‘neglected argument for the reality of God’ and explicitly notes that the third part of the Neglected Argument also describes ‘certain parts of the work of

scientific discovery' (6.457). Ochs shows how the third part of the Argument, 'classifies the Neglected Argument in terms of a more general methodetic of inquiry' (1998: 235). This 'methodetic of inquiry' shows that the scientific method as it is described by Peirce is a special case of the application of the logic underpinning Peirce's 'neglected argument for the reality of God'.

The intimate relationship between the scientific method and the Reality of God can be further illustrated by looking at the source of the pragmatic maxim. In technical terms the maxim is: 'Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object' (5.402). Peirce inserts the following comment in the footnote to (5.402): 'It has been said to be a sceptical and materialistic principle. But it is only an application of the sole principle of logic which was recommended by Jesus; "Ye may know them by their fruits," and it is very intimately allied with the ideas of the gospel' (Volume 5, Endnote 258). While different pragmatists may differ on other issues, all of them affirm the validity of the pragmatic maxim. The following observation describes the maxim in simpler terms, along with its genealogy:

All pragmatists will further agree that their method of ascertaining the meanings of words and concepts is no other than that experimental method by which all the successful sciences . . . have reached the degrees of certainty that are severally proper to them today; this experimental method being itself nothing but a particular application of an older logical rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' (5.465)

Here Peirce is alluding to the Gospels, more specifically Matthew:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits. (Matthew 7: 15–20)

He acknowledges that various philosophies of science and theologies provide warrant for critiquing the pragmatist conception of God. But he rejects these critiques on purely logical grounds. To begin with, this conception can be critiqued on the basis of philosophical scepticism. Peirce argues that if we accept the presuppositions of scepticism we will have to reject validity of science as well: '[I]f we cannot in some measure understand God's mind, *all* science . . . must be a snare' (8.168; emphasis in original). While the beginning of the following passage explicitly refers to scepticism in general, the end of the passage leaves no doubt as to the specific type of scepticism that is being critiqued:

[S]cepticism, in the sense of doubt of the validity of elementary ideas – which is really a proposal to turn an idea out of court and permit no inquiry into its applicability – is doubly condemned by the fundamental principle of scientific method – condemned first as obstructing inquiry and condemned second because it is treating some other than a statistical ratio as a thing to be argued about. No: as to God, open your eyes – and your heart, which is also a perceptive organ – and you see him. (6.493)

For Peirce, philosophical scepticism with respect to the reality of God is a position that 'the scientific method utterly condemns' (6.493).

Apophatic theology is different from philosophical scepticism in that it affirms the reality of God but then becomes sceptical regarding any positive knowledge claims about God. From this perspective the only reasonable things we can say about God are in purely negative terms – what God is not. Any positive statements about the attributes of God are considered unreasonable by definition. Peirce summarises the apophatic position in these words:

[V]arious great theologians explain that one cannot attribute *reason* to God, nor perception (which always involves an element of surprise and of learning what one did not know) and, in short, that his 'mind' is necessarily so unlike ours, that some – though wrongly – high in the church say that it is only negatively, as being entirely different from everything else, that we can attach any meaning to the Name. (6.502; emphasis in original)

While sceptical philosophy has to be rejected for violating the foundational principle of the scientific method, negative theology has to be rejected in

the face of the actual results (or fruits) of scientific enquiry. Peirce argues that we have to reject the claim that 'we cannot attach any meaning to the Name' because 'the discoveries of science, their enabling us to *predict* what will be the course of nature, is proof conclusive that, though we cannot think any thought of God's, we can catch a fragment of His Thought, as it were' (6.502). Peirce is aware of the implications of his conception of God for the logic of scientific enquiry. His conception of God is such that the answer to the question 'whether all physical science is merely the figment – the arbitrary figment – of the students of nature' (6.503) is directly dependent on the answer to the question of whether God is Real or not. Put in simple terms, if God is Real then scientific enquiry yields true knowledge; if God is not Real, then scientific knowledge yields illusions.

Peirce's 'science of religion' transforms science's conception of reality no less dramatically than Iqbal's 'religion of science' transforms religion's conception of God. Walker Percy notes that Peirce's science makes it possible to see how 'the humanities are the elder brother of the sciences, who sees how the new scientist [for example, the practitioner of the hard sciences] got his tail in a crack when he takes on the human subject as object and who even show him the shape of a new science' (Percy 1991: 288). In other words, there are aspects of empirical reality that the statements of the hard sciences cannot capture, and that statements about certain aspects of reality offered by art, poetry, and literature (and we may add religion) 'ought to be taken very seriously indeed since these are the cognitive, scientific, if you will, statements that we have about what it is to be human' (ibid.). The scope of this 'new science' is such that 'one might even explore its openness to such traditional Judeo-Christian notions as man falling prey to the worldliness of the world, and man as pilgrim seeking his salvation' (291).

Taken together, Iqbal and Peirce teach us that it is indeed possible 'to seek out and define oneself using references found in the other's tradition' (Taylor 2010: xi). Iqbal's 'religion of science' is a religion that opens itself up to the findings of science in its quest for sharpened self-understanding and self-awareness. Peirce's 'science of religion' is a science that opens itself up to the wisdom of religion for sharpened self-understanding and self-awareness. This opening up is not done under duress or under conditions imposed from the outside but is the result of an inner calling and a sense of self-confidence.

This inner calling and self-confidence allows the self to view the alien other not as an existential threat but as an existential need for the growth and affirmation of the self. The fact that this path to self-discovery is being articulated by a leading Muslim thinker and a leading Western thinker suggests that the Islamic and Western traditions have untapped, deep resources that have much to teach their respective communities about how to move from a frozen and distrustful relationship with the alien other to a nurturing, mutually enriching, and life-affirming relationship.⁴ And it is in opening up this possibility that Iqbal's *falsafa-e-khudi* is of immediate, enduring, and global relevance.

Notes

1. The original is in Urdu; the translation into English is mine.
2. In contrast, other philosophers have variously offered the Unmoved Mover, the Idea, the Monad, the Transcendental Ego, and the Universal Spirit (among other such abstract concoctions) to bring the One into relation with the Many.
3. This is the standard format for citing Peirce's *Collected Papers* (1931–58) (Volume number. Paragraph number) – for example, (6.429) means volume 6, paragraph 429.
4. This chapter could offer only a cursory hint at the affinity between Iqbal's *falsafa-e-khudi* and Peirce's pragmatism. It briefly discussed how Peirce's notion of a 'religion of science' and 'neglected argument' shed light of certain aspects of Iqbal's critique and reconstruction of the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments for the existence of God. The breadth and depth of the affinity between Iqbal and Peirce is such that the phrase 'deep affinity' would be more accurate.

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5

Pragmatism and Islam in Peirce and Iqbal: The Metaphysics of Emergent Mind

Richard Gilmore

Concordia College, United States

The Qur'an opens our eyes to the great fact of change . . .

Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (2006: 12)

Introduction: Key Concepts in Iqbal and Peirce

The 'change' that Iqbal refers to is not change *simpliciter*, which would be indistinguishable from chaos; it is change that has a direction, a purpose, a personality. It is change in time, and time implies precisely these characteristics of direction, purpose, and personality. The great metaphysical question that pervades the work of both Muhammad Iqbal and Charles Sanders Peirce is: what is it that drives this change? What is its direction, purpose, and personality? The most basic answer to this question about what drives this change is: mind. But what is mind? What is the direction, purpose, and personality of mind?

The question of what mind *is*, of what consciousness *is*, is a question that vexes contemporary philosophy and contemporary science. The tools of contemporary philosophy and science seem inadequate to the task of illuminating the nature of mind. One strategy is simply to deny the reality of mind. The first move in this strategy was made by Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* where he referred to mind as the 'ghost in the machine' (1949: 15–16).¹ It is an ironic gesture, since it is by virtue of their own minds that philosophers and scientists deny the reality of mind. Peirce and Iqbal, in part

or largely, informed by their religious faith and tradition, have a very complicated, and empirical, theory of mind. It is a metaphysical theory of mind. It is metaphysical in the Kantian sense that, while it transcends all physical description, it makes sense of all of our physical experiences.

Both Iqbal and Peirce, I will argue, naturalise mind. They will find signs of mind in nature, and signs that mind is manifested throughout nature. Mind just is the principle by which change in nature occurs. Both Iqbal and Peirce are writing post-Darwin, and both accept Darwin's theory of evolution as a valid theory of nature.² Peirce was, himself, a scientist, and Iqbal was a great respecter of science. One of Iqbal's commitments in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is to recover for Islam the great discoveries and insights of modern science (2006: xxii). The guiding work for all of Iqbal's thinking is the Qur'an, but Iqbal refers to 'the general empirical attitude of the Qur'an', and goes on to say, 'The naturalism of the Qur'an is only a recognition of the fact that man is related to nature' (12). I understand Iqbal to be saying that the Qur'an itself instructs us to take the empirical discoveries of science about the laws of nature with utmost seriousness.

For Iqbal and Peirce, however, there is an understanding of the cosmos to be achieved that transcends the explanatory abilities of science. The appeal is not to something supernatural, but to an aspect of nature that transcends the various working parts of nature. In this their explanation of nature is akin to contemporary complexity theory, which is discovering principles of emergence in complex phenomena where the whole is, as it were, greater than the sum of its parts. Complexity theory describes a process of emergence whereby a form of complexity emerges that cannot be explained in terms of a simple concatenation of causal events. M. Mitchell Waldrop, in *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* calls complexity 'a science of emergence' (1992: 88–9). He describes complexity in terms of interactions within a system such that they allow 'the system as a whole to undergo spontaneous self-organization' (11). Peirce and Iqbal seem to anticipate this discovery in their theories of the ultimate nature of Reality, and, if their theories are right, this should not be surprising because they have already discovered this principle of nature as operative in their own thinking.

There are several concepts that I will be focusing on in Iqbal and Peirce in order to analyse and synthesise the concept of mind that they describe. From

Iqbal, the most important concept for understanding his concept of mind, I will argue, is the Islamic concept of *tauhid*, which means ‘to be or make one’ (2006: 122). The importance of *tauhid* to the concept of mind is that it refers to the ability of mind to ‘see’ in diversity a unity, to make or create, out of many, a one. It refers to the power of mind, and a similar power in nature, to unify, and this process of unification is the same as the process of growth. The part of our own mind that is the source of this ability I understand Iqbal to identify with *qalb*, or ‘heart’ (12–13), which I will associate with what Iqbal calls the ‘appreciative self’ (38–9), and that Iqbal himself associates with Kant’s ‘unity of apperception’ (38). The moment of ‘seeing’ the unity in diversity I understand Iqbal to refer to as *Barzakh*, which Iqbal describes as ‘a state of consciousness characterized by a change in the ego’s attitude toward time and space’ (95).

In Peirce’s philosophy, the most important concepts for my purposes are his concept of the law of mind, which he defines as,

that ideas tend to spread continuously and to affect certain others which stand to them in a peculiar relation of affectability. In this spreading they lose intensity, and especially the power of affecting others, but gain in generality and become welded with other ideas. (Peirce 1934: 6.104).³

This description of the law of mind can be understood in terms of the Islamic concept of *tauhid*. The law of mind is described in terms of a continuous spread of an idea that ‘welds’ it to other ideas forming, first, a new general idea, and then, spreading still more and welding with other general ideas, to form a still more general idea. This is how multiple ideas get unified under a single idea. It is the process by which ideas grow.

Mind works from within, from what Iqbal calls an ‘ego’, and spreads outward. The central impulse of an idea, its ego, and the process by which it spreads, is what Peirce calls the ‘personality’ of an idea. Here is Peirce’s description of personality:

[P]ersonality is some kind of coördination or connection of ideas . . . a connection between ideas is itself a general idea, and that general idea a living feeling . . . This personality, like any general idea, is not a thing to be apprehended in an instant. It has to be lived in time; nor can any finite

time embrace it in all its fullness. Yet in each infinitesimal interval it is present and living, though specially colored by the immediate feelings of that moment. Personality, so far as it is apprehended in a moment, is immediate self-consciousness. (Peirce 1934: 6.155)

I understand Peirce's reference to an idea as 'living' to mean, simply, that an idea 'grows'. Its growth is just what ideas do according to the law of mind: it is their tendency to spread and tendency to combine with other ideas to form new unified ideas. This is a process of 'growth' because it is not mechanical or entirely predictable. It is a process of reciprocal and mutual affectability that spontaneously generates possibilities for future states that defies mechanical explanation.

In addition to Peirce's concept of the 'law of mind', and his concept of 'personality', the final aspect of Peirce's philosophy that I will adduce is his logic of thought that he describes in terms of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. These three categories of thought encompass the evolutionary trajectory of thought for Peirce. All thought begins in Firstness, which is a kind of self-contained mental equilibrium, perhaps something like a mood. Secondness refers to the mental state of disruption to the mental equilibrium that initiates the activity of enquiry in order to resolve the mystery of this interruption. Finally, Thirdness describes the mental experience of discovering an explanation for the mental disruption, which will empower action, if necessary, and which, once the source of Secondness is dealt with, will lead back to a state of mental equilibrium that is the state of Firstness. The mental processes of enquiry will involve abduction, guesses as to the source of the mental disturbance, induction, a consideration of the abduction generalised across many examples, and deduction, a conclusion drawn from the considered evidence about the reliability or viability of the particular abduction. If the abduction is deduced to be, in fact, reliable, consistent with the facts, and predictive in a way that prescribes some decision or action, an action or decision will ensue. If the abduction is found to be insufficient or inapplicable or unwarranted, the process repeats, and this will continue until a satisfactory conclusion is arrived at (Peirce 1934: 1.300–53).

My thesis is that the concepts that I have identified in Iqbal's philosophy of mind map on to Peirce's philosophy of mind, and that both philosophies

of mind map on to the processes of change in the world. The processes of mind and the processes of change in the world can both be described as evolutionary. 'Evolutionary' means that there is some kind of direction, some kind of purpose, and some kind of personality that can be attributed to the change that is experienced and observed. Both Iqbal and Peirce will associate this process of change with mind, but also with God or Allah. In my reading of Iqbal and Peirce, the references to God or Allah, while they are not inconsistent with a more transcendental understanding of God or Allah, do not require such an understanding. As Iqbal says, 'God is a percept' (2006: 144).

Pragmatism and Islam

Comparing pragmatism and Islam will strike many, no doubt, as a bizarre proposal. Nor will all take either Peirce or Iqbal as sufficiently representative of pragmatism or of Islam to provide a basis for such a comparison. I will argue that there is a core idea at the heart of pragmatism that is similar to a core idea that is at the heart of Islam and that this core idea is especially well articulated in the philosophies of Peirce and Iqbal. It is an interesting corollary to this core idea that everything is related to everything else, that there are, often secret or occluded, ties of attachment between the most apparently distinct or distant of things. Insofar as this corollary of the core ideas of pragmatism and Islam is true, an apparently unlikely comparison will work especially well to illuminate the core idea itself.

In the preface to his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, published in English in 1930, Iqbal describes the need for a new 'method' for 'shaping and directing the evolution of religious experience in Islam', one inspired by 'modern thought and experience'. He says his project is 'to meet . . . this urgent demand by attempting to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical traditions of Islam and the more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge' (Iqbal 2006: xxi–xxii). The *Reconstruction* is a series of lectures that Iqbal had delivered in previous years on various occasions organised into a book. In the first chapter, 'Knowledge and Religious Experience', Iqbal quotes approvingly from William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In the passage quoted, James is acknowledging the difficulty of distinguishing between inspirations and insights that are, in fact, true, from those that are 'counter-

feit'. James concludes the passage by saying, 'In the end it had come to our empiricist criterion: "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots".' Iqbal finds this sentiment mirrored in a sura from the Qur'an, "Thus shall God affirm His revelations, for God is Knowing and Wise (22:52)" (2006: 19). James's own 'empiricist criterion' is taken from the King James version of the New Testament, Matthew 7: 20.

In the essay 'Pragmatism', written in 1907, five years after James published his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Peirce says, 'pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts.' Peirce identifies the method of pragmatism with 'experimental method' and concludes, 'this experimental method being itself nothing but a particular application of an older logical rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them"' (1998: 400–1). Here we have two very prominent pragmatists and one Muslim referring to the same New Testament text, not just approvingly, but as though it were a kind of enciphered key to their whole projects. In deciphering this key, I propose to discover deep parallels between Islam and American pragmatism.

A problem that immediately emerges, that has already emerged, is that Islam is a religion and pragmatism is a method for clarifying ideas and concepts. It would initially appear that what Iqbal is doing is very different from what Peirce and James are doing. This problem is further complicated by the fact that all three thinkers adduce a passage from a religious text, the New Testament, as an extremely concentrated distillation of the larger content of their thought. This is an apparent problem because it seems to be the case that a supposedly rational philosophical position is being founded upon a supposedly supra-rational religious text. This problem is – once the ideas themselves are elaborated – its own solution. What 'by their fruits ye shall know them' implies, for James, Peirce, and Iqbal, or so I will argue, is a dynamic continuum between all things. It is temporal and evolutionary. It implies an organic relation between earlier states and later states. Just as distinctions must be made, continuities must also be discovered. Distinctions emerge out of continuities and continuities bridge and merge distinctions. Ultimately, as different as philosophy and religion are, they are also deeply similar. They are both about the world we all live in, and our experience of that world. As

much as pragmatism is merely a method, it is also a metaphysics. Religion, too, involves some metaphysics. The core idea that I will argue is at the heart of both pragmatism and Islam is a metaphysical idea.

God, Mind and Evolution

Iqbal is a deeply religious thinker, but his great value to the West and to non-Muslims is his ability to translate his religious vision into a language that describes the world as it is universally experienced. He, for his philosophical purposes, naturalises God. That means that he describes God in terms of signs given in nature. One of Iqbal's descriptions of God is as the 'Ultimate Ego'. An 'ego', for Iqbal, is a 'self'. A 'self' is a unity, an 'organic wholeness of a synthesis'. Peter Ochs describes Iqbal's use of 'ego' as 'centers of energy and activities'. Ochs elaborates, '[T]hey are simply varied in their degree of complexity, relationship and consciousness' (2010: 81). An 'ego', therefore, is anything that can be described as a centre of energy that is part of an organic wholeness of a synthesis. All alive things, therefore, will have an ego. Systems of living things, similarly, insofar as they display signs of synthesised organic wholeness, and a centre of energy and activity, will have an ego. There are, then, as Ochs suggests, hierarchies of egos, and an ego's place in the hierarchy will be determined by its degree of complexity, the complexity of the relationships that it brings into connection, and the level of its (self) consciousness.

The ego of all egos, the ego that is the centre for all ego activity, which synthesises all of the sub-egos into an organic whole, is what Iqbal calls the 'Ultimate Ego', or God. What characterises the Ultimate Ego? What does the Ultimate Ego do? Iqbal says: 'The Ultimate Ego that makes the emergent emerge is immanent in Nature, and is described by the Qur'an, as "the First and the Last, the visible and the invisible"' (2006: 85). This description of God as the 'Ultimate Ego' can be read as a naturalised version of God because Iqbal equates God, the 'Ultimate Ego', with the process of making the emergent emerge. The process of making the emergent emerge correlates with Spinoza's idea of *natura naturans*, nature naturing (1982: 51). What nature does is bring forth what can be brought forth. This is, fundamentally, a creative process. It is, fundamentally, an evolutionary process. What can be brought forth, the emergent that can emerge, is based on the materials that are available. The process itself will be a process of bringing disconnected things

into connection. It will be a process of generating more complex things out of less complex things. It will be a process of *tauhid*, of 'making one'. This is the ultimate creative act, a reproduction of something new out of materials that already exist. This is the process of making the emergent emerge.

The 'emergent emerging' is the ontology and the morality of 'by their fruits ye shall know them'. The ontology is that nature, or the Ultimate Ego, is a continuum in process. The process is evolutionary. The idea of an evolutionary process entails the idea of proceeding according to certain rules or laws. The operative rules and laws will emerge from a kind of centre of intentionality. The intention of the Ultimate Ego, or, evidently, nature, is to make the emergent emerge, or, in other words, to make one. Examples of 'making one' would be the composition of a cell from a multiplicity of molecules. The 'making one' is revealed in the composition of a complex single organism from a multiplicity of cells. The composition of a single identifiable and definable species based on a multiplicity of individual members is a form of a 'real' one that emerges from a plurality of non-identical individuals. It's 'reality' is, following Iqbal's quotation from the Qur'an, 'invisible'. One species of finch does not look that much different from another species of finch, and, yet, they are different species. Furthermore, the differences between species are given in real signs, but one has to have a certain knowledge in order to 'see' them. The recognition of the composition of a genera is a 'making one' out of a multiplicity of species. All of these things are evolutionarily emergent. This is what nature does. It is what the Ultimate Ego does.

This process, understood as the process of 'making one' out of a manifold or a plurality, is also the process of thought. Iqbal says, 'In its essential nature, then, thought is not static; it is dynamic and unfolds its internal infinitude in time like the seed which, from the very beginning, carries within itself the organic unity of the tree as a present fact' (2006: 5). The vocabulary in this description of thought also describes the process of *tauhid*. It describes a dynamic process that 'unfolds', or 'emerges', from some base state. The simile that Iqbal uses is the example of a seed. The seed has an emergent potential that requires certain facilitating conditions in order for its emergent potential to be fully realised. Furthermore, even if there is soil, sunlight, and water available to the seed, while the 'organic unity of the tree' may be present as a fact, the precise form of the actual tree that will emerge is still open. The final

form of the tree is still to be determined by a near infinite number of circumstantial events – of sunlight, of rain, of soil quality – that will determine what ultimate form of the tree will emerge from that seed. I understand that fundamental openness in the system to be indicated by Iqbal when he refers to the ‘internal infinitude in time’ within which both thought and nature evolve.

Iqbal says, ‘Thought is, therefore, the whole in its dynamic self-expression, appearing to the temporal vision as a series of definite specifications which cannot be understood except by a reciprocal reference’ (2006: 5). I understand Iqbal to mean here that the processes of thought recapitulate the processes of nature, ‘the whole’. Thought is dynamic, emergent, and evolutionary, just like nature. An understanding based on a ‘reciprocal reference’ refers to the way that everything is interrelated and connected, if not obviously, then emergently, by processes strongly resembling thought. In the process of developing, a particular tree, emerging from a particular seed, will influence the quality of soil beneath it (by its root system, by the leaves that it drops, by the fauna it attracts), which will influence the development of the tree itself. The thoughts we think will interact and connect with other thoughts we have and have had, which will influence the thoughts that we will have in the future.

Iqbal concludes this paragraph on the nature of thought with a somewhat poetic, yet nevertheless quite precise, description of the nature of thought:

It is in its progressive participation in the life of the apparently alien that thought demolishes the walls of its finitude and enjoys its potential infinitude. Its movement becomes possible only because of the implicit presence in its finite individuality of the infinite, which keeps alive within it the flame of aspiration and sustains it in its endless pursuit. It is a mistake to regard thought as inconclusive, for it too, in its own way, is a greeting of the finite with the infinite. (Iqbal 2006: 5)

This passage is Levinasian, *avant la lettre*, in its description of encountering the infinite in the radically other.⁴ What we think about, what thought is thought of, is the world. The objects of the world are radically other, radically alien, to thought. Yet, in the process of living our lives, of thinking our lives forward, we, in thought, transform the radically alien into, first, the recognisably familiar, and then into the infinitely open. By ‘recognisably familiar’ I

mean that a 'sensory manifold', or an alien combination of objects, becomes organised into a unity (*tauhid*), into a space that we understand and can navigate our way through. This discovery of a way through the space educes to that space a new conception of time that applies to that space. We 'see' the relations between things not just spatially, but also temporally. We understand how far or near one thing is to another not only spatially, but also in terms of the time it would take to reach one from the other. This awareness of things in space and time that is the result of *tauhid* is captured in the concept of *Barzakh*, which Iqbal describes as 'a state of consciousness characterized by a change in the ego's attitude towards time and space' (2006: 95). That this now 'recognisably familiar' space becomes 'infinitely open' refers to the way that understanding opens up the future to infinite possibilities. This is what I understand Iqbal to mean by, 'the implicit presence in its finite individuality of the infinite'.

'Greeting the finite with the infinite' personalises the finite and the infinite. The finite and the infinite will indeed have an aspect of 'personality', in the Peircean sense, or an 'ego' in the Iqbalian sense. The finite individual person will have a personality, but the infinite possibilities that the future opens up to us will also have a personality. The possibilities themselves are emergent and real. They will emerge from a very particular context. They will have a particular general, if still actually open, trajectory. There will be better and worse ways of going forward, of exploring the actual possibilities that open up before us. There will, probably, be a best way. In general, the best way will be the way of *tauhid*. It will be the way of assisting the emergent in its emergence. It will be the way of God or of Allah or of nature. It will be the way that an individual human being will maximise his or her own individual emergence. The goal is the maximising of one's own ego, which means becoming as complex an ego as we can become. That means being a unifying centre to a maximum of different relations that we sustain by means of our active thought, our understanding, our activity of *tauhid*.

This picture of thought and nature presented by Iqbal maps on to the picture of thought and nature presented by Peirce, even though Peirce speaks a very different kind of language and puts the emphasis in a different place. It is the similarities that emerge out of the differences, as well as the difference of emphasis that, in its own way, affirms the similarities between them, that

makes the comparison of Peirce with Iqbal so important. Peirce is a very difficult philosopher. He speaks in, what are for most people, the very esoteric languages of scholastic philosophy, mathematics, and science. I have already suggested some lines of similarity between the thinking of Iqbal and Peirce. Iqbal's concept of 'ego' maps on to Peirce's concept of 'personality'. Peirce's description of the logic of thought as a process of arriving at a single explanation from a plurality of signs, maps on to Iqbal's concept of the processes of thought as dynamic and evolutionary, and that I associate with the Islamic concept of *tauhid*.

I have also suggested how both Iqbal and Peirce see the same processes that comprise thought as operative in nature. The primary difference between the two thinkers is that Iqbal is trying to understand the science of nature from the perspective of religion, while Peirce is trying to understand nature by means of science, and religion fits in with his scientific views, but does not determine them. Other profound, but sometimes difficult to characterise, differences are that Peirce is a Christian and Iqbal is a Muslim. Peirce is from the West and Iqbal, although very well versed in Western culture, Western philosophy, and Western science, is from the East. This East–West distinction is reductive, but not without significance. Specifically, I would say, that the difference in the contemporary world at least means a difference in the role and respect of science to the culture, as well as the role and respect of religion in the culture. Both Iqbal and Peirce, however, are united in their advocacy of the importance of science to both their cultures and their religions.

Signs

The basic premise that Iqbal and Peirce share is that, as Peirce says, 'the universe is perfused with signs' (1934: 5.448n.), and that one way of reading these signs is as signs of God. Iqbal says that the primary duty of man 'is to reflect on the signs of God'. He then quotes a passage from the Qur'an: 'And He hath subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon, and the stars too are subject to you by His behest; verily in this signs are given for those who understand (16: 12)' (Iqbal 2006: 8–9). Peirce was an inventor of the science of semiotics, the science of reading signs. What is scientific activity but an attempt to read the signs of nature? And in the signs of nature, both Iqbal and Peirce believe that one will find signs of God.

It may seem as though I have been talking about Iqbal and Peirce as though they were simple Darwinians and that their perspectives are, ultimately, reconcilable with scientific reductive materialism. This, however, is not the case. Iqbal is very clear. He says, in speaking of the ultimate character of the universe we inhabit, 'it is not the result of mere creative sport' (2006: 8). Peirce also sees limits to the ability of Darwinian evolutionary theory for explaining the evolution that we actually find in the world. In a section of the essay called 'Evolutionary Love' with the subtitle 'Second Thoughts Irenica', Peirce makes this striking observation and draws from it an equally striking conclusion: 'Evolution by sporting and evolution by mechanical necessity are conceptions warring against one another. A third method, which supersedes their strife, lies enwrapped in the theory of Lamarck' (1934: 6.299).

This passage needs some explanation. First, it is a great irony that Peirce identifies when he says that evolution by sport and evolution by mechanical necessity war against each other because it is the assumption of scientific reductive materialism that sport and mechanical necessity are the same. A moment's thought, however, verifies the truth of Peirce's claim. Mechanical things do not sport. Clocks do not sport. Cars do not sport. Computers do not sport, although it sometimes seems like they do. Mechanical things break down. Mechanical things may have unanticipated mechanistic quirks that appear unexpectedly, but they do not sport. Sporting requires some different kind of explanation from that of a mechanism. The reference to a 'third method', and Peirce means here a method of evolution beyond mere chance (sport) and mere mechanical necessity, that supersedes those two with a reference to Lamarck may seem unintentionally ironic. Lamarckian evolution – the idea that an organism can pass on characteristics developed in its lifetime to its offspring – was decisively disproven by the German evolutionary biologist Friedrich Weismann (1834–1914) in the late nineteenth century by, in one experiment, cutting off the tails of mice and finding full-length tails in their offspring. So, it would seem, Peirce knows not of what he speaks. In fact, however, in the same paragraph that Peirce seems to endorse Lamarck he refers to Weismann, so the irony must, after all, be intentional.

The reference to Lamarck's theory is cautionary. Peirce refers to a third method of evolution that lies 'enwrapped in the theory of Lamarck'. That is not exactly an equating of the two. The third method of evolution that Peirce

argues is the most primary form of evolution he calls ‘agapism’, or ‘evolutionary love’. Peirce acknowledges the importance of chance (that, as an evolutionary theory, Peirce calls *tychism*) and necessity (that, as an evolutionary theory, Peirce calls *anachism*), but considers these two forms of evolution to be, ultimately, understandable only through agapism, evolutionary love (1934: 6.302).

Habits and Habit-taking

The core idea that is Peirce’s, and not Lamarck’s, but will become enwrapped in Lamarck’s theory, is the idea of the potentiality of organisms to develop ‘habits’. Peirce says,

[A]ll that distinguishes the highest organic forms from the most rudimentary has been brought about by little hypertrophies or atrophies which have affected individuals early in their lives, and have been transmitted to their offspring. Such a transmission of acquired characters is of the general nature of habit-taking, and is the representative and derivative within the physiological domain of the law of mind. (Peirce 1934: 6.299).

This is not hard-core Lamarckism, but it has a trace of Lamarckism that is consistent with contemporary scientific discoveries that are associated with epigenetics. In epigenetics, habitual developments in adults can influence the timing of the triggering of genes, and that characteristic can then be transferred to the offspring. The habits themselves will be determined, in part, by environmental factors, so, for example, a mouse living in an environment with a smell that gets associated with a specific danger can transmit that particular fear into their offspring who will also associate that smell with a certain sort of threat (Callaway 2013; Dias and Ressler 2013).

The important idea here is not so much the theory of epigenetics, which is a very new and still controversial theory, but the importance of the phenomenon of habit-taking, which is neither new nor controversial. Habit-taking is associated with repeated activities that are repeated because they are ‘directed toward an end’ (Peirce 1934: 6.299). This is a process that is, as Peirce says, ‘essentially psychical’. A personality is a reflection of the combination and coordination of a particular set of habits. Peirce says of habit,

Thus, habit plays a double part; it serves to establish the new features, and also to bring them into harmony with the general morphology and function of the animals and plants to which they belong . . . this account of . . . evolution coincides with the general description of the action of love. (Peirce 1934: 6.300).

The formation of a habit, then, is a creative development; it establishes something new. It is also a unifying development, bringing into harmony an organism and its environment. It is, in a word, an example of *tauhid*.

Terrence Deacon, in *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter*, refers explicitly to Peirce's theory of habit-taking:

Habit was Peirce's general term referring to regularities of behavior arising in both physical and organic contexts. The term could thus apply equally to the tendency for hurricanes to circle counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere and the yearly migration of Monarch butterflies between Yucatán [Mexico] and New England [United States]. (Deacon 2012: 183)

The core idea that Deacon wants to pick up from Peirce is his postulation of 'the existence of a universal habit of habit formation' as 'fundamental to the nature of things' (Deacon 2012: 183). Humans develop habits, but, as a general concept, so does nature develop habits. Habits just are a regularisation of behaviours, a unification of various tendencies into one more or less predictable form of behaviour. Iqbal says, 'Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the Qur'an it is the habit of Allah' (2006: 45). Habits are, therefore, a form of *tauhid*.

Teleology and Final Causality

The most controversial element in the thinking of Iqbal and Peirce is signalled in this account of intentional action, or action 'directed toward an end'. What this suggests is teleology. It suggests the reality of final causes as well as efficient causes, to use the vocabulary of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1947: 284–6). It suggests that there *is* some end toward which not just human action aims, but the whole evolutionary process as a whole as well. This suggests some purpose to the world, some meaning in the world,

and to the universe as a whole. Now we are in an area strongly antithetical to the spirit of reductive scientific materialism.

Is there a way to find continuity between the religious sensibility that sees meaning in the evolution of the world and the reductive scientific sensibility that sees the evolutionary processes of nature as fundamentally mechanistic? Is *tauhid* here possible? Iqbal and Peirce have already done that work for us. What they each offer is a form of teleology naturalised. Here is Iqbal on the teleology of mental life: 'Mental life is teleological in the sense that there is no far-off distant goal towards which we are moving, there is a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of value as the process of life grows and expands' (2006: 43–4). Consider what Iqbal says here in comparison with what the Nobel Prize-winning scientist François Jacob says, in his essay 'Time and the Invention of the Future', about the evolution of one of the 'most fantastic powers of the brain':

On the one hand, memorized images of past events can be broken up into component parts and recombined to form hitherto unseen representations of new situations: this makes it possible not only to keep images of past events but also to imagine possible events and, therefore, to invent the future. (Jacob 1982: 58).

Jacob clarifies a point implicit in Iqbal's description of teleology, that teleology is not just out there in the world, but that it is a function of our thinking and, because of it, we 'invent' the future, we create it, first in imagination, and then in reality.

Peirce calls this kind of teleology a 'developmental teleology' (1934: 6.156). This term refers to the possibilities that emerge as an organism, an eco-system, or the world develops. These possibilities emerge as the result of a reciprocal and mutual affecting of organism and environment, or an environment with a larger environment. These are possibilities that are not predetermined or even predetermining, but are to be understood as creative possibilities for new directions of being. In this, the organism mirrors the cosmos, the microcosm the macrocosm. As Iqbal says,

To my mind nothing is more alien to the Quranic outlook than the idea that the universe is the temporal working out of a preconceived plan . . .

the universe, according to the Qur'an, is liable to increase. It is a growing universe and not an already completed process. (Iqbal 2006: 44)

Iqbal offers a similar interpretation of the concept of *taqdir*, or destiny. First, he quotes the Qur'an: 'As the Qur'an says: "God created all things and assigned to each its destiny."' Then he offers his interpretation of the passage from the Qur'an: 'The destiny of a thing then is not an unrelenting fate working from without like a task master; it is the inward reach of a thing, its realizable possibilities which lie within the depths of its nature' (Iqbal 2006: 40). This is teleology like the idea of the tree is in the seed teleology. It is not seeing the supernatural in nature, but a reading of the signs of nature itself.

Peirce's conception of teleology is correlated with his idea of 'personality'. The very notion of a personality entails the notion of teleology. Recall that Peirce defines 'personality' as 'some kind of coördination or connection of ideas'. Later, in that same essay, 'The Law of Mind', he adds,

But the word coördination implies somewhat more than this; it implies a teleological harmony in ideas, and in the case of personality this teleology is more than mere purposive pursuit of a predeterminate end; it is a developmental teleology. This is personal character. A general idea, living and conscious now, it is already determinative of acts in the future to an extent to which it is not now conscious. (Peirce 1934: 6.256)

This is not the Aristotelian teleology of the Unmoved Mover. It is, as Peirce says, the developmental teleology of a universe in which there are laws of nature, but also some openness in the system that is a source of creative emergence of the new. Our character will determine our future acts, but our character itself will grow, develop, and emerge in a process of reciprocal and mutual encounters with our environment as we creatively engage with it.

