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EMPIRICAL AND INTUITIVE
KNOWLEDGE IN IQBAL'S THOUGHT: A
SYNTHESIS OF SENSE AND SPIRITUAL
PERCEPTION

Dr. Mohammad Maruf

ABSTRACT

In this article, the author examines Iqbal's theory of knowledge, beginning with Iqbal's assertion on Ultimate Reality, which reveals symbols both externally and internally. Iqbal attributes importance to sense-perception as a way to understand the observable aspects of reality. While he acknowledges the value of empirical knowledge, he emphasizes that it is merely a stage in humanity's spiritual journey. Iqbal critiques modern empiricism for focusing solely on external reality and neglecting its inner, spiritual dimensions, which are accessed through intuition, or "*qulb*." For Iqbal, intuition is not a mysterious faculty but another mode of engaging with reality, and its insights are as concrete as those obtained through sense-perception.

Iqbal applies Kant's distinction between pure and practical reason but goes beyond them, asserting that true thought is dynamic and capable of reaching the Infinite. He argues that thought and intuition are interdependent, both necessary for a comprehensive understanding of reality. This synergy between reason and intuition, Iqbal believes, can lead to a fuller vision of the Ultimate Reality.

Furthermore, Iqbal advocates for a holistic approach to knowledge, combining empirical and intuitive insights. He critiques both the East and the West for their partial approaches, suggesting that only the fusion of love and intellect can provide a complete understanding of reality. Iqbal's theory thus rejects the opposition between sense-knowledge and intuitive knowledge, proposing instead that both must work together to illuminate the truth.

In addition to sense-perception and intuition, Iqbal acknowledges history as a third source of knowledge, though he focuses more on the former two. The article concludes by highlighting Iqbal's unique contribution to mysticism and religious philosophy, particularly his view that mystic knowledge, like other forms of knowledge, is grounded in the everyday world.

While writing on Iqbal's theory of knowledge I have chosen to begin with his very basic assertion on the Ultimate Reality that it reveals its symbols both within and without.¹ The symbols revealed "without" are the vicissitudes of nature which are amenable to sense-perception and are studied by the sciences. Iqbal here assigns a due place to sense-perception as a source of knowledge and describes it as the knowledge of the 'observable aspects of Reality'.² In fact, he believes that inasmuch as man has to live in the obstructing environment, he requires sense-perception to enable him to carve his way through this labyrinth in order to live a smooth life; he has to master his environment rather than enslave himself to it. For Iqbal, however, (and this is very important) the empirical attitude is not to be treated as a detached and isolated one as held by his Western predecessors and contemporaries of the empirical school of thought; it is rather 'an indispensable stage in the spiritual life of humanity;...'³ He adds, 'It is our reflective contact with the temporal flux of things which trains us for an intellectual vision of the non-temporal'.⁴ Thus, for Iqbal it is not only that empirical awareness is a kind of knowledge, it is rather an indispensable pre-condition for the spiritual understanding and uplift of man. He further adds that 'man, who has to maintain his life in an obstructing environment, cannot afford to ignore the visible'.⁵ Thus, Iqbal was not an anti-empiricist, nor he was an empiricist in the strictly modern sense, and what carries him beyond empiricism is his belief that this empirical and reflective contact with nature is not an end in itself. Modern empiricism has confined itself exclusively to the "outer" aspect of reality, unmindful of its internal, spiritual, and more 'intimate aspect which reveals itself "within", i.e., through more subtle source of experience. This approach renders it one-sided.

But what is that 'more intimate aspect of reality and what is the nature of that "within" to which it is revealed? In one word, it is called '*qulb*', "heart" or 'intuition' which is 'a kind of inner intuition or insight'⁶ (to use a phrase from Iqbal). It is something which (in the words of Jalal-uddin Rumi) 'feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception'.⁷ This description of the great Muslim sage brings intuition closer to other ordinary sources of experience which also