This development of our own character will be a process of unifying a variety of goals toward a single ideal. Teleology is just an ideal toward which a personality strives (Peirce 1934: 6.434). As we grow as individuals, our various teleologies, our various goals, will, ideally, converge on a single teleology, a single goal. This will be a potentiality that can become a reality if properly attended to. This is our own personal moral imperative, to help the emergent potential of our own personality to emerge. This is a process of making one out of our own self (*tauhid*). We are surrounded by personalities in the world,

Iqbal's 'egos'. Our moral imperative with respect to the world is to facilitate the emergence of the emergent. It is to guide toward the best possible ideal the various emerging personalities that we discover in the world. Science can help us do this. Science can illuminate how various personalities in the world do emerge. It can identify what conditions maximise the potentiality of the emergence of a particular personality.

This, according to Iqbal, is our job in the world, to facilitate the emergence of the emergent. This is what I understand him to mean when he says that we are 'the representatives of God on earth' (2006: 76). Our ultimate purpose is to facilitate the emergence of the emergent. This is God's creative activity, His creative work. It is the process of *tauhid*. It is a process that is identical to the process of thought, of moving towards an ideal of ever more general understanding, the unification of a multiplicity under one general idea, one general ideal.

What is the teleology of the universe? What is the ultimate ideal of the universe? What guides the developmental teleology of the world, of nature, not as a fixed end, but as an ever-present guiding principle? A clue to the answer to these questions is in Iqbal's description of 'the true character' of the Ultimate Ego: 'The Ultimate Ego exists in pure duration wherein change ceases to be a succession of varying attitudes, and reveals its true character as continuous creation' (2006: 48). The ultimate activity of God is continuous creation – that, I understand to be, not just God's activity, but also God's teleology; God's ideal is to be continuously creative. What God loves, what nature does, is continuously to create. The act of creation is essentially an act of 'making one'. It is the process by which a plurality is unified into a one. We appreciate the recognition of this unity with the 'appreciative self'. The fundamental act of appreciation is a feeling, a matter of heart, *qalb*, which then generates cognitive analysis, and then knowledge, but it originates as feeling.

Iqbal says that God is a percept. A percept is, say, a sense datum. With respect to the question of God, God is a sense datum of what, exactly? Both Iqbal and Peirce have an answer to this. God is a sense datum of an experience we have in the process of thinking. It is the sense, as we think, of having our thought directed in a specific direction. It is the sense of our thought moving from the particular toward the more general. A general idea is just the unification of a multiplicity of sense data under a single concept. It is the

process of *tauhid* that is inherent in the very process of thought. The processes of thought during which this experience of feeling our thought being directed is most pronounced in what Iqbal calls 'prayer' and Peirce calls 'Musement'. Iqbal gives the example from Rumi of, during the process of prayer, seeing 'the musk-deer's tracks' and following them (2006: 72–3). In the process of Musement, Peirce refers to the experience of having one's thought directed as though by a wind in the sails of a boat. As he says, rather poetically, 'Enter your skiff of Musement, push off into the lake of thought, and leave the breath of heaven to swell your sail' (Peirce 1934: 6.461). In both cases, the language is metaphorical, but what is being described is nothing symbolic but real; it is the real sense of, when one allows one's thoughts a certain freedom, one feels them move in a directed fashion. All creative thought, all original scientific thought, for Iqbal and Peirce must begin with something like Musement or prayer. As Iqbal says, 'The truth is that all search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer' (2006: 73).

The form of causality that operates in Musement and prayer is not efficient causality, but final causality: our thoughts are directed not by push but by attraction. Our thoughts are attracted to a particular ideal. This is not compulsion, but love. Nor is it the future determining the present, as final causality is sometimes characterised. It is a possible future influencing the present by the attractiveness of its possibilities. It is an invitation to create a future. 'There is,' as Iqbal says, 'a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of value as the process of life grows and expands' (2006: 43–4). Peirce says,

[W]e must understand by final causation that mode of bringing facts about according to which a general description of result is made to come about, quite irrespective of any compulsion for it to come about in this or that particular way; although the means may be adapted to the ends. (Peirce 1934: 1.211)

A bit later in the same essay, Peirce describes the relation between efficient and final 'causation':

Efficient causation is that kind of causation whereby the parts compose the whole; final causation is that kind of causation whereby the whole calls out

its parts. Final causation without efficient causation is helpless . . . Efficient causation without final causation, however, is worse than helpless, by far; it is mere chaos. (Peirce 1934: 1.220)

The ‘whole’ calling out its parts is a beautiful way of saying *tauhid*.

Reparation versus Creation

Peter Ochs provides a very strong reading of both Peirce and Iqbal in terms of *tikkun* or the concept of repair. In his reading of Iqbal and Peirce he sees them as outlining a system of repair for the threats raised and the damages done by modernity. As Ochs says, ‘I will re-read Iqbal’s *Reconstruction* through the lens of Peirce’s pragmatism . . . my reading will seek answers to the single most important question a pragmatist may ask today: how shall Scriptural religion respond to the challenges of modernity?’ (2010: 80). Ochs puts the emphasis on the importance of scripture and prayer as means for repairing a civilisation ‘out of order’. He calls for a science that is ‘completed in prayer’ (90). This is a strong reading of Iqbal and Peirce because it is so compelling and because it so usefully joins Iqbal and Peirce under a single project.

I would put the emphasis, however, on a slightly different point. I want to argue that the better lens through which to look at Iqbal and Peirce together is the lens of creation, rather than reparation. Reparation is always secondary to, and dependent on, creation. What drives nature, evolution, growth, and mind is creation. Creation can look like reparation; the evolution of a thicker beak better able to crack a certain type of prevalent seed shell can be explained in terms of a reparation, a fix, an improvement of an imperfect form, but it can also be understood as a creative development. The point that this change of emphasis is meant to bring out is that with the concept of creation, the emphasis is on the future; it is the process of imagining new, unimagined possible ideals. With the concept of reparation, the emphasis is on the past and the present. The goal is, but is only, amelioration, not creation. Emergent mind is a fundamentally creative act, as both Iqbal and Peirce insist.

Another way to frame the distinction between reparation and creation is in terms of the causality each reflects. Reparation is primarily a process of efficient causality. Doctors repair people by means of their knowledge of

the efficient workings of the body. Creation is a process of final causality. It works by attraction to an ideal. There is, as Peirce has made clear, no efficient causality without final causality, and vice versa, but we are more purely creative when we are explicitly concerned with final causes, and the motivation is a purer form of love, of attraction to, than when we are working to repair. For me, the real upshot of this distinction is that I consider the work of Iqbal and Peirce to be a great boon to modern and postmodern thinkers. They each come out of, and think in terms of, a religious tradition, but their thinking also transcends any particular religious tradition, or even religion in general. As a non-Muslim, and even as a non-religious person, I have learned a tremendous amount about Islam, about a spirit of religion with which I find myself deeply sympathetic, and a perspective from which to view the world and universe that is immensely valuable to me. I do not want to leave Iqbal confined to religious thinkers alone. His wisdom is too wide and too valuable to exclude the non-religious, the secular humanists, the philosophers, and the scientists.

There is no question that the Qur'an is of central importance to everything Iqbal writes. But what is the Qur'an and how does Iqbal read it? Ahmed Afzaal in his essay, 'Iqbal's Approach to the Qur'an', argues that the way that Iqbal reads the Qur'an was with the intent to keep his mind and his heart completely open and receptive, to read the Qur'an as though it were being revealed to him as he was reading it (Suheyl and Koshul 2010: 9). As Afzaal says,

It is only when the readers pay constant attention to the flux of their own experiences in relation to their encounters with the sacred text that they come to appreciate the dynamic character not only of their experiences but also, and more importantly, of the text itself . . . The insistence on a single 'correct' understanding then becomes impossible to maintain, and it is increasingly replaced by a joyful anticipation of fresh meanings as the sacred text begins to reveal some of its infinite possibilities. (Suheyl and Koshul 2010: 9–10)

How can a written text, with words placed in a fixed order, be 'dynamic'? How can a fixed text reveal 'infinite possibilities'? It can if the writing of the text mirrors the pattern of authentic thought. It can if the thinking in the text

mirrors the thinking in the world. It can if the authentic mind of the reader is open and receptive to the authentic mind of the text. This is the sense in which God is closer to us than our ‘jugular vein’ (*The Koran* 2003: 366 [50: 16]), a location appropriately mid-way to, and a conduit between, our head and our heart. God is in our very thought and feeling. Iqbal gets to nature via the Qur’an, but one could also get to the Qur’an via nature.

The wisdom of the Qur’an transcends the Qur’an just as the wisdom of nature transcends nature. Iqbal’s wisdom is aimed at this transcendent place. To limit him to dealing in ‘scripture and prayer’ is to make him unavailable to a large number of non-scriptural, non-praying people. There is submission, and there is submission. One is the submission of efficient causality that enforces a blind obedience. The other is the submission to final causality, which is openness to ‘infinite possibilities’. The emphasis on reparation limits to too great a degree a reading of Iqbal to the former sort of submission, while an emphasis on creation opens up the latter.

Conclusion

Slavoj Žižek refers to Lacan’s belief that ‘the discourse of science presupposes the foreclosure of the subject’ (1999: xxi). What is so helpful about reading Iqbal and Peirce, and especially about reading Iqbal and Peirce together, is for their reinsertion of the subject into the world. Iqbal refers to ‘egos’ and Peirce to ‘personality’, but both are talking about the way that we find subjectivity pervading our experiences in the world. One *can* look at the world from the perspective of the foreclosure of subjectivity, but it is a dead, pointless world, as both Iqbal and Peirce recognise. In ‘The Will to Believe’ James argues that there are certain possibilities for experience in the world that can only be realised if we act as though they were real before they are in fact real. If, however, we do act as though they were real before they are real, we can create their reality as a matter of fact. The primary example that James adduces of this phenomenon is the phenomenon of friendship. You have to act as though someone were your friend before they are really your friend, but it is only by so acting, contrary, in some sense, to the reality, that the reality of friendship can emerge. The potentiality for friendship is really there, and, like a final cause, it is an ideal conceived of and sought out by both parties, an ideal that both parties must have as an ideal in order to make it a reality in fact (James 1948: 88–109).

A way of parsing this with respect to subjectivity is to employ the 'actions' versus 'events' distinction (Nagel 1979: 36). From the outside, everything a person does is an event and can be explained by means of efficient causality. From the inside, from the subjective position, there are also actions, actions based on purposes, ideals, ends. These can only be explained with final causes. Science is very effective at discovering the efficient causes of events, but has no vocabulary for actions based on final causes. We create the need for this vocabulary when we regard what people do as actions, when we see what they do from the subjective position. Iqbal and Peirce extend this far beyond the mere human realm, and in doing so they open up a whole new way of understanding the world and our place in it.

Mind emerges, not just in us and in nature, but also for us when we look for it from the subjective position. We may not see it, we may not look for it, and, effectively, it will not exist for us. There are many who do not look for it, and who, therefore, do not seem to see it. On the other hand, if we do look for it, if we act as though we were encountering a mind, what we discover is a reality that emerges for us that is very real, the reality of mind in another person, and the reality of mind in the world. The signs of mind are the signs of a unity, a general idea, that is in the process of growing, evolving, changing in a specific direction. Mind is in its essence emergent.

Emerson says, 'Let us treat the men and women well; treat them as if they were real; perhaps they are' (1981: 275). A lot goes into that 'perhaps'. The realness of people depends on the treating. If we treat people as real, they will reveal themselves to be so. In a sense, it is only by treating them as real that they become so. It is sometimes only by making space for mind to emerge that mind does emerge. This is the wisdom that Iqbal and Peirce have to teach us. They teach not just this wisdom, but also the mechanics of it, what mind looks like, what the signs of mind are, what mind does, how mind develops. A version of Emerson's suggestion that we ought to treat people as real appears as a sura in the Qur'an (49: 13): 'We have created you from male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you might get to know one another.'⁵

Notes

1. For more contemporary accounts of mind as, essentially, a computer, see, for example, Churchland (1995) and Dennett (1991).
2. Iqbal, for example, after mentioning Darwin by name, says, ‘There is no doubt that the theories of science constitute trustworthy knowledge, because they are verifiable and enable us to predict and control events in Nature’ (2006: 33). Peirce says, for example, ‘Whether the part played by natural selection and the survival of the fittest in the production of species be large or small, there remains little doubt that the Darwinian theory indicates a real cause, which tends to adapt animal and vegetable forms to their environment’ (1934: 1.395).
3. The standard way to cite Peirce’s work is to give the volume number of the *Collected Works*, followed by the paragraph number.
4. Emmanuel Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, associates the encounter with the face of another person, or with, as he says, ‘the Other’, with an experience of transcendence, ‘this transcendence is expressed by the term infinity’ (1969: 24–5).
5. I need to express my deep gratitude to Basit Koshul and Ahmed Afzaal for the many conversations that I have had with them about Iqbal and Peirce. It is not too much to say that everything I know, or think I know, about Iqbal and Islam, I have learned from Dr Koshul and Dr Afzaal. I may not have learned well, and any flaws in my analysis are my own, but I have learned a great deal from both of them.

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6

Between Hegel and Rumi: Iqbal's Contrapuntal Encounters with the Islamic Philosophical Traditions

Sajjad Rizvi

University of Exeter, United Kingdom

The colonial period in British India witnessed the rise of different responses articulated by religious communities to both their traditions of scriptural and vernacular knowledge systems as well as attempts to make sense of how modernity challenged their practices, modes of life, and epistemologies of the cosmos that they inhabited. In effect, all of these responses were incubated in the laboratory of imperial modernity – new political systems of governance, the new science, new epistemologies and pedagogies, print and new media, and a world opened up before them albeit within the confines of the status of imperial subjects – and perhaps in that sense it would not be incorrect to label them all as ‘modernist’. The failure of the old elites to resist the imperial powers – and the ongoing issue of whether the success of the colonisers was somehow linked to their ‘muscular Protestantism’ – led to a rethinking of traditions and their refashioning in the image of the conqueror (van der Veer 2001; Viswanathan 1989; Prakash 1999). The development of the field of Islamic intellectual history in South Asia has brought out in particular five or six such responses – and captured the interest of the subject of this volume and of this chapter (for example, Muhammad Iqbal) who had a relationship in some way or the other with each of them: the return to scripturalism and in particular to the texts that portrayed the Prophetic way of life (the hadith) in Deoband (India) from 1867, the reaffirmation of the vibrancy and relevance of traditional devotion to the Prophet and Sufi piety of the movement of

Aḥmad Rizā Khān of Bareilly (India), the alternative scripturalism of the ahl al-Qur'ān in the Punjab (India), the Aligarh movement and its embrace of a new colonial elite fashioned on the playing-fields of Eton and in the quadrangles of Oxford (United Kingdom), the struggle of survival of the old Shi'a nawabi elites of Avadh to retain status and their epistemologies, and the 'new faiths' such as the Aḥmadī movement with their desire to link reform and reconciliation with modernity through a recourse to an old notion of 'prophecy continuous' (Metcalf 1982; Sanyal 1996; Qasmi 2011; Lelyveld 1978; Jones 2012; Friedman 1989). Each one of these appealed to some notion of the tradition, and each one in a sense forged a modernist project appropriate to their context. At times, religious traditions retained a sense of autonomy from the state but they shared in the emergence of practices of what Foucault called 'governmentality', connecting the techniques of governing the self with techniques of dominating the other (van der Veer 2014; cf. Inda 2005; Lemke 2011). These movements were thus as constitutive of the 'apparatus' of imperial modernity as the British state in India (Agamben 2009).

The old sociological dichotomy between tradition and modernity, which examined them chronologically, is, of course, well past its expiry date: these movements fashioned their modernity in ways that were spiritual, scriptural, philosophical, Muslim, Indian, and modern. Forged in imperial modernity, they did much to make that context modern and sustainable as well. The impact thus on the British was also quite clear, and how could it not be? As Subrahmanyam puts it, '[O]nly an utter devotion to structuralist forms of history and structuralist understandings of culture – and a corresponding neglect of diachronic processes – would force us to regard this as an unnatural or even an unusual outcome' (2012: 30).

In that sense, asking the question of the influences on the thinker such as Iqbal from Rūmī or Nietzsche, McTaggart or Mullā Ṣadrā is somewhat misleading. He was an existentialist but Kierkegaard, despite his hopeful faith, is not a good comparison, as his privileging of action as being owes much to Mullā Ṣadrā. He read Hegel through Mullā Ṣadrā and Bēdil through Bergson. His poetry and prose thus reveals these facets of rather contrapuntal readings of texts – in fact, for those excited by how contrapuntal readings lie at the heart of postcolonialism, one can do a lot worse than turn back to Iqbal (for example, Majeed 2009). Even his own diary or jottings that he initiated

on return from Europe in about 1910 and published as *Stray Reflections* – and perhaps in the vein of our discussion it should have been called his *Bayāz* – amply reflects this:

I confess I owe a great deal to Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil and Wordsworth. The first two led me into the ‘inside’ of things; the third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals of poetry, and the last saved me from atheism in my student days. (Iqbal 2012: 53)

After the rupture in the educational system in the subcontinent following 1857, a number of hybrid Muslim intellectuals such as Iqbal trained in European pedagogical methods began to re-assess their intellectual heritage. Works were written in Urdu and in English that grappled with the philosophy of Avicenna and Mullā Ṣadrā, drawing upon the texts that were still (just about) being studied in madrasas and were becoming known to German and British orientalism (such as the famous Max Horten). It is within this context of assessing one’s heritage and seeking a space for it within the contemporary context of European thought at the turn of the twentieth century that one ought to locate and make sense of Iqbal’s early work on the Islamic philosophical traditions (the subject of his doctorate) as well as the development of his thought from these beginnings to his later lectures on the reconstruction of religious thought. Iqbal’s engagement with the Islamicate and Persianate tradition of *ḥikmat* (beyond analyses of ‘Muslim pantheism’) has been rather neglected in scholarship and demands a serious reassessment – Hegel and Bergson are privileged over Rūmī and Mullā Ṣadrā (cf. Raschid 2010).

Iqbal’s own career falls broadly into two parts. His early apprenticeship under Sayyid Mīr Ḥasan (d. 1929) in Sialkot, Dāgh (d. 1905), Shibli Nu‘mānī (d. 1914), and Thomas Arnold (d. 1930) culminated in an MA in philosophy in 1898 followed by his trip to Europe where he gained an MA at Cambridge in 1907 and a PhD from Munich in 1907. These figures bridged the traditional and modernist: Sayyid Mīr Ḥasan and Dāgh representing the former, and the friends Nu‘mānī and Arnold being associated with the Aligarh movement. Ḥasan was a traditional scholar who taught Iqbal Arabic and inspired in him an interest in philosophy and Persian poetry (Ḥusayn 2007).

Dāgh was rather typical of the Delhi intellectuals of his time (Anjum 1986). Born in 1831, he was initially exposed to the Delhi renaissance that included his poetic masters Ghalib and Zauq and to the court itself since his mother after the death of his father married Prince Mirzā Fakhrū in 1844 (Anjum 2001). He fled at the revolt and sought the patronage of first Nawab Kalb ‘Alī Khān of Rampur and later in the Deccan Plateau with Nawab Mīr Maḥbūb ‘Alī Khān. He trained a large number of poets – including briefly Iqbal by correspondence – and died in Hyderabad in 1905. As such he bridged the classical period of Urdu poetry with the Ghalib circle and the court with the rise of modernism in the colonial period and the search for identity and belonging in India. Dāgh was a popular poet, famed for his erotic verse and for his *masnavī* style – and had somewhat of a reputation of an old court dandy or even a playboy, a figure that recalls the later poet Josh Malihabadi (d. 1982) in the twentieth century. Iqbal was his student by correspondence, as Dāgh had been appointed as the laureate at the court of the Nizam as attested to in the introduction to *Bāng-e darā* (*The Peal of the Bell*) where the ‘corrections’ to his ghazals by Dāgh were acknowledged. Some of his early ghazals bear the influence of Dāgh’s themes and concerns even if in his more philosophical and critical reflections on personhood and identity later Iqbal’s verse had more in common with Alṭāf Ḥusayn Ḥālī and Akbar Ilāhābādī. It is quite possible then that the reason that Iqbal sought out Dāgh as his teacher was the desire to link himself to the classical poetic tradition of the Delhi renaissance (Āzād 1986: 187). Even before leaving for Europe, and under the influence of European poets, he set aside the ghazal tradition, signalling his break from Dāgh (Āzād 1986). Nevertheless, Dāgh had a large number of students – none more famous than Iqbal – and it is very much the success of his verse that convinced many of the mobilising force of poetry for intellectual and political action in the new century (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn 1986). Furthermore, other critics have argued that *Faryād-e Dāgh*, an important autobiographical *masnavī* composed in 1300/1883 had an influence on a number of works, including *Shikvā* of Iqbal (Parbatī 2010: 106–8).

Shiblī was more of a hybrid scholar who was the first major popular historian of modern Muslim South Asia, writing on a range of topics, glorifying heroes of the past, and writing critical appraisals of the intellectual traditions from a thoroughly orientalist perspective (Nadvī 1970; Ṣiddiqī 2012;

Akhtar et al. 2009; cf. Nu‘manī 1898, 1964, 2012). His project was a rather conservative but modernist defence of the faith in favour of latitude through rethinking law and theology (McDonough 2005). Shiblī was a strong critic of Ash‘arī theology and a proponent of the complementarity of faith and reason, critical of the Aligarh school’s dismissal of the tradition as incapable of resisting the new philosophy and science (Murad 1973: 3–36). As part of this process, he deployed Rūmī – that we also see later in Iqbal. Arnold represented the other element of the orientalisng Muslim modernism of the period (Morison and Gibb 1930; Arnold 1896, 1924). Through their association at Aligarh, they were friends and their collaboration bore fruit in works such as Arnold’s *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*.

The fruits of this period were the early poems of ‘Bāng-e darā’, including his ‘Himāla’ (Himalaya), ‘Tarāna-ye hindī’ (Indian Anthem – ‘The best land in the world is our India; we are its nightingales; this is our garden . . .’), ‘Tarāna-ye millī’ (The Muslim community’s anthem – ‘China and Arabia and ours; India in ours. We are Muslims, the whole world is ours . . .’), ‘Nayā shivāla’ (A New Shiva Temple – ‘Let me tell you truth, Brahmin, if you will not be offended. The idols of your temples have become old . . .’), and ‘Shikvā’ (Complaint), which he wrote of the sense of India and nation based on the model of Dāgh as well as his elegy for Dāgh (‘Dāgh is dead! Alas! His corpse brings adornment to our shoulders, The last poet of Shāhjahānābād is dead . . .’) (Matthews 1993: 16–22, 28–29, 31–41).

But before we move to a closer consideration of Iqbal, we need to consider first how Muslim intellectuals before him and contemporary to him were trying to make sense of their intellectual heritage within the apparatus of imperial modernity and how the study of the Islamic intellectual heritage developed in academia within the philosophical taste prevalent in Britain and Germany of Iqbal’s student days. Already before the advent of official empire there was a shift towards hybrid institutions in which both epistemologies and curricula coincided, bringing together selective elements of European and North Indian Muslim curricula forging ahead with some of the brightest minds of the ‘Delhi renaissance’ at Delhi College run by the British and funded by Indian notables (Minault 2000; Pernau 2006). The college brought in the skills of the madrasa-trained to be deployed for British

pedagogical aims, drawing in Sehba'i, Imām Bakhsh, Ghālib, Āzurda, and others. The rise in print and the public sphere consuming intelligence, information, and 'knowledge' from the West accelerated the process of encounters around the pivotal events of 1857 (Ṣābrī 1953, I: 121–224; Khan 1991: 65–114; Yūsuf 2008: 47–120; Minault 2005; Pernau 1996). The post-1857 scenario was rather different, and the hybridity in many ways gave way to an internalisation of orientalist paradigms and the rise of the role of missionary schools in the dissemination of education through a change in the colonial government's policy towards an Anglicist perspective. This new policy had a significant 'civilising' mission. As the missionaries Henry Elliot and Henry Tucker explained in their report on education following 1857:

He [the student] enters the school premises, becomes acquainted with mathematical science, with astronomy and geometry. Naturally, he loses confidence in his own religion when he finds that it contains so many ridiculous and impossible explanations. Propositions of Euclid and Sir Isaac Newton confute the fables . . . of their religion . . . It is impossible, even if we wished it, to be absolutely neutral in dealing with the false religions of India; for they are so intimately blended with false science that we cannot teach the simplest lessons of true science without contradicting the false sciences contained in their religious books . . . and so far proving their religions themselves to be false. (Elliot 1858: 67)

In the confidence of this 'scientistic' mode coupled with a new metaphysics coming from the Enlightenment, intellectuals became increasingly deracinated from their intellectual heritage even as they sought to retain their links. Pre-colonial pedagogies and epistemologies became obsolete – or at least needed to be rethought in the reform movements mentioned above – and were replaced by outsider perspectives. In this way when one analyses the reflection on Islamic intellectual history made by Muslims at the turn of the twentieth century, one finds racial categories, attitudes, and perspectives on thought that were prevalent in Europe in the works later of Max Herten.

To take an example of two works in Urdu in the early twentieth century – *Āftāb-e hikmat* (*The Sun of Philosophy*) by Gobind Prasad 'Āftāb' dedicated to the Bēgum of Bhopal in gratitude and printed at the famous Newal Kishore Press in Lucknow in 1916, and *Mir'at al-ḥukamā' yā Guldasta-yi farhang*

(*The Mirror of Philosophers or the Bouquet of Culture*) of Shams al-‘ulamā’ Sayyid Imdād Imām ‘Aṣar’ published in 1879 in Patna (originally written in 1877). Both are good examples of elite expression and reveal a concern with internalising the post-Cartesian mind–body problem and both seem rather influenced by the dominance of idealism in British and German philosophy of the time – much like we shall see with Iqbal.

Mir’āt al-ḥukamā’ is dedicated to J. M. Lewes, magistrate of Bhagalpur in Bihar. Imām was a scion of a prominent elite family, which produced a number of barristers known for their learning. In the Urdu preface, he states that his aim was to present European thought, and to bring it into conversation with the Arabic Islamic tradition, making it accessible to those who did not have access to English sources (Imām 1879). In particular, he considers it his remit to introduce a number of European thinkers, especially on matters relating to mental states. He also laments the absence of a philosophical lexicon in Urdu and apologises for the need to draw upon the Arabic scholastic terms that do not quite capture the new European thought he wishes to convey. The English preface is somewhat different. He claims to have ‘systematically and scientifically cemented together the metaphysical views hitherto promulgated by some of the distinguished speculative authors both of Europe and Asia’ (Imām 1879: 1). Although he mentions Aristotle, Locke, Descartes, and Reid alongside Avicenna, Ghazālī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, he is rather dismissive of the contribution of ‘Arabic writers’ on ‘mental science’ partly because they ‘blindly adhered’ to Aristotle and partly because they made no original contribution: ‘there is no Arabian work treating of mental science’ (Imām 1879: 3–5, English). He criticises the traditional ‘ulema whom he feels will be rather slighted by his account. This is very much an orientalisising project steeped in the modernist tradition:

I think this is an attempt on my part to make my countrymen aspire for the learning and the sciences of the West, to invite my co-religionists to taste the honey of the European sciences, and lastly to convince the prejudiced sect of the old-typed moulvies, that Europe at present occupies the highest position throughout the world in point of knowledge attainable by man. If I err not the moulvies are the greatest impediment to the furtherance of my views – so that if these my learned friends be gained over to my side, I

can justly hope that the future generation may turn out a more reasonable class of men than what their fathers are now. I would not be hyperbolic if I were to assert that our moulvy sahibs do really consider it a sin to ascribe any thing recommendatory to Europe. This view as far as I know has no religious basis to stand upon, but simply rests on their groundless belief of the imaginary excellence of the old scientific investigations. (Imām 1879: 6, English).

The most important influences on him seem to be the Scottish philosophers Thomas Reid (d. 1796) and Sir William Hamilton (d. 1856) – two thinkers associated with empiricism and a logical approach to the analysis of the mind and the cosmos known as ‘direct realism’. It was later replaced by idealism but Imām’s philosophical tastes, probably incubated in his younger days, were rooted in the early part of the nineteenth century. Imām tries to argue that the European tradition from its inception was far more concerned with matters of the mind, of epistemology, and logic than with metaphysics, the concern of Islamic thinkers (Imām 1879: 44–54). Because he holds the opinion that for knowledge to be beneficial it needs to be expressed in English he does lament the fact that most of the central works of the Islamic tradition in India are not available in that language, including *Sharḥ al-mawāqif* (of Jurjānī (d. 1411)), *al-Ufuq al-mubīn* (of Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631)), the *Zawāhid* (that is, the three *marginalia* of Mīr Zāhid Hirawī (d. 1699) on the *Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-manṭiq*, on *Sharḥ al-mawāqif*, and on the *Sharḥ ‘Aqā’id al-‘aḍudiya*), and *Sharḥ Sullam al-‘ulūm* (of Muḥibbullāh Bihārī (d. 1707)) (Imām 1879: 73). These were key philosophical and theological texts of the Dars-e nizāmī established in the eighteenth century in North India (Malik 1997: 522–35; Qamaruddīn 1996: 345–52). But even then his examination of the psychology of the Islamic tradition is based entirely on Avicenna, Fārābī, and Ghazālī, which was also the focus of Orientalist literature as well in the same period. It was Bacon and Descartes who brought about the revolution that ended the hegemony of the schoolmen (Imām 1879: 87–95). Throughout his analysis there is little engagement with the actual contents of the works of the Islamic philosophical curriculum in India, and even in the biographies of philosophers appended – entitled *Rawzat al-ḥukamā’* – there are few figures mentioned who were not known to late nineteenth-century

orientalists (Imām 1879: 409–535). This is very much a history of philosophy that mentions Arabic figures of significance for medieval scholasticism – the expression of a self-orientalised intellectual.

A young Kayasth, Gobind Prasad, authored *Āftāb-e hikmat*. Some of the prefaces sound rather patronising to him, encouraging his efforts in the study of Islamic (thoroughly Pythagoreanising Neoplatonic) philosophy (Āftāb 1916: 1–3). Prasad thanks the efforts of his father and the Begum of Bhopal who supported his education at the Alexandra School (that she had founded to train children and prepare them for Aligarh) where he picked up English and the desire to read (4). He divides his text into five sections: on propaedeutics such as the nature of the self, and of key concepts such as form, analysis, and division to demonstrate that there is a radical distinction between body and soul; on mathematics (*riyāzīyāt*, rather traditional Euclidean) that begins with a classification of the sciences common to the *ma‘qūlātī* tradition of North India; on logic (*manṭiqīyāt*, the Arabic modified Aristotelian organon); on natural philosophy (*ṭabī‘īyāt*), starting from Aristotelian hylomorphism to traditional Ptolemaic cosmology, including ethics (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*), and discussions of the afterlife and its pains and pleasures; and finally on matters pertaining to reason (*‘aqlīyāt*), starting with Pythagoras on the intellect and moving onto other opinions and causality and related issues in metaphysics. The style is rather mundane and accessible – this is not really the analysis of a deep scholar. There is no real attempt to bring in perspectives from other Indian philosophical traditions or indeed of European ones. Hardly any sources are cited. The approach to metaphysics in particular is both light and selective with a strong emphasis on a Pythagorean approach that considers different types of homologies between the animal world, the cosmos, and ultimately God, which may be the result of particular influences from his teachers (166–75). Similarly, he draws upon the Islamic tradition’s naturalisation of the Neoplatonic notion that erotic motion is the animating force of the cosmos (mediated by Avicenna in particular) (195–200). The final chapter on causality even included a nod to the illuminationist concept of the ‘world of archetypes’ (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) (203–8; cf. Corbin 1990: 126–30, 174–5). The one theme that one may expect – that is missing – is any sense of monism but then this is a work devoid of mysticism and any serious sustained metaphysics. It is a beginner’s study based on

a rather rudimentary understanding of Islamic philosophy as taught in the hybrid schools of the colonial period and quite a different expression of that from the work of Imām.

So much for the options of his time that ranged from the orientalisising to the traditional rehearsal of ideas. Iqbal's relationship with German orientalism can help to elucidate the impact of his doctoral dissertation and locate its own orientalisising tendencies. The first major historian of Islamic philosophy who covered the range of the tradition was Max Horten (1874–1945), whose approach to thought betrays the racial categories of the French Orientalist Ernest Renan (1823–92), the phenomenological insights of Franz Brentano, the transcendental idealism of the neo-Kantians such as Robert Reininger (1869–1955), and the egoism of Nietzsche (cf. Daiber 1999). Horten's own work lies at the culmination of a long history of German engagement with Islamic thought, in which Hegel's views in his *Lectures on Philosophy of History* were particularly influential (Almond 2010: 108–34; cf. Manjapra 2014). Islamic philosophy – including Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā – was praised as the product of the Persian – the Aryan – mind over the Semitic – 'Persia's role as bearer of Oriental civilization'. Horten's presentation is often clichéd and does not pay sufficient attention to the details of arguments and their contexts and is reminiscent of the approaches of Arthur de Gobineau (1816–82) and others (de Gobineau 1923). Like Iqbal, he tended to privilege the 'pantheism' of the Ibn 'Arabī school over the Avicennan tradition of 'light-monism' as he put it, influenced by Indian thought on 'Islamic civilisation' in his important history *Die Philosophie des Islam*, first published in 1924 and then serialised in English translation in the Pakistani journal *Islamic Studies* from 1972 to 1974 following its German reprint (Horten 1924). As we see with Iqbal, he devoted a large part of his studies to later Islamic philosophy and Sufism, including works on Suhrawardī (d. 1191), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī 'the sceptic' (d. 1210), Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274), Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1635). He also correctly identified a 'school of Mullā Ṣadrā', culminating with Sabzawārī (d. 1873) and even the influence on the Shaykhī albeit as an offshoot (141–2). Like others before him – and even Iqbal – he saw the culmination of the monist tendency in the Babi-Bahai movement (he did not differentiate between them) (Horten 1924: 144–53; de Gobineau 1923: 131–319). Horten's judgements have not

entirely disappeared from the history of Islamic philosophy and it is striking how far his assessments coincide with the views expressed in the *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*.

Iqbal's doctoral dissertation *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* was (Iqbal 1908) published in 1908 followed shortly after by his *Bedil in the Light of Bergson* (Iqbal 1988). Mīrzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bēdil (1642–1720) was one of the great Indian poets of Persian and steeped in the intellectual traditions (Bēdil 1978, 1997; Aḥsanuẓẓafar 2009). His style and approach influenced major figures like Ghālib and, of course, Iqbal. While Iqbal's prose works leave a lot to be desired when it comes to an analysis of the Islamic philosophical tradition, his poetry is far more subtle and informed and here is where the significance of Bēdil lies.

The latter in particular indicates the importance of Bēdil to his thought. He describes Bēdil as 'a speculative thinker of the highest order, perhaps the greatest poet-thinker of India', and remarks on the 'staggeringly polyphonic character of his mind which appears to pass through the spiritual experiences of nearly all the great thinkers of the world' (Iqbal 1988: 19–20). We find Iqbal deploying Bēdil in favour of both scepticism towards the ability of reason as well as an embrace of Sufi metaphysics and epistemology (of the school of Ibn 'Arabi) in favour of a sort of existentialism. Towards the end of this fascinating treatise, Iqbal sums up what we take from Bēdil (filtered through Bergsonian notions of duration and intuition) and reflects the attraction and frustration that he has with the intellectual tradition:

When we study Bēdil's poems carefully we cannot fail to recognise that although his love of imaginative expression makes him impatient of logical analysis, he is fully conscious of the seriousness of his philosophical task. Considering his view of the nature of intelligence and the revelations of intuitions, it is obvious that his poetry treasures the great philosophical truth regarding the ultimate nature of reality, the details of which he orients in the spirit of a poet rather than a philosopher. The truth that we live forward and think backward, that the two opposing movements of thought and extension are inseparable in the original becoming is sufficiently clear in his poetry, yet we find in it nothing of the great wealth of illustrative details, nothing of the practical attitude towards time-experience that character-

izes the philosophy of Bergson. In so far as the former point is concerned, I think, we cannot, in fairness, claim it for Bēdil, since he is essentially a poet, but we are surely entitled to claim for him the latter. Bēdil's poetry, however, falsified expectation. All conceptual handling of reality according to him is absolutely valueless. He counsels us not to fall victim to the concrete, since the beauty of the mirror of life does not consist in its reflection. (Iqbal 1988: 34–5)

It is clear to see here what we would now call the problem of reification that lies in the reduction of the ineffable into concepts as a process of cultural critique, a forgetting of reality and the confusion of concepts for the reality that they supposedly describe (Honneth 2012). De-reification involves setting aside the amnesia, and a return to recognition and acknowledgement. For Iqbal, it is precisely the skill of the poet to grasp reality, to de-reify and communicate it without recourse to the confines of conceptualisation by linking the fruits of his imagination to that of the reader's. From Avicenna to Mullā Ṣadrā, philosophers understood the limits of discourse and the significance of the human imagination to make the world that we inhabit.