'feed on the rays of the Sun', the fountainhead of all light and vision in the world. Talking of the nature of this source of knowledge Iqbal expressly says that it is not to be regarded as 'a mysterious special faculty' as is commonly thought; 'it is rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part. Yet the vista of experience thus opened to us is as real and concrete as any other experience'.⁸ Here he emphasizes two very important aspects of intuition: (i) the data which come through this source are other than the sensations in the ordinary sense, and (ii) the knowledge which it brings is as real and concrete as through any other source of experience. Here the question arises as to what is the nature of this 'datum' and what fashions it into the form of knowledge proper? Iqbal says that its 'reports, if properly interpreted, are never false'.⁹ But what is it which 'interprets' these data? It is now common sense that in the case of sense-knowledge the data are interpreted by reason or, to use a Kantian terminology, "understanding". Iqbal accepts this Kantian model when he says that 'knowledge is sense-perception elaborated by understanding'.¹⁰ He also adds that the character of man's knowledge is conceptual.¹¹ "Iqbal then applies this model to mystical or religious knowledge also and holds that in this case, too, the data supplied by intuition are organized and interpreted by 'thought'. He agrees with those who say that 'discursive thought' plays no role in religious knowledge,"¹² but he adds that it is not the only kind of thought. This brings us to his theory of thought which plays an important role in his theory of knowledge.

Following the legacy of Aristotle, Kant admitted two kinds of 'thought' viz.,

(i) Pure thought or reason which is analytical and discursive, and
(ii) Practical reason which operates in the sphere of practical matters like morals. The former being analytical is the tool used in the field of sciences; its chief function being to pick a whole to its pieces with a view to understand it. This is why Iqbal compares sciences to so many vultures, each snatching away its own piece of flesh from the dead body of nature.¹³ According to Iqbal, this kind of reason cannot reach the true nature of reality. The Practical Reason (as Aristotle held himself), being concerned with the means to a given end only, and not being able to give the end itself which comes through some other sources, is also unable to reach the real. In Iqbal's view these two kinds of thought are only superficial and do not reach the inward nature of reality; however, he adds, in the company of that great Muslim thinker al-Farabi¹⁴ (870-950 A.D), that

thought has a deeper movement also in which it is capable of reaching an immanent Infinite in whose self-unfolding movement the various finite concepts are merely moments'.¹⁵ By this he means that thought is not static in its true nature, but 'is dynamic and unfolds its internal infinitude in time like the seed,...'¹⁶ In other words, the infinite is implicitly present in thought and is not alien to it as is sometimes held. In this deeper movement, he agrees with al-Farabi, thought and intuition become one a fact which was realised neither by Imam Ghazali (d.1111) nor yet by Kant. According to Iqbal, 'thought and intuition are organically related',¹⁷ though, he goes on to add, thought must necessarily simulate finitude and inconclusiveness because of its alliance with serial time',¹⁸ Hence, thought is infinite and the view that it is essentially finite and thus incapable of reaching the Infinite 'is based on a mistaken notion of the movement of thought in knowledge'.¹⁹ For this mistake Iqbal accuses logical understanding 'which finds a multiplicity of mutually repellent individualities with no prospect of their ultimate reduction to unity that makes us sceptical about the conclusiveness of thought.'²⁰ He condemns both Ghazali and Kant on the ground that they 'failed to see that thought, in the very act of knowledge, passes beyond its own finitude'.²¹ This passage is 'possible only', he says, '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.'²² It is wrong to regard thought as inconclusive for it..., 'in its own way, is a greeting of the finite with the infinite'.²³

The question arises how thought in this special sense operates on the Special data to carve them into religious knowledge, say the knowledge of God? Iqbal's position implies that the operation of thought on the religious data is analogous to its operation on sense-data. In both the cases, thought organizes the data supplied into the finished product called 'knowledge'. But apart from the difference of the nature of data in the two cases, thought operates on the sense-data from "outside" and has nothing to do with the data itself, whereas in the case of religious data thought is not 'a principle which organizes and interprets its material from the outside, but as a potency which is formative of the very being of its material'.²⁴ In other words, the relation between thought and its data is not an external' one as is the case with sense- data; the two rather become one in the process of knowledge, Iqbal says of thought and intuition, "They spring up from the same root and complement each other".²⁵ they are 'in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation'.²⁶

It is not only that sense-perception and intuition are two equally important sources of knowledge; they must work together and complement each other in order to provide a complete and exhaustive knowledge of the real. Iqbal says in *The Reconstruction* that 'prayer must be regarded as a necessary complement to the intellectual activity of the observer of Nature'.²⁷ Not only this, he goes on to add 'that all search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer. The scientific observer of Nature is a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer.'²⁸ Iqbal goes a step further when he says in his Persian verse *Gulshane Raze Jadeed*, (*The New Rose Garden of Mystery*): 'If he should close one eye, it would be sin: it is by seeing with both eyes that he can gain the path...'²⁹ Thus, he is against one-sidedness and partiality in knowledge, for only a fuller and comprehensive vision can reach the ultimate reality. Iqbal condemns both the East and the West for their one-sided and partial approaches. In his Persian verse *Javid Namah* he says, 'For Westerners intelligence is the stuff of life, for Easterners love is the mystery of all being.'³⁰ Only if they were to combine the two, they would get to know the ultimate reality. He says, 'Only through love intelligence gets to know God,...'³¹ Not only this, but this combination will enable them to chalk out a new world. He bids the Westerners and Easterners both to 'rise and draw the design of a new world, mingle together love with intelligence'.³² Only such an amalgamation of love and intelligence, of intuition and sense-perception, can afford a fuller and more comprehensive vision of the ultimate reality. Thus, in Iqbal's view there is no opposition between sense-knowledge and intuitive knowledge; rather they should work in complete unison and complement each other's illumination.

Besides these two sources of knowledge i.e., sense-perception and intuition - Iqbal acknowledges a third source of knowledge, viz., History,³³ which deals with the knowledge of nations and societies, as to how their rise and fall occur and what are the principles and factors controlling them. However, he does not elaborate much upon this source of knowledge. He has, no doubt, devoted his famous *mathnavi Ramuze Bekhudi*³⁴ (*Mysteries of the Selflessness*) to an elaborate study of the people and society, but it is not from an epistemic point of view that he deals with them. Hence, Iqbal's chief interest centers round a discussion of sense-perception and intuition which are the "outer" and "inner" sources of knowledge respectively.

Though agreeing with the mystics that discursive thought plays no role in religious knowledge, Iqbal compares all human knowledge

to discursive knowledge in one very important respect, i.e., as ‘a temporal process which moves round a veritable ‘other’, supposed to exist per se and confronting the knowing ego’.³⁵ Here he tries to bring home some very important facts about human knowledge, namely, it always involves a trio, i.e., (i) the knowing subject, (ii) the object to be known, and (iii) the act of ‘sensing’ or perceiving. What he wants to stress is that no knowledge is possible in the absence of any of these three terms. This view of knowledge leaves absolutely no room for the state of *‘hulul’* or *‘fana’* (i.e., abnegation of the self) in the process of knowing the ultimate reality as held by a majority of mystics and even by the *sufis*. Thus, Iqbal denies that any knowledge can take place while the recipient is in a state of trance or ecstasy because in that use the difference between the subject and object would vanish and with that the relationship between them would also cease. Hence, even in the case of mystic knowledge he believes in the necessity of the said trio. In fact, this position draws upon his view of the end of the ego’s quest which, according to him, ‘is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality; it is on the other hand, a more precise definition of it.’³⁶ In his *Javid-Namah*, he beautifully says: ‘No one can stand unshaken in His Presence: and he who can, verily, he is pure gold’.³⁷ By implication, only such a one can acquire knowledge of the ultimate reality.

One more important point which Iqbal emphasizes in the case of mystic knowledge ‘is a moment of intimate association with a Unique Other Self, transcending, encompassing, and momentarily suppressing the private personality of the subject of experience.’³⁸ It carries two important conditions, viz., (i) it involves an intimate association with “a Unique Other Self and (ii) the private personality of the recipient is momentarily suppressed. Now as far as the first condition is concerned, Iqbal clearly means by this Unique Other Self nothing other than God, a point on which some of the mystics will not go with him. The second condition, however, seems to contradict his main thesis that the recipient retains his personality through the whole experience as a necessary pre-condition of mystic knowledge. Here Iqbal is, most probably, equating this experience with an aesthetic experience in which case the experiencing self is momentarily and partly “suppressed”. This, however, can be a pre-condition of “appreciation” but not of knowledge” which requires that the recipient must retain himself. This point simply explains that mystic knowledge, which is like any other Land of knowledge qua knowledge, involves a kind of appreciation also - a fact which accounts for any touch of mystery which may appear to shroud it. It

bestows a touch of vagueness on the type of knowledge under discussion. However, it does not detract from its normalcy in so far as an aesthetic experience is a perfectly normal human experience, e.g., any normal human being who is endowed with a certain level of sensitivity is capable of “enjoying” a beautiful sunset or an exquisite piece of painting, etc.