His work on Bēdil through Bergson came at the end of his engagement with European thought that stemmed from his study at Cambridge (United Kingdom) and Heidelberg (Germany). He became an advanced student at Trinity College, University of Cambridge in 1905 and after examination was awarded in BA in Moral Sciences (the tripos was only renamed Philosophy in 1970) through a dissertation 'by special dispensation' in June 1907 (Durrānī 2003: 106f.). We cannot be sure what that dissertation is, but Durrānī suggests that it was the same one submitted for the PhD at Munich examined in November 1907. He cites the registration papers from Cambridge in which Iqbal was named as a student of James Ward and J. M. McTaggart (d. 1925) working on the topic of 'The Genesis and Development of Metaphysical Conceptions in Persia' (Durrānī 2003: 149). McTaggart's Hegelianism tinged with the intuitionism of Bergson had an important influence on Iqbal, including on his poetry (Majeed 1993). Within months, he was examined in Munich with his principal subject being Oriental philology – submitted in July and examined in November (Durrānī 2003: 174f.). It was published in Munich in the following year as *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*

but was already circulating in that name as attested by Iqbal's old mentor Thomas Arnold in October 1907 when he was Professor of Arabic at the University of London. Arnold praised it:

I have read Prof. Muhammad Iqbal's dissertation 'The Development of Metaphysics in Persia' with much interest. So far as I am aware, it is the first attempt that has been made to trace the continuous development of ancient Iranian speculations as they have survived in Muhammadan philosophy and so bring out the distinctively Persian character of many phases of Muslim thought. The writer has made use of much material hitherto unpublished and little known in Europe, and his dissertation is a valuable contribution to the history of Muhammadan philosophy. (cited in Durrānī 2003: 178)

His examiners in Munich were not entirely convinced by his mastery of the Zoroastrian and medieval material. But they passed it because they felt that it drew sufficiently upon manuscript research and because they trusted the judgement of experts such as Arnold (Durrānī 2003: 182–8). It was a dissertation in oriental philology and not philosophy because the committee was not satisfied with its quality in the latter area.

So what can we make of the *Development*? The first theme that is striking is the racial essentialisation of the Arab (or the Semitic) mind and the Persian mind with a strong sense that the decline of the former and the dominance of the latter has been detrimental to Islamic history. As he put it later in 1917 there is an urgent need for Muslims to '[c]ome out of the fogs of Persianism and walk into the brilliant desert sunshine of Arabia' (Iqbal cited in Harder 2011: 163). Arabia in this sense is a privileged anti-colonial and pristine space of identity, a rather protestantised and Nietzschean framework for the articulation of one's selfhood devoid of mystical fog. In two further letters in 1917 and 1919, he bemoaned the decadence of Persianised mysticism not only because of its pantheism and its other-worldiness but also its denial of human agency (Harder 2011: 167f.). The real question that faces us is to consider whether Iqbal begins with a passion for the monistic thought of the school of Ibn 'Arabī as articulated in India and 'championed' in the *Development* and later abandons it in favour of a more otherworldly, protestantised faith of the emergent and dynamic self, or whether he actually continued to embrace

a form of monism as seen in his poetry of later years identifying Bēdil in particular as the key exemplar of that 'Islamic intellectual tradition'. One can further see the possible influence of Bergson insofar as he rejects time as an oppressive structure that destines humans to their ends as we see him argue in the *Reconstruction* (Iqbal 1990, 49–54; cf. Diagne 2011: 91–115). He owes in this insight as much to the Leibnizian critique of fatalism as to Bergson's vitality of life.

A number of commentators have pointed out the mistakes in the *Development* while acknowledging his originality (being practically the first person writing in a European language to discuss Mullā Ṣadrā – Browne and de Gobineau having already done so) (Mir 2006: 78–80). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider its study now as a mere exercise in antiquarianism. It indicates much about the development of Iqbal's own thought and his relationship to Sufi monism in particular, which constitutes the essence of 'metaphysics' for him. Much like Corbin, after him, he traces ideas from their pre-Islamic origins through the world of Islam into their culmination with the heterodoxies of the nineteenth century. In his very dedication to Arnold, he acknowledges what he owes to European thought. He begins with an interesting paradox:

The most remarkable feature of the character of the Persian people is their love of metaphysics speculation. Yet the inquirer who approaches the extant literature of Persian expecting to find any comprehensive systems of thought . . . will have to turn back disappointed. (Iqbal 1908: vii)

An odd judgement, since in the very introduction he cites the manuscripts that he consulted for his study that include a number of 'systematic' works of philosophy and philosophical theology, such as *Ḥikmat al-'ayn* of Dabīrān Kātībī Qazwīnī (d. 1276) along with the commentaries on it by Mīrak Bukhārī and Mīr Ḥusayn Maybudī (d. 1502) and the 'collected works of Avicenna'. He consulted classic works of Sufism including *Mishkāt al-anwār* of al-Ghazālī, *Awārif al-ma'ārif* of 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, *Kashf al-mahjūb* of 'Alī Hujvīrī, as well as classic works of Persian Neoplatonism such as the translation of Aristotle's *De Anima* by Bābā Afzal Kāshānī and of the illuminationist tradition such as the *Anvārīya* of Hiravī, commenting on the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* of Suhrawardī. More intriguing is his citation of the Ḥurūfī

classic the *Jāvidān-nāma*. Although he does not mention these in the manuscript list at the beginning, it is clear that his reading of the later school of Ibn ‘Arabī is dependent on Jīlī’s *al-Insān al-kāmil* (that was widely available in India as manuscripts and lithographs attest) and on Persian metaphysics the Sadrian text *Asrār-i ḥikam* of Hādī Sabzavārī (d. 1873) that had been lithographed in 1883. What is striking is the relative absence of any mark of the metaphysical curriculum of the *dars-e nizāmī*. The issue is that Iqbal seems to understand that the later Islamic philosophical tradition was somewhat bifurcated between the more mystically inclined monisms of Sufi thought and the rather more Aristotelianising philosophical and theological tradition – as he acknowledges in his aims to trace the ‘logical continuity of Persian thought . . . in the language of modern philosophy’ and discuss ‘the subject of Ṣūfīism in a more scientific manner’, in which the latter plays an important part in ‘awaken[ing] the slumbering soul to a higher ideal of life’ (Iqbal 1908: x–xi).

The work itself is divided into six chapters in two parts – the first on Persian dualism deals with Zoroaster and the second on ‘Greek dualism’ begins with the Avicennan (and Neoplatonic) tradition moving onto *kalām* (as Islamic rationalism) before shifting to Sufism and Sabzavārī and the Bāb as expressions of a return to Persian dualism (which is what he sees the Illuminationist tradition doing) and pantheism. The middle sections on ‘rationalism’ owe much to his teacher Shiblī Nu‘mānī’s study of the development of Islamic theology, as well as to Orientalist studies of *kalām*, including the Cureton edition of the doxographical *al-Milāl wa-l-niḥāl* of Shahrastānī that was published in British India two generations before Iqbal (Iqbal 1908: 33, 72). What is striking in the first part is his stress on dualism and the relative absence of pantheism in ancient Persian thought while emphasising its metaphysical speculation (20f.). This absence is meant to express his critique.

With the advent of Islam, one saw the transition from the ‘objective attitude of pre-Islamic Persian philosophy to the subjective attitude of later thinkers’, and it is worth remembering that subjectivity in all senses are positive qualities for Iqbal (23). The section on Avicenna seems to draw primarily on Mehren’s edition of his ‘mystical works’, focusing on the treatise on love and the doctrine on the soul – but even here there is no reference to either of his major works that were studied in India, the *Shifā’* and the *Ishārāt*, nor to his major reconstruction of the Aristotelian tradition in his logic, his

metaphysics of radical contingency, and his proof for the immateriality of the soul. Given more recent research that has identified the prominence of the study of logical puzzles and problems in identifying major terms in syllogisms, the complete absence of logic and how it relates to metaphysics in 'Persian' thought as practised in India is remarkable and further demonstrates Iqbal's alienation from traditional modes of scholarship (Ahmed 2013, forthcoming). His championing of Ghazālī and distancing him from the Ash'arī tradition owes much to both Shibli and to the Orientalist scholarship on him. Similarly, while critical of reducing Sufism to a borrowing from Indian or Neoplatonic thought, he focuses upon its metaphysics of monism. A large part of this is identifying the Illuminationist tradition as Sufi because of its emphasis on reality as light (Iqbal 1908: 120–50). Noteworthy is his association of the identity thesis or the doctrine of immediate knowledge with Leibniz's law of identity. The section on Sufism ends with an exposition of Jīlī – but in rather Hegelian terms in which the 'pure undelimited being' of Sufi terminology becomes the Hegelian absolute, and the undifferentiated 'cloud' (*al-ʿamā*) is described as the 'Unconsciousness' (151–74). One gets the impression that the defence of 'pantheism' in Sufism owes much to its respectability in Hegel for Iqbal. The final chapter on later Persian thought starts with Sabzavārī as heir to Mullā Ṣadrā's tempering of monism through what we would call the doctrine of modulation (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) and the recovery of Plato. The Bābī and later Bahā'ī developments take us back to the redefinition of the Hegelian Absolute as love and will. In conclusion, Iqbal states that the 'Persian mind' has struggled long with the dualism of the ancient Persians and of the Greeks and has often sided with the monism of the Sufi tradition. Nevertheless in his praise of the 'political reform' of the Bābīs one can discern a criticism of a mysticism that is excessively other-worldly (195).

His later career in India first as an academic and then as a barrister led to his political engagement (he was knighted in 1922 and later took part in the Roundtable conference in London in 1931 and 1932). His more radical Urdu poetry in the form of *Shikvā* and *Javāb-e shikvā* and his *Bāl-e Jibrīl* (Gabriel's Wing) and *Ẓarb-e kalīm* (Strike of Moses) in 1936 as well as his Persian trilogy of *Asrār-e khudī* (Secrets of the Self) in 1915, *Rumūz-e bēkhudī* (Mysteries of Selflessness) in 1918, and *Payām-e mashriq* (Message of

the East) in 1922, a response to Goethe's *Westöstlicher Divan*, and *Jāvidnāma* in 1932, his response to Dante taking Rūmī as his guide, took on a more independent, universal, and prophetic quality. Interestingly, the two names that come up the most in the Persian oeuvre are Nietzsche and Goethe (cf. Schimmel 1977). Hermann Hesse wrote in the introduction to the German verse translation of *Jāvidnāma* in 1957:

Sir Muhammad Iqbal belongs to three kingdoms of the spirit: three kingdoms of the spirit are the sources of his extraordinary work: the world of India, the world of Islam, and that of Occidental thought. A Muslim of Indian decent, trained spiritually by the Koran, by the Vedanta and by Persian-Arabic mysticism, but also strongly touched by the problems of Western philosophy and conversant with Bergson and Nietzsche, leads us in ascending spirals through the provinces of his cosmos. (Schimmel 1977: 268)

But was there a return to the tradition? In his correspondence with Nicholson, who later translated *Asrār-e khudī*, he claimed that the philosophy of the work was based on the Sufi classics, so even if it seemed that he was drawing on Bergson and Nietzsche his sources were Rūmī, 'Irāqī, and Jīlī (Dar 1971: 26f.). Of course, there is an element of self-fashioning in this statement. The themes of his poetry – that reveal his philosophical positions and contrapuntal readings quite clearly – demonstrate both the mark of his study of the Islamic traditions, focusing on monism as well as the influences of British and German thought, the latter of which included romanticism, socialism, existentialism, and so forth. Perhaps one of the most common approaches to Iqbal is to consider him to be an existentialist. This is exemplified in the work of Latif Kazmi, the late critic, philosopher, and poet Syed Waheed Akhtar and most Urdu critics, and focusing upon the notion of the selfhood defined by human action and motion, in which personhood arises not from the substantiality of the human but from the conglomeration of her acts. Akhtar explicitly connects Iqbal to the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard and the sense of despair that arose out of the rise in scientism and the predicament of modernity that seemed to diminish humans and their traditional anthropocentric approach to reality (1977). Although he does not explicitly mention him and almost all citations come from the European

tradition, Akhtar's reading of Iqbal seems to be filtered by the later Islamic philosophical tradition of Mullā Ṣadrā that privileges existence over essences, process over substance, the creative over the passive, and the monist over the pluralist and that dissolves the subject–object dichotomy recalling the doctrines of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, *ḥaraka jawhariya*, *ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa-l-ma‘qūl*, and *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa kull al-ashya'* (Akhtar 1977: 111; cf. Akhtar 1981). Kazmi extends the approach by carefully examining the poetry to bring out the basic features of existentialism that he locates in the emphasis on human agency, human free will and creativity, the revolt against the personal, and the desire to overcome alienation in the modern world (1997: 67–100).

Iqbal's existentialism is about the action and significance of human agency to make one's life and a complete rejection of fatalism – which is one of the reasons why he rejects the pantheism of *wahdat al-wujūd* in *Development*. His use of al-Ḥallāj in *Jāvidnāma* is thus an appropriation of the idea of submission in God to effect human freedom and force the human to act (Diagne 2011: 22). Critical to this process is the desire to act freely and without fear as expressed in his *Rumūz* (31). This autonomy of the self then plays out in the political sphere with his famous 1930 speech (33–8).

Nevertheless, the self is poised between the godless, spiritless existentialism of the West and the monistic fatalism of the East. As he says in his poem the 'Death of Selfhood' in *Ẓarb-e kalīm*:

The death of the self lies in the darkened innards of the West
 The death of the self lies in the leprous loss in the East.
 The death of the self is shown in the lack of soul in the Arab, losing his
 zeal
 Possessing Iraq and Iran but without limbs or veins.
 Indians have lost too their self,
 Making the prison the norm and forbidding themselves freedom.
 The true death of the self is the figure of the shaykh in Mecca
 Who lives on the sale of the robes that pilgrims don. (Iqbal 1987a: 69)

But one of the issues is that many Muslim existentialists use Iqbal to deploy their own sense of an Islamic existentialism in which submission means freedom to be and in which the Qur'an is read as a 'hymn to liberty' and where a 'self-islam' emerges, not one which is individualistic and selfish but

the realisation of selfhood that produces a diverse community (cf. Bidar 2008).

In that sense, Iqbal's notion of selfhood, influenced as it was by Nietzsche, retained a spiritual core:

Man in whom egohood has reached its relative perfection, occupies a genuine place in the heart of divine creative energy and thus possesses a higher degree of reality than things around him. Of all the creations of God, he alone is capable of consciously participating in the creative life of the Maker. (Iqbal 1990: 82)

Selfhood in God is the key aspect of Iqbal's philosophy as initiated in his *Asrār-e khudī* in 1915 and *Rumūz-e bekḥudī* in 1918. This self is directly related to the divine spirit that comes from God's command and his privileging the human through the provision of a free personhood that holds the vicegerency of God over the cosmos (Iqbal 1990: 95–8). That self is also, *contra* James, not reductive to the sum of its experiences, nor is it some mere duration as a framework for first-person perspectives (as Bergson may have put it). But this selfhood's assertion is not an arrogant vanity of self-centeredness as he put it in his introduction to *Asrār-e khudī*. *Khudī* is thus the ever-self-conscious ground for the agency of the human and its 'boundless energy'. Iqbal uses Bergson's notion of the self that endures even through change. In the opening to *Critical Evolution*, he writes:

I pass from state to state. I am warm or cold, I am merry or sad, I work or I do nothing. I look at what is around me or I think of something else. Sensations, feelings, volitions, ideas – such are the changes into which my existence is divided and which colours it in turns. I change, then, without ceasing. For I speak of my states as if it were a block . . . that it remains the same during all the time that it prevails. (Bergson 2007: 1)

This notion of the persistence of the self in change recalls the idea of motion in substance that lay at the heart of late NeoPlatonic psychology as well as the thought of Mullā Ṣadrā. Yet personhood lies in the act and not in the substance for Iqbal:

My experience is only a series of acts, mutually referring to each other and held together by the unity of a directive purpose. My whole personality lies in my directive attitude. (Iqbal 1990: 103)

The becoming of the person draws upon Rūmī and Jīlī in his work on the perfect human. This becoming sets aside the Graeco-Arabic notion of the immortality and eternity of the soul in favour of a selfhood that is earned through action and persists through one's effort refuting both determinism and teleology. In the *Reconstruction*, he states that 'personal immortality is not ours of right. It is to be achieved by personal effort' (Iqbal 1990: 119). And in *Asrār-e khudī*, addressing the self that is realised as God's vicegerent, he says:

Mankind are the cornfield and thou the harvest
Thou art the goal of life's caravan. (Iqbal 1973b: 46; Nicholson 1920: 84)

Or in one of the most famous of his Urdu verses rejecting fatalism:

Raise up your selfhood so that before each fate is sealed
God addresses his servant and asks him: what is your desire?

He also uses Rūmī to privilege love over reason as the human attribute imitating the divine (Khanum 1982: 51–6, 72f.). God, as goal, is the true NeoPlatonic beloved. Love motivates and 'pricks' the human to act in search of the beloved. As he puts the words in the mouth of al-Ḥallāj in *Jāvidnāma*:

Life without prickings is no true life
One must live with a fire under one's feet. (Arberry cited in Khanum 1982: 52)

The archetypal journey to the beloved is the ascension of the Prophet (the *mi'rāj*), which is invoked in the *Bāl-e Jibrīl* and that transcends the epistemic duality of subject–object in the Prophet's monistic experience:

Beyond the sphere of knowledge, there is for the man of faith
The bliss of longing, the blessing of the meeting. (Iqbal 1973b: 49)

The goal of love in unitive experience remains at the level of the ineffable or the inarticulate – as Iqbal says in *Reconstruction*: 'The incommunicability of

mystic experience is due to the fact that it is essentially a matter of inarticulate feeling, untouched by the discursive intellect' (1990: 21).

Yet at the same time in his verse and in his *Development*, we see a searing critique of *wahdat al-wujūd* sometimes defined in much of the secondary literature in South Asia as 'pantheism' (cf. Dar 1978). He plays on the traditional topos of the conflict between *eros* and *nomos* and the victory of the former in *Bāl-e Jibrīl*:

Breath, not heart, stirs in your body: no elation
 Stirs the assembly at the words you fashion.
 Leave reason behind for its light is the lamp
 that shows the road, not marks the destination. (Kiernan 1946: 67)

Love wins the day in *Jāvidnāma*:

Love in the soul is like sight in the eye
 Be it within the house or without the door;
 Love is at once both ashes and spark.
 Its work is loftier than religion and science.
 Love is authority and manifest proof
 Both worlds are subject to the seal-ring of love;
 Timeless it is, and yesterday and tomorrow spring from it;
 When it supplicates God for selfhood
 All the world becomes a mount, itself a rider.
 Through love the draw of this ancient inn becomes void;
 Lovers yield themselves up to God,
 Give interpretative reason as an offering.
 Are you a lover? Proceed from direction to directionlessness;
 Make death a thing prohibited to yourself. (Iqbal 1973a: 32–3; Arberry
 1966: 32)

The resulting self realised being can ascend to the vicegerency of the divine.
 As he says in *Asrār-e khudī*:

His genius abounds with life and desires to manifest itself
 He will bring another world into existence
 He bestows life by miraculous action,

He renovates old ways of life.

He gives a new explanation of life

A new interpretation of this dream. (Iqbal 1973b: 45; Nicholson 1920: 80)

In *Bāl-e Jibrīl* he puts it thus:

May be brick or stone or the harp or the letter or sound

The miracle of art is the result of the heart-blood (*khūn-e jigar*).

A drop of the heart-blood makes the stone a heart,

From heart-blood are sound and burning and joy and melody

What is originality of thought and action?

An urge to revolution!

What is originality of thought and action?

A renaissance of national life!

It is the source of life's miracles

Transforming granite into the purest pearls. (Schimmel 1963: 71)

In *Naqsh-e farang*, he prefers Rūmī to Goethe because the latter is not a prophet but a writer. Hegel's reason seems to be lofty but remains in matter and he fails to find love through reason. Nietzsche is superficially attractive but mired in egoism. There is a constant sense of negotiation between self, love, and the divine that brings to the fore his philosophical influences. What Iqbal does take from the tradition is the notion of the human inspired and enchanted by God, the individual who makes his destiny. Not for him is the mystical otherworldliness of much of the philosophical and mystical tradition that went before him.

Reconstruction is a modernist project, to revitalise the tradition and show it in conformity with science and the facts of modernity (cf. Sheikh 1978). Iqbal very explicitly sees himself as the heir to al-Afghani as expressed not only in the lectures but in his verse (Diagne 2011: 42f.). Part of this attitude is a rethinking of Plato away from the master of conformity and from enemy to friend of an open society (44–6). Unlike the *Development*, this text is far more concerned with the here and now, and the problem that individuals face in achieving the possibility of religion and of religious experience. The key problem that faces modern Islam is of thinking Muslims making sense

of themselves as religious beings in an intellectual world that has rejected the traditional Platonic metaphysics, politics, and ethics that were central to the tradition (Mir 2006: 80–117). *Development* dealt with theological dogmas, while *Reconstruction* addresses the realities and activities of faith. His fresh approach is to reconsider the Qur'an in the light of his training, divorced from the influence of Greek thought that he felt has led to a deterministic reading that stifles human freedom and creativity (Iqbal 1990: 3f.). Like Imām, as we saw above, he felt that the act of reconstruction was necessary due to the stagnation of Muslim thought since the medieval period (7). The monism of the Sufi tradition is set aside in favour of the affirmation of selfhood that arises from al-Ḥallāj's famous, 'I am the creative truth' (Iqbal 1990: 96). The possibility of religion relates to the need to assert the self as the recipient of revelation and to this end he cites an anonymous Sufi: 'no understanding of the Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to the Prophet' (181). Pantheistic Sufism is as much criticised for its ethics and as its otherworldliness (90). But there remains much of a romantic attachment to the poetic vision of that tradition as evinced in his citations of Rūmī and indeed of his concluding with his own *Jāvidnāma* (91, 199).

Many of the major metaphysical thinkers of the Islamic tradition are cited like they are in the *Development*. Perhaps one of the key ideas of the *Reconstruction* is about the human spirit being in motion, in the process of ever becoming creatively. This idea partly draws on Bergson but equally is predicated on the notion of the graded degrees of being that he cites as an idea stemming from Suhrawardī (and then from Mullā Ṣadrā) that implies the becoming and changing of the substance of the human, the concept of substantial motion in Mullā Ṣadrā (71). He even offers an original reading of Mīr Dāmād's concept of perpetual creation, an idea that was debated in India (cf. Rizvi 2011). Because the creation of the ego lies in the perpetual 'change without succession', it remains eternal, and eternally creative and becoming (Iqbal 1990: 77). Thus, he modifies a theory of the creation of the cosmos to suit his purposes of the possibilities of the human.

Iqbal remains a fascinating thinker, creatively engaging with the European intellectual traditions of his time, self-orientalising but even interpreting elements of the Islamic philosophical traditions in innovative ways. Ultimately,

the problem is that critics have insisted on reading Iqbal as philosopher and as poet separately, and even then as a programmatic poet with a clear didactic-pedagogical intent as dominating the art. As Shamsur Rahman Faruqi puts it:

[T]he problem arises when one is made to read Iqbāl not for pleasure, but for profit. For Iqbāl is also a politician's poet, a religious thinker's poet, and a philosopher's poet, and much more besides. Iqbāl has earned a lot of praise, and not a little blame as well, for being one or the other of these. (Faruqi 2005: 1)

He himself gave them good reason to do so in two well-known letters from 1919 to Sayyid Shaukat Ḥusain and Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī feigning his skills as a poet and deeming it secondary (Barnī cited in Faruqi 2005: 7). However, poetry was known to have a major role in mobilisation – and the timing is quite revealing in the midst of the nationalist fervour of the Khilafat movement in which poetry played an essential role (Minault 1974). The myth of the person assumes a great philosopher, a great poet, and a great historian – and a consistency. But as one sees in his prose works, we have an insightful thinker who has not entirely reconciled his differing positions and influences, and a historian of thought whose judgements strike us as bizarrely essentialist if not just wrong. What survives in many ways is the poetry and that is where the engagement with the tradition is best seen not just because of his programmatic approach but because both the changing style, language, diction, metre, and even concerns reveal the development of a modernist deeply engaged by his intellectual tradition while resisting its charms in search of a political theology that works. We would be better served if we understand that poetry is a type of fiction, a working of the imagination, and at the very least reveals his philosophical and political imaginary in creative contrapuntal ways in which we cannot read the prose (Faruqi 2005: 12–15). And this was possible precisely because he composed poetry within traditions: ghazals recalling Ghālib, Bēdil, and Dāgh, and *masnavīs* that referenced and invoked Amīr Khusraw, Rūmī, Sauda, and Mīr Anīs (Kermode cited in Faruqi 2005: 15). Ultimately, the Islamic intellectual tradition for Iqbal is Bēdil whose emotion of wonder he extols (recovering the 'pantheistic tradition'):

There are fragilities contained in the illusion-house of wonder
Do not blink lest the desire for show continue. (Iqbal 2012: 75)

And he sums him up in *Ẓarb-e kalīm*:

Is this the Reality, or the mischief wrought
By my false-seeing eye?
The earth, the wilderness, the mountain range,
The dark-blue sky,
Some say: It is; others, it is not,
Who knows if this your world exists at all.
How well Mirzā Bēdil unknotted this knot
Whose unraveling has been
So hard for the Philosopher:
'If the heart had enough space, this garden
Were sightless: the wine's hue chose to come out
Because the wine-flask didn't have enough room.' (Iqbal 1973a: 103;
Faruqi 2005: 26)

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7

Reconstructing Islam in a Post-metaphysical Age: Muhammad Iqbal's Interpretation of Immortality

Christopher Scott McClure
Harvard University, United States

According to Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the Indian philosopher and poet, the greatest political problem facing Muslims is the sense of disenchantment or loss of meaning that accompanies the spread of modern thought. For Iqbal, one of the greatest modern poets in the Urdu and Persian languages, and also the spiritual father of Pakistan, modern science and philosophy have made it difficult to believe in Islam. In particular, the traditional understanding of an immortal soul destined either for heaven, with its gardens, rivers, and *houri*, or hell, with its fires and torments, may now appear illusory or mythical. As a consequence, the Islamic teaching about how to approach the meaning of one's mortality is no longer capable of providing either guidance to the individual or a source of shared meaning for the community, despite the persistent need for both. This essay examines Iqbal's response to this challenge. I rely for the most part on his main philosophic work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (2012).

The problem of the meaning of mortality is one that is felt widely. As Iqbal notes, 'No age has produced so much literature on the question of immortality as our own, and this literature is continually increasing in spite of the victories of modern Materialism' (2012: 89). As Roxanne Euben (1997a, 1997b, 1999) notes, in response to this challenge many Islamic thinkers have rejected Western rationalism wholesale or attempted to allow for scientific progress, but only within certain sanctioned boundaries. Rather than with-

drawing into an obscurantist fundamentalism, however, Iqbal faces these issues directly. His interpretation of immortality is a key part of his effort to provide, on the model of Rumi and Goethe, a new understanding of Islam in light of modern thought. It is not an attempt to refute modern science, nor is it part of an attempt to reject modern individualism or the modern state, but to show the continuity of these modern developments with the trajectory of previous Muslim thought as well as to open a path for the future progress of religion.

Both contemporary liberalism and modern natural science, following in the wake of post-Enlightenment philosophy, eschew any metaphysical framework that can govern individuals, or establish positive rules about the right way to live. Iqbal, who accepts for the most part the truth of modern science and the inevitability of liberalism, offers an interpretation of immortality that relies on post-Einsteinian physics, is non-metaphysical but teleological, and is ambiguous enough to remain open to individual interpretation and creativity. His goal in doing so is to provide an interpretation of Islam that is more believable, and that can serve as the basis of shared meaning for Muslims in a liberal age. At the same time, and paradoxically, his interpretation is an attempt to allow for the individual autonomy and spontaneity that characterise much modern Western philosophy. The key, and perhaps most challenging, issue in his project is that of human finitude.

Iqbal believes that no account of the meaning of mortality can be convincing in the modern age if it is not open to individual interpretation. He thus manages to retain Islam as a source of meaning only by rendering its account of the afterlife ambiguous. For Iqbal this interpretation is not a capitulation to modernity, but rather an opportunity for Islam to reach, for the first time, its highest stage of development and its fullest flourishing.

While other scholars (for example, Esposito 1983; Diagne 2001) have studied Iqbal's work as a constructive and perhaps democratic response to modernity, few have recognised the central importance to his thought of his interpretation of immortality. This is likely to be because the complexity of this interpretation tends to mislead commentators in one of two ways. On one side, Iqbal could mean by 'immortality' simply, 'performing deeds which leave their mark on history' (Khundmiri 2001: 187). On the other hand, he could be describing a purely spiritual journey into other realms of existence.

As Schimmel (1989: 277) claims, ‘For the faithful in Iqbal’s sense death is nothing but a door opening towards new possibilities.’

Neither of these readings is entirely wrong. Achieving immortality, according to Iqbal, does in part mean making a contribution to the progress of humankind and one’s community, but it also involves something akin to a spiritual journey. Neither of these, however, can be taken as conventionally understood. The core of immortality for Iqbal, in fact, is the tension between the two. This chapter explores and explains what exactly Iqbal means when he speaks of this tension. I find that immortality for Iqbal is the tension between personal immortality, understood as the experience of time as pure duration rather than serial time, and becoming an active contributor to the evolution of humankind. I will, thus, first consider the meaning of personal immortality, and then immortality through history and evolution, and, finally, immortality as the tension between these two.

This interpretation of immortality represents an attempt to adapt Islam to modern, post-foundational thought in order to retain its vitality. The challenge of discovering the meaning of human mortality, of course, is a problem not only for Muslims, and Iqbal’s attempt to re-interpret his own culture and religious tradition may be an indication of how others could or will approach the question of meaning – both within and outside the West.

Personal Immortality: Relativity, Time and Mysticism

As with the tenets of any major religion, the concept of immortality in Islam has been subject to various interpretations and controversies over the centuries. Iqbal’s interpretation, however, strays widely from the traditional view of his own time and goes beyond the terms of previous theological debates in Islam. A brief sketch of what could be called the traditional view will help to bring out the originality of Iqbal’s thought. We are fortunate to have Abul A’la Mawdudi’s ([1932] 1997) work, *Towards Understanding Islam*, to help us in this regard. This small booklet is an attempt to explain the fundamentals of the religion in clear and simple terms to young Indian Muslims, and is therefore a snapshot of an accepted and generally uncontroversial view of various theological concepts from one of Iqbal’s contemporaries – one, moreover, whom Iqbal knew and respected. According to Mir (2006: 15), Iqbal, ‘invited Abu l-A’la Mawdudi – later founder of the religious political party

Jama'at i Islami – to undertake the reconstruction of Islamic jurisprudential thought along certain designated lines (the project did not take off because of Iqbal's death a short time later)'. Mawdudi explains the fifth pillar of Islam, belief in life after death, thus:

The life of this world and of all that is in it will come to an end on an appointed day. Everything will be annihilated. This day is called the day of reckoning or the last day. All the human beings who lived in the world since its inception will be restored to life and will be presented before God Who will sit in court on that day. This is called 'Resurrection.' (Mawdudi 1997: 102)

God will then judge each individual, and, '[t]hose who emerge successful in this judgment will go to Paradise and the doors of eternal bliss will be opened to them. Those who are condemned and deserve punishment will be sent to Hell – the abode of fire and torture' (Mawdudi 2006: 102). The importance of belief in this article for Mawdudi cannot be overstated. 'Denial of life after death,' he says, 'makes all other beliefs meaningless.' He adds, 'If you reflect still deeper, you will come to the conclusion that belief in life after death is the greatest determining factor in the life of a man. Its acceptance or rejection determines the entire course of his life and behavior' (103, 104).

The mandatory nature of belief in resurrection and a day of judgment meant that any non-literal interpretation of the concept was controversial and potentially dangerous. What debates did take place on the topic revolved around whether the individual would return to life in his own body, some other body, or in a purely incorporeal form, and whether the gardens and rivers of paradise and the fires of hell described in the Qur'an were meant literally or as representations of inexpressible spiritual pleasures and torments. Perhaps the most famous debate about the nature of resurrection is that between Averroës in his *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (1954), and Ghazali (2000) in his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. For a classic discussion of the permitted ways of interpreting the Qur'an, and in particular the extreme caution that one had to take in interpreting resurrection and the afterlife, see Averroës (2008: 8–12).

For Iqbal, however, the core of the debate shifts to questions about humankind's destiny and the nature of temporality. As he says, the survival

of the ego requires 'a change in our attitude towards time and space', and '[t]he resurrection, therefore, is not an external event. It is the consummation of a life-process within the ego' (2012: 96).

In order to fully appreciate the meaning of such statements, we must understand this change in emphasis as Iqbal's response to the perceived challenge that modern science and philosophy pose to traditional belief. Rather than a denial or refutation of science, this response is rather an appropriation of it, along with certain elements of Sufism, with a view to providing a new foundation for belief in the modern context. This redirection of the Islamic tradition is at the heart of Iqbal's reconstruction of religious thought, and is the impetus behind his interpretation of immortality. The religious experience is unknown to modern man because of his 'habits of concrete thought' and his suspicion that such experiences are likely illusory (xlv). Because of this, 'the demand for a scientific form of religious knowledge is only natural', and Iqbal has 'tried to meet, even though partially, this urgent demand by attempting to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical traditions of Islam and the more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge' (ibid.).

There are two main points about Iqbal's approach to modern thought that serve as essential foreground to his account of immortality. The first is the Islamic provenance of Western empiricism, essential because it demonstrates that his reconstruction is not a capitulation to alien Western modes of thought, but the re-appropriation of a line of thought that was erroneously dropped by earlier Muslim scholars. As he says, 'During all the centuries of our intellectual stupor Europe has been seriously thinking on the great problems in which the philosophers and scientists of Islam were so keenly interested' (6). Specifically, the empirical and experimental methods are originally Islamic: 'the point to note is the general empirical attitude of the Qur'an which engendered in its followers a feeling of reverence for the actual and ultimately made them the founders of modern science' (11). This account of the origins of modern science also frees Islamic thought from the frequent accusation that it was essentially Greek or Magian in character: 'the birth of the method of observation and experiment in Islam was due not to a compromise with Greek thought but to a prolonged intellectual warfare with it' (104; see also Iqbal 1964). For example, Iqbal argues that Roger Bacon, and

even Francis Bacon, ultimately derived their empiricism from the Muslim universities of Spain. Iqbal quotes Briffault approvingly to the effect that '[n] either Roger Bacon nor his later namesake has any title to be credited with having introduced the experimental method' (Iqbal 2012: 103; see also Iqbal 2008b: 168). The second point is that science in Iqbal's time was undercutting its own materialist foundations, thereby admitting its inability to refute certain religious tenets and leaving more room for the possibility of their truth.

In contrast, modern Muslim thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb have identified modern science and philosophy as the greatest threat to their religion. While Iqbal agrees that Western thought poses a challenge to Islam, he also sees it as a great opportunity for the revitalisation of religious thought. 'The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history,' he says, 'is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West' (Iqbal 2012: 6). But, he adds:

There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture. (Iqbal 2012: 6)

Indeed, Iqbal was particularly well placed to appreciate what was happening at the forefront of European thought. He studied philosophy in England and Germany from 1905 to 1908, receiving his BA from the University of Cambridge and a PhD from the University of Munich in 1907, and continued to keep abreast of scientific developments in Europe during one of the most dramatic periods of its history (Mir 2006: 8).