In this article I have confined myself to a study of the constitutive aspect of the mystic knowledge only, leaving out its epistemic significance as falling beyond its scope. Iqbal's chief contribution in this field, to my mind, is that he has brought his knowledge from the heavenly world of Plato down to the sublunary world of everyday life. He has shown that it is a kind of knowledge among other kinds and constitutively it is no different from other kinds of knowledge amenable to man. This, in my view, is a notable contribution of Iqbal in the fields of mysticism and the philosophy of religion.

Notes and Reference

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 - ² Ibid, p.11.
 - ³ Ibid, p.12
 - ⁴ Ibid
 - ⁵ Ibid
 - ⁶ Ibid, p. 13
 - ⁷ Ibid
 - ⁸ Ibid
 - ⁹ Ibid
 - ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 10
 - ¹¹ Ibid, pp. 10-11
 - ¹² Ibid, p. 17
 - ¹³ Ibid, p. 34
 - ¹⁴ According to al-farabi, the intellect rises from potential to the habitual intellect and thence to the acquired intellect where rational knowledge coincides with ecstasy and inspiration ef. his *Risala fi Ara Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah*, (Leiden, 1895), pp. 440.
 - ¹⁵ Iqbal, op. cit., p.5
 - ¹⁶ Ibid.
 - ¹⁷ Ibid, p. 4
 - ¹⁸ Ibid
 - ¹⁹ Ibid, pp.4-5
 - ²⁰ Ibid, p. 5
 - ²¹ Ibid

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23 Ibid
24 Ibid, p. 31
25 Ibid, p. 72
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29 An English rendering of Iqbal's work by M. Hadi Hussain, (Lahore: Sh. Ashraf, 1969), p.8.
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38 Ibid, p. 15

EXISTENCE AND ESSENCE IN SADRĀ'S
METAPHYSICS: THE DYNAMIC REALITY
OF BEING AND THE PRINCIPLE OF
TASHKIK

Dr. Atya Syed

ABSTRACT

This article explores Sadrā's philosophy of existence, emphasizing that existence is the only true reality, while essences are merely mental constructs derived from particular modes of existence. Sadrā critiques the notion that abstract concepts can fully grasp real existence, arguing that existence is dynamic, unique, and beyond the limitations of conceptual thought. He distinguishes between essences, which are static, and existence, which is constantly evolving and manifesting in new forms. The principle of "*tashkik*" (systematic ambiguity) is central to Sadrā's thought, explaining how existence is both the same in all things and yet generates unique, individual realities. Sadrā's existential framework rejects the Peripatetic view that existence and essence are separate, and also diverges from Al-Suhrawardī, who prioritized essence over existence. Sadrā asserts that existence itself gives rise to essences, with God being pure existence without essence. He also dismisses monism, ascribing irreducible uniqueness to contingent beings, while asserting that God's absolute simplicity transcends all multiplicity. Furthermore, the article discusses Sadrā's idea of intrinsic movement within existence, where beings ascend towards higher forms, culminating in the perfected human (*Insan-i Kamil*) who bridges the contingent and the eternal.

According to Sadrā nothing is real except existence. But this sole reality cannot be grasped by the mind which can understand only the general ideas i.e., concepts or essences. There is a fundamental difference between essences and existence. Essences do not exist per se, but arise in the mind from the particular modes of existence. Therefore, they are mental phenomena. The mind is capable of capturing them. However, the general idea of existence cannot grasp the real existence, since existence is an objective reality and its transformation into an abstract idea distorts it. In other words, what exists is uniquely particular. Hence it cannot be understood by the conceptual mind. However essence is a concept and does not exist per se. Therefore, it can be grasped by the mind.

Sadrā further clarifies his view and admits that there is an abstract notion of existence arising from different existents. He also endorses the fact or observation that there is nothing that strictly corresponds to this abstraction; but the blunder is to imagine the existence is just this abstraction or concept.

Sadrā maintains if existence is to be considered as a concept, then it is some sort of essence or a genus. But existences are unique and no general idea can do justice to the uniqueness of real being. Moreover, essences are static. Hence, each instance of an essence is exactly the same. No instance of essence is unique or individual *Fard* (فرد). Existence on the other hand, means individuals (فرد) who are unique and not just cases (*hisas* حصص) of existence.¹ Existence is dynamic and constantly manifesting itself in new and dynamic form. Reality is the home of existence, while mind is the proper place for essences, concepts and static ideas.

The above-mentioned chain of reasoning leads to the conclusion that existence is a unique unanalysable factor in everything. Sometimes an objection is raised against it. According to it if existence is asserted of essence as something over and above essence, then essences will be invested with being prior to their existence. One answer to this objection is that existence is a special attribute which does not presuppose the existence of an essence. However, in reality existence is just the status of being real. It is not an attribute of something which is in its own right already something real.

For Sadrā existence is pure and absolute. It manifests itself in different forms. The resultant beings are modes of existence (*anwaul al-wujud*). They differ from the absolute existence and exhibit certain essential characteristics to the mind. Hence it is in the mind and not in external reality that essences arise a sort of secondary nature of the primordial reality which is existence.² Here Sadrā draws an analogy between absolute existence and the sun which in a sense is identical with the rays of light it emanates; but the rays can give rise to different characteristics.

The more an existence is complete, the less of essences it exhibits. Hence, God has no essence. From this point of view essence constitutes negation of existence. Existence is positive, definite, determinate and real. Essences are vague, dark, indeterminate, negative and unreal. Essences are nothing in themselves unless they are conjoined with existence, but existences are real; because, they are manifestations of the absolute existence.

When it is said that essence and existence are “united”, this description gives the impression as if there are two realities, i.e., essence and existence, and they are united, but Sadrā has already declared that essences do not possess any reality. The question arises: ‘In what sense these are said to be conjoined?’

In the light of afore-mentioned discussion the answer is that when absolute existence ceases to be absolute and becomes ‘modes’ of existence. These modes give rise to essence. From this point of view essence is the subjective element. God himself gives rise to essences when he “descends” from his absoluteness and generates attributes as contexts or ideas of His mind.³ His attributes have no real existence. They are purely subjective to him. Therefore in its downward movement, when existence is further diversified into modes, these modal existences generate essences.

The fundamental difference between Sadrā and the Muslim Peripatetic is that according to the former existence itself creates essences, while the latter believe that a concrete existent is a combination of essence and existence and each of them having a separate reality in its own right. This point of view separates Sadrā from al-Suhrawardi who holds that essence is the reality and existence is only an abstraction.

The Principle of *Tashkik*

The classical Aristotlean logic has made the distinction between two types of universals which are the following:

- (a) The universals univocally applicable.
- (b) The universals equivocally or ambiguously applicable.

Later Muslim peripatetic believe that there is no difference within a single essence and differences exist only in particular existences of an essence. For example there is no differences in general 'redness', but instance of redness differ from each other. So when it intensifies, a new species of red arises and the previous red goes out of existence.

Al-Suhrawardī does not agree with the above-mentioned view and maintains that a single specific essence may have a range of intensity. So when a qualitative intensification takes place essence is not replaced by another essence. Therefore, when red colour intensifies not only "redness" but also "red" remain the same, though a qualitative increase has taken place. In other words, all essences are capable of increase and decrease. For Al-Suhrawardī, the category of 'more or less' is most basic category applicable to the range of reality.

Sadrā has taken this category of "more or less" and makes it as the basis of his theory of existence. However, this principle called "*tashkik*" (تشكیک), is not applicable, to existence. Sadrā argues that essences are univocal and existence is equivocal or ambiguous (*mutashakik*). When something is ambiguous, it acts both as a principle of identity and difference. Only existence is such a principle and that is why it creates identity in difference.⁴

Moreover, existence is not only ambiguous, it is systematically ambiguous. Its reasons is that existence is not static but in perpetual movement. The movement is from the more general (*amm*) and the more indeterminate (*mubham*) to the more concrete and determinate (*ḵbās*), integrated and simple forms of existence. Every prior form of existence behaves like genus or matter and it is absorbed into the concreteness of the posterior form which behaves like differentiae. This movement from the less perfect to the more perfect is uni-directional and irreversible. Therefore existence never moves backward.