Through his observation of these developments, he was in a position to note that physics had found it necessary to 'criticize its own foundations' and had 'found reason to break its own idol, and the empirical attitude which appeared to necessitate scientific materialism has finally ended in a revolt against matter' (Iqbal 2012: 27). Modern, post-rational thought, for Iqbal, began with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and was foreshadowed by Berkeley (28). However, Kant also denied the possibility of acquiring any knowledge of God. With developments such as Einstein's theory of Relativity

and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, however, 'the case for a system of rational theology is not so bad as Kant was led to think' (144). According to Iqbal, 'modern science utters its agreement with Berkeley's criticism which it once regarded as an attack on its very foundation' (28). He goes so far as to say that 'modern science and philosophy, becoming more exact, is [*sic*] furnishing rational foundations for certain religious beliefs, which the 18th and 19th centuries' science rejected as absurd and incredible' (Iqbal 2008b: 188–9).

The awe-inspiring scientific discoveries of the twentieth century, far from making religious experience impossible, have opened a new vista from which to understand the nature of religion. The claim that science has refuted religion is based on an outdated view of science for Iqbal. In fact, as we shall see below, it is only with these developments that Muslims are in a position to fully appreciate Islam.

Exploring these observations in detail would be far beyond the scope of this essay, as would any assessment of them. Key to Iqbal's interpretation of personal immortality is that matter, time, and space are no longer understood as universal and stable, and are thus more open to individual interpretation.

The relationship between matter and energy in Iqbal's time was unclear, as it is in our own. The theory that energy and matter are somehow interchangeable or equivalent opens the door, Iqbal believes, to the existence of a spiritual realm, which forms the basis of reality (Iqbal sees energy as the equivalent of spirit). In addition, the theory of Relativity of space and time inherently rejects previous materialism: "Substance" for modern Relativity Physics is not a persistent thing with variable states, but a system of inter-related events' (31). Time is similarly not static, but open in some sense to interpretation. Nature, he says is not static, 'but a structure of interrelated events out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time. And this is only another way of saying that space and time are interpretations which thought has put on the creative activity of the Ultimate Ego' (52). The individual's body and soul, too, are systems of interrelated actions (84).

Time and space, which have until recently been thought of as stable and universal, appear now as dependent on the perception and interpretation of the individual. This is, for Iqbal, one of the insights of Islam, which only now can be clarified: 'The Qur'an has no liking for abstract universals. It always

fixes its gaze on the concrete which the theory of Relativity has only recently taught modern philosophy to see' (64). The following passage is an example of how Iqbal brings these elements of modern thought and Islam together:

All that is secular is, therefore, sacred in the roots of its being. The greatest service that modern thought has rendered Islam, and as a matter of fact to all religion, consists in its criticism of what we call material or natural – a criticism which discloses 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 self-realization of spirit. All is holy ground. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it: 'The whole of this earth is a mosque.' (Iqbal 2012: 123)

A key element of personal immortality, then, is freeing oneself from earlier interpretations of time as a series of events that can be plotted on a line, or what Iqbal, following Bergson, calls serial time. This serial view of time, as divided into past, present, and future, is the dominant interpretation that man places on the phenomenon, but Iqbal argues that we must think of immortality as a matter of intensity rather than extension. Iqbal calls this, as does Bergson, pure duration. Unfortunately, Iqbal says, it is 'impossible to express this inner experience of pure duration in words, for language is shaped on the serial time of our daily efficient self' (39). Bergson, wrestling with the same problem, describes it thus: 'Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances' (1944: 7). 'The appreciative self,' which perceives time as duration, Iqbal says, 'is more or less the corrective of the efficient self,' which perceives serial time, 'inasmuch as it synthesizes all the "heres" and "nows" – the small changes of space and time, indispensable to the efficient self – into the coherent wholeness of personality' (Iqbal 2012: 39). The perception of time as duration, moreover, is something that one only experiences in rare moments 'of profound meditation' (38; see also Iqbal 2008b: 182).

It is these rare experiences, which are essentially what many would call religious experiences, which constitute the core of immortality for Iqbal. As quoted above, he claims, 'The resurrection . . . is not an external event. It is the consummation of a life-process within the ego. Whether individual or universal it is nothing more than a kind of stock-taking of the ego's past

achievements and his future possibilities' (Iqbal 2012: 96). Iqbal likens this experience to that described by those who are close to death and see their lives passing before their eyes. Iqbal, then, implicitly denies that the individual can persist in serial time in anything like the traditional view of immortality. 'The Quran,' he claims, 'does not contemplate complete liberation from finitude as the highest state of human bliss. The "unceasing reward" of man consists in his gradual growth in self-possession, in uniqueness, and intensity of his activity as an ego' (93–4). The Qur'an also, he claims, makes it perfectly clear that there will be no return to this earth for the dead (93). Iqbal makes this controversial claim on the basis of what I take to be dubious interpretations of the Qur'an 19: 66–7, 23: 99–100, and 50: 3–4 (Iqbal 2012: 96, 93, 97).

Of course, modern science cannot establish any of the above, but can at most, for Iqbal, allow the possibility of this view of immortality. And although Iqbal seems to sidestep what for most is the crucial question, namely, whether the individual will survive with consciousness intact beyond the point of death, it is undeniably true that he is relying on a conception of time that is much closer to the scientifically verifiable truth than the ordinary person's understanding of past, present, and future. It is also true, however, that while mainstream contemporary physics has only strengthened Iqbal's case by theorising vibrating superstrings of energy as the foundation of the universe and ten or eleven dimensions (possibly including other time dimensions) as opposed to only four, it is very difficult to grasp this view of reality conceptually (Greene 2003: 111). In short, Kant's theory that space and time are a priori mental faculties, and the preconditions of thought, with only a tenuous or non-existent relation to reality, has been borne out by modern physics. So, even though modern science has rendered the traditional view of eternal life unbelievable for many, it has also, Iqbal is arguing, opened the door to new and awe-inspiring possibilities.

However, although science has opened the door to the possibilities that Iqbal sketches, it is nonetheless fundamentally unserious, in that it cannot make any assertions about the meaning of existence or how to live, and thus must be supplemented by religious thought (Iqbal 2012: 145). In particular, science does not give enough weight to the role of creative thought, both that of man and God, in its account of space and time (to be discussed in more detail in the following section). It is important to stress here, however, that

although Iqbal does not think that modern science gives a completely true account of reality, he accepts that it is true, or, in other words, it offers us truth, although not the whole truth. As he says, 'The only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of that knowledge' (78). And because the sciences all take a partial view of reality rather than a comprehensive view, religion has nothing to fear from them: 'Thus religion, which demands the whole of Reality and for this reason must occupy a central place in any synthesis of all the data of human experience, has no reason to be afraid of any sectional views of Reality' (34).

Iqbal has recourse to certain elements of Sufism to complete his picture of personal immortality. Although Sufism has anticipated many of the discoveries of modern science, Iqbal also sees it as deeply flawed in several respects. Its chief flaw is stagnation and an emphasis on asceticism and withdrawal from an active life (xlv, 6). The Sufis of Iqbal's time, he says, 'owing to their ignorance of the modern mind, have become absolutely incapable of receiving any fresh inspiration from modern thought and experience' (xlv). Some Sufis also erred in denying human individuality and assuming that the highest stage of spiritual development would result in the individual being subsumed like a drop in the ocean. It is important to note here, however, that this was not Rumi's view, and that this is in part what attracted Iqbal to his poetry (88). This is also not the view of Ishraqi philosophy that, Iqbal says, holds that

[d]eath does not put an end to the spiritual progress of the soul. The individual souls, after death, are not unified into one soul, but continue different from each other in proportion to the illumination they received during their companionship with physical organisms. (Iqbal 1964: 113)

Still, earlier Sufis, and especially the poet Iraqi, came quite close to espousing something like the post-Einsteinian view of space and time. In particular, Iraqi posited that the human soul could reach higher and higher stages of awareness, until it reached '[d]ivine space which is absolutely free from all dimensions and constitutes the meeting point of all infinities' (Iqbal 2012: 109). Where Iraqi went wrong, according to Iqbal, is his belief that time does not change, but that the universe considered as a multi-dimensional object

is entirely static. As with modern science, Iraqi failed to understand that '[t]he philosophical path that leads to God as the omni-psyche of the universe lies through the discovery of living thought as the ultimate principle of space-time' (110). And further, 'Both Kant and Ghazali failed to see that thought, in the very act of knowledge, passes beyond its own finitude . . . It is in the life of the apparently alien that thought demolishes the walls of finitude and enjoys its potential infinitude' (5).

In short, Sufism was correct to claim that one could ascend towards direct contact with the divine through various stages of spiritual progress, but it was incorrect when it claimed that this progress could reach an end. Rather, immortality, for Iqbal, depends on continuous action. In a passage reminiscent of Tennyson's 'Ulysses', he urges, 'Do not seek the limit, Being has none of it, to reach any limit is to become devoid of life. Never to reach the limit is life everlasting, voyage alone is life immortal' (Iqbal cited in Khundmiri 2001: 173–4). It is only through constant engagement with the world that man can reach higher degrees of intensity, expand his ego, and win immortality. All our actions are either 'ego-sustaining' or 'ego dissolving', and only through ego-sustaining acts can the individual win immortality and fortify himself against 'the shock that dissolution brings' (Iqbal 2012: 95).

It is on the basis of this view of immortality that Iqbal reinterprets heaven and hell. Both of these, he argues, 'are states, not localities. Their descriptions in the Quran are visual representations of an inner fact' (98). Those who have not done what is necessary to achieve immortality will experience hell as 'the painful realization of one's failure as a man' (ibid.). This realisation can be construed narrowly as a failure to contribute anything lasting to one's community or to humankind. For Khundmiri, immortality in Iqbal's sense is 'possible only by raising oneself beyond the threshold of the present and performing deeds which leave their mark on history' (2001: 187). Many of Iqbal's statements support this view, such as his claims that '[s]truggle and combat give eternal life' (2000: 141). The character of the actions required to win or lose one's immortality will thus be the topic of the following section.

History, Evolution and the Finality of the Prophet

In claiming that the individual will not return to the earth after death, and admitting that she will not persist as an individual consciousness indefinitely

in time (as usually understood), Iqbal seems to offer a fairly bleak vision of immortality. This is not entirely misleading. There is in Iqbal's poetry and thought a strong element of the poetic view that immortality can be achieved through one's works, and that there is a certain melancholy pleasure in contemplating one's future impact. In an echo of Shakespeare's paean for eternal lines to time, Iqbal proclaims:

How many a poet after his death
 Opened our eyes when his own were closed,
 And journeyed forth again from nothingness
 When Roses blossomed o'er the earth of his grave!
 . . .
 No one hath told the secret which I will tell
 Or threaded a pearl of thought like mine.
 Come if thou would'st know the secret of everlasting life!
 Come if thou would'st win both heaven and earth! (Iqbal 2008a: 22, 23)

The poet's desire for immortality through his or her works, however, is only the starting point for Iqbal. On the side of personal immortality, the contemplative pleasure of the poet (or author, or political actor, or community member, and so on) must be seen in light of Iqbal's analysis of time and intensity of perception as discussed above. But while Iqbal agrees with Bergson about the need to conceive of time as pure duration, he faults Bergson for failing to see the inherent purposive nature of thought: '[Bergson] ignores that the unity of consciousness has a forward looking aspect. Life is only a series of acts of attention, and an act of attention is inexplicable without reference to a purpose, conscious or unconscious' (Iqbal 2012: 42). It is through working towards a purpose and working towards the advancement of humanity that the individual attains immortality and earns the right to the type of experience discussed above. Exploring what Iqbal means by purpose and advancement is essential to understanding his assertion that '[i]t is open to man, according to the Qur'an, to belong to the meaning of the universe and become immortal' (94).

We have seen above that Iqbal regards immortality as something that one must earn through action. This sentiment can be interpreted in a narrowly political manner, in the sense that by acting to defend one's community or

religion, one is making a direct contribution to the longevity of the community, and thus actively becoming a part of something that will outlast the individual. In one of Iqbal's annual addresses as president of the All India Muslim League, he argues that 'that which really matters is a man's faith, his culture, his historical tradition. These are the things which, in my eyes, are worth living for and dying for' (Iqbal 2008: 31).

When Iqbal speaks of achieving immortality by becoming a part of the meaning of the universe, however, he is speaking primarily about his theories of evolution and history as these relate to humankind and Islam. As with his ideas about temporality, his understanding of history is a unique amalgam of science, Continental Philosophy, and Islamic theology in addition to his own thought. Prior to Charles Darwin, Muslim thinkers had already worked out a theory of evolution. The Persian philosopher Ibn Maskawaih (d. 1030 AD) posited that life had evolved through increasingly complex types of plants, to animals, and finally to man (Iqbal 2012: 107). The poet Rumi presented this theory most famously in a passage that Iqbal claims '[n]o cultured Muslim can read . . . without a thrill of joy' (147). Unlike Darwin's theory, however, Rumi speculates that the process of evolution will continue beyond man as he is currently known, towards another goal:

Beyond the clouds, beyond the sky,
In realms where none may change or die –
In angel form; and then away
Beyond the bounds of night and day,
And Life and Death, unseen or seen,
Where all that is hath ever been seen,
As One and Whole. (Rumi cited in Iqbal 2012: 148)

The most significant difference between the view of Islamic and Western thinkers on evolution, according to Iqbal, is the positive and hopeful view of the former and the 'secret despair' that 'hides itself behind the screen of scientific terminology' of the latter (Iqbal 2012: 148). This despair stems from the assumption that humankind has no real future. Iqbal quotes the early twentieth-century sociologist Edward Cary Hayes to the effect that 'there now appears to be no scientific basis for the idea that the present rich complexity of human endowment will ever be materially exceeded' (Hayes cited in Iqbal

2012: 148). Similarly, although Iqbal admires Nietzsche's emphasis on life and vitality and his hope for the emergence of a future superman he claims that Nietzsche was ultimately subject to the same despair as his scientific peers, since, '[h]is enthusiasm for the future of man ended in the doctrine of eternal recurrence – perhaps the most hopeless idea of immortality ever formed by man' (ibid.; compare to Iqbal 2008b: 161 (essay on Nietzsche and Rumi)).

Nietzsche 'was a failure' according to Iqbal (2012: 154). Although he was perhaps the best-equipped man in Europe for prophetic vision and was driven by an understanding of 'the Divine in man', he failed because he had no spiritual guidance and no solid tradition on which to found his vision (ibid.). Christianity had been obliterated under the weight of modern science and criticism and could not therefore play the role that Iqbal sees for Islam as a guiding principle in directing man's future evolutionary progress. This limitation drove Nietzsche to fight the inevitably democratic character of man's future: 'Instead of looking for a spiritual rule which would develop the Divine even in a plebeian and thus open up before him an infinite future, Nietzsche was driven to seek the realization of his vision in such schemes as aristocratic radicalism' (ibid.). As mentioned above, however, Iqbal did admire Nietzsche's emphasis on action and the need for man to play an active role in his future development, as well as the need for constant revaluations of values (Iqbal 2008: 121).

At a certain point, a point we have now reached according to Iqbal, man comes to play an active role in his own evolution (118). It is partly through this participation that man can achieve immortality by becoming a part of the meaning of the universe. At this point, however, evolution is no longer a matter of physical change, but of mental and spiritual development (Iqbal 2012: 85). Iqbal puts it thus:

It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well as that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own ends and purposes. And in this process of progressive change God becomes a co-worker with him, provided man takes the initiative: 'Verily God will not change the condition of men, till they change what is in themselves' [Quran] 13:11. (Iqbal 2012: 10)

The deepest and most significant aspect of Iqbal's immortality involves the tension between this individual participation in history or evolution and the personal immortality of the individual. But before we can fully appreciate the significance of what Iqbal (2008b: 183) calls 'the tension of the ego', we must spell out more clearly Iqbal's view of history and the accompanying and highly unorthodox understanding of the finality of Muhammad's prophethood.

There are three stages of history, or religion, thus far, according to Iqbal. These three stages are, 'Faith', 'Thought', and 'Discovery' (Iqbal 2012: 143). In the first stage, man was ruled by the visions of prophets or those like prophets who provided, 'ready-made judgements, choices and ways of action' (100). Both individuals and peoples in the age of faith, 'must accept [religious discipline] as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning or purpose of that command' (ibid.). This period, which Iqbal calls the 'minority of mankind' and the time when he was in 'leading strings', came to an end with the birth of inductive reason, 'which alone makes man master of his environment . . . and when once born . . . must be reinforced by inhibiting the growth of other modes of knowledge' (ibid.).

In the second period, the age of thought, which Iqbal characterises much as Kant does as humankind's emergence from immaturity, man closes himself off to the sort of non-rational knowledge to which the prophets had access and seeks the foundation of religion, 'in a kind of metaphysics – a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view' (Iqbal 2012: 143). But while Western philosophers such as Hegel believed that this development marked the beginning of the end of history, for Iqbal it was only the midway point. The sense of despair that accompanies Darwin's theory of evolution is matched by Hegel's grim statements about the 'slaughter-bench' of History (2004: 21). For Iqbal, this is the 'unwarranted modern assumption that man's present structure, mental as well as physiological, is the last word on biological evolution, and that death, regarded as a biological event, has no constructive meaning' (2012: 97).

For Iqbal, the erosion of the foundations of modern rationalism and metaphysics, and the accompanying sense of crisis in the West, represents another historical turning point. In this period, religion will reemerge in a

new form to guide both the potentially dangerous course of modern science and the future moral development of the individual. This new period not only opens the door to a stage of development that is higher than those that have gone before, but it represents, for the first time in history, an opportunity for Muslims to realise the true meaning of Islam. 'The storm from the West,' he says, 'has transformed Muslims into real Muslims' (cited in Mir 2006: 9). The following passage offers a glimpse of how this combination of a new beginning and simultaneous return to the origins of Islam, as well as the corresponding understanding of immortality, all fit together for Iqbal:

Neither the technique of medieval mysticism, nor nationalism, nor atheistic socialism can cure the ills of a despairing humanity. Surely the present moment is one of great crisis in the history of modern culture. The modern world stands in need of biological renewal. And religion, which in its higher manifestations is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual, can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves, and restore to him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it in the hereafter. It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future, his whence and wither, that man will eventually triumph over a society motivated by an inhuman competition, and a civilization which has lost its spiritual unity by its inner conflict of religious and political values. (Iqbal 2012: 149)

The fresh vision Iqbal discusses, which is the subject of the following section, is only possible through what he calls the tension of the ego and personal revelation, a concept that seems to pose a serious challenge to one of the most fundamental tenets of Islam. The notion that the modern individual can receive some sort of revelation is a direct contradiction of Islam's teaching that Muhammad was the final prophet and that no new prophet can emerge. Mawdudi sums up this basic article of faith as follows: 'there will be no prophet appearing in the future, nor will any new religious system be revealed. The fact is Muhammad's teaching are [*sic*] meant for all the children of Adam, are sent for the entire human race, and are valid until the end of time' (1997: 75). Schimmel has noticed this problem and set it down to an oversight on Iqbal's part:

Yet it cannot be denied . . . that from this interpretation of the eternally fresh possibilities of life there could emerge a contradiction to the Islamic dogma of the finality of the prophethood which Iqbal has maintained otherwise so strictly. But it seems that the poet-philosopher has not thought of these possible implications of his theory of an eternal development. (Schimmel 1989: 290)

Schimmel, however, fails to understand Iqbal's conception of history. Iqbal does, indeed, firmly adhere to the principle of the finality of the prophet, but only in the sense that after Muhammad no further prophecy is necessary because man will eventually be able to think for himself, and use his own reason to determine the best ethical and political laws, and ultimately receive revelation on his own. Muhammad's prophecy is the turning point between the period of faith and the period of thought, Iqbal argues, and this is an essential part of his claim that empirical science is Islamic in its origins. Iqbal puts it thus: 'In [Muhammad] life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam . . . is the birth of inductive intellect. *In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need for its own abolition*' (Iqbal 2012: 101, emphasis added).¹ It is only in the modern period, however, the age of discovery, when inductive reason has reached its limit, that man is in a position to set aside the literal teachings of the Qur'an and, as Iqbal does, reconstruct Islam as a religion that is more open to individual interpretation and creativity. It is through this understanding of Islam that Iqbal is able to interpret immortality as being dependent on personal revelation and a tension in the ego between individual immortality and immortality through becoming part of the meaning of the universe.

The Tension in the Ego, Personal Revelation and the Third Age of Religion

Iqbal's description of a third age of religion and its accompanying concept of immortality is an attempt to create a new teleological source of meaning based on the cultural and religious traditions of Islam. But while this description is rooted in Islamic tradition it is at the same time faithful to the scientific spirit and liberal values of modernity and is therefore non-metaphysical and relies on a constant revaluation and creative individual and political interpretation

of those traditions. This new interpretation of religion relies on what Iqbal calls the tension of the ego. This is a tension between one's drive towards shaping the future based on personal experience and interpretation, and one's rootedness in a community and religious tradition that always shapes one's efforts. As Iqbal puts it:

The life of the ego is a kind of tension caused by the ego invading the environment and the environment invading the ego. The ego does not stand outside the arena of mutual invasion. It is present in it as a directive energy and is formed and disciplined by its own experience. (Iqbal 2012: 82)

It is the tension between individual aspirations and the community that is the real key to possible immortality: 'Personally, I regard immortality as an inspiration and not something eternally achieved. Man is a candidate for immortal life which involves a ceaseless struggle in maintaining the tension of the ego' (Iqbal 2008b: 183). Thus, Iqbal's understanding of immortality involves the tension between one's striving for personal immortality, which depends on a different perception of time and something like religious experience, and one's contribution to shaping the as yet unforeseeable future course of one's society and of humankind as a whole.

There is no predetermined goal towards which history is moving for Iqbal, who consequently regards his own thinking as provisional (Iqbal 2012: 44). It was the view that Islam is intensely fatalistic, on the part of many Muslims as well as outside observers such as Spengler, which led to the stultification and ossification of belief. This tendency only intensified under the pressures of modern materialism (Spengler 2006: 299). While Iqbal acknowledges that 'the idea of destiny runs throughout the Qur'an', this does not mean that Islam views the world 'as a rigid system of cause and effect' (Iqbal 2012: 87). What Iqbal calls the higher fatalism of the Qur'an is in fact the experience of the tension of the ego spoken of above. As he says in the following difficult passage:

The vital [way of making the world our own] is the absolute acceptance of the inevitable necessity of life, regarded as a whole, which in evolving its inner richness creates serial time. This vital way of appropriating the universe is what the Qur'an describes as Iman [faith]. Iman is not merely

a passive belief in one or more propositions of a certain kind; it is a living assurance begotten of a rare experience. Strong personalities alone are capable of rising to this experience and the higher 'Fatalism' implied in it. (Iqbal 2012: 87)

This experience, Iqbal goes on to say, 'is a vital fact', which 'can embody itself only in a world-making or world-shaking act; and in this form alone the content of this timeless experience can diffuse itself in the time movement, and make itself effectively visible to the eye of history' (Iqbal 2012: 145). These two quotations are attempts on Iqbal's part to describe what he means by the tension of the ego, or the meeting point between experiencing serial time and time as pure duration. It means having some experience of eternity, but realising that life requires participation in the world as a finite individual, and not withdrawal from it. The individual must play an active role in helping his society and humankind, despite his mortality.

It is in this light that Iqbal explains heaven and hell. These, as we have seen, are states of mind. Hell is punishment for inactivity, and the realisation that one has not done anything with lasting significance. It 'is not a pit of everlasting torture inflicted by a revengeful God' since there is no afterlife, as traditionally believed according to Iqbal, but 'it is a corrective experience' (Iqbal 2012: 98). Heaven, on the other hand, 'is the joy of triumph over the forces of disintegration', but is not a state of rest or inactivity, for, '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' (ibid.). The notion of a wrathful God who metes out severe punishments and great rewards is, for Iqbal, no longer believable. This view is the result of Magian influences that have been adopted by both Islamic thinkers and those such as Spengler, and Iqbal goes to great lengths to disprove this notion (114ff.). This view, not surprisingly, is the source of some consternation among commentators because it denies the everlasting punishment for sin that appears to be outlined in the Qur'an (see, for example, Ashraf 2003: 75–85).

Achieving immortality, then, requires purposive and creative activity. More concretely, humankind can achieve this through the active engagement of every individual, as well as the occasional appearance of 'an inspiring

personality, the birth of a new ideal, or a universal religious reform' (Iqbal 2008b: 117). Iqbal sees himself as acting in such a role, and consciously emulates others he sees as having done so, especially Rumi and Goethe. 'The world of today,' he says, 'needs a Rumi to create an attitude of hope, and to kindle the fire of enthusiasm for life' (Iqbal 2012: 97). Without constant reinterpretation or revaluation in Nietzsche's sense, religion becomes essentially worthless as a real source of meaning.

We can note in passing that there is a striking affinity between Iqbal's response to modern thought and Heidegger's later work, in which he argues that art, and especially poetry, is somehow the 'saving power' that will emerge to check the danger of modern technology.² It is poetry's ability to shed new light on its subject and its openness to individual interpretation that, for Iqbal, allows it to keep the Islamic tradition alive.

Here, however, Iqbal faces another challenge from Islamic theology. After the destruction of Baghdad in the mid-thirteenth century, many of the religious schools of Islam declared that there could be no further innovation in religion or interpretation (*ijtihad*) of the Qur'an. Iqbal devotes a chapter to this development and concludes, 'The closing of the door of Itjihad is pure fiction', saying that interpretation 'within the limits of the revealed texts, is absolutely free' (141).

But Iqbal takes the notion of *ijtihad* one step further by claiming that individuals not only need freedom in order to interpret the Qur'an, but personal revelation as well. The age of thought, which is coming to a close, has proven that 'pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring' (Iqbal 2012: 142). This personal revelation, he says, speaks 'from the inmost depths of life' and 'internalizes its own apparent externality' (ibid.). This, again, is not only a radical innovation, according to Iqbal, but also the emergence of the true meaning of Islam:

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 today 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. (Iqbal 2012: 142)

Iqbal finds support for this unorthodox idea in the words of 'a Muslim Sufi' who claims that 'no understanding of the Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to the Prophet' (Iqbal 2012: 143).

By receiving personal revelation, 'the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of law, but by discovering the ultimate source of law within the depths of his own consciousness' (ibid.). By claiming that Muslims can receive revelation on their own, based on their own interpretation of the Qur'an, and thus be masters of their own spiritual development, Iqbal is denying the legal aspect of the Qur'an, which, it should go without saying, is also a controversial sentiment. The purpose of the Qur'an, Iqbal claims more than once, 'is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe', and is therefore 'not a legal code'. Similarly, the descriptions of the afterlife in the Qur'an are 'representations of an inner fact' and not meant to be read literally (98).

That the Qur'an must constantly be reinterpreted and that each individual can receive personal revelation raises an unsettling question about the nature of immortality. Despite Iqbal's discussion of the topic in terms of one's perception of time and involvement in societal progress, he ultimately leaves it up to personal interpretation to determine what it means to be immortal. Even in terms of his analysis of time, Iqbal's interpretation does not lend itself to any clear understanding of how the individual is to think about his own finitude. As Whittemore puts it, 'Iqbal is at pains to stress his conviction that the individual is neither in time nor eternity lost in time' (1956: 692). This ambiguity is clearest in the following passage:

The nature of the universe is such that it is open to it to maintain in some other way [than corporeal resurrection] the kind of individuality necessary for the final working out of human action, even after the disintegration of what appears to specify his individuality in his present environment. What that other way is we do not know. Nor do we gain any further insight into the nature of the 'second creation' [Quran 29:20] by associating it with some kind of body, no matter how subtle it may be. The analogies of the Qur'an only suggest it as a fact; they are not meant to reveal its nature and character. (Iqbal 2012: 97f.)

Although this may appear as a grave weakness in Iqbal's theory, this ambiguity is in fact one of its strengths. It is an attempt to reconstruct religious thought in a way that will make it more believable and more of a living factor in the lives of Muslims. Offering a concrete description of what the afterlife will be like based on a fully worked out metaphysical framework would, perhaps paradoxically, likely make Iqbal's interpretation less believable rather than more so. Ibn Rushd (Averroës), he says, 'approached the question of immortality from a purely metaphysical point of view, and, I venture to think, achieved no results' (Iqbal 2012: 89). This is, in part, he says, because

if mere belief in certain prepositions of Metaphysical import is the only thing that ultimately determines the structure of the Muslim Community, is it not an extremely unsafe basis especially before the advance of modern knowledge, with its habits of Rationalism and criticism? (Iqbal 2008b: 124)

And further, 'Purely metaphysical arguments, however, cannot give us a positive belief in personal immortality' (Iqbal 2012: 89). Iqbal's interpretation, then, is in keeping with his recognition that traditional religious belief is difficult in part because of its metaphysical assertions in an age that has lost all faith in metaphysics.

Conclusion

Liberalism, for Iqbal, was inevitable. He did not view it as an entirely negative development, but as a challenge that offered an opportunity for progress within Islam (Iqbal 2008b: 4). As with any living religion, Islam has always had to change and adapt to changing circumstances, as Iqbal knows. The challenge from modern thought, however, is greater in that it poses an obstacle to belief itself. Iqbal downplays the legal aspect of the Qur'an in part because the question on his intended audience's mind increasingly was not, 'What do I have to do to get into heaven and avoid hell?' but 'Does anything I do matter at all?'

The traditional account of the afterlife can no longer serve as a guide for the individual or community, and, Iqbal believes, no arguments, however persuasive, can change this state of affairs. Iqbal, rather, tries to revive the religious experience, free from any conventional list of rewards and punishments, through a sense of awe at the disparity between humankind's

perception and reality. In some sense, it is by keeping abreast of what is happening at the edges of theoretical physics and understanding the Qur'an in light of these developments that one can have such an experience. But, rather than withdrawing into asceticism, this sort of confrontation with temporality must be tempered by an engagement with one's community. The experience of time as pure duration should be followed by one's active participation in serial time.

Iqbal understood that India was not going to revert to what it once was after the eventual British withdrawal, but was going to become a fully modern state with Western institutions. In his Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim Conference, Lahore, 21 March 1932, Iqbal stated, 'The present struggle in India is sometimes described as India's revolt against the West. I do not think it is a revolt against the West; for the people of India are demanding the very institutions which the West stands for' (Iqbal 2008b: 43). The place of Islam in this modern context was, then, an imminent and practical concern. Rather than attempting to preserve religion as something antiquated that needs protection from modern thought, Iqbal presents Islam as something that is only now on the verge of coming within humankind's ken. Fully grasping Islam, and especially the meaning of one's mortality, will only be possible with the help of advanced theoretical physics and the interpretive powers of the greatest poets. As a living religion, Iqbal teaches, Islam is inexhaustible, and thus cannot be reduced to a superstition or an unbelievable myth by the advance of modern science. Put another way, Islam can only remain a vital force if it remains beyond the horizon of modern thought.

The fundamentalist approach, which Iqbal opposes, in fact agrees with certain strands of modern thought, in that it, too, treats religion as something that must be hived off from modernity and protected in a static and antique form. An integral part of the fundamentalist view is that religious laws are immutable and apply to every individual. Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of Iqbal's interpretation of Islam is that the religion is no longer seen as immutable and that it is open to individual interpretation. The implication here is that it is in some sense open to the individual to interpret what exactly his or her fate will be after death. This is, perhaps paradoxically, the only way that religion can continue to guide its adherents in the post-metaphysical age.

Notes

1. It is also worth noting that Iqbal sees prophecy as an entirely natural phenomenon, and one that may perhaps characterise psychopaths. He suggests that Muhammad may have been such a psychopath, along with Nietzsche (Iqbal 2012: 150ff.). Iqbal cites Ibn Khaldun in support of the view that prophecy is a natural psychological phenomenon (see Ibn Khaldun 1969: 70ff.).
2. See, for example, Heidegger's essay 'The Question Concerning Technology', in which he quotes Holderlin to the effect that, 'where the danger is, grows/The saving power also' (1993: 340). Iqbal, however, would likely level the same criticism at Heidegger that he does at Nietzsche – namely that his philosophy is not grounded in a spiritual tradition, but in vague notions of culture.

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8

Iqbal, Bergson and the Reconstruction of the Divine Nexus in Political Thought

H. C. Hillier

Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

Introduction: The Crisis

Religion does not teach us to bear ill-will among ourselves. We are Indians, our homeland is India.

Iqbal, 'Taranah-i-Hindi', *Poetry of Allama Iqbal*, (2010: 26)

In 1904, Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) penned 'Taranah-i-Hindi' ('Song of the Indian People'). The poem was so popular that it became the unofficial national anthem for the Indian independence movement, and has been often quoted by later Indian politicians and by astronauts and was even chanted by Gandhi himself (Wajihuddin 2005). In it, Iqbal praises the natural beauty of India and her people, unified as a nation above religious division. Six years later, however, Iqbal would reject his own poem and its sentiments, penning a new one entitled 'Taranah-i-Milli' ('Song of the Muslim People'), in which he writes: 'China is ours, Arabia is ours, and India is ours. We are Muslims and the whole world is our homeland.' Within a few short years, Iqbal's political vision evolved from Indian nationalism to pan-Islamic nationalism. Why? It is simply that, after a few years of living in Great Britain, he came to see that there was something fundamentally wrong with the Western political enterprise, and religion was the answer (see Sevea 2012).

During the same years, the French Jewish philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) had also become a national hero in France for his innovative

writings and lectures that spanned multiple fields of human enquiry (for example, biology, psychology, and philosophy). Despite achieving a status that would leave some academics comfortably content (for example, holding the Chair of Philosophy at the Collège de France, winning a Nobel Prize in Literature, and achieving almost cult status), Bergson never shied away from taking strong political positions. When the Great War broke out in 1914, Bergson used his position as an intellectual leader to criticise imperialism and campaign for France within the world community. The French Government sent him to the United States as a diplomat to advocate for French interests. His relationship with the Wilson Administration continued as he worked to establish the League of Nations (LN; Société des Nations (SDN) in French).¹ Eventually, chronic pain (rheumatism) forced him to withdraw from public life, but even as illness took its toll on his body, and as the continent faced the onset of fascism, Bergson would take one last stand against anti-Semitic despotism. Although sympathetic to Catholicism, even seriously considering converting to it, he rejected all exemptions offered to him by the Vichy Government and boldly identified with his fellow Jews by renouncing all his postings as required by the *Statuts des juifs* (the Statutes on Jews). While Bergson was more supportive of the modern European nation-state than Iqbal, it is important to note how, at the end of his life, he maintained his ethno-religious identity over any nationalistic one. Like Iqbal, Bergson came to perceive fundamental problems within Western political thought and life, and wanted to find a stronger foundation for sociopolitical life – one that found religion at its heart.

So while these two philosophers were separated by geography, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, they came to share a very similar philosophical view of the world. In addition to their shared metaphysical views, politically they would both reject oppressive human divisions (for example, racism), support democracy and freedom, and advocate for a League of Nations. Both would also go on to influence both rightist and leftist political groups globally.² At the outset, it is important to note that neither philosopher was interested in writing a political philosophy *per se*, but they each sought to use philosophy to address particular sociopolitical problems. For Bergson, the challenges were issues such as war, peace, democracy, political authority, and governance. For Iqbal, the main political concerns were with colonial imperialism,

political self-determination, and the centuries-long decline of the Islamic civilisation. In fact, Iqbal would argue that British rule had an immensely damaging impact upon Indian Muslims,³ even referring to their plight as a form of enslavement in his poetry (Mir 2007: 84–91).