The more a thing has essence, the less it has of existence. At the lowest in the scale of existence is primary matter which does not exist. It is only a concept, i.e., an essence. The highest in the scale of existence is God who is absolute existence. Hence He has no essence and is beyond the reach of the conceptual thought. For Sadrā existence is not something static. It is constantly moving from the lower to the higher. The driving force this movement is '*Isḥq*' or cosmic love which compels everything towards a movement of concrete form. Sadrā believes that intellectually and spiritually perfected members of the human species will become a

species in themselves hereafter. Since existence is good and absolute existence is absolute good. The absolute existence has no opposite; because, opposites are subsumable under a genus and existence has no genus.

What does Sadrā means by the systematic ambiguity of existence? In order to answer the question we should keep in mind the following points:

- (i) Existence is all things is basically the same.
- (ii) Existence is basically the same, yet it creates fundamental differences which renders every existence unique.
- (iii) Due to substantive movement in existence all the lower forms of existence are contained in and transcended by higher forms.

Difference and Unity

There seems to be real tension between existential monism of Sadrā (according to which everything vanishes in the Absolute existence, i.e., God) and the doctrine of the systematic ambiguity of existence according to which every contingent being has a unique reality of its own which cannot be reduced to anything else. When we study Sadrā it becomes clear that for him God alone is real as Reality. The contingent beings are real only as appearance. If this is so how we can reconcile the principle of ambiguity of existence with this absolute and all encompassing monism?

Sadrā tries to answer the above mentioned questions by differentiating between necessary and contingent existents. He maintains that all existents are unique and irreducible. Therefore, all existents whether necessary or contingent are original & unique. However, there is a difference in the case of God who is pure existence and a necessary existent, while the contingent existents are mixture of existence and essence.

Sadrā on the basis of the principle of '*tashkik*' rejects existential monism. He criticized those Sufis who think that existence is a single individual reality, i.e. God, and it is a universal having multiple instances. In Sadrā's opinion it is not possible that God's being itself should form the existence of contingents— substances or accidents. The reason is that in the case of many existents whose essence is identical (for example in the case of men). Supposing that their existence is also identical (as in the case of God), then there will be no distinction among them. This shows that existence can never be identically the same in any two existents, whether they stand under the same genus or essence.

Sadrā also rejects monism on the basis of his famous principle: "That which is of simple nature is everything (*basit al-haqiqa Kull al-ashya*)." ⁵

On the basis of this, Sadrā argues that God is absolutely simple. Therefore, He is all existence. However, Sabazwari maintains that this does not lead to the conclusion that there is unity in multiplicity. It means multiplicity in unity, where as absoluteness of God means that nothing relative can be attributed to Him. God being absolutely simple cannot be identical with anything that is composite, because, composite is that to which affirmative or negative attributes can be ascribed.

Lastly, according to Sadrā, the contingent existence is not static or fixed. There is an intrinsic movement of being upward (*baraka fil joubar*). He presents the principle of movement as a manifestation *tashkik*. The physical nature in moving towards higher forms of existence gives rise and assumes the higher forms. This movement towards higher forms of being a matter of observation and experience. It can be attested and confirmed. The end product of this process is that perfect man (انسان کامل) in whose being the contingent and the eternal meet. However, it does not mean that the contingent becomes God.

Notes and References

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- ¹ Shirazi, Sadrā-al-Din, *Al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*, p. 43, lines 4.
 - ² Ibid., p. 86-87, lines 6-8.
 - ³ Fazal-ur-Rehman quotes *Al-Asfar*, I, p. 308, line 8 and p. 318, line 4 – in his book – *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadrā*, pub. University Press of New York University, 1975.
 - ⁴ Fazal-ur-Rehman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadrā*, quotes from *Al-Asfar*, I, 1, p. 483, line 13. Pub. The State University of New York, Albany, 195.
 - ⁵ Fazal-ur-Rehman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadrā*; Quote from *Al-Asfar*, I, 1, p. 47, line 8. Pub. by the State University of New York, Albany, 1975,