This chapter will accomplish two things. First, it will be shown that Iqbal provides a new theological-philosophical framework for (Islamic) political thought through the assimilation of Bergsonian epistemology and metaphysics into a modern interpretation of the Qur'anic worldview. More than any other philosopher or theologian, Iqbal makes twenty explicit references to Bergson in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1932).⁴ While there is some debate on whether Iqbal was directly assimilating or converging with one of the most significant philosophical schools of the period (Shafique 2007; Howard 2011; Mullarkey 1999; Copleston 1994), in light of his multiple references to other philosophers who identify with Bergson (for example, Alexander, Morgan, and Whitehead (1933, 1938)), I believe that Iqbal also identified with Bergson and the Process school.⁵ And while Iqbal may have drawn significantly upon Bergsonian and Process epistemology and metaphysics, this identification was not done uncritically. In fact, it is best to consider Iqbal a prominent member of this school, as evidenced by the fact that *The Reconstruction* is not only the earliest *Islamic* Bergsonian–Process philosophy, but is also the earliest articulated Bergsonian–Process *political* philosophy. This is not difficult to see given the fact that the publication of *The Reconstruction* occurred some years before Bergson's and Whitehead's own political writings. My argument, then, is that Iqbal's assimilation of Bergson was done intentionally, with a goal of resolving a particular crisis facing his community and his devotion to Islam and the Qur'an.

Second, it will be shown how this new framework challenged a fundamental problem perceived within Western political thought by both Iqbal and Bergson – secularism. Secularism was, mythically, the European solution to the violent implications of political theology and its violent applications in European history. In order to liberate itself from religiously inspired violence, it had to liberate itself from theology. Religiously inspired thinkers have, ever since, sought to revitalise the relevance of political theology in modern Western societies, but have had little success. In this chapter I will show how Iqbal reconstructed political theology (that is, the 'divine nexus')

through the integration of Bergsonian metaphysics and Islamic theology. To do this, I will present a systematic representation of Iqbal's own political philosophy (from his various philosophical writings) and use Bergson's own philosophical and political ideas to identify where and how Iqbal assimilated, developed, and transformed these ideas in light of his view of Islam.

Why were the problems of secularism, peace, colonialism, imperialism, and so forth so challenging? This is because they did not simply challenge the existing sociopolitical order; they challenged the very intellectual supports and justifications for that order. In fact, they sparked an epistemological crisis. An epistemological crisis, Alasdair MacIntyre explains, occurs in two ways: one way is when 'alien' traditions encounter each other, and where one tradition threatens the intellectual coherence of the other tradition(s); or the other way is when one tradition ceases to make intellectual progress according to its own standards. At this point, the previous ways of reasoning through tensions are no longer effective, and may only increase the apparent inadequacies of the tradition itself (MacIntyre 1988: 361).

In order to overcome the epistemological crisis, MacIntyre writes, the tradition must invent or discover a new framework that both explains what rendered it 'sterile or incoherent' in the first place and shows a 'fundamental continuity' with the shared beliefs of the past. In this, the tradition gets to 'rewrite its history in a more insightful way', through which it identifies both the central values that have successfully defined it as a tradition and the structures that have supported the tradition's truth-claims (363). In seeking to resolve an epistemological crisis, however, the tradition may successfully assimilate the 'language of the alien tradition' by making it a second language. MacIntyre writes:

When they have understood the beliefs of the alien tradition, they may find themselves compelled to recognize that within this other tradition it is possible to construct from the concepts and theories particular to it what they were unable to provide from their own conceptual and theoretical resources, a cogent and illuminating explanation . . . of why their own intellectual tradition had been unable to solve its problems or restore its coherence. (MacIntyre 1988: 364)

These alien concepts may be the very notions that caused the epistemological crisis in the first place, but the successful assimilation of these concepts will require that the tradition's narrative explain the connection between the new and the old. For both Iqbal and Bergson, the epistemological crisis faced by the modern world was not merely sociopolitical, but ultimately theological-philosophical.

Focusing upon Iqbal, the epistemological crisis is seen in the opening chapter of his *Reconstruction*, where he asserts that Muslims in general and Indian Muslims in particular have suffered from an 'intellectual stupor' (1932: 7). Iqbal writes:

During the last five hundred years religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary. There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam. The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. (Iqbal 1932: 7)

It is this systemic intellectual immobilisation, and the movement westward, that Iqbal wants to resolve in *The Reconstruction*. Unlike other prominent Indian nationalist intellectuals, including Gandhi himself, Iqbal supported this intellectual move westward. He felt that this assimilation is genuinely Islamic, for European thinkers have been reflecting on the questions that have also interested Muslim thinkers historically. Arguing that the process of modern human thought and experience originated in Islamic thought, Iqbal adds: 'There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam' (Iqbal 1932: 7). At the same time, he wants to limit the assimilation of modern Western thought and cautions that 'the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture' (ibid.).

My argument, then, is that at the heart of the sociopolitical crises and reformation that Iqbal perceived there was an epistemological crisis created by the invasion of an alien tradition (that is, European modernity). In order to resolve that crisis, Iqbal intentionally drew upon the elements of that alien tradition that he believed to be most supportive of his reconstructed theological and sociopolitical vision (that is, Bergson). Moreover, one of the reasons

that Iqbal found an ally in Bergson was due to their shared belief in the fundamental importance of religion in all things political. They maintained this belief against the secular nature of modern Western political thought.

The Sociopolitical Problem of the Secularised Nation-state

All men and not just 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.

Iqbal (2002a: 187)

In his book, *Stillborn God* (2007), intellectual historian Mark Lilla outlines the philosophical evolution of the modern secular nation-state. In the beginning, he argues, humans understood themselves as subject to a world upon which they were dependent but had little power over. From this essentially passive position, they came to create gods, who made them a unique part of this created world. This is what Lilla entitles the ‘God, man and the world nexus’, or the *divine nexus*, and it is this nexus that has provided most civilisations with an ‘authoritative guidance for political life’ (2008: 21). The form of political guidance depended upon how that civilisation imagined their god (that is, their theology). A passive and silent force would offer little guidance, whereas a personal, passionate, and active deity will offer much more guidance. While not all civilisations made the move from theology to political theology (for example, ancient Greece and China), most did. Among those civilisations who did make this move, their particular theological understand of the divine (for example, immanent, transcendent and pantheistic) would offer different forms of political engagement; ranging from political withdrawal to theocracy (Lilla 2008: 32).

Lilla argues, however, that Christianity presented a new dynamic that was different from all previous and later religious communities, including Judaism and Islam. Theological concepts such as Divine Incarnation and the Trinity merged the immanent and transcendent views of God, and at the same time Christianity did not articulate a distinct political vision. As such, after centuries of diverse political expressions within Christianity, the converted elite of Imperial Rome preserved the existing sociopolitical order within both the Christian Roman Empire and Roman Catholic Church – two

separate institutions ordained by God with parallel hierarchies but distinct purposes. Medieval writers used various metaphors to support this bicephalic order (for example, the Two Cities of Augustine and the Two Swords of King and Pope). But by the seventeenth century something within the traditional medieval sociopolitical system sparked a reactionary and revolutionary intellectual challenge (17). Many began to see that the conflict between European powers was escalated by religiously inspired fanaticism and violence, and that mere religious and/or intellectual reform was not enough to resolve this violence. It was the divine nexus itself, as conceived in Christian political theology and its representative institutions, that needed to change. Lilla contends that as innovations in the natural sciences destroyed traditional 'Christian [*sic*]' conceptions of the cosmos, ensuring that Christianity could no longer present a comprehensive world picture, the same forces allowed an escape from political theology (64).

This escape was discovered by Thomas Hobbes. While philosophers like Machiavelli could merely polemicise and ridicule Christian political theology, Hobbes was able to liberate political thought from the divine nexus of Christendom itself by avoiding the matter altogether. As a devotee to the scientific method, Hobbes begins his *Leviathan* (1985) not with a discussion of revelation but with a discussion of human nature (that is, the nature of psychological motivation). He outlines a theory of religion as ignorant superstition and fanaticism sparked by fear that places the human individual as both the source and subject of religion (Lilla 2007: 79). Humans are naturally driven by fear and desire, and within the state of nature these powers are the source of conflict. Likewise, in order to understand the world around them, these two powers ignorantly drive humans to create a god in their own image. This god, however, becomes a monster within the human psyche for it creates new fears. The naturally occurring conflicts between humans become immensely magnified by religion due in large part to the fear of a capricious deity demanding satisfaction that causes humans – who are ignorant of the divine will – to empower individuals whom they believe do know it (for example, prophets and priests). In doing so, conflicting messages are made, rival groups formed, and further conflict created as religion becomes another form of sociopolitical power in the competition for resources (Lilla 2008: 84; Hobbes 1985).

What is needed, according to Hobbes, is to separate religion and religious influences from sociopolitical life. This can only be done by making religion submit to the absolutist state. Lilla labels this sociopolitical change the 'Great Separation'. While the entirety of Hobbes's prescription would be tempered by later thinkers such as Locke (1997) and Rousseau, the Great Separation (or secularism) has established itself within Western civilisation as the best solution to resolve religiously magnified conflict. The success of this ideology can be seen in failed attempts by later religious theologians and philosophers, both Liberal and neo-orthodox, to reintroduce the divine nexus back into Western societies. Lilla argues that these miscarried attempts have either been too optimistic about modernity (for example, Cohn, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Strauss) or they have advocated too little political engagement (for example, Barth and Rosenzweig).

For scholars of Muhammad Iqbal (and reformist or modernist Islamic thought), Lilla's assessment presents a challenge. On the one hand, Iqbal agrees with Lilla's assessment of European political philosophy and its devotion to secularism. While he does not echo Lilla's charge that the great separation was sparked by religious violence – a concept that is problematic within Lilla's own work,⁶ – he does argue that it is the natural outworking of monastic-oriented Christian doctrine. On the other hand, Iqbal seeks to do what Lilla feels was the miscarried scheme of Liberal theology: to recreate a political theological philosophy that maintains the divine nexus while simultaneously supporting the fundamental values of sociopolitical Liberalism. Regarding both problems, Iqbal maintains that religion is an expression of the whole person. And while there are both internal (soul) and external (worldly) forces affecting our societies, Islam resolves that tension by embracing both. Islam sees no conflict between spirit and world, but that the one 'animates and sustains' the other, where the spirit seeks to transform the world into its ideal vision (Iqbal 1932: 9). The spiritual and the material worlds are not separate worlds, for they permeate each other completely. There is an organic unity between all existing things within the cosmos (140). By challenging the necessity of the Great Separation, Iqbal seeks to create a third way between political theology and modern political philosophy.

The Theopolitical Cure: Bergsonian Reconstruction the Divine Nexus

It did not bring either wine, or a cup from eternity: The tulip gets its eternal passion from the scar in its own heart.⁷

Iqbal (2008 [1990]: 79)

As noted, Lilla's notion of divine nexus and the failed attempt to reintroduce a modernised Judeo-Christian political theology into Western political systems helps explain Iqbal's own project. While Iqbal shares similar conclusions about the possibility of reconstituting a Judeo-Christian political theology, he does not feel the same about the prospects for an Islamic one. Believing that Islam resolves the problems at the heart of European Christendom, what is needed now is the modernisation of Islamic political thought. This modernisation, which also resolves the epistemological crisis affecting Islamic thought, is achieved through an assimilation of particular strands of European philosophy amicable to Islam – its amicability being rooted in the fact that European thought is the inheritor of earlier Islamic thought.

How does Iqbal reconstruct the divine nexus of God, man, and the world in a way that challenges the Hobbesian-rooted secular solution? This section will outline Iqbal's political theory and examine how Bergson's political ideas connect with and elaborate upon Iqbal's. These connections will be made in two areas: (1) the metaphysical foundations of the political; and (2) the particular sociopolitical ideas themselves in both Iqbal and Bergson.

The Metaphysical Foundation of the Political: Creativity and Individuality

For Iqbal, the foundation of any valid political system begins with recognising the fundamental unity of the human experience. Unlike modernity, Iqbal asserts that human experience and knowledge cannot be fractured or subdivided, identifying one as valid and the other as suspicious. Human experience and knowledge is holistic, something that science simply fails to do because it cannot, by essence (by its particular rationalising nature), provide a 'single systematic view of Reality' (Iqbal 1932: 41). Rather it focuses upon what the intellect can understand based on sensual observations, and while this is an effective methodology in some areas of human knowledge, it cannot become metaphysical and thereby provide access to the source of all human knowledge and life. Likewise, human knowledge cannot be fractured or subdivided.

There are, however, different epistemologies related to different levels of the human mind, the most important being the intellect and intuition, according to Iqbal.

The metaphysical and epistemological importance of intuition and experience for Iqbal is drawn from the central tenants of Bergson's philosophy. Introduced in *Mind and Matter*, but articulated more fully in *Creative Mind* (1946), Bergson defines 'intuition' as a source of knowledge besides human intellect. Believing Kantian philosophy to be too abstract, Bergson sought for a more precise foundation and source⁸ (1911: 241). Unlike intelligence or intellect (that is, analytical reasoning), which is the traditional but limited intellectual source for science and philosophy, intuition is the immediate holistic awareness of Reality itself (Cunningham 1916: 23). It is the most fundamental, direct, non-intellectual, and non-rational apprehension of Reality outside our senses and perception, one that exists prior to any ability to understand it. As Lawlor and Moulard note, 'Bergsonian intuition consists in entering into the thing, rather than going around it from the outside' (Lawlor and Moulard 2013). Intuition is the direct sympathetic experience of Reality where sympathy is understood as one person's entering into the experience of another person, and is the best source for metaphysics according to Bergson (1946: 159). So while sensual perception is assumed to be the most direct form of knowledge about Reality, there is a deeper experience to be known by entering into Reality itself. Wildon Carr (1914: 25) uses the example of the sentence. When a person hears a complete sentence, they first appreciate it as a whole. And yet, the same sentence may be broken down into smaller 'numerable elements', each of which can be appreciated in their own isolated part.

Both Bergson and Iqbal identify the 'intellect' as the more analytical linear process of understanding, which perceives Reality as a series of separate and isolated things like a string of pearls. Intuition is the experience of 'undivided continuity', a stream of consciousness, which is then divided into parts and strung together by the intellect (Bergson 1911: 239). Gustavus Cunningham notes that intelligence is the faculty best suited for understanding matter. This is because it connects to Reality, to some degree, but it cannot take us beyond the matter and space. By contrast, intuition 'is capable of adequately seizing the real and of disclosing its total nature' (Cunningham

1916: 240). Thus, where intelligence deals with knowing the material, intuition deals with knowing duration (Bergson 1911: 303).

Like Bergson, Iqbal speaks of intuition as a higher form of the intellect. Known as mystical or religious insight, it is what the Qur'an calls the 'heart' (*fu'ad*). It is 'a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part' (Iqbal 1932: 16). Since intuition is an experiential form of knowledge, like all other experiential forms of knowledge (for example, sensual), it is immediate and accessible by all humans. However, contrary to some psychological theories, intuitional experience does not disconnect the individual from their rational conscience. Rather, intuitional experience (and knowledge) 'brings us into contact with the total passage of Reality in which all the diverse stimuli merge into one another and form a single unanalysable unity in which the ordinary distinction of subject and object does not exist' (17). It is as real as any other human experience and it produces knowledge just as true as any other source of knowledge. So what knowledge does intuitional experience of Reality present to us? When it comes to the problem of political life, it presents humans with two vital truths: the dynamic nature of Reality and the centrality of the human ego.

Iqbal asserts that the essence of the universe is change. He states that our experience of Reality reveals it to be 'a structure of events possessing the character of a continuous creative flow' (45). This view of reality is consistent with the Qur'anic view of nature being characterised by succession and alternation (10: 6; 23: 80; 25: 62; 31: 27; 39: 5). Here he draws upon an idea shared by both Bergson and Whitehead. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson states that from the privileged case of our own existence and the variations of emotional, psychological, and physical states we see how change 'is far more radical than we are at first inclined to suppose' (1922: 1). Change is the holistic passage from one state to another because the change of one area of our existence means change for all; therefore, in our experience, change is constant. Whitehead, a scholar influenced by Bergson, argued in *Science and the Modern World* (1997 [1920]) and *Process and Reality* (1978 [1929]) that Reality was composed not of material substance within a fixed cosmos, but of 'events', also labelled as 'actual occasions' or 'experiences', within a dynamically moving and organically whole cosmos. This means that the universe and those things that exist

within it are essentially events, or occasional actualisations of experience, and not immutable dead matter. For instance, whether it is the electron or the human being, existing things are merely the interrelationship of different events. As such, because the actual existents of the cosmos are experiential events, the essential characteristics of the cosmos are change, freedom, and relations.

For Bergson, Iqbal, and Whitehead this holistic free creative movement of the universe is time itself – that Bergson labels *duration* and Iqbal labels *duration* or *destiny*. Bergson defines duration as ‘the continuous process of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances’ (1922: 5). Since human consciousness itself is a subject of this duration, it repeatedly succeeds itself in a continuous flow and can never exist in the same state twice. Like memory, which perceives past and present in a single moment, our intuitive mind (our consciousness) does not perceive the movement of time as a series of separate and isolated acts, but rather perceives the universe as a whole. As Iqbal (1932: 49) articulates, it takes the string of separate temporal events and makes them into a real ‘organic whole’, as opposed to serial time that is merely pulverisation of duration by the intellect.

Furthermore, this ontology of change exhibits a creative force within existents of the cosmos that drives it towards a teleological end – an organic whole or harmony (Bergson 1922: 53). Contrary to Darwinian natural selection, this universal vital impetus (*élan vital*) is the principle of inner direction that moves parts towards a united effort.⁹ This vital impetus is the cause for variation within evolutionary history and it is the power that drives all parts towards a certain *telos*. Lawlor and Moulard note: ‘If there is a *telos* to life, then, it must be situated at the origin and not at the end (contra traditional finalism), and it must embrace the whole of life in one single indivisible embrace (contra mechanism)’ (2013).

Iqbal accepts Bergson’s concept of duration and *élan vital*, to an extent, for he seems to assimilate the two into one deeper concept. The concept of duration is consistent with statements within the Qur’an regarding time (for example, 25: 58–9; 54: 49–50), as well as statements made in the Bible (for example, 1,000 years equals one day in heaven; see Psalm 90: 4, 2; Peter 3: 8). Likewise, Iqbal argues that the Qur’an reveals Reality as possessing a ‘free, unpredictable, creative impetus’ (1932: 51). However, he seems to feel that

Bergson's theory of duration and *élan vital* 'ends in an insurmountable dualism of will and thought' (52). Iqbal argues that thought and life are equated, and both move towards a teleological end – a concept that he identifies with the Qur'anic notion of *destiny* (*taqdir*). Destiny, he argues, is not some unrelated fate or preordained events dripping forth across time, but an inward reach from the innermost being that 'forms the very essence of things' and becomes actualised in serial time. The Qur'an does not present a universe that is merely working-out a pre-conceived plan. The universe is not a mass of dead matter floating in empty space fully completed eons ago by its Maker, but it is a growing and purposefully evolving universe. Unlike the mechanical vision of time in natural science,¹⁰ time needs to be understood as absolutely and creatively free, original, novel, and unforeseeable. As Iqbal writes:

The world process, or the movement of the universe in time, is certainly devoid of purpose, if by purpose we mean a foreseen end – a far-off fixed destination to which the whole creation moves. To endow the world process with purpose in this sense is to rob it of its originality and its creative character . . . A time-process cannot be [a] conceived actualization of open possibilities. It is a line in the drawing – an actualization of open possibilities. (Iqbal 1932: 55)

So, essentially, for Iqbal, our intuitive mind has revealed that the cosmos moves in a deeper sense of time (for example, duration) and is teleologically driven by an essential force known as *destiny* or *élan vital*. Given that this force is absolutely free and creative, this *telos* is open and constantly being actualised. All of this, therefore, means that the Reality is essentially spiritual. While modernity has understood the world as material, the vision presented by Bergson and Iqbal (among others) is that even the material itself is spiritual. This, for Iqbal, is an idea shared by the all Abrahamic religions, as evidenced by the theological concept of 'God as Light' (Iqbal 1932: 71).

In such a cosmos, points of convergence and unity are characterised as *Egos*. Iqbal and Bergson both describe the formation of the human ego-self as the point where the intuitive mind (that perceives the cosmos holistically) unites with the more analytical intellect; our psyche-consciousness forms a formless and immutable ego to unite them (Bergson 1922: 5). Iqbal notes that it is impossible to even describe the internal experience of pure duration

in words, because language itself is shaped by the serial time of our intellect.¹¹ At this level, the states of our consciousness melt into each other, creating a unity of the ego where every experience is felt by the whole consciousness. 'There is change and movement, but this change and movement are indivisible; their elements inter-penetrate and are wholly non-serial in character' (Iqbal 1932: 48).

Contrary to Bergson, Iqbal argues that the ego-self exists prior to duration (absolute time),¹² and, as such, this unity must be conceived as an all-embracing and concrete ego-self; for to exist in pure duration is to exist as a self-aware consciousness. Then, drawing from Bergson's and Lloyd Morgan's cosmological hierarchy of being, Iqbal (1932: 62–3) argues that there are degrees of spirit and individuality (see Bergson 1922), from the lowest atom to the highest complex being, all can be understood as egos – their degree being measured by the level of self-awareness. And since egos can only proceed from another ego, there is the existence of an ultimate ego that stands at the highest level of existence (that is, God). God, as the ultimate ego, is fully independent and complete. Unlike other egos, God's own self-awareness is so intuitive that it does not require a confrontation with creation to define itself.¹³

Due to its high degree of self-awareness, in this hierarchy of egos, humans rank nearest to the ultimate ego. Humans possess a higher degree of Reality, and therefore are able to participate in the creativity of God by imagining and creating the world around them, for better or worse. This creative power is evident in the first choice made by the first humans. In an imaginative reading of the Qur'an, one that remains consistent with Bergson's theory of creative evolution,¹⁴ Iqbal interprets the myth of the Garden of Eden (*Jannat*) as a primitive pre-social state of nature. Unlike the Judeo-Christian utopia or the Hobbesian brutish dystopia, Iqbal perceives early humans as 'primarily governed by passion and instinct', from which emerges human consciousness and personal freedom (1932: 126). The Qur'an reveals that this emergence of freedom was a good thing. This means that, while the 'first act of free choice' by the first humans was disobedience, the Fall was not an emergence of moral depravity but an act of human self-awareness (85).

To understand Iqbal's political theory, especially when identifying the impact of Bergson, it is essential to begin with his metaphysics. Contrary to the modern tradition of political science, true knowledge about the uni-

verse cannot be fractured and limited to sensual observations only (that is, Hobbesian political scientific method). There is a deeper source of knowledge, which reflects the nature of the universe more genuinely (that is, intuition or heart). This intuition reveals that the fundamental characteristic of the cosmos is dynamic change. Change is holistic movement, constant evolution, and is essentially time itself (that is, duration). This developmental and evolutionary change is driven by a power (*élan vital* or destiny) that drives the cosmos and all that exists within it towards a purposeful end (*telos*). Within this cosmos are points of convergence, identified as egos. In fact, all existents in the cosmos from the smallest subatomic particular to the most complex creature are egos. As such, there exists a hierarchy of egos that advance by their degree of individuality and self-awareness and culminate in the highest ultimate ego – that is, God. Since egohood is defined by individuality and the cosmos by creativity, Iqbal and Bergson will argue that these are the foundational elements of the sociopolitical order. With this, one can see that the foundations of a reconstructed divine nexus are established in Iqbal's thought. His understanding of the cosmos, as a spiritual continuum, is characterised by dynamic creativity, teleological duration and ego-consciousness where egos, emerging from other egos, evolve along different levels of self-awareness until one finds the ultimate ego (that is, God). The 'God, man and world' nexus, then, is understood as the interconnected points of convergence within a holistic system. This suggests, when discussing the sociopolitical implications, that there is an authoritative source in identifying the contours of human societies.

The Sociopolitical Alternative

In light of these assumed metaphysical principles, the sociopolitical ideal for Iqbal and Bergson is the development of human individuality and creative freedoms. Regarding individuality, Iqbal argues that the ideal society is the composite of ideal individuals.¹⁵ Ideal individuals are those who possess 'strong body and strong mind', free from all powers weakening its individuality. The human being, according to Iqbal, is an individual of infinite power, so that that strengthens this power is good and that that weakens it is bad; 'virtue is power . . . evil is weakness' (Iqbal 2002b: 87). Regarding freedom, like modern European Liberalism, he states that Islam affirms the

fundamental goodness of humans – contrary to the affirmation of humanity's wickedness found within Christianity and Christendom.¹⁶ Recognising the ethical and political importance of this difference is vital. For, if humans are essentially wicked, then they cannot have freedom but must be controlled by external authority (for example, the divinely ordained priesthood in religion and autocracy in politics found in medieval Europe, or contemporary British rule in India).¹⁷ However, if humans are essentially good, then that that promotes their natural freedoms promotes their goodness. Recognising these truths make societies virtuous and respectful towards others. By rejecting them, or by denying their essential goodness (that is, original sin) and thereby idealising other religious virtues that deny our humanity (that is, self-renunciation, poverty, obedience or otherworldliness), one actually weakens human individuality within society. So much so, Iqbal argues, that they are considered sins within Islam.

It is this ethical vision that Bergson perceives is at the heart of the good society. Alexander Gunn, for instance, notes the social application of Bergson's philosophy:

[His philosophy] would involve the laying of greater stress upon the need for all members of society having larger opportunities of being more fully themselves, of being self-creative and having fuller power of self-expression as free creative agents . . . [It] would set in clearer light the claims of human personality to create and to enjoy a good life in the widest sense, to enter into fuller sympathy and fellowship with other personalities, and so develop a fuller and richer form of existence than is possible under present social and industrial conditions. (Gunn 2007: 111)

In the social sphere, Bergson's philosophy would emphasise the need for society to support the creative development of individuals. It would place personality over property, emphasise how material goods are to be utilised for developing a good life, and place the development of full personality as the primary social and political goal.

Bergson's most significant statements on social-political life came in his last publication, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935), which was published after Iqbal's *Reconstruction* (1932). Considering that this was his last major publication, it is valuable to notice what he considered were the

sociopolitical implications of his earlier doctrines. Like Iqbal, Bergson advocates a more holistic interrelationship between the individual and society. For instance, he argued that the institutions of church and state only differed by degree, not kind (Scherer 2006: 169).¹⁸ For example, one element within each institution is the concept of conversion by which both institutions seek to transform individuals by creating and assimilating new habits (171).

The notion of habit is important to Bergsonian sociopolitical thought. In his *Two Sources*, Bergson discusses the evolution of obedience, as our childhood experiences establish habits within us, for our past obedience to authority figures represented a non-conceptualised greater authority that we would later realise was obedience to society itself (1935). The relationship between the individual and society represents nature, just as cells are united together by unseen forces to develop into a hierarchy (Bergson 1935: 8–9). Scherer correctly interprets: ‘Obligation accrues through experience in the forms of habits that demand satisfaction; these habits ensure the survival of individuals and communities by functioning regularly and dependently’, but it means that the foundation of society is habit as the socialisation of human habit is merely institution. Habit is a natural instinct for the human animal, whose only tools are the inorganic tools that humans develop to extend their bodies’ abilities; as the craftsman uses a tool as an extension of his hand, so, too, is human society the inorganic extension of human intelligence and habit (Scherer 2006: 182f.).

Habit is a sufficient enough foundation for society, in Bergson’s mind, for society generally operates without the need for interference; we know what is expected from us and what we in turn expect. This habitualisation has been engrained and enforced through various social relationships and identifications (for example, family, church, work, and country), becoming instinctual for each individual. Habitualisation creates obligation, obligation engrains a sense of duty, and fulfilling one’s duties grants a greater sense of individual continuance with the greater society (Bergson 1935: 18f.; Scherer 2006: 186).

While habitualisation appears to be a non-creative process, Bergson sees this as a continuing, dynamic, and open process. Like Kant, Bergson believed that obligation presupposed freedom because an individual does not feel obligation unless they have freedom (1935: 19). In fact, Bergson identifies two

kinds of societies: the closed society and the open society. The closed society is, in essence, a society that maintains a circular repetition of institutionalised habits, remaining exclusively self-sufficient. The closed society aims at cohesion, where the citizen has a sense of well-being rooted in stability and regularity without serious crisis. The open society, however, is one that sees itself as the universalised humanity-at-large, rooted in the obligation of 'love' (as conceived within the mystical traditions). This emotional impetus is powerful enough to disrupt habitual slumber, and inspire creativity. Members of the society act upon emotionally driven inspiration (*élan vital*) to create natural habits and actions, much like an artist who is emotionally inspired and then must act upon that inspiration (Bergson 1935).

In a society open to this, Scherer summarises, Bergson sees creative emotions as forces that drive institutions toward the universal and thereby transform them; and because they form a natural response towards action, as habits do, they can form a foundation for ethical life. The difference between actions from habit and those from creative emotions is not only their beginnings, but also their ends, as fulfilment of habit gives pleasure, while fulfilment of creative emotion gives joy. Both forces, however, work dynamically within social institutions, and only intellect can explain both (Scherer 2006: 96f.).

While Iqbal does not use the concept of 'habit' in *Reconstruction* or other writings, probably because his philosophy was published before Bergson's, I believe that there is an argument that the notion of 'habit', and even more the notion of 'obligation', can be the foundations of society.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it could be argued that Iqbal actually presents a sociopolitical theory that is more consistent with their shared metaphysical principles than Bergson himself is within *Two Sources*.²⁰ This is because, for Iqbal, society is driven by particular fundamental powers – and two in particular, what he labels *force* and *conflict*. His notion of *force* is the generic parallel to Bergson's *élan vital* and *destiny* but expressed within the sociopolitical order. Force cannot be understood as sheer physical power; rather he states: 'I believe in the power of the spirit, not brute force' (Iqbal 2002b: 95).²¹ Force is, for Iqbal, the divine tendency in the universe that drives its evolution. There is a spiritual power that drives the creative evolution of individuals, societies, and the entire cosmos itself. It drives every element of the universe to evolve after eons into its present state, from the atom, to the human, and to the human civilisation.

However, since these evolved forms are inherently unstable and weak, they achieve higher forms of evolution through overcoming *conflict*.

Conflict plays an important role in Iqbal's political theory. As with his metaphysical belief of a teleologically evolving universe, Iqbal speaks of progressively evolving requirements of ideal individuals and society, in removing 'social problems, to settle our disputes, and to place international morality on a surer basis' (2002a: 183). It is when our (*élan vital*) force-driven egos and societies overcome conflicts that they evolve into their higher forms (even immortality). While Iqbal expands the ideas of force and conflict, parallel ideas are found in Bergson as well. For instance, in a discussion of war, he argues that there is a point where, as Soulez notes, 'Life [*élan vital*] no longer drives societies via the clash of wills towards their integration in a finally unified humanity', but rather it drives the destruction of humanity itself over the destruction of one's enemies (2013: 110). Sociopolitical order, therefore, is necessary for both Bergson and Iqbal. This is because human societies are the locations where humans develop and actualise these forces, overcome their conflicts, and evolve towards their ideal forms of development (Iqbal 2002a: 186).

Moreover, both Bergson and Iqbal seem to agree on the single most significant threat to the development of human individuality and human societies – exclusion of the other. For Bergson, it is this instinct for exclusion that has made racism so common. When that notion of exclusion is magnified by science (that by its nature divides and labels), exclusionism opens the door to extermination (Bergson 1935: 71–8). Iqbal expresses similar sentiments:

Tribal or national organizations on the lines of race or territory are only temporary phases in the enfoldment 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. (Iqbal 2002a: 187)

For Iqbal, Islam transcends all such divisions – not just for Muslims, but for all humans. The Qur'an calls upon all people to overlook their differences and unite on their commonalities. He states: 'All men and not just 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'²² (Iqbal 2002a: 187).

The resolution or solution of the modern sociopolitical crisis in Iqbal and Bergson are parallel, but unique to each philosopher. Naturally, in reintroducing the divine nexus, the key for both is found in religion. In *Two Sources*, Bergson distinguishes between two systems: the closed and the open. The closed system is characterised by a closed religion, closed morality, and closed society, whereas the open system is characterised by their counterparts. Humans are animals who need a community in order to survive, and the closed society is focused on survival, continuance and 'social cohesion' (Bergson 1935: 21). Thus, the protection of the society and its members from the threat of nature and death, over the promise of life, is its highest ideal (175). In this, the closed society is constantly at war, or perceives itself as under the constant threat of war or social destruction. Since the closed society is focused upon survival, its religion and morality seek to solidify the ideals of the closed society. As such, it is guided by a morality of exclusion and rigid obedience to the laws (that is, its Kantian categorical imperatives). When these laws are challenged, the intellectual focus of society is directed at finding reasons to support the existing structures, institutions, and codes. Likewise, the religion of such a society is focused on preserving the traditional sociopolitical order. To secure the obedience needed to maintain authoritative tradition, its deity forbids, threatens, commands, and condemns.

The open society, however, is one that possesses a different kind of religion and morality altogether. Focused on promoting life, peace, and inclusion, the open society specifically aims at enabling the essential capabilities needed for a full-human life (that is, freedom and creativity) universally. Unlike being driven by the pressure of social cohesion and obedience, members of the open society are driven by an internal attraction towards some such ideal or ideals. Our actualisation of these ideals is accompanied by corresponding emotions. For the closed society, it is a sense of general well-being and a sense of pleasure (and joy). For the open society, however, the emotion created is one of 'enthusiasm' (39) – an enthusiasm from the sense of progress and forward development. These ideals are typically represented by the exemplars from that society – the heroes, prophets, law-givers, and mystics – who have made a deep mystical (intuitive) connection with the creative source of life itself (that is, God) and who embody these ideals (31, 81). This mystic is like an artist, in that s/he creates things in Reality. This attraction transcends

intellect and analytical reason, and is rooted in a deeper and more holistic kind of human understanding – that is, mysticism. This mysticism (or connection with the creative source) cannot be ascetic or monastic, but it must inspire some genuine activity within the world. In fact, the very nature of this experience is to connect to God (the creative source) and flow back towards humanity, which cannot be taught, but ‘it has only to show itself, and its mere presence may stir others to action’ (40). So while not all humans may obtain this mystical experience, they may awaken such deeper connections within us, and thus inspire us to action. All human individual and socio-political progress has ‘always been from the contact with the generative principle of the human species’, from which humanity has drawn its strength to love one another and inspire a more open morality (41). The ‘mystic society, embracing all humanity and moving animated by a common will’, will create a more complete humanity (67). So much so, Bergson argues, that justice will be replaced by charity, and the society eventually resolves its moral problems.

Naturally, Iqbal also asserts the fundamental importance of religion in the sociopolitical order. Reality, characterised as being spiritual in essence, drives social evolution in order to resolve its problems. In a Hegelian sense, Iqbal argues that Ultimate Reality (or Universal Spirit) manifests its driving force through great historical individuals and through their civilisations.²³ At the same time, Iqbal (2002a: 183) asserts that the resolutions cannot be found in ‘treatises, leagues, arbitrations and conferences’ but within a living personality (ego). This living personality cannot be a mere politician or philosopher, but someone who enables humanity to see the Divine both within revelation and within them (that is, a prophet). This person has ascended to the ‘highest heavens’ and had an intense ‘unitary experience’ with the divine ego (Iqbal 1932: 124). This experience is rooted in the Qur’anic idea of ‘inspiration’ (*wahy*). Inspiration is more than merely a religious experience according to Iqbal; it is ‘a universal property of life’, which is characterised differently in different stages of organic life – from the growth of the plant, to the evolution of a new organ in an animal, to the spiritual depth in human life (125).

Inspiration is the metaphysical source for human civilisations. The intuitive human knowledge of duration, *élan vital*, creative change, spiritual nature of Reality, its Ultimate Source (that is, God), and the human mystical

experience of it epitomised in the prophet inspires creative and transformative change. Both Bergson and Iqbal reject the notion that the mystical experience drives the person inwards. Rather, the prophet (for Iqbal) and the mystic (for Bergson),²⁴ insert themselves into the movement of time (duration) 'with a view to control the forces of history' (123). Moreover, neither Iqbal nor Bergson conceived the prophet-mystic as a politician, but someone whose impact was more civilisational.

The fact that both Iqbal and Bergson place the prophet-mystic at the heart of civilisations and societies implies something vital for modern socio-political thought: the importance of religion. All genuine societies find their unity through something that transcends those things that divide humans: nationalism, ethnicity, and tribalism. True unity is spiritual unity. This is because religion is not some irrational experience, covered then by a layer of speculative knowledge, but religion is a metaphysic in itself (94). The primary form of commitment and identity for humans originates from their metaphysical beliefs. What they believe about the nature of the cosmos, the origin and nature of the universe, and the nature of the things that exist within it (that is, humans), provides the reasons, contours, and motivations for their sociopolitical activity. In extension, then, there must also be a shared agreement on metaphysical beliefs that lie at the heart of any particular society. (For instance, one could see how modern Liberal secular society depends upon a shared belief regarding human nature.)

If religion, as a metaphysic, is more reflective of the natural order of the universe, then religion ought to be a better foundation for human societies. Yet, this metaphysical-religious source for human sociopolitical unity is more than merely shared intellectual belief; it is also the source for creating a shared expression of humanity. Human societies produce a particular kind of character within their members, a character that reflects the 'uniform mental outlook' or shared worldview. This process of forming character is known as culture, and culture is essential because it gives a place for the individual within society to examine and evaluate their world.

For Iqbal, and I would assert for Bergson as well, religion is the best vehicle through which a society's particular worldview and the cultural formation of its members is fulfilled. Religion has a particular view of the universe that suggests 'a new type of character tending to universalize itself' (Iqbal 2002c:

176f.). The more universalised and more consistent with Reality a religion is, the more successful is its ability to inspire sociopolitical flourishing. For Iqbal, Islam is that religion. The ideal of a universal society based upon a shared religious vision was originally a product of Jesus and Christianity, but with its monastic focus it was unable to actualise its vision when assimilated by Imperial Rome. As such, according to Iqbal, this ideal was finally epitomised by the Prophet Muhammad and Islamic civilisation, which rejected tribalism and promoted a sociopolitical unity based upon religion. Muslim culture, as the ‘product of cross-fertilization of the Semitic and the Aryan ideas’ (178), looks to create a universalised human culture that transcends nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sectarianism.²⁵ It is a society whose citizenship does not depend upon birth, but through the explicit, individual, voluntary, and public identification with Islam and the global Muslim community (that is, the *ummah*). This means that Islam provides more than a pan-Islamic society; it is the foundation for a pan-human society.

The reason that Islam is the better foundation for a more universal human society, according to Iqbal, is that modern Western societies maintain and promote values that divide humans, humanity, and human nature itself – in particular through its commitment to secularism. He states: ‘The state is not a combination of sacred and secular but a unity without such distinctions’ (Iqbal 2002d: 118).²⁶ For Islam, human unity is both religious and political. A nationality based on any ‘material limitations’ is not the highest limit of political development for humanity. Instead, the ‘political ideal of Islam consists in the creation of a people born of a free fusion of all races and nationalities’, although sharing a common historical heritage given by the Prophet (117).

Therefore, Iqbal’s response to the Western Liberal Nationalism and its Great Separation is Islam. Islam and the society it inspires transcends chronic human divisions. Islamic society is global, inclusive, and best develops full-humanity. Humans, in general, and Muslims in particular, would be best served by a society that eliminates obstacles and empowers individuals. While the goal for all Muslims should be the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate (Iqbal 1932: 159), Iqbal concedes that nationalism is currently the prominent sociopolitical system in which human individuality develops into its higher forms. He argues that nationalism, particularly Muslim nationalism,

has continuing practical relevance and utility to Muslims today. This is because, in the international arena, there is no sympathy for weakness and only power is respected. Since Muslims globally find themselves in weakness, it is prudent that they seek to strengthen themselves by establishing workable independent modern states. The nationalistic separation of the *ummah* is a temporary situation, as each separated Muslim nation will 'sink into her own deeper self' to focus on her own vision until such time as Muslim nations are powerful enough 'to form a living family of republics' (that is, an Islamic League of Nations) (ibid.). So, in his famous Presidential Address before the All-Muslim League, Iqbal states that the goal for Indian Muslims is to create their own nation-state in northwest India (that is, Pakistan).²⁷

Even still, Iqbal asserts that nationalism poses the single most vital danger for Indian Muslims. The problem with Western-styled nationalism is its secularism. While Iqbal does not mention so-called wars of religion in Europe, he argues that secularism is the natural outworking of Christianity's otherworldly emphasis. Thus, the universal ethic of Jesus is replaced by the nationalistic ethic of Protestantism. This is not the case within Islam. 'Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter,' asserts Iqbal. 'In Islam, God and the universe, spirit and matter, Church and State, are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam, matter and spirit realize itself in space and time' (Iqbal 2002e: 193f.).

In what could be identified as the most significant insight from his years living in Europe, Iqbal argues that European secular nationalism has driven religion out of public discourse. In doing so, it has rooted the ultimate interests of the state within nationalism and not humanism (Iqbal 2002e: 194). The West has become a political civilisation, which sees man as a thing to be exploited. As such, it is natural for it and its oppressive economic system to be in conflict with Islamic cultures (Iqbal 2002f: 215, 2002e: 192). So, Iqbal rejects European views of nationalism, not because they will hurt Islamic societies materially, but because in them he sees 'the germs of atheistic materialism', which is 'the greatest danger to modern humanity' (Iqbal 2002f: 212). Islam cannot accept the notion of privatised religion in the sociopolitical order. Iqbal states: 'The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically

related to the social order which it created. The rejection of one will eventually involve the rejection of the other' (ibid.).

This means that the development of nationalistic polity outside of Islamic values of solidarity and unity is unthinkable, and Muslims therefore need independent sociopolitical self-determination united within a larger federated India (akin to Canada).²⁸ Since India is a multicultural, multiethnic, multinational, and multireligious state, which seeks for genuine equality between race, religion, and class, race-conscious European ethnic nationalism is inapplicable (Iqbal 2002e: 200–1). The creation of a Muslim state within a federated India would not be a 'religious' state, for the idea of 'religion' as a phenomenon distinct from all other areas of human life is a concept alien to Islam. Unlike a church, Islam is 'a State conceived as a contractual organization long before Rousseau ever thought of such a thing, and animated by an ethical ideal which regards man not as an earth-rooted creature . . . but a spiritual being understood in terms of social mechanism'; for Iqbal considers 'politics have their roots in the spiritual life of man' (201).

Conclusion

Muhammad Iqbal is, arguably, one of the most significant voices of modern Islamic and Indian nationalism (Esposito 1983; Esposito and Voll 2001). This chapter sought to identify the major ideas of Iqbal's political theory, which he formulated in order to resolve an epistemological crisis created by Western imperial colonialism. A significant element of this effort was the assimilation of Bergson's metaphysical ideas into a modernisation of Islamic thought. While Iqbal did not simply absorb Bergson without criticism, it is evident that the two philosophers shared many fundamental ideas on the nature of reality, human understanding, and a good human society. Notably, both philosophers saw that the cosmos was spiritual in essence, and that this cosmos was driven by a divine Creative Force that is teleological in nature. This force has moved all things in an evolutionary process towards greater actualisation and empowerment. This vision of Reality has the capacity to inspire, by recognising that the Creative Force that is at work in our evolving universe allows humans to strive in creating societies that best support their individual evolutionary developmental process. The best of these societies are those that derive their inspiration from individuals who access the

Creative Force in a deeper way (that is, prophets and mystics) and therefore inspire a society more universal and consistent with the purposes of Reality (Iqbal 2002a: 183–6). The implications of this convergence and union are significant for scholars of philosophy and Islamic studies, and examining the legacy of Bergsonian–Process thought within modernist and reformist Islamic thought has only begun.

Additionally, this chapter sought to show how this reconstructed divine nexus aspires to overcome the oppressive and restrictive limitations created by modern Western societies, notably nationalism, racism, classism, and secularism. Both Iqbal and Bergson assert the fundamental importance of religion in society. Bergson (1935: 80–2), for instance, contends that religion is not merely the helpmate of morality, but rather it is the drive, the impulse, and the impetus for society itself. With that, both add that religion exists between the real and the ideal in society, and that church and state are essentially the same, in that they differ only in degree not in kind (Iqbal 1932: 9; Bergson 1935: 67). This is important because metaphysical-religious commitments (even if they involve the denial of metaphysics) transcend all other forms of intellectual commitment. This means that metaphysical beliefs, even if unarticulated, exist prior to our sociopolitical values, and they influence our human activities. This is evidenced by Iqbal’s criticism of the inherent nationalism and racism within Western societies being dependent upon a metaphysical belief regarding human nature.

So, in response to Lilla’s thesis, the modern detachment of political thought from religion and metaphysics characterised by Hobbes and Locke may have been successful in a time when the metaphysical theories of the period were no longer consistent with developments in science. Iqbal, drawing upon European philosophy (Bergson), science, and the Qur’an, however, was able to develop a metaphysical theory and Islamic theology that is more consistent with the scientific knowledge of the period, and a political theory that overcomes the problems of Western secular-Liberal nationalism and promotes values more consistent with human freedom and fuller developmental capabilities.

Notes

1. Bergson was given ambassadorial responsibilities by France in the United States, was involved in the development of the League of Nations, and later appointed president of the International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation (CICI) for the Leagues of Nations (as precursor to UNESCO) (Soulez and Worms 2002: 150–4).
2. For instance, Bergson has been called an ‘enemy of parliamentarism’ (Schmidt 1985: 109–10) and accused of producing an ‘*élan vital* of the bourgeoisie’ (Boch 1938: 319–20).
3. The ethical ideal in Islam is a strong will and strong body, but this is not found among Indian Muslims, who have become ‘enfeebled, self-dwarfing, dependent, and spiritually lazy’, which is called ‘contentment’. This is merely dependence, Iqbal contends, which is found in various ways: the young and educated Muslim seeks civil service, the middle-class is not able to unite economically because of mistrust, and the rich see trade-work as humiliating. Iqbal even speaks of the physical weakness of Indian school children, which further limits their power to fight subjection. (He, rather, idealises the lowly shopkeeper, who despite being illiterate works hard and will fight for his family.) Iqbal argues that education is a poor vehicle for moral training, but in the low socio-economic context of India, education is the only method for individual development. However, while education in India has provided ‘bread and butter’, it has failed to make India a ‘living nation’ as Indian school children know more about the Puritan Revolution than they know their own history (Iqbal 2002b: 93–6).
4. For Bergson, see Iqbal (1932: 3, 35–6, 39, 46–8, 51, 52–5, 57, 62, 141).
5. Iqbal’s identification with this school challenges the misinterpretation of Iqbal as a Nietzschean philosopher – an interpretation common among Euro-American commentators (for example, Schimmel 1985) even during Iqbal’s own lifetime. It was something that he personally rejected in a letter to his English friend and translator Dr Nicholson. In it he stated: ‘Some English reviewers, however, have been misled by the superficial resemblance of some of my ideas to those of Nietzsche’ (2002a: 189). He contends, rather, that many apparently Nietzschean ideas are rooted more in Sufi thought, and are better understood through the thought of British philosopher Samuel Alexander, who admittedly was indebted to Bergson.
6. The contours and criticism of this myth has been expertly examined in William T. Cavanaugh’s book, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the*

Roots of Modern Conflict (2009). Juan Cole challenged Lilla by arguing, ‘when Europeans are confronted with renewed experiences of cycles of violence at the end of the twentieth century around the world, they do not remember the history of European [nonreligious-nationalist inspired] violence of the twentieth century, but rather retrieve the forgotten histories of the wars of religion of early modern Europe’ (Cole et al. 2013: 19). So, the popular Western belief is that secularism, found enshrined in the doctrine of the separation of church and state, is essential in order to prevent religious-based violence.

7. This is the third stanza ‘Bergson’, from his poem *Locke, Kant and Bergson*, in which he uses the metaphor of a tulip to distil the central ideas of each philosopher. He places Bergson at the culmination of modern European thought and highlights the idea of *élan vital*.
8. This is a point that Frederick Copleston (1994: 180) also makes in *A History of Philosophy. Volume IX: Modern Philosophy*.
9. Bergson asserts that Darwinian evolutionary theory fails to explain how different parts can perform the same duties, despite their parts being differently situated and differently constituted and having different functions (1922: 80).
10. Iqbal states: ‘Science seeks to establish uniformities of experience, i.e., the laws of mechanical repetition. Life with its intense feeling of spontaneity constitutes a centre of indetermination, and thus falls outside the domain of necessity. Hence science cannot comprehend life.’ Iqbal argues that the biologist who limits himself to a mechanical worldview does so because he confines himself to examining lower forms of life and generalises from that. If this biologist examined life as revealed in himself, for example, free will and critical thought, he would see ‘the inadequacy of his mechanical concepts’ (Iqbal 1932: 50).
11. Iqbal gives the example of a ray of light that is comprised of billions of particles. While it would take thousands of years to observe each particle, the ray as a whole is observed by the eye in an instant.
12. Iqbal argues that Bergson’s mistake, positing that pure time and space are prior to ego-self, comes in the fact that these notions cannot rightly conceptualise the ‘multiplicity of objects and events’; for this intellectualisation only occurs with an ‘appreciative act of an enduring self’ that transforms the multiplicity ‘to the organic wholeness of a synthesis’ (Iqbal 1932: 55).
13. Iqbal states: ‘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 not-self is a fleeting moment in the life of God. His “I-amness” is independent, elemental, absolute. Of such a self it is impos-

- sible for us to form an adequate conception. As the Qur'an says, "Naught" is like Him; yet "He hears and sees" (Iqbal 1932: 56).
14. Bergson's theory of creative evolution was developed further by Samuel Alexander and C. Lloyd Morgan, both referred to by Iqbal. See Alexander (1920); Bergson (1922); Morgan (1923).
 15. In his 'Letter to Dr. Nicholson', Iqbal states that ideal individuals are expressions of a divine tendency in the universe, a notion that should be understood through Samuel Alexander's metaphysical notion of the perfect man. While Iqbal rejects Alexander's placement of God within the space-time continuum, he admits that his metaphysical beliefs are influenced by Alexander rather than Nietzsche (2002a: 182).
 16. Iqbal states: 'Ethically speaking, therefore, man is naturally good and peaceful. Metaphysically speaking, he is a unit of energy, which cannot bring out its dormant possibilities owing to its misconception of the nature of its environment. The ethical ideal of Islam is to disenthral man from fear, and thus to give him a sense of his personality, to make him conscious of himself as a source of power' (2002b: 86).
 17. Iqbal asserts the power of autocracy in medieval society was so engrained that it took a revolution, Luther in religion and Rousseau in politics, to emancipate Europe (2002b: 86).
 18. In fact, for Bergson, religion lies between the Law of Nature and the Command of Society; between the transcendent ideal and the approximate real (Iqbal 1935: 10).
 19. In a statement on Freud's notion of the unconscious, Iqbal does appear to favour the notion of habit as primary in human behaviour, and how our responses to stimuli habituate and 'gradually fall into a relatively fixed system, constantly growing in complexity by absorbing some and rejecting other impulses which do not fit in with our permanent system of responses' (1932: 24). Elsewhere, Iqbal (1932: 90) refers to the notion of habit in three ways. First, in discussing patterns of the rational mind, he asks if patterns of concrete thinking are merely habituated patterns of thought. Second, in evolution, he wonders if biological adaptation is simply the formation of fresh habits or modification of old ones (22–3). Third, he wonders if the nature and activities of the human body are purely the 'accumulated action or habit of the soul' (103). In fact, in discussing God as Absolute Ego, Iqbal (56) notes how 'Nature' is not matter occupying a void, but a structure of events and a mode of behaviour connected to some organic Self – something that the Qur'an calls the 'habit of Allah'.

20. In *Two Sources*, Bergson is occasionally inconsistent with his own ideas and methodology, a point also made by Soulez (2013).
21. Iqbal notes that some critics charge him with deifying physical force and conflict in his evolutionary theological-political theory. Here Iqbal admits the periodic need for 'righteous war', which is opposed to wars of conquest. He argues that people have the duty to fight in a righteous war but not in one of conquest; in the end, however, all war is destructive and must end eventually (see Iqbal 2002a: 183). Elsewhere, Iqbal challenges those European critics who argue that Islam can only exist and strive in a state of war. He reasons that war is an expression of the energy of a nation and a necessity for the survival of all nations – both in international competition and in the human evolutionary process. He contends that Islam permits only defensive wars and adds that the Prophet Muhammad engaged only in defensive wars and placed restrictions on killing women, children, and the sick, and destroying the economical and physical infrastructure of a nation. Iqbal notes that political expansion in Islam was not only the by-product of war but missionary work as well, noting that the greatest political expansions happened in the peaceful conversions of the Malaysians, the Mongols, and South Asians. Islam is essentially a religion of peace, which denounces all forms of political and social disorder, even forbidding the secret meeting, which is the heart of such disorder. All methods of violent social change are rejected – rather Islam aims to secure social peace at any cost. Iqbal, therefore, disparages those Muslims who criticise their Christian government and adds that their situation is reminiscent of the first Muslim migration to the Christian nation of Abyssinia, reminding them of the Qur'anic verse that speaks of the closeness of Christians and Muslims (see Iqbal 2002b: 96–100).
22. While Muslims have battled and conquered, with some merely personal ambitions covered with a veil of religion, these were 'not part of the original program of Islam' but a 're-paganization' of their beliefs. Instead, 'Islam aims at absorption', not territorial conquest, but a teaching that appeals to the common sense of humanity (Iqbal 2002a: 187).
23. See Hegel (1975: Section 3, paragraphs 24–39).
24. While Iqbal clearly distinguishes the mystic from the prophet, arguing that the one is inward-focused and the other outward, Bergson's use of the word 'mystic' is similar to Rousseau's 'Lawgiver' (Soulez 2013: 106; Bergson 1935: 77) – thus making Iqbal's 'prophet' and Bergson's mystic roughly synonymous.
25. The problem is that division has taken hold in Islam, and all distinctions of sect

- (Sunni, Shia, Wahabi, and so forth) and class must be eliminated in order to allow humanity to evolve freely.
26. 'The Caliph is not a divine representative but a fallible man like others. Even the Prophet is considered by some theologians to be fallible' (Iqbal 2002c: 118).
 27. 29 December 1930.
 28. Iqbal states: 'Thus it is clear that in the view of India's infinite variety in climates, races, languages, creeds and social systems, the creation of autonomous States based on the unity of language, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests, is the only possible way to secure a stable constitutional structure in India' (Iqbal 2002e: 201).

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9

Muhammad Iqbal: Restoring Muslim Dignity through Poetry, Philosophy and Religious Political Action¹

Dayne E. Nix

Naval War College, United States

Introduction

The poet Muhammad Iqbal perceived an attack on the dignity of Muslims as a result of the occupation and exploitation of his Indian homeland by British Imperialism. His doctrine of the Perfect Man, incorporating his philosophical and religious views, was his prescription for the restoration of that dignity that he effectively communicated through his popular poetry. Iqbal worked for nearly thirty years to achieve political change in his native India. Yet he did not work entirely in the political arena as a Gandhi or a Nehru, instead choosing to communicate his ideas through the less obvious means of his poetry. The power and effectiveness of his approach evades the Western mind, accustomed to more direct means of political activism. Yet Iqbal's approach was perfectly suited for his culture, which continues to hold the poet and his thought in high esteem. This chapter presents a history of ideas and interdisciplinary treatment of Iqbal's work, providing an analysis of the philosophical, political, and religious influences in a cultural context that shaped both the man and his message into the Poet of Muslim Dignity – a message that continues to resonate with contemporary Muslims.

In this chapter, I will first describe the challenge to the dignity of the Muslims in British India as perceived by Iqbal. Second, I will describe his

prescription to restore Muslim dignity, the *khudi*-empowered Perfect Man. Finally, I will elucidate Iqbal's pan-Islamic message and activism that he hoped would bring about the fulfilment of his vision and the restoration of Muslim dignity.

The Humiliation of Muslims in British India

Muhammad Iqbal looked deeply into the soul of India and discerned a wound that required the ministrations of his unique perspective. His analysis discerned that the dignity of India's Muslims had been deeply compromised by British colonialism, with both national and global implications. It is important to understand that his Muslim faith was born in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and arose from what has been characterised by anthropologists as an honour-based culture. In such cultures, honour and dignity are vital motivating factors, with affronts requiring 'eye for an eye' satisfaction. In Iqbal's view (and in that of many Indian Muslims of his time), the dignity of India's Muslims had been attacked by the imposition of British colonial rule on a once proud Muslim land. This humiliation was increased by the self-appointed role that the British assumed for themselves in India, that of bringing civilisation to India in the form of Christianity, nationalism, and democracy. Hegelian and utilitarian social theories as well as Social Darwinism served as a rationale for the colonial enterprise that served to increase Muslims' sense of humiliation. Finally, Iqbal was not one to accept victimhood. Instead, he suggests in the strongest terms that India's Muslims were at least partially responsible for their condition due to their own passivity in the face of imperial expansion.

Great Britain's Civilising Project

Take up the White Man's burden –
 Send forth the best ye breed –
 To bind your sons to exile
 To serve your captive's need;
 To wait in heavy harness
 On fluttered folk and wild –
 Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
 Half devil and half child. (Kipling 1989: 321)

Muhammad Iqbal grew up in a world that was profoundly influenced by British culture and influence. In fact, he was a beneficiary of that influence, educated within a system that incorporated both missionary and secular efforts to 'civilise' India's masses. Indeed, England and her people felt that they had a providential responsibility to 'govern, civilize, to educate and to improve the innumerable tribes and races whom Providence had placed beneath her scepter' (James 1997: 294). Lord Baring, British administrator in Egypt from 1886 to 1907, described this providential responsibility as a national philanthropy that devolved 'grave national responsibilities upon England', the 'lofty aspirations which attach themselves to her civilizing and moralizing mission' (Cromer 1913: 10f.).

Christianity was a great ally in Britain's efforts to civilise India. It was believed that only Christianity could provide the civilising influence that would finally provide for national and interracial cohesion of India's diverse people groups through the eventual elimination of Islam and Hinduism through evangelism (Cromer 1914: 19). Lord Baring also stated that 'Christianity is our most powerful ally' in establishing internal cohesion and a moral basis for English rule (52). While the government did not engage in proselytising, it did give permission to Christian missionaries to conduct evangelism throughout India and all the East India Company's territories, provided by an act of Parliament in 1813. Even though the intentions were mostly sincere, Iqbal and his countrymen resented these efforts, especially those directed against their religion. The 1857 Sepoy Rebellion (also known as the Indian Mutiny) is often attributed to these religious influences.

Great Britain also imposed its government upon India, attempting to bring both nationalism and democracy to the country. This was also viewed as an affront to Muslim dignity by Iqbal. In his estimation, nationalism was a source of racism and disunity among the peoples of Europe as well as India. He also viewed it as the cause of World War I. He believed that nationalism had put the entire world in peril.

And man creates an ever novel god
Whose joy is shedding blood, whose hallowed name
Is Colour, Fatherland; Blood-brotherhood.

Humanity is slaughtered like a sheep
Before this worthless idol. (Iqbal 1918: 55)

Along with nationalism, Iqbal viewed democracy² as a British import to the East that was inconsistent with Islam. Iqbal especially opposed democracy's separation of church and politics and viewed it as a particular threat to Islam's concept of the Unity of God, exemplified in its unity of religion and state. He viewed this as an existential issue (Iqbal [1930] 1974: 153–5).

The West thinks Soul and Body to be separate;
Hence the dichotomy between Religion and the State.
The church is busy saying prayers on Peter's rosary,
Quite unconcerned with polity,
And as for Western polity, it is pure deceit.
Thus Soul and Body in the West can never meet.
The intellect should always have the heart in train.
Look at the plight of Turkey, which has kept apart the twain.
The Turks forgot themselves in aping Western ways . . .
And cut between Religion and the state the ancient ties.³ (Iqbal 1991: 15)

Iqbal blamed democracy, as well as nationalism, for the wars that had been waged in Europe and that had significantly impacted the colonial world during the early years of the twentieth century. He believed that democracy's secularising influence removes the mitigating impact of religion from war and makes all people subject to the mortal dangers of a secular world:

Convey this message to the West from me:
Democracy is a sword drawn out of
its sheath, a sword that kills, a sword that knows
No difference between a Muslim and
an Infidel. If it does not remain
Sheathed for a while, then it will very soon
Destroy both itself and humanity. (Iqbal 1991: 30)

Philosophical Elements

Iqbal's studies led him down deep philosophical paths, and it was in these paths that he discerned the colonial rationale for the situation of his country-

men vis-à-vis the West. In Hegalian philosophy (popular in England at the time) he found a rationale by which Great Britain could justify its colonialism; in utilitarian applications he found the great bureaucratic machine that stifled the life of his homeland; and Social Darwinism fuelled the racism that brought about his people's utter humiliation.

Iqbal perceived a Hegelian dimension in the human social relations inherent in colonialism (Iqbal 1915: 55). Hegel writes in his monumental work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* that human relations are ultimately built upon human competition for recognition. True freedom consists of the ability to sacrifice one's life in the cause of recognition, and this is most perfectly realised when two individuals contest with each other, each willingly risking his life. The winner of this contest gains honour while the loser experiences death. Submission is preferable to death and leads, on individual, tribal, and national levels, to the development of what Hegel terms 'the master and the slave relationship', or 'master races and slave races' (1967: 234). The master gains a position of recognition and dignity through this relationship while the slave remains dependent (236). The slave sacrifices dignity as a result of his servile position.

At this point, Hegel's dialectical process takes over. From the thesis of the master, to the antithesis of the slave, comes the synthesis of a new attitude in the servant. Labour provides dignity to the slave, for he must learn and grow in order to accomplish his assigned tasks. His dignity lies in accepting his servile position. For Iqbal, the similarity between Hegel's thought and the relationship between Great Britain and India were obvious.

In his *Book of Slaves*, Iqbal poetically describes his country's situation, with servitude resulting in far-reaching effects on emotional well-being and psychology:

Bondage kills the heart in the live body
And makes the very soul a burden to it.
It enervates youth into palsied age.
It blunts the mighty jungle lion's teeth . . .
Deprived of all sense of distinction, he
Thinks bee-stings to be honey and takes good
For evil. Dead, although he never died,

He bears his own corpse on his shoulders;
 And having staked away life's honor, he
 Is happy like an ass to be fed grass. (Iqbal 1991: 43)

'The elegant-styled poet is the nation's clear-sighted eye' (Iqbal 2005a: 87). Iqbal saw himself as a seer and a guide for his people. His self-appointed mission was to bring about self-reflection and awaken India's Muslims to their condition. He warned India's Muslims that they were in bondage, a servile and dependent race subject to the whims of their colonial master, Great Britain.

India, during Iqbal's time, was also the subject of a vast utilitarian experiment begun in the nineteenth century by James Mill and Jeremy Bentham. In 1817, James Mill, the 'able lieutenant of Jeremy Bentham', the originator of utilitarian ethics, had suggested the reorganisation of India according to utilitarian principles in his *History of British India* (Ghosh 1978: 97). On the strength of his suggestions, he was employed by the East India Company (EIC) to manage its operations. Working with Bentham, these utilitarians attempted a 'vast social reform of India', following a scientific methodology to bring about the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Ghosh 1978: 97).

Bentham and James Mill suggested that the best form of government for India would be authoritarian, one that could guarantee a high degree of central control deemed necessary to effectively administer their scientifically organised legal system (99). James Mill designed a new law code for India, attempting to incorporate the best of both Hindu and Muslim jurisprudence, while following British utilitarian principles.

John Stuart Mill, the famous son of James Mill, succeeded his father at the East India Company and adopted his father's utilitarian approach. In spite of his well-known advocacy for human liberty, he continued to support a thoroughly authoritarian bureaucratic system for India, believing that a 'benevolent despotism' was necessary to bring about social and material improvement due to India's backward state:

Mill took the position that a good native despotism is a rare and transitory accident, but that when the dominion is that of a more civilized people, a gradual transition of the native population to a higher state of civilization and into self-government was more likely to be promoted. (Harris 1964: 191)

By Iqbal's time, the utilitarian bureaucracy was well established in India and was evident in every aspect of life: its government, its ubiquitous law code, its penal system, and its courts. The result was a loss of freedom resulting from an over-organised society and an all-encompassing bureaucratic machinery.

Another pseudo-philosophy that contributed to the humiliation of India's Muslims during Iqbal's life was Social Darwinism. This viewpoint taught, seemingly consistent with Hegel's philosophy, interracial competition and the relative merits of particular racial groups resulting from natural selection. Social Darwinism contributed to a sense of superiority on the part of many, and the British were particularly attracted to its excesses. Many British expatriates living in India exhibited this sense of racial superiority with some of the worst excesses being promulgated by English planters and farmers who believed that they could treat Indian labourers in any way that they pleased: 'They believed in a world in which some men were ordained to deliver blows and some to receive them', often using pejorative and offensive language to refer to their workers (James 1997: 350). This treatment fuelled heated debate between Indian nationals and the English, and the 'superior offensiveness of the ruling race' by some 'irresponsible Englishman' often caused problems for the colonial government (Cromer 1914: 211).

Iqbal opposed this racism in his philosophy and poetry, teaching that Islam was far superior to Western thought and the practices so prevalent in his homeland. In Islam, he taught, all people are equal before the supreme creator. Britain's civilising role and social philosophies were found completely without merit in his eyes:

Only one unity is dependable, and that unity is the brotherhood of man, which is above race, nationality, colour, or language. So long as this so-called democracy, this accursed nationalism, and this degraded imperialism are not shattered, so long as men do not demonstrate by their actions that they believe that the whole world is the family of God, so long as distinctions of race, colour and geographical nationalities are not wiped out completely, they will never be able to lead a happy and contented life and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialize. (Iqbal 1992: 375)

Muslim Responsibility

Iqbal attributed a great deal of blame for his country's situation to Great Britain, but victimhood was unacceptable to Iqbal. He believed that Muslims had inadvertently served as co-conspirators with their colonial masters in passively accepting British occupation in exchange for commercial and cultural benefits: jobs, Western practices, and markets for Indian goods. Iqbal believed that Muslim leaders had abdicated historical responsibility for God-given lands, and had therefore experienced Allah's judgement. Their current historical predicament was a direct result of their unfaithfulness (Armstrong 2002: xi–xii):

In the heart of a people that once shattered the world I have seen a conflict between religion and country. The spirit is dead in the body through weakness of faith, despairs of the strength of the manifest religion; Turk, Persian, Arab intoxicated with Europe and in the throat of each the fish-hook of Europe; And East wasted by the West's imperialism. (Iqbal 1932: 55)

In Iqbal's 1915 book of poetry, *The Secrets of the Self*, he singles out Sufism for particular criticism, teaching that it was largely responsible for the passivity of India's Muslims ([1915] 2001). While he appreciated certain aspects of Sufism, Iqbal (with the mainstream Muslim schools) rejected the characteristics he considered destructive to Islam: its other-worldly focus in the pursuit of divine union, its concept of personal annihilation in the beloved, and its practical passivity in the face of Western expansion. For Iqbal, its most damaging impact was the passivity it encouraged in his people. To him it seemed that Indian Muslims had simply fallen asleep in the face of Great Britain's incursions:

The tiger-tribe was exhausted by hard struggles,
They had set their hearts on enjoyment of luxury . . .
At length their tigerish nature was broken . . .
That craving after action dwelt in their hearts no more.
They lost the power of ruling and the resolution to be independent . . .
The wakeful tiger was lulled to slumber by the sheep's charm (Iqbal
[1915] 2001: 48–55)

In 1909, after his return from England, Iqbal published an article entitled 'Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal' in the *Hindustan Review*. In this article, Iqbal clearly identified his perception of the state of Muslim character and the need for personal reformation:

Does the Indian Muslim possess a strong will in a strong body? Has he got the will to live? Has he got sufficient strength of character to oppose those forces which tend to disintegrate the social organism to which he belongs? I regret to answer my questions in the negative. The reader will understand, that in the great struggle for existence it is not principally number which makes a social organism survive. Character is the ultimate equipment of man, not only in his efforts against a hostile social environment, but also in his contest with kindred competitors after a fuller, richer, ampler life. The life-force of the Indian Muslim has become woefully enfeebled. The decay of the religious spirit, combined with other causes of a political nature over which he had no control, has developed in him a habit of self-dwarfing, a sense of dependence and, above all, that laziness of spirit, which an enervated people call by that dignified name of 'contentment' in order to conceal their own enfeeblement. (Iqbal 1992: 41)

Iqbal was clearly dissatisfied with his perception of the state of Muslim character and faithfulness in India. But he believed that God is all powerful and wondered if God bears some responsibility for the state of Muslim affairs. Had Allah rewarded his people's loyalty and worship?

We erased the smudge of falsehood from
the parchment firmament;
We redeemed the human species from the
chains of slavery;
And we filled the Holy *Ka'aba* with our foreheads
humbly bent,
Clutching to our fervent bosoms the Qur'an in
ecstasy,
Yet the charge is laid against us we have
played the faithless part,
If disloyal we have proved, hast Thou
deserved to win our heart? (Iqbal 1997: 10)

Iqbal boldly questions Allah about his commitment to India's Muslims, and he complains against God's seeming lack of concern for his people:

No; the burning power of song bides me be bold and not to faint;
Dust be in my mouth, but God – He is the theme of my complaint.
(Iqbal 1997: 3)

Ultimately, Iqbal concludes that responsibility for the condition of Muslims in India must be borne by Muslims alone. Their future depends on their own renewed obedience to Allah.

It is clear that human dignity was a motivating passion for Iqbal. Reflecting a Hegelian perspective, he expressed the situation of his nation and his people from the vantage point of human freedom and dignity. British colonial policy in India, facilitated by utilitarian social theories, had established a machine-like political structure consisting of an authoritarian central government supported by a vast bureaucracy. In India, the impact of this vast social machine, fuelled by Britain's sense of racial superiority and the imposition of Western civilisation, was experienced as a malignant paternalism that stifled human freedom and was destructive of Muslim culture. Early in his career, Iqbal awakened to the sense that Indian Muslims had, through Britain's political domination, become mere objects in the galaxy of colonial rule: 'For it is the essential principle of slavery, that man has not yet attained a consciousness of this freedom and consequently sinks down to a mere thing – an object of no value' (Hegel 1967: 195, 198). In his poetry, Iqbal reflected upon the experience of British domination and concluded that even hell was preferable to foreign domination.

Like their own flames; fires whose flames pounce
Like biting dogs, which horrify, which burn
The living, but whose light is cold and dead –
A million years in such a place
Are better than a moment's servitude. (Iqbal 1969: 44)

Iqbal saw himself as a modern-day prophet and a source of national (and international) Muslim self-reflection, accurately judging his people's historical situation. He concluded that his Muslim countrymen required a personal renaissance of faith in order to reestablish the global dignity of Islam, to

release Muslims from the slavery that had been imposed upon them through British Imperial domination. In order to bring about that renaissance of faith and restore Muslims' freedom and dignity, Iqbal developed his philosophy of the *khudi*-empowered Perfect Man.

Restoring Muslim Dignity: The *Khudi*-empowered Perfect Man

In 1915, Iqbal published his first Persian poetic-philosophic work, the *Asrar-i-Khudi*, or *Secrets of the Self*. Designed for a wide Muslim audience, the work introduced the concept of *khudi*, the principle of strengthened Muslim ego and power aimed at the restoration of the dignity and identity of all Muslims, especially of those in India. Iqbal's goal was to instil a strong will in the character of Muslims in order to oppose British Imperialism. He also sought to discover a charismatic Muslim leader, a Perfect Man, who would lead Islam out of its depressed state. He often complained about the absence of strong leaders in the Muslim community. His work sought to develop or reveal a generation of leaders who would bring about an Islamic renaissance, perhaps in answer to the vigorous and effective Hindu leadership that filled the newspapers and jails with opponents of the British Raj.

In the *Secrets of the Self*, Iqbal first explained that all of life derives from the powerful expression of the self (*khudi*). He suggested that this secret had been abandoned by Muslims and was being revealed once again through his poetic inspiration. Iqbal defines the word as a particularly powerful ego:

Ethically the word '*khudi*' means (as used by me) self-reliance, self-respect, self-confidence, self-preservation, even self-assertion when such a thing is necessary, in the interests of life and the power to stick to the cause of truth, justice, duty, etc., even in the face of death. Such behavior is moral in my opinion because it helps in the integration of the forces of the Ego, thus hardening it, as against the forces of disintegration and dissolution (vide Reconstruction); practically the metaphysical Ego is the bearer of two main rights that is the right to life and freedom as determined by the Divine Law. (Iqbal 1992: 244)

Iqbal explained that the essence of *khudi* is love and that the self is enlivened by its passion. However, the love he described is the believer's love for God

and the Prophet, Muhammad. This love is the source of energy that brings conquest in the name of Allah:

Love fears neither sword nor dagger,
 Love is not born of water and air and earth.
 Love makes peace and war in the world,
 Love is the fountain of Life, Love is the flashing sword of death.
 The hardest rocks are shivered by love's glance:
 Love of God at last becomes wholly God,
 Learn thou to love and seek a beloved . . .
 Kiss the threshold of the Perfect Man!
 Like Rumi, light the candle
 And burn Rum in the fire of Tabriz!⁴ (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 29)

The love that invigorates the self is reflective of that same power that had enabled early Muslims to defeat the ancient powers and establish a world-wide empire. Iqbal encouraged Muslims to return to their pure religion, to their roots (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 32, 37).

An important goal of the *Asrar-i-khudi* is to describe the various character traits of the Muslim ego endowed with *khudi*. Desire is essential, as is self-control. Most important, however, is negation, an attitude that eliminates every object of worship except Allah (76). This trait is an essential characteristic of the vast self-empowered force that Iqbal sought to build within Islam:

Whoso dwells in the world of negation.
 Is freed from the bonds of wife and child.
 He withdraws his gaze from all except God
 And lays the knife to the throat of his son.
 Though single, he is like a host in onset:
 Life is cheaper in his eyes than wind. (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 77)

Iqbal's ultimate goal was to discover a Perfect Man, one who perfectly exemplified *khudi*. When this individual comes on the scene, Iqbal believed he would bring peace to the world, in the same way that the followers of the Prophet Muhammad brought peace to the world of his time.⁵ He hoped to discover champions lying hidden within the masses of Muslim India.

Our handful of earth has reached the zenith,
 For that champion will come forth from this dust!
 There sleeps amidst the ashes of our to-day
 The flame of a world-consuming morrow . . .
 Appear, O rider of destiny!
 Appear, O light of the dark realm of Change . . .
 Silence the noise of the nations,
 Bring once more days of peace to the world,
 Give a message of peace to them that seek battle! (Iqbal [1915] 2001:
 83–4)

Iqbal suggested that this champion, the Perfect Man, would be one who exemplified the qualities of hardness (89), action (90), and power (92) while he eschewed *sua'l* (beggary) (39) and passivity (Iqbal [1915] 2001). Ultimately, the Perfect Man would have global implications, especially important in an international context in which Muslims had largely lost any political influence.

Arise and create a new world!
 Wrap thyself in flames, be an Abraham! (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 90)

It is important to note that Iqbal's conception was not an encouragement to passively await a leader who would arrive on an indeterminate future day to lead the faithful. Instead, he taught that all Muslims were responsible for developing the character traits of the Perfect Man within themselves. He advised, 'Give up waiting for the Mahdi – the personification of power. Go and create him' (Iqbal 1961: 94).

Iqbal viewed war and peace as a benefit to *khudi* and borrowed a page from Nietzsche when he extolled the benefits of a truly worthy enemy. The enemy awakens the creative energies within the Perfect Man who is able to wage war against the enemy for the benefit of God. Iqbal suggested that peace can be an evil if warfare for God is required, although war waged for any reason but God is unacceptable:

Peace becomes an evil, if its object be aught else;
 War is good if its object is God.
 If God be not exalted by our swords,
 War dishonors the people. (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 118)

Finally, Iqbal advised the Western powers not to gloat over the humiliated condition of Muslims in light of their world situation. Their dignity was derived from their relationship with Allah, not any association with empire or territory. In spite of their current state of powerlessness, ‘lightning flashes still lurked within their cloud’:

Although crown and signet have passed from us,
Do not look with contempt on our beggarliness!
In thine eyes we are good for nothing,
Thinking old thoughts, despicable.
We have honor from ‘There is no God but Allah,’
We are the protectors of the universe . . .
Lightning-flashes still lurk in our cloud . . .
In our essence divinity is mirrored:
The Moslems being is one of the signs of God. (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 140)

Iqbal published a second Persian work in 1918, the *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi*, or the *Mysteries of Selflessness*, which continued his theme of Islamic renaissance. Where the *Asrar* had focused on the development of the Perfect Islamic Man empowered with *khudi*, the *Rumuz* provided a recipe for the development of the perfect Islamic community composed of *khudi*-empowered individuals. Iqbal’s theme was,

[t]hat the perfection of communal life is attained when the community, like the individual, discovers the sensation of self; and that the propagation and perfecting of this sensation can be realized through the guarding of the communal traditions. (Iqbal 1918: 59)

Iqbal believed that there was room for one cultural community within the world and believed that the Muslim *ummah* was engaged in fateful competition with the West. Europe, ravaged by World War I, clearly demonstrated the West’s failures. He called upon the Muslim community to arise and take its rightful place in the world and bring about peace and human equality under the banner of Islam through its greatest power.

And on the tongue to cry, *There is One God.*
No other god but God – this is the point

On which the world concentrically turns,

This is the conclusion of the world's affairs. (Iqbal 1918: 54; emphasis in original)

Iqbal's philosophy was meant to combat the power of the British and to revitalise the Islamic world. In taking this approach, Iqbal endowed his Perfect Man with a dignity based on the Muslim's relationship with Allah. As he noted in his writings, the closer his Perfect Man draws to his God, the more perfect he becomes. This relationship to God also imparts a *telos* to human existence, with the goal always to know and please God and accomplish his purposes in the world. Ultimately, this relationship provides the only dignity necessary for Iqbal's Muslims.

We have honor from 'There is no God but Allah,'

We are the protectors of the universe. (Iqbal [1915] 2001: 140)

Restoring Muslim Dignity: Poetry, Politics and Pan-Islam

They said, 'This world of ours – does it agree with you?'

I said, 'It does not agree'. They said, 'Then break it to pieces.'

Iqbal, *Javid Namah* (1932, 122)

In 1930, Iqbal made a speech as president of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad in which he called for a separate Muslim state within India. Because of this speech, he is known as the Spiritual Father of Pakistan, the first to voice publicly the impossibility of reconciling the sectarian communal differences between India's Hindus and Muslims and to suggest a possible political future. It was not until after his death that the idea would be included in the political agenda of the Muslim League. In 1947, his dream became a reality, with the establishment of the independent homeland for Indian Muslims called Pakistan. Some commentators doubt that Iqbal's 1930 intentions included two competing national entities, but that he was arguing for a Muslim state within a federated India, with the recognition of religiously oriented majority regions and electorates. Yet this poet-philosopher's political views and activities played an important role in bringing about that new national reality only seventeen years after his watershed speech.

Iqbal's philosophy of the Perfect Man emphasises the necessity of action

in bringing about the perfect community, of creating new worlds as the vice-regent and co-creator with God on earth. His political activities and viewpoint serve as a demonstration of Perfect Manhood, essential to the development of his Muslim community and the restoration of Muslim dignity in India and the world. In his political efforts, Iqbal played an important role as a prophetic voice, political leader, and poet laureate for the Indian Muslims of his day.

Iqbal lived in one of the most politically active areas of India during arguably the most important period of India's modern history. Lahore was the capital of the province of the Punjab and shared a border with the North-West Frontier Province, a hotbed of Pathan (Pashtun) resistance to British rule. It was only a few miles from the border with Afghanistan, the focus of seemingly constant British military activity. Muslims were the majority religious group in the Punjab and would play an important role in its political development. They would also serve as the core constituency of the future state of Pakistan.

Lahore was also a university town, site of the Government College, itself a result of nineteenth-century British reforms designed to prepare Indian youth for positions in the Indian Civil Service. Educated at the Scotch Mission High School in Sialkot, Iqbal gained admittance to Government College and moved to Lahore in 1895. Already a budding young poet, his literary activities gained him an introduction to the *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam* (The Association for the Service of Islam), a Muslim literary society in Lahore, thus starting an association he would maintain his entire life. This society provided Iqbal with an audience for his poetry and a venue for literary discussion. It also gave its members an outlet for political discussion and commentary, often carried out through thinly veiled criticism of the Raj.

Iqbal was a committed nationalist during this early period, with the understanding that Muslim and Hindu unity was the most effective method for gaining independence from Great Britain. Metaphor and simile were convenient poetic elements for political criticism in the early days of the resistance against British rule. Iqbal's poetry often addressed innocent sounding subjects, directing political messages to his countrymen while criticising the government. Subjects like cows and goats, birds in a cage, or beautiful scenery were effective means to veil his criticism of the authorities. The use of

the Urdu language also guaranteed a national Muslim audience while providing an additional level of insulation from British eyes.

1905–24: Transformation to Pan-Islam and Political Theorist

In 1905, Iqbal went to London to continue his education at the University of Cambridge. The experience broadened his educational horizons, but also gave him the opportunity to develop his political opinions. The Muslim League was established in India in 1906 with the purpose of representing Muslim interests to the Raj (James 1997: 419). A London chapter was established in 1908 and Iqbal joined its membership and assisted in writing its constitution (Zakaria 1993: 19). Shortly after his arrival in London, he became embroiled in a dispute that pitted him against his mentor, Thomas Arnold. The dispute involved the name change of the Islamic society from *Anjuman-i-Islam* (Islamic Society) to the Pan-Islamic Society. The term ‘Pan-Islam’ had negative associations in Britain, a reminder of various Muslim agitations against the empire. Iqbal supported the change and subsequently delivered six lectures on Islam under the auspices of the London Pan-Islamic Society (Beg 2004: 18). Later, Iqbal would report that it was his experiences in Europe that transformed him from an Indian nationalist ‘into a Mussalman’, a committed proponent of Pan-Islam (Zakaria 1993: 30).

Reynold Nicholson, Iqbal’s English translator, in introducing the *Asrar-i-Khudi*, comments on Iqbal’s vision of Pan-Islam and explains that the author had introduced revolutionary ideas with long-term global implications:

He (Iqbal) is a religious enthusiast, inspired by a vision of a new Mecca, a worldwide, theocratic, Utopian state in which all Moslems, no longer divided by the barriers of race and country, shall be one. He will have nothing to do with nationalism and imperialism. These, he says, ‘rob us of Paradise’: they make us strangers to each other, destroy feelings of brotherhood, and sow the bitter seed of war. He dreams of a world ruled by religion, not by politics. (Iqbal [1915] 2001: x–xi)

In 1908, Iqbal completed his European studies and returned to India by way of Sicily, a former Muslim territory. One of the recurring elements of Iqbal’s Pan-Islamism is the grief-filled reminder of lost ancient glories. In ‘The Islands of Sicily’ he reflects upon that history:

O blood-dripping eye! Now cry to your heart's content
 There you can see the mausoleum of the civilization of Hijaz . . .

Tell me your pathos, I am also the embodiment of pathos,
 I am the dust of the caravan of which you were a stage . . .

I will take your gift towards India,
 I myself weep here, and will make others weep there. (Iqbal 2005a: 247)

The early twentieth-century India that Iqbal returned to was riven with political conflict against the British Raj. As noted above, in the midst of this turmoil, Iqbal published an article entitled 'Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal' in the *Hindustan Review* in late 1909. This article discussed important political issues from a Muslim perspective and presaged much of his later poetic and philosophic production. He explained that the fear of pain was the greatest enemy of man, and that Islam exists to 'free man from fear' (Iqbal 1992: 35). An individual who is freed from fear experiences individuality and becomes a source of power. Sounding very much like Nietzsche, Iqbal explained:

This idea of man as an individuality of infinite power determines, according to the teachings of Islam, the worth of all human action. That which intensifies the sense of individuality in man is good, that which enfeebles it is bad. Virtue is power, force, strength; evil is weakness. (Iqbal 1992: 36–7)

In the article, Iqbal explained that Indian Muslims were fearful and lacked the character necessary to compete and win in the 'contest with kindred competitors after a fuller, richer, ampler life' (1992: 41). He lamented a lack of 'great personalities' and the social environment that precluded their development, explaining that their absence was to blame for the lack of moral force among Muslims. Although he opposed the worldwide spread of democracy, he suggested that democracy was the best form of government within Islam at that time, in order to provide Muslims with, 'as much freedom as practicable' (51). In an interesting aside, Iqbal explained that England was the 'greatest Muhammadan Empire in the world' due to the large number of Muslims within its domain (52).

Iqbal's message of a revived Islam, of powerful men emboldened by their

conservative religion, and of the evils of Western culture, served as a tonic for Muslims, and contributed to national unrest and caused even further difficulty for the English in India. By the eve of World War I all of India was a tinder box, where an awakening Islam, Hindu nationalism, terrorism, and an 'irresponsible and hostile popular press' made life very difficult for the British government in India (James 1997: 436).

World War I brought increased political turmoil to India, posed mainly by Hindu nationalism. A particular challenge for India's Muslims was Turkey's declaration of war against Britain, 'especially after the *Shaikh-al-Islam* in Constantinople, in early 1915, declared the fight against the British to be a *jihad*' (Ansari 1986: 511). The Khalifat movement, championed by Ghandi and the Ali brothers, was a political movement of Muslims designed to convince Great Britain to respect the Turkish Sultan, the Caliph of all Islam. This movement had been the brain child of anti-British agitator al-Afghani during the late nineteenth century and gained currency with the war between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire. Iqbal wrote a series of articles, published in 1917, that opposed this political effort (Zakaria 1993: 177). Consistent with his view of *khudi*, Iqbal believed that the movement represented, in essence, begging the British for something that Muslims should have been able to bring about through their own efforts. In a poem entitled, 'Begging for Khalifah', Iqbal forcefully expressed his opposition:

Do you not have a knowledge of history?

You have started begging for Khalifah!

If we do not purchase it with our own blood

Such sovereignty is a disgrace to the Muslim! (Iqbal 2005a: 260)

Iqbal opposed the efforts of both Hindus and Muslims for national independence from Britain and preferred the stability provided by British rule rather than the agitation of the nationalists (Zakaria 1993: 53). Iqbal continued to write poetry that was regularly published in the local Urdu papers. These poems were published in his first Urdu work, *Bang-i-Dara (The Call of the Caravan Bell)*, in 1924 ([1924] 2005a). A perusal of the themes of his poetry after 1908 attest to his opposition to nationalism, his opposition to Europe and the West, as well as the reminder of Islam's past glories. One

important poem that had been published earlier and attained wide popularity was titled the *Muslim National Anthem*:

China and Arabia are ours, India is also ours.
We are Muslims, the whole world is our homeland.

The trust of divine unity is in our breasts,
Our identity cannot be destroyed.

Among the world's temples is that first House of God,
We are its sentinels, it is the sentinel of our heart.

We have been brought up under the shade of swords,
The crescent's dagger is our national insignia. (Iqbal [1924] 2005a: 178)

In another poem, he addressed Western nationalism, and explained that Muslims should not be enticed by nationalism's call. According to Iqbal, nationalism is a form of idolatry that results in tyranny rather than freedom:

Country is the biggest among these new gods!
Its shirt is none other than the shroud of *Deen*.⁶

Your arm is enforced with the strength of divine unity.
You are the followers of Mustafa,⁷ your country is Islam . . .

The limitation to country results in destruction,
Live like the fish in the ocean, be free from country . . .

God's creation is unjustly divided among nations by it,
The concept of nationality is uprooted by it. (Iqbal [1924] 2005a: 179–80)

In a poem entitled 'Addressed to the Youth of Islam', Iqbal stressed the need for Muslim youth to be acquainted with the exploits of their ancestors. Consistent with his political philosophy, his goal was to awaken the youth of the nation and encourage them to vigorously set about changing the world:

In short what should I tell you what those
wanderers in the wilderness were,

They were world conquerors, world rulers,
 world administrators, and world adorners . . .
 You cannot have any relationship with your ancestors.
 You are talk, they were action, you are stars, they were planets. (Iqbal
 [1924] 2005a: 197)

As noted earlier, Iqbal remained aloof from the political turmoil that was rampant throughout the country. Whether in the interest of peace and stability or as a method to earn British support for a global Islam, many saw Iqbal and his advice as counter to the freedom of India. At the end of a political poem entitled ‘The *Eid* Crescent’, he advised his Muslim brethren to closely observe the events that were transpiring within the country, but not to participate. Instead, they were to wait for the denouement of those events:

Look at everything, and remain quiet like a mirror,
 In today’s tumult remain occupied with evening’s music! (Iqbal [1924]
 2005a: 199)

In another long poem, entitled ‘The Traveler’s Guide’, Iqbal commented on imperialism and British attempts to include Indians in the government. He warned Muslims to remain aloof from participation in the government’s excesses, calling it an enchantment that would lead them away from the true faith:

Imperialism is the enchantment of victorious nations.

If the ruled from his stupor slightly awakens,
 The ruler’s spell lulls him back to sleep again . . .

Do not disgrace your independent position with slavery,
 So that you do not mold yourself into the master
 who would be a worse infidel than the Brahmin.

The Western democratic system is the same old orchestra
 In whose frets is nothing different than the Kaiser’s tune . . .

The monster of despotism is treading in democracy’s robe,
 You consider it the beautiful ferry of independence.

The legislative assembly, the reforms, the rights and concessions,
 In Western medicine the tastes are sweet, the effect is soporific . . .

You have taken this apparent beauty's mirage as a garden!
 Ah, O ignorant one! You have taken the cage to be a nest! (Iqbal [1924]
 2005a: 265)

Iqbal provided further advice to Muslims. They should ignore the allures of democracy and British rule and, instead, form an association of Muslim nations against the West:

The salvation of the East is in organization of the Muslim nations.
 The people of Asia are still unaware of this mystery.

Relinquishing politics, enter the fort of *deen*⁸ again,
 Country and wealth is only a reward for *haram*'s⁹ defense.

Muslims should unite into one body for *haram*'s defense,
 From the banks of the Nile to the City of Kashghar . . .

To establish the Khilafah's foundations in the world again,
 The need is to bring from somewhere the ancestor's mettle. (Iqbal [1924]
 2005a: 266–7; emphasis added)

In a poem entitled 'The Renaissance of Islam', Iqbal discussed the inevitable resurgence of Islam in the modern world. He commented that Islam was far more powerful than Germany and its dreams of empire. In order to realise this potential, Muslims must awaken and act:

Learn again the lesson of Truth, Justice, and Bravery.
 You are entrusted with the world's leadership . . .

In the world of existence full of doubts, the Muslim's faith
 Is like a beacon of light in the dark night of the wilderness . . .

Come, so that we may sprinkle flowers and pour wine in the cup,
 Rend asunder the sky's roof and establish a new foundation. (Iqbal [1924]
 2005a, 272–5)

Amid all this talk of Islam and revolution against the West, Iqbal was content to let his poetry serve as an effective force, to allow his words to act like the 'ocean to the rain cloud', feeding the resources for the coming storm. But his

approach seems to have engendered some self-doubt. In the last poem of the *Bang-i-Dara*, he comments on his own role.

Iqbal is a good advisor, in moments he fascinates the heart.
He became a hero in talk, but a hero in deeds he could not be. (Iqbal
[1924] 2005a: 295)

In 1923, the British Government conferred knighthood upon Iqbal in recognition of his literary accomplishments. Iqbal accepted the honour, much to the consternation of his supporters. Gandhi's nationalist movement had advised that its followers decline and return all British honours. Iqbal received hundreds of letters condemning his acceptance of the knighthood, but he refused to reconsider (Zakaria 1993: 56). In contrast, Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize-winning Hindu poet, resigned his knighthood in the aftermath of the 1919 Massacre of Amritsar.

Iqbal was completely consistent in his actions, however, opposing Indian nationalism and supporting a stable political environment in which he was free to communicate his Pan-Islamic message. He consistently advised Muslims to exert themselves in the cause of Islam and denounced the imperialism of Great Britain. At the same time, he welcomed the social stability and comforts of British rule, finding within that environment the ability to produce a poetry that would gradually develop the *khudi* (ego) of his Muslim countrymen.

1925–30: Participation in Provincial and National Politics

In 1922 Gandhi withdrew from public politics and retreated to the countryside. The Indian Nationalist Movement, which had seemed to be on the verge of victory, went into a free fall. The death of the *Khalifat* movement and the end of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* movement gave the Indian British government a respite from organised political turmoil, but opposition still boiled throughout India. With the end of shared goals between Muslims and Hindus, conflict between the two religious communities, which had simmered beneath the surface, took front stage. While Congress Party leaders languished in jail, riots broke out throughout India between religious groups over issues that, although seemingly minor, reflected deep-seated antagonisms between India's religious communities (Nehru 1941: 112f.).

Politically, sectarian communalism was expressed in continuous wrangling over electorates, the numbers of reserved seats in legislatures and councils, and eventually in the distribution of jobs and political favours. At the local level, communalism was expressed in riots over Hindu insults to the Prophet, Muslim cow slaughter, Hindu parades and music that interfered with Muslim prayer times, and a myriad of other religious slights that resulted in the destruction of property, abuse of women, and murder in the name of religion (Hardy 1972: 203f.). There was also a widespread belief on the part of Congress members that the British Government was orchestrating the friction between the communities, following a divide and conquer approach in order to ensure the continuation of the Raj (Nehru 1941: 112f.).

Against this backdrop, Iqbal decided to plunge into regional politics. He believed that a sound political structure and environment were essential for the development of a people's character and that the political environment had an important impact on spiritual and philosophical reality. He believed that one reason for the deterioration of Muslim character in India was the Mughal loss of political power in the nineteenth century (Iqbal 1961: xxv). Yet, until 1925, he remained aloof from active political involvement, allowing his poetry to do his political work for him. In 1926, however, he was persuaded to contest for a Muslim seat on the Punjab Provincial Legislature, which he won by a landslide (Zakaria 1993: 58). He was the only Muslim League member to win a seat in the majority Muslim province.

Iqbal's term in the Punjab Legislative Council lasted until 1930. The Council had responsibility for social legislation in the province, and focused on a multitude of mundane issues. Iqbal participated fully in the debates and forcefully voiced idealistic sentiments in favour of active social reform. Iqbal spoke intelligently on issues of equal division of government funds for education between Muslim and Hindu villages where he felt the Muslim schools had been short-changed (Iqbal 1992: 334), for rural sanitation, and for medical relief for women (310f.). The communal issue also made its way into discussion, and Iqbal was deeply concerned by the riots that convulsed the country. On 18 July 1927, he aired his concerns, chiding council members for their lack of action while civil war raged around them. He was also concerned that Hindu legislators publicly supported nationalism while they privately supported a communal agenda (323). He stated:

I wonder if the members have realized the fact that we are actually living in a state of civil war . . . This conference should carefully consider the present situation and suggest ways to suppress the existing communal tension. If this communal hatred permeates the rest of the country and the people living in villages also come to loggerheads, God alone knows where it will eventually land us. (Iqbal 1992: 317f.)

Zakaria suggests that Iqbal found the daily grind of politics 'tiresome and meaningless' (1993: 59, 61). He decided not to run for re-election and left political office after 1930.

Iqbal continued to play an important role within the Muslim League. On the national level, consistent with his anti-nationalist views and distrust of Hindu politics, Iqbal disagreed with attempts toward Hindu-Muslim political unity as well as efforts to oppose British political reforms. He believed that a unified Hindu-Muslim constitutional solution was impossible given the communal animosities present in India and that only the British could be trusted to find an impartial approach. The result was a division of the Muslim League into two factions: with a Punjab League under Muhammad Shafi and Iqbal, and an All India League under Jinnah (Malik 1995: 311).

The Jinnah League met in Delhi in late 1927 and offered to abandon the requirement for separate Hindu and Muslim electorates in an effort to forge a Hindu-Muslim alliance, in exchange for certain political guarantees. Iqbal's group insisted on separate electorates and supported the Simon Commission, trusting the British to develop a constitutional solution (Zakaria 1993: 61). In 1930, frustrated by Hindu and Muslim intransigence, Jinnah abandoned hope of an alliance between Muslims and Hindus and moved to England, washing his hands of Indian politics (79). The Punjab Muslims, led by Iqbal, Shafi, and Husain, became the spokesmen for Indian Muslims and formed a unified Muslim organisation that opposed the Hindu-dominated Congress Party, recommended cooperation with the British, insisted on separate electorates, weightage for Muslim populations, and a weak federal organisation in the hope that Muslim provinces could play a major role in a future federal Indian government (78f.).

1930-7: The Round Table Conferences and International Recognition

The year 1930 marks the beginning of probably the most influential period of Iqbal's life. He attended two of the three London Round Table Conferences initiated by Britain to address India's communal problem. He also presided over the annual meeting of the All India Muslim League held at Allahabad on 29 December 1930. In his famous address, Iqbal discussed a number of his favourite themes. He condemned nationalism as inconsistent with Islam, encouraged a harmony of effort on the part of the various Indian religious groups, and advocated the full freedom of Muslims to develop their own culture and religion. He took a position contrary to the nationalists, explaining that the foundation of India's future rested on its communalism:

The units of Indian society are not territorial as in European countries. India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages and professing different religions. Their behavior is not at all determined by a common race-consciousness. Even the Hindus do not form a homogenous group. The principle of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognizing the fact of communal groups. (Iqbal 1992: 170)

Iqbal illuminated his political and social views when he commented that Islam is both a state and a spiritual reality, with a definite social purpose. Later, he made the demand that would earn him the title, 'Spiritual Father of Pakistan':

I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim State in the best interest of India and Islam. For India it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power; for Islam an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian Imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times. (Iqbal 1992: 173)

Iqbal's speech has earned various interpretations. Some believe he was calling for a separate nation for Muslims. Others believe he was simply demanding the unification of the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and

Baluchistan provinces into a large Muslim state that would exist within a weakly federated Indian nation (Iqbal 1992: 171). In any case, this speech is referred to today as the first courageous call for a separate Islamic homeland within India.

In 1931 and 1932, in recognition of his status as an important Muslim cultural leader, Iqbal participated in the second and third Round Table Conferences in London. Like the first, these ended in deadlock, with the delegates unable to reach any agreement due to communal differences:

How is India's problem to be solved if the majority community will neither concede the minimum safeguards necessary for the protection of a minority of 80 million people nor accept the award of a third party, but continue to talk of a kind of nationalism which works out only to its own benefit? . . . Either the Indian majority will have to accept for itself the permanent position of an agent of British imperialism in the East or the country will have to be redistributed on a basis of religious, historical and cultural affinities so as to do away with the question of electorates and the communal problem in its present form. (Iqbal 1992: 367)

The years 1932 to 1937 were significant years for Iqbal. Poetically, he published a number of works that maintained his popularity at home and confirmed his credentials as a serious poet. His *Javid Namah* was published in 1932. Similar to Dante's tale of a journey from the inferno to paradise as well as the Prophet Muhammad's famous 'night journey' to heaven, it is an imaginary tale of Iqbal's journey from Earth through the spheres of the planets to heaven. As Dante was guided by the poet Virgil, so Iqbal is guided by the Sufi poet Rumi as he meets with different political, religious, and philosophical figures. All of his favourite themes and personages are present and serve as Iqbal's mouthpieces regarding his contemporary world and the future he envisions. He suggests that his message originates in heaven and is especially directed to the young:

What I have said comes from another world;
This book descends from another heaven.
I am a sea, untumult in me is a fault;
Where is he who can plunge into my depths?
A whole world slumbered upon my shore

And saw from the strand naught but the surge of the wave.
 I who despair of the great sages of old,
 Have a word to say concerning the day to come!
 Render my speech easy unto the young,
 Make my abyss for them attainable. (Iqbal 1932: 24)

Iqbal traverses the spheres of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn and then moves beyond the spheres into heaven itself. Along the way, he meets representatives of Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Muhammad. In another sphere, he meets Afghani who condemns the nationalism sweeping the world:

The Lord of the West, cunning from head to toe,
 Taught the people of religion the concept of country.
 He thinks of the centre, while you are at discord –
 Give up talk of Syria, Palestine, Iraq!
 If you can discriminate between good and evil
 You will not bind your hearts to clods, stones, bricks. (Iqbal 1932: 55)

In another section, Said Halim Pasha, the eminent Pan-Islamic Persian statesman, comments on the differences between East and West:

For Westerners intelligence is the stuff of life,
 For Easterners love is the mystery of all being. (Iqbal 1932: 57)

Referring to the reforms in Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Pasha further comments:

No, the Turks have no new melody in their lute,
 What they call new is only the old tune of Europe;
 No fresh breath has entered into their breast,
 No design for a new world is in their mind . . .
 If you possess the spirit of the true Mussalman
 Examine your own conscience and the Koran –
 A hundred new worlds lie within its verses,
 Whole centuries are involved in its moments;
 One world of it suffices for the present age –
 Seize it, if the heart in your breast grasps the truth. (Iqbal 1932: 58)

Finally, Iqbal enters into heaven and achieves completed insight, as well as Perfect Manhood. He also receives a vision of the future and the impact of his poetry:

Dominion is frailer than a bubble
And can be destroyed by a single breath.
The destinies of nations have been shaped by a song,
By a song nations are destroyed and rebuilt.
Though your lancet has Peirced men's hearts,
None has perceived you as you truly are,
Your melody springs from a poet's song,
But what you utter transcends poesy.
Stir up a new tumult in Paradise
Strike up an intoxicating air in Paradise! (Iqbal 1932: 122)

Iqbal's other major work during this time was *Rod of Moses (Zarb-I-Kalim): A Declaration of War on the Modern Age*. Published in 1937, Iqbal discusses various aspects of the modern world and compares and contrasts them as they are found in the East and the West. Generally, he finds the attributes of the West to be deficient while his native India is deficient in its acceptance of British domination while Muslims have failed to live up to Allah's pure religion. In a short poem entitled 'East and West', Iqbal expresses despair concerning the modern age.

Slavery, slavishness, the root of our
Disease; of theirs, that Demos holds all power;
Heart-malady or brain-malady has oppressed
Man's whole world, sparing neither East nor West. (Iqbal 1955: 78)

Iqbal also travelled extensively from 1932 to 1937, a well-respected intellectual emissary of Islam. After the Round Table Conferences, he visited France where he met with the aged philosopher Henri Bergson. In Italy, he was invited to an audience with Mussolini and prayed at the Mosque of Córdoba during a visit to Spain. He also attended meetings in Palestine at the World Muslim Conference (Zakaria 1993: 91, 95). Reflecting his commitment to Pan-Islam, he called for Muslims to consider 'practical means for

the formation of an Eastern League of Nations' in a public statement read at a public meeting of the Muslim League in 1937 (Iqbal 1992: 372).

1937–8: Ill Health, Continued Political Influence and Death

In 1937, Iqbal's health began to fail. In spite of his ill health, he was still involved in the political issues of the day. Jinnah had returned to India in 1935 at the encouragement of a number of Muslim leaders, Iqbal among them. In a letter dated 21 June 1937, Iqbal commented on Jinnah's importance to the future of the Muslims in India and the dangers facing the country:

I hope you won't mind my writing to you so often, as you are the only Muslim in India today to whom the community has a right to look for safe guidance through the storm which is coming to North-West India, and perhaps the whole of India. I tell you that we are living in a state of civil war which, but for the police and the military, would become universal in no time. (Jinnah 1943: 20f.)

In 1936, Nehru had begun a nationwide programme to enlist Muslim voters on the side of the Congress Party's nationalist cause. The programme became a real concern for Iqbal. He sent a number of letters to Jinnah on the necessity of opposing Nehru and establishing the Muslim League as a national, unified Muslim political party. On 20 March 1937, he wrote again to Jinnah:

I suppose you have read Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's address to the All India National Convention and that you fully realize the policy underlying it in so far as Indian Muslims are concerned . . . I therefore suggest that an effective reply should be given the All India National Convention. You should immediately hold an All-India Muslim Convention in Delhi . . . to this convention you must state as clearly and as strongly as possible the political objective of the Indian Muslims as a distinct political unit in the country . . . It would further make it clear to the Hindus that no political device . . . can make the Indian Muslim lose sight of his cultural identity. (Jinnah 1943: 13f.)

Jinnah took Iqbal's recommendations and focused on making the Muslim League a party that would include all of the Muslims of India. His work was

so effective that, by 1939, Jinnah was recognised as a political power of equal stature to Gandhi (James 1997: 536f.). Sadly, Iqbal's illness prevented him from seeing the realisation of his political dreams. He died at 5:15 a.m. on 21 April 1938.

Conclusion

Muhammad Iqbal sought to awaken India's Muslims to their rightful place in world history. He was deeply aware of the deep wound of the world's Muslims and sought to heal that wound through his poetic philosophy of the *khudi*-empowered Perfect Man. Iqbal was also a man of action and political involvement who consistently advocated for Pan-Islam against nationalism, democracy and colonialism. Throughout his life, Iqbal displayed a poetic consistency of action and viewpoint. Some have identified glaring inconsistencies in Iqbal's political actions and writings, even suggesting that he was only an 'armchair politician' (Zakaria 1993: 56). In fact, I believe there was an underlying unity of thought that harmonised his actions, a 'string of pearls' so characteristic of Persian poetry. He dreamed of a unified worldwide Islam yet realised that his dream would come about only in stages. The first stage was to establish a Muslim national entity in his homeland. He was content that other Muslims in other lands would pursue the second step, the forging of their own Islamic homelands. The final step would occur one day, perhaps far in the future, when those Muslim nations could come together to form a Pan-Islamic worldwide entity.

Iqbal attempted to live up to the requirements of his own conception of Perfect Manhood. His lifelong poetic, philosophical, and political involvements demonstrate an underlying unity of purpose, seeking always to motivate and develop Muslims for the international role that resides within Islam and that would restore Islam to its historic dignity and role as a world power. After his death, his dream realised a partial fulfilment in the creation of Pakistan, a Muslim nation that continues to play a significant role in world politics. Perhaps Iqbal was, according to his own definition, a co-creator with God on Earth and an early twentieth-century incarnation of the Perfect Man. He was, and continues to be, the Poet of Muslim Dignity.

Notes

1. Much of this work is drawn from my PhD dissertation and subsequent book *The Integration of Philosophy, Politics and Conservative Islam in the Thought of Muhammad Iqbal* (Nix 2011).
2. In this chapter I present the view that Iqbal is largely opposed to both democracy and the West. I understand that there is some debate among scholars regarding these issues. Iqbal is not always consistent in his writings on these points. In much of his poetry he is very strong in his criticism of the West and strongly suggests that democracy is inconsistent with Islam. However, he moderates these points in some of his other writings, particularly in his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. It's instructive that Iqbal came under some criticism for a perceived lack of clarity in his writings during his life. This fact moved him to comment in one of his poems, 'Iqbal also is not acquainted with Iqbal' (Iqbal [1924] 2005a: 87).
3. Iqbal is referring to the secularisation of Turkey that began in 1920 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.
4. Rome and Rumi's spiritual director, Shams-i-Tabriz, a metaphor for engulfing the West in the spiritual passion of the East (Iqbal 1915] 2001: 29).
5. Note the similarity to Pan-Islam, which seeks to unify all Islam and the world under a powerful Khalif.
6. 'The path or the way of life in accordance with the law of God' – a meaning very close to religion (Iqbal [1924] 2005a: 324). Iqbal is saying that nationalism is a type of religion.
7. The Prophet Muhammad.
8. Religion.
9. The Ka'bah, the holiest site of Islam, as well as the pilgrimage sites in the surrounding area (Iqbal [1924] 2005a: 325).

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Index

- abduction, 91
- Abraham, 30, 61, 179, 213
- Absolute Unity doctrine, 41
- action, 4
 - actions versus events distinction, 109
 - earning immortality through action, 153–4, 160–1
 - intentionality, 27
- ‘Addressed to the Youth of Islam’ (Iqbal), 220–1
- Adul Quddus of Gangoh, 48
- al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din, 24, 219, 228
- Aftāb-e hikmat (The Sun of Philosophy)* (Prasad), 117, 120–1
- Afzaal, Ahmed, 107
- agapism, 100
- Akhtar, Syed Waheed, 128–9
- Ali, Yusuf, 36
- ‘Aligarh Movement’, 1
- All-India Muslim League, 48, 129, 190, 215–16, 225, 226
- All-India National Convention, 230
- Allah, 66, 69, 76, 92, 209–10, 212, 215; *see also* God
- ancient world, 17, 63
- Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam* (Association for the Service of Islam), 216
- Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Kant), 37
- apophatic theology, 84–5
- appreciation, 104
 - ‘appreciative self’, 90
- Arabia, 124
 - Arabian imperialism, 49–50, 226
- Arberry, A. J., 7
- Aristotle, 42, 101
- Arnold, Thomas, 114, 116, 124, 125, 217
- ascension, 7, 131
- asceticism, 151, 164
- Asrar-e-Khudi (Secrets of the Self)* (Iqbal), 3–4, 19, 130, 131, 132–3, 208, 211, 212, 217
- Augustine, 173
- Aurobindo, Sri, 59
- authoritarianism, 2, 206, 210
- Averroës, 14, 145, 163
- Avicenna, 114, 126–7
- Bābī developments, 127
- Bacon, Francis, 147
- Bacon, Roger, 146–7
- Bāl-e Jibrīl* (Iqbal), 131, 132, 133
- Bang-i-Dara (The Call of the Caravan Bell)* (Iqbal), 115, 219, 222
- Bangladesh, 48
- Baring, Lord, 202
- Barzakh*, 90, 97
- Bausani, Alessandro, 6
- Bedil in the Light of Bergson* (Iqbal), 122–3
- Bēdil, Meerza, 113, 122–3, 125, 135–6
- ‘Begging for Khalifah’ (Iqbal), 219
- Being Human in Islam: The Impact of the Evolutionary Worldview* (Howard), 33
- believers, ix, xi, 78
- Benjamin, Walter, 22
- Bentham, Jeremy, 206
- Berdyaev, Nikolas, 59
- Berger, Gaston, 44

- Bergson, Henri, ix, xi, xii, 12, 14, 24, 69, 113, 122–3, 125, 134, 153, 229
 convergence with Iqbal, 33–55, 167–200:
 divine nexus, reconstruction of, 175–91; intellect and intuition, 38–9;
 metaphysical foundation of the political: creativity and individuality, 175–81;
 mystics and their politics, 47–50; Qur'an definition of God, 35–6; secularised nation-state, sociopolitical problem of, 172–4; self as unity of consciousness, 37–8; self as unity of life, 36–7, 38;
 shared philosophical views, 168–9, 171–2; sociopolitical ideals, 181–91; time and *ijtihad*, 42–6; vital knowledge of vital unity, 35–42
 on duration, 149
 political outlook, 167–8
 Berkeley, George, 65, 147
 Berque, Jacques, 36
 Bible, 83, 93, 178
 biology, 64
 and nature, 66–70
Book of Slaves (Iqbal), 205–6
 Bradley, F. H., 59
 Brentano, Franz, 121
 British Raj, vii–viii, xii, 216, 217, 218, 224

Call of the Caravan Bell, The (Bang-i-Dara) (Iqbal), 115, 219, 222
 caste system, 2, 5
 Catherine of Siena, Saint, 48
 causality, 105–6, 106–7, 108, 109, 120
 cause/effect dualism, 66, 68–9, 74
 centennial renewal, 21
 chance, 100
 change, 88, 91, 177–8, 180, 181
 Christianity, 5, 155, 172–3, 182, 189, 190, 202, 203
 classism, 2, 5, 192
 closed society, 184, 186
 closed universe concept, 43
 colonialism, vii–viii, xii, 2, 21, 48, 112, 169–70, 202–4, 231
 common sense, 79
 communalism, 224–5, 226, 227
Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos (Waldrop), 89
 complexity theory, 89
Concept of Mind, The (Ryle), 88
 conflict, 184, 185
 consciousness, 70, 71–2, 178, 179–80
 person–universe–conscious relationship, 73, 74
 prophetic consciousness, 17, 27, 28
 conversion, 183
 cosmology, ix, xii, 42–3, 59
 of a free creative movement, 43–4
 cosmos, ix, x–xi, 89, 119, 120, 130, 134, 173, 177–8, 179–80, 181, 188, 191
Creative Evolution (Bergson), 34, 35, 130, 177
Creative Mind (Bergson), 176
 creativity/creation, 6, 8, 20–5, 23, 28, 35, 68–9, 71, 104
 cosmology of a free creative movement, 43–4
 creative evolution, 34, 36, 180, 184–5
 critical creativity, 20
 metaphysical foundation of the political, 175–81
 perpetual creation concept, 134
 reparation versus creation, 106–8
Critique of Pure Reason (Kant), 37, 147–8
 culture, 188, 189
 Cunningham, Gustavus, 176

 Dāgh, Musa, 114, 115
 Dante, 128, 227
 Darwin, Charles, 66–7, 99, 156, 178
 Social Darwinism, 202, 205, 207
datum, 38
 sense datum, 104–5
 Deacon, Terrence, 101
 'Death of Selfhood' (poem, Iqbal), 129
 deduction, 91
 Deleuze, Gilles, 15, 20, 21
 Delhi College, 116–17
 democracy, 204, 218–19, 222, 231
 Descartes, René, 37
 designer/designed dualism, 58, 63, 64, 66, 69–70, 74
 despotism, 206
 destiny, 4, 36, 78, 103, 133, 155, 159, 178, 179, 181
Development of Metaphysics in Persia, The (Iqbal), 19, 41, 122, 123–7, 129, 132, 134
 Diagne, Souleymane Bachir, ix, 33–55
 Dickinson, Lowes, 5
Die Philosophie des Islam (Horten), 121
 dimensions, 150
 discovery, 156–7
 Divine Incarnation concept, 172
 divine nexus, xi–xii, 167–200
 Bergsonian reconstruction of, 175–91:
 metaphysical foundation of the political: creativity and individuality, 175–81;
 sociopolitical ideals, 181–91
 crisis in the sociopolitical order, 167–72
 secularised nation-state, sociopolitical problem of, 172–4
 'Doctrine of Absolute Unity as Expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani' (article, Iqbal), 41
 Driesch, Hans, 67, 68

- dualism, 126
 cause/effect dualism, 66, 68–9, 74
 designer/designed dualism, 58, 63, 64, 66, 69–70, 74
 ideal/real dualism, 58, 63, 64, 72–3, 74
 duration, 149, 153, 160, 164, 178–80, 181
 Durrānī, Saʿīd Akhtar, 123
- ‘East and West’ (Iqbal), 229
- Eco, Umberto, 20
- ecstasy, 48
- efficient causality, 106–7, 108, 109
- ego, 130, 133
 definition of, 94
 ego-activity, 36–7
 ego-unity, ix, 36–9, 73
 personality, x, 90–1, 103–4, 187
 points of convergence and unity, 179–80, 181
 tension in the ego, 159–60
 ‘Ultimate Ego’, 62, 73, 94–5, 104, 148, 180, 181
- ‘Eid Crescent, The’ (Iqbal), 221
- Einstein, Albert, 65, 147–8
- élan vital* (vital impetus/force), xii, 39, 44–5, 48, 178–9, 181, 184, 185
- Elliot, Henry, 117
- emergent emerging process, 94–5, 104
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 109
- emotion, 28, 47, 184, 186
- empiricism, 146–7
- end/purpose concept, 67–8, 68–9
- energy, 148, 150
- epigenetics, 100
- epistemological crisis, 170–1
- eternal recurrence, 23
- Euben, Roxanne, 142
- Europe, 15, 16
- evangelism, 203
- evolution, 23, 67, 68–9, 89, 92
 and conflict, 185
 creative evolution, 34, 36, 180, 184–5
 and force, 184
 history, evolution and the finality of the Prophet, 152–8
 mind, evolution and God, 94–8
- ‘Evolutionary Love’ (essay, Peirce), 99
- exclusion, 185, 186
- existentialism, 128–30
- experience, 14, 15, 64, 77, 108
 human experience, xi, 175–6
 intuitional experience, 177
 and understanding God, 64
- faith, 156, 159–60
- falsafa-e-khudi* (philosophy of self) *see khudi* (selfhood) concept
- Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman, 135
- Faryād-e Dāgh*, 115
- fatalism, 43, 125, 129, 131, 159, 160
- fear, 218
- final causality, 105–6, 107, 108, 109
- finality, 18, 25
 of Muhammad, 157–8
- finite/infinite, 97
- Firstness, 91
- force, 184, 191–2
- Forster, E. M., 4, 5
- Foucault, Michel, 113
- Francis, Saint, 48
- friendship, 108
- Gabriel (archangel), 29
- Gandhi, Mahatma, vii, 167, 171, 219, 223
- Garden of Eden, 180
- German orientalism, 121–2
- ghazal tradition, 115
- Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad, 14, 22, 127, 145, 152
- Gibb, H. A. R., 6
- Gilmore, Richard, x–xi, 88–111
- Gobineau, Arthur de, 121
- God, xii, 92
 as Absolute/Ultimate Ego, 62–3, 94–5, 104, 148, 180, 181
 ‘God as Light’ concept, 179
 mind, evolution and God, 94–8
 modern science and traditional arguments for God’s existence, 63–77
 Qur’an definition, 35–6
 reality of, x, 58, 60, 82–5
 relationship to humanity, 6–7, 34
 relationship with nature, 65–6
 relationship with science, 81–2
 selfhood in God, 130
 as a sense datum, 104–5
tawhid (*tawheed*, *tauhid*) (oneness of God), xi, 9, 26–7, 90, 95, 97, 98, 101, 104, 106
 understanding God through experience, 64
 Unity of God concept, 204
 vicegerency, 3, 7, 130, 131, 132–3
 wrathful God, notion of, 160
- god-man, 41–2
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 128, 133, 143, 161
- Gospels, 83
- governmentality, 113
- Great Separation concept, 174, 189
- Greek philosophy, ix, 40, 42
- Guattari, Félix, 21
- Gunn, Alexander, 182
- habits/habitualisation, 100–1, 183–4, 195n19
 person–universe–habit relationship, 66, 74

- al-Hallāj, Husayn Mansūr, 41
 Haldane, J. B. S., 67–8
 Hamilton, Sir William, 119
 Hasan, Sayyid Mir, 114
 Hassan, Riffat, 1–11
 Hayes, Edward Cary, 154–5
 heaven, 152, 160
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 14, 28, 33, 41, 113, 121, 127, 133, 156, 202, 205
 Heidegger, Martin, 24, 161
 Heisenberg, Werner, 148
 hell, 152, 160
 Heraclitus, 42
 Hesse, Hermann, 128
hikmat, 114
 Hillier, H. C., xi–xii, 167–200
 Hindus, 5, 49, 224
Hindustan Review, 209, 218–19
 history, 17, 18, 23, 24
 and evolution and the finality of the Prophet, 152–8
 and prophecy, 25–9
 stages of, 156
History of British India (Mill), 206
 Hobbes, Thomas, 173–4, 192
 Horten, Max, 117, 121–2
 Howard, Damian A., 33
 humanity
 advancement of, 15–16, 153
 and good/wickedness, 181–2
 human experience, xi, 175–6
 human nature, 173
 human person, Iqbal's view of, 29–31, 131, 134
 human soul, 16
 human spirit and motion, 134
 humanisation, 49, 50, 52n5
 humanitarian ideal, 5
 relationship to God and creation, 6–7, 34
 see also khudi (selfhood) concept
 Hume, David, 37
 Husain, Sayyid Shaukat, 135
 Husayn, 30
 Hussain, Zakir, 9

 'I am-ness', 37–8, 72
 Ibn Jabal, Muadh, 45
 Ibn Khaldun, 23, 28
 Ibn Maskawaih, 154
 Ibn Rushd (Averroës), 14, 145, 163
 ideal/real dualism, 58, 63, 64, 72–3, 74
 idealism, 118, 119
 ideas, 90–1
 identity, 56–7
ijtihad (independent reasoning), ix, xi, 8, 34, 49, 161
 definition of, 45
 and time, 42–6
 Iman (faith), 159–60
 immobility, 42
 immortality, xi, 39, 40, 142–66
 earning immortality through action, 153–4, 160–1
 history, evolution and the finality of the Prophet, 152–8
 Iqbal's interpretation of, 143–4
 personal immortality: relativity, time and mysticism, 144–52
 personal revelation, 161–3
 tension in the ego, 159–60
 and Western empiricism, 146–7
 imperialism, 2, 24, 168, 169–70, 221–2
 Arabian imperialism, 49–50, 226
Incoherence of the Incoherence, The (Averroës), 145
Incoherence of the Philosophers, The (Ghazali), 145
Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter (Deacon), 101
 India, 48–9, 50, 112–13, 164, 167, 191
 communalism, 224–5, 226, 227
 Hindu-Muslim political unity, 225–6
 Muslims, humiliation of, 202–4
 religious and political disturbances, 223–4
Indian Antiquary, 41
 individuality, 35, 36, 37, 39, 218
 ideal individuals, 181–2
 metaphysical foundation of the political, 175–81
 induction, 91
insan kamil, 35
 inspiration, 16–17, 28, 187–8
 instincts, 79–80
 intellect/intelligence, 38–9, 42, 43, 176–7
Introduction to Metaphysics (Bergson), 38
 intuition, xii, 25–6, 27, 28, 38–9, 176, 177, 181
Iqbal: An Illustrated Biography (Shafique), 33–4
 Iqbal, Sir Muhammad, vii
 All-India Muslim League, presidential address 1930, 48–9, 129, 190, 215–16, 226
 career and life details, 114, 123–4, 127–8: 1905–1924 transformation to Pan Islam and political theorist, 217–23; 1925–1930: participation in provincial and national politics, 223–6; 1930–1937 Round Table Conferences and international recognition, 226–30; 1937–1938: ill health, continued political influence and death, 230–1; Lahore, 216
 commitment to and interpretation of Islam, 4–5

- comparison with Lilla, 174
 comparison with Peirce, x–xi, 58, 77–86, 97–8
 contemporary relevance of, ix–x, 6, 56–87: extra-Islamic relevance, 60–1; modern science and traditional arguments for God's existence, 63–77; nature and biology/teleological argument, 66–70; nature and physics/cosmological argument, 64–6; nature and psychological/ontological argument, 70–4; 'One/Many' problem, 59–60, 62; and secular knowledge, 61–3
 convergence with Bergson, 33–55, 167–200: intellect and intuition, 38–9; metaphysical foundation of the political: creativity and individuality, 175–81; mystics and their politics, 47–50; Qur'an definition of God, 35–6; Qur'anic narratives, 39–40; secularised nation-state, sociopolitical problem of, 172–4; self as unity of consciousness, 37–8; self as unity of life, 36–7, 38; shared philosophical views, 168–9, 171–2; sociopolitical ideals, 181–91; time and *ijtihad*, 42–6; vital knowledge of vital unity, 35–42
 criticism of, 5, 135
 early poems, 116
 as an existentialist, 128–30
 and German orientalism, 121–2
 human person, view of, 29–31
 influence of other philosophers, 113–15
 as an inspiration to others, 2–3
 knighthood, 223
 as a poet-philosopher, 1–2, 9
 poetry, 201; metaphor and simile, 216–17; separation of poetry from philosophy, 135; Urdu poetry, 127–8, 131, 217, 219–20
 Qur'an, importance of, 6, 59–60, 89, 107–8, 134
 reconstructed vision of Islam, viii, 2, 6–7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 22–3, 24–5, 40, 48–50, 92, 134, 146, 164, 175
 relationship with God, 7
 'Spiritual Father of Pakistan', vii, 142, 215, 226
 'Iqbal's approach to the Qur'an' (essay, Afzaal), 107
 Iraqi (poet), 151–2
 Ishraqi philosophy, 151
 Islam
 culture, 189
 as a foundation for universal human society, 189, 190, 190–1
 human good, 181–2
 'intellectual stupor' and Westward spread of, 171
 interpretation of immortality, 144–5
 Iqbal's commitment to and interpretation of, 4–5
 lack of conflict between spirit and world, 174
 pan-Islam, 217–18, 230, 231
 and pragmatism, 88–111; comparing pragmatism and Islam, 92–4; God, mind and evolution, 94–8; habits and habit-taking, 100–1; key concepts in Iqbal and Peirce, 88–92; reparation versus creation, 106–8; signs, 98–100; teleology and final causality, 101–6
 reconstructed vision of, viii, 2, 6–7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 22–3, 24–5, 40, 48–50, 92, 134, 146, 164, 175
 Sunni Islam, 21–2
 Unity of God concept, 204
 'Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal' (article, Iqbal), 209, 218–19
 Islamic State, 49
Islamic Studies, 121
 'Islands of Sicily, The' (Iqbal), 218
 Ismail, 30

 Jacob, François, 102
 James, William, 92–3, 108
 Jamshed (Persian king), 19
Javid Namah (Iqbal), 128, 129, 131, 132, 134, 215, 227–9
 Jesus, 49, 83, 189, 190
 al-Jilani, Abdul Karim, 41
 Jili, Abdul Karim, 128, 131
 Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, vii, 225, 230–1
 Joan of Arc, 48

 Kant, Immanuel, 14, 33, 37, 89, 90, 147–8, 150, 152, 156, 183
 Kazmi, Latif, 128, 129
 Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman Ibn, 18
khalifa (vicegerent), 3, 7, 130, 131, 132–3
 Khalifat movement, 219, 223
khudi (selfhood) concept, ix, x, xi, xii, 2, 7, 12, 28, 29, 58, 62–3, 73–4, 130, 134, 202
 creativity, 20–5
 death of selfhood, 129
 development of, 3, 4
 difference, 20
 human person and the paradox of revelation, 13–18
 khudi-empowered Perfect Man, 211–17, 231
 as a metaphysical category, 14–15
 and the 'One/Many' problem, 60

- khudi* (selfhood) concept (*cont.*)
 persistence of the self in change notion, 130–1
 as a philosophy of action, 4
 rehabilitation of, 13–14
 self as unity of consciousness, 37
 self as unity of life, 36–7, 38
 self-fashioning, 18–19
 selfhood in God, 130
 unity of the self as vital, 36–9
- Khundmiri, Alam, 152
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 113, 128
 Kipling, Rudyard, 202
 knowledge, 20, 175–6, 177
 of the universe, 180–1
 of vital unity, 35–42
- Kolakowski, Leszek, 14
 Koshul, Basit Bilal, ix–x, 56–87
- Lacan, Jacques, 108
 Lahore, 216
 Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste, 99, 100
 Laplace, Pierre-Simon, 42–3
 ‘Law of Mind, The’ (Peirce), 103
 Lawlor, Leonard, 176, 178
Lectures on Philosophy of History (Hegel), 121
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 125, 127
Leviathan (Hobbes), 173
 liberalism, 143, 163, 174, 189
 Lilla, Mark, xi, 172, 173, 174, 175, 192
 Locke, John, 174, 192
 love, 5, 9, 29, 105, 107, 127, 131–2, 184, 211–12
 evolutionary love, 99–100
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 173
 McClure, Christopher Scott, xi, 142–66
 MacIntyre, Alasdair, 170
 McTaggart, J. M. E., 113, 123
 Magianism, 18, 21, 160
 Majeed, Javed, 50
 ‘making one’ process, 95
 Malihabadi, Josh, 115
 Marx, Karl, 20
 Massignon, Islam Louis, 33
 matter, 64, 65, 72
 relationship to energy, 148
 Matthew (apostle), 83
 Mawdudi, Abul A’la, 144–5, 157
 May, Todd, 20
 mechanism, 66–7, 68, 99
Meditations (Descartes), 37
 memory, 46, 178
me’raj (ascension), 7
 messianism, 21
 metaphysics, 4, 12, 13, 14–15, 120, 163, 192
 of emergent mind, 88–111
 metaphysical foundation of the political:
 creativity and individuality, 175–81
Metaphysics (Aristotle), 101
 Mill, James, 206
 Mill, John Stuart, 206
Mind and Matter (Bergson), 176
 mind, metaphysics of, 88–111
 denial of the reality of mind, 88
 Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness logic of thought, 91
 God, mind and evolution, 94–8
 habits and habit-taking, 100–1
 ideas, 90–1
 Islam and pragmatism, 92–4
 law of mind concept, 90
 reparation versus creation, 106–8
 signs, 98–100
 teleology and final causality, 101–6
 thought and nature, 95–8
 ‘minority of mankind’, 156
 Mir Dāmād, 134
 Mir, Mustansir, 19, 144
Mir’at al-ḥukamā’ y’ā Guldasta-yi farhang (The Mirror of Philosophers or the Bouquet of Culture) (Shams al-’ulamā’ Sayyid Imdād Imām ‘Asar’, 117–18
 mistrust of the alien other, 56–7
 modernity, 6, 12, 13–14, 112–13, 128, 142–3, 174, 179
 intellectual heritage of imperial modernity, 116–21
 monism, 120, 121, 124–5, 127, 128, 134
 monotheism, xi, 9, 26–7
 Moosa, Ebrahim, ix, 12–32
 moral anthropology, 17
 Morgan, C. Lloyd, 180
 Moulard, Valentine, 176, 178
 movement, 20, 180
 Muhammad, Prophet, 17–18, 21–2, 30, 38, 45, 47, 165n1, 189, 212
 finality of, 157–8
 Mullā Sadrā, 113, 114, 121, 129, 130, 134
murshid (spiritual guide), 1
 Musement, 105
 Muslim League, 217, 224, 225, 230, 231
Muslim National Anthem (Iqbal), 220
 Muslims
 crisis in and Westward spread of Islamic thought, 21, 171
 culture, 189
 dignity, restoration of, xii, 201–34:
 1905–1924, transformation of Iqbal to Pan Islam and political theorist, 217–23;
 1925–1930, Iqbal’s participation in provincial and national politics, 223–6;
 1930–1937, Round Table Conferences and international recognition of Iqbal,

- 226–30; 1937–1938, Iqbal's ill health, continued political influence and death, 230–1; humiliation of Muslims in British India, 202–4; *khudi*-empowered Perfect Man, 211–17; Muslim responsibility for humiliation, 208–11; philosophical elements of Muslim humiliation, 204–7
early Muslims, 7–8
empowerment of, xii, 2
Iqbal's understanding/representation of, 2, 22, 167, 168–9
and nationalism, 189–90
Mysteries of Selflessness, 5, 129, 130, 214
mysticism, ix, xii, 7, 27, 28, 186–8
mystics and their politics, 47–50
mythopoeisis, 18–19
- Nadvī, Sayyid Sulaimān, 135
Naqsh-e farang (Iqbal), 133
nation-states, 172–4
nationalism, 49, 50, 189–91, 192, 203–4, 220, 225, 226, 231
natural science, 143
nature, 17, 18, 75, 76–7, 148
biology/teleological argument, 66–70
mechanistic concept of, 66–7, 68
and mind, 89
nature naturing idea, 94
physics/cosmological argument, 64–6
psychological/ontological argument, 70–4
and thought, 95–8
necessity, 100
negation, 212
'Neglected Argument for the Reality of God' (Peirce), 58, 82–3
Nehru, Jawaharlal, vii, 201, 224, 230
Neo-Platonism, 40
New Testament, 93
newness, 45–6
Newton, Isaac, 42, 64–5, 66–7
Nicholson, R. A., 4, 5, 7, 10n1, 128, 217
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 14, 33, 113, 121, 128, 130, 133, 155, 213, 218
Nix, Dayne E., xii, 201–34
novelty, 45–6
- obedience, 183, 186
obligation, 183, 184
Ochs, Peter, 82, 83, 94, 106
'One/Many' problem, x, 58–60, 62
ontology, 15, 19, 23, 36, 95, 178
arguments for God's existence, 58, 63, 70
discovery of a conscious self, 72–3
open society, 184, 186–7
- Pakistan, 48, 50, 190, 215–16
Pan-Islamic Society, 217
pantheism, 114, 121, 124, 126, 127, 132, 134
Paul, Saint, 48
peace, 170, 213
Peirce, Charles, x
affinity with Iqbal, 58, 77–86
comparison with Iqbal, x–xi, 97–8
'Evolutionary Love' (essay), 99
Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness logic of thought, 91
habits and habit-taking, 100–1
law of mind concept, 90
'Law of Mind, The', 103
metaphysical theory of mind, 89
Musement, 105
'Neglected Argument for the Reality of God', 58, 79–80, 82–3
personality, concept of, 90–1, 103–4
'Pragmatism' (essay), 93
'religion of science' conception, 58, 77–86
'science of religion' concept, 79, 82–3, 85
signs, 98–100
thought and nature, 97–8
- Percy, Walker, 85
Perfect Man, 18, 25, 41, 201, 202, 229, 231
khudi-empowered Perfect Man, 211–17
person–universe–conscious relationship, 73, 74
person–universe–habit relationship, 66, 74
person–universe relationship, 74
personality, x, 40, 90–1, 103–4, 187
personhood *see khudi* (selfhood) concept
Phenomenology of Spirit, The (Hegel), 205
philosophy, 1–2, 21
political philosophy, 169–70
of the pre-scientific era, 63–4
and the science/religion relationship, 80–2
social philosophy, 48
physics, 147–8
description of nature, 64–6
Plato, 133, 134
Plotinus, 48
poetry, 1–2, 161, 201
metaphor and simile, 216–17
Urdu poetry, 127–8, 131, 217, 219–20
Poetry of Allama Iqbal, 167
political philosophy, 169–70
political theology, 27, 135, 169–70, 172, 173
pragmatism, 83
and Islam, 88–111: comparing pragmatism and Islam, 92–4; God, mind and evolution, 94–8; habits and habit-taking, 100–1; key concepts in Iqbal and Peirce, 88–92; reparation versus creation, 106–8; signs, 98–100; teleology and final causality, 101–6
'Pragmatism' (essay, Peirce), 93
Prasad, Govind 'Āftāb', 117, 120–1
prayer, 7, 105, 106

- Preaching of Islam, The: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Arnold), 116
- predestination, 26
- Process and Reality* (Whitehead), 177
- Process school, 169
- prophecy/prophets, xii, 165n1, 187–8
- and history, 25–9
- ‘idea of finality’, 18, 157–8
- Muhammad, Prophet, 17–18, 21–2, 30, 38, 45, 47, 157–8, 165n1, 189, 212
- prophetic consciousness, 17, 27, 28
- Protestantism, 190
- Psalms of Persia* (Iqbal), 18–19, 26
- psychology, 64
- and nature, 70–4
- Punjab, 216
- Punjab Legislative Council, 224–5
- pure duration, 149, 153, 160, 164
- purpose, 21, 153, 179
- end/purpose concept, 67
- push of life *see élan vital*
- Pythagoras, 120
- qalb* (‘heart’), 90, 104
- Qawmi Zindagi*, 45–6
- Qur’an, ix, x, 2, 4, 8, 17, 23, 159, 163, 164
- creation, 70–1
- definition of God, 35–6
- destiny notion (*taqdir*), 103, 179
- discussion on the wisdom of creating Adam, 39–40
- emphasis on ‘deed’, 7
- Garden of Eden myth, 180
- ‘habits of Allah’, 66, 69, 76, 101
- heaven and hell, 152
- and human ego, 40
- inspiration, 187–8
- and Iqbal’s philosophy, 6, 59–60, 89, 107–8, 134
- language of creative movement, 44
- and personal revelation, 161–3
- and reality, 178
- and resurrection, 150
- signs, 98
- on social differences, 185
- taqdir* concept, 103
- and time, 178
- and the universe, 102–3
- Qutb, Sayyid, 147
- racialisation, 49
- racism, 185, 192, 202, 207
- Radhakrishnan, R., 59
- Rafiuddin, Muhammad, x, 57–8, 59–60, 61–2, 73–4
- Read, Sir Herbert, 2–3
- reality, ix, xi, 4, 20, 38, 39, 61–2, 70, 75–6, 80, 177
- as a creative flow, 177–8
- ‘direct realism’, 119
- of God, x, 58, 60, 82–5
- and intuition, 176, 177
- non-empirical reality, 14
- realness of people, 109
- reification, 123
- ultimate nature of, 73, 89, 187
- unconditioned/conditioned reality, 15, 19, 23
- reason, 17, 26, 28
- dialectical reason, 27
- ijtihad* (independent reasoning), ix, xi, 8, 34, 42–6, 49, 161
- inductive reason, 156, 158
- intuitional reason, 27
- reconstruction, concept, 45
- Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, The* (Iqbal), 2, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 22, 23, 34, 41, 47, 60, 74, 88, 89, 106, 125, 131–2, 133–4, 142
- epistemological crisis, 171
- ‘Knowledge and Religious Experience’, 92–3
- references to Bergson, 169
- Reid, Thomas, 119
- reification, 123
- Reininger, Robert, 121
- Relativity, theory of, 147–8
- religion, 58, 192
- closed and open religion, 186–7
- ‘fundamental hypothesis’ of, 80
- as a guide for modern science and moral development, 156–7
- relationship to science, 76–7, 98
- ‘religion of science’ concept, 58, 77–86
- ‘science of religion’ concept, 79, 82–3, 85
- as a sentiment, 78, 79
- as a sociopolitical power, 173–4
- and unity, 188–9
- ‘Renaissance of Islam, The’ (Iqbal), 222
- Renan, Ernest, 121
- repair/reparation, x–xi
- reparation versus creation, 106–8
- self-repair, 67
- resurrection, 145, 149–50
- revelation, 27
- and the human person, 13–18
- Iqbal’s concept of, 16, 157–8, 161–3
- Rizvi, Sajjid, xi, 1–11, 112–41
- Rod of Moses (Zarb-I-Kalim): A Declaration of War on the Modern Age* (Iqbal), 229
- Roman Catholic Church, 172–3
- Roman Empire, 172–3
- Round Table Conferences (London), 226, 227

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 174, 191
 Royce, Josiah, 59
 Rumi, Maulana Jalaluddin, 1, 2, 7, 14, 43–4, 105, 113, 116, 128, 131, 133, 134, 143, 151, 154, 161, 227
Rumuz-e Bekhudi (Mysteries of Selflessness) (Iqbal), 5, 129, 130, 214
 Russell, Bertrand, 65
 Ryle, Gilbert, 88
- Said Halim Pasha, 228–9
 salvation, 21–2
Satyagraha movement, 223
 scepticism, 84
 Scherer, Carl, 183, 184
 Schimmel, Annemarie, 30, 144, 157–8
 science
 challenge to traditional/religious beliefs, 146, 147–8, 150–1
 ‘fundamental hypothesis’ of scientific method, 80
 instinct as the origin of science, 79–80
 modern science and traditional arguments for God’s existence, 63–77
 and personality, 104
 relationship to religion, 76–7, 98
 ‘religion of science’ concept, 58, 77–86
 ‘science of religion’ concept, 79, 82–3, 85
Science and the Modern World (Whitehead), 177
 scripture, 106
 Secondness, 91
Secrets of the Self, The (Asrar-i-Khudi) (Iqbal), 3–4, 19, 130, 131, 132–3, 208, 211, 212, 217
 secularism, 169–70, 189, 190
 secular knowledge, 61–3
 secularised nation-state, sociopolitical problem of, 172–4
 self-awareness, 180
 self-fashioning, 18–19
 self-possession, 41
 self-realisation, 41, 47–8
 self-renunciation, 7
 selfhood *see khudi* (selfhood) concept
 semiotics, 98
 sense datum, 104–5
 sensual perception, 176
 sentiment, 78, 79
 Sevea, Iqbal Singh, 48, 50
 Shafique, Khurram Ali, 33–4
 Shakespeare, William, 153
 Sharia rules, 49
 Shibli, 115–16
 Shi’ism, 21
 ‘Shikwa’ (‘Complaint to God’) (Iqbal), 7
 Sicily, 217
 signs, 98–100
 Simon Commission, 225
 Singh, Iqbal, 3–4
 slavery, 2, 161, 205, 210, 211
 Smith, W. C., 6
 Social Darwinism, 202, 205, 207
 social evolution, 23–4
 social philosophy, 48
 society
 closed/open society, 184, 186–7
 spiritual basis for, 15
 Soulez, Phillipe, 185
 Spengler, Oswald, 159, 160
 Spinoza, Baruch, 94
 spirituality, 15, 16, 20, 29
Stillborn God (Lilla), xi, 172, 173
Stray Reflections (Iqbal), 114
 Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, 113
 Sufism, 6–7, 40–1, 48, 112–13, 125–6, 127, 134, 146
 flaws of, 151, 152, 208
 Suhrawardī, Shahab al-Din, 121, 134
Sun of Philosophy, The (Prasad), 117, 120–1
 Sunni Islam, 21–2
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 223
taqdir concept (destiny), 4, 36, 78, 103, 133, 155, 159, 178, 179, 181
tawhid (*tawheed, tauhid*) (oneness of God), xi, 9, 26–7, 95, 97, 98, 104, 106
 habits, 101
 and mind, 90
 Taylor, Charles, 56–7, 79
 teleology, xi, 101–6, 131
telos, 178, 179, 181, 215
 Tennyson, Lord Alfred, 2
 tension in the ego, 159–60
 ‘Terana-e-Hindi’ (poem, Iqbal), 50, 167
 ‘Terana-e-Milli’ (poem, Iqbal), 50, 167
 Teresa, Saint, 48
 Thiridness, 91
 thought, 20, 104–5, 152, 153
 and nature, 95–8
 as a stage of history, 156
tikkun (repair), 106–8
 time, 70–2, 178–9
 change in time, 88
 dimensions, 150
 and *Ijithad*, 42–6
 serial time, 149, 150, 160, 164
 time-space, 28, 72, 97, 146, 148–9, 150, 151–2
 ‘Time and the Invention of the Future’ (essay, Jacob), 102
Times of India, 49
Towards Understanding Islam (Mawdudi), 144–5

- traditionalism, 2, 6, 13–14, 113, 170–1
 ‘Traveler’s Guide, The’ (Iqbal), 221–2
 tribalism, 2, 188, 189
 Trinity concept, 172
 truth, 15, 41, 75, 78, 81, 134
 Tucker, Henry, 117
 Turkey, 15–16, 219, 228–9
 Twelver Shi‘ism, 21
 Two Cities (Augustine), 173
Two Sources of Morality and Religion, The
 (Bergson), 34, 47, 48, 51n3, 182–3, 184,
 186
 Two Swords of King and Pope concept, 173
 ‘Ultimate Ego’, 62, 73, 94–5, 104, 148, 180,
 181
 Ultimate Reality, 187
 al-‘ulamā’ Sayyid Imdād Imām ‘Asar’, Shams,
 117–20
ummah, 189, 190, 214
 Uncertainty Principle, 148
 unity
 unity of self, 36–7, 38, 72
 vital knowledge of vital unity, 35–42
 universal love, 9
 Universal Spirit, 187
 universalisation, 49
 universe, 20–1, 39
 closed universe concept, 58–9, 60, 62,
 103–4, 151–2, 179
 and the achievement of immortality, 154–5,
 158
 and change, 177–8
 person–universe–conscious relationship,
 73, 74
 person–universe–habit relationship, 66,
 74
 prophetic concept of, 62
 relationship with God, 69–70, 81–2,
 102–3
 teleology of, 103–4
 true knowledge of, 180–1
 utilitarianism, 202, 205, 206–7
Varieties of Religious Experience, The (James),
 92–3
 vicegerency, 3, 7, 130, 131, 132–3
 Waldrop, M. Mitchell, 89
 Wali Ullah, Shah, 13, 24
 war, 185, 196n21, 204, 213
 Ward, James, 123
 Weismann, Friedrich, 99
White Man’s Burden, The (poem, Kipling),
 202
 Whitehead, A. N., 59, 65, 76, 177–8
 Whittemore, Robert, x, 4, 57–8, 58–9, 60–1,
 62–3
 Wildon Carr, H., 67, 68, 176
 ‘Will to Believe, The’ (James), 108
 ‘world-revealing cup’, 19
 World War I, 219
 youth, 6, 220–1
 Zakaria, Rafiq, 48, 225
*Zarb-I-Kalim/Zarb-e kalīm (Rod of Moses: A
 Declaration of War on the Modern Age)*
 (Iqbal), 127, 129, 136, 229
 Žižek, Slavoj, 108