IQBAL'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY: FROM
ENLIGHTENMENT TO QURANIC
REVIVAL AND REFORM

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the intellectual and spiritual transformation of Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) in the context of 19th-century thinkers and the role of his mentor, Syed Mir Hasan, in shaping Iqbal's understanding of Islamic teachings, the Quran, and Islamic history. It delves into Iqbal's exposure to the Quranic knowledge and the Prophetic sayings, highlighting the Prophet's warnings about following in the footsteps of Jews and Christians in distorting the divine message. Iqbal's intellectual journey, marked by his dissatisfaction with the conventional understanding of Islam, led him to Europe, where he encountered Western scholarship and philosophy, significantly influencing his thought process. The article traces the impact of European intellectual movements, particularly in Biblical studies, on Iqbal's evolving critique of religious distortions and his deep engagement with the Quran. It examines how Iqbal, through his study of Western historical criticism and the methods used to analyze the Old and New Testaments, came to understand similar distortions within the Muslim world. This realization led Iqbal to emphasize the importance of reformation and returning to the original doctrines of the Quran.

Furthermore, the article discusses Iqbal's internal conflict between abandoning poetry for prose, influenced by his desire to focus on research and reform, and how his mentor, Professor Thomas Arnold, guided him to continue using poetry as a means to convey his philosophical and religious ideas. The article concludes with a reflection on Iqbal's poetry as a medium for his intellectual, religious, and societal reforms, underscoring his call for a revival of the true spirit of the Quran and Islamic thought to rejuvenate the Muslim Ummah.

The 19th C. of human history is regarded as the century of thinkers, philosophers, and ideas. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Mirza Asad-Ullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869), Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914), were among the notable ones. Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was also born in the 19th C.

Syed Mir Hasan (1844-1929) a distinguished scholar of the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic history, a renowned professor of Arabic at Scotch Mission College in Sialkot imparted knowledge of Arabic and Persian to Iqbal and trained him in the Quran, Statements of the RasoolAllah (Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic history and thus through his knowledge influenced him deeply. It seems that Syed Mir Hasan, who had met Mirza Ghalib and was an ardent supporter and admirer of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan introduced Iqbal to these two great luminaries of his time, and thus directed and helped Iqbal to write poems like “Mirza Ghalib” and “*Syed ki Lob-e-Turba*”. Otherwise, such writings could not be expected from Iqbal before 1905. The lower and higher criticism of the poem “Mirza Ghalib” depicts the thoughtfulness and innovativeness of Iqbal’s mind. An in-depth reading of the poem “Mirza Ghalib” gives an insight into Iqbal’s thorough understanding of the Quran, Statements of Rasool Allah (Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic history. Moreover, Iqbal’s poem “*Syed ki Lob-e-Turba*” is a substantial proof of his command and thoughtfulness over the Quran, Hadith literature, biography of the Prophet of Islam, and Statements of the Prophet of Islam.

Definitely, Iqbal would have gone through the following statements of the Prophet of Islam and would be aware about their implications:

1. “You will certainly follow the ways of those who came before you, hand span by hand span, cubit by cubit, to the extent that if they entered the hole of a lizard, you will enter it too.” We said: “O Messenger of Allah, (do you mean) the Jews and the Christians?” He said: “Who else?”¹

2. “O Messenger of Allah! Make a Dhat Anwat (Nabk – *Ziziphus spina-christi*) for us as they have a *Dhat Anwat*.’ The Prophet (SAW) said: “*Subhan Allah!* This is like what Musa’s people said: Make for us a god like their gods. By the One in Whose control is my soul! You shall follow the way of those who were before you.”²

These aforementioned statements were symbolic to the behaviour of Jews and Christians with regard to (i) *Kitab Allah* (Revealed Book), (ii) *Deen Allah* (Divine Law), and (iii) *Rusul Allah* (Prophets of God), which simply highlights their dubious intent towards the Divine Laws, the Revealed Books, and Prophets of God. These statements of the Prophet were prescient that the *Ulema* of Muslim *Ummah* and its Elders will do the same with *Deen Allah*, *Kitab Allah* (Quran), and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as Jews and Christians did before them to their prophets and Revealed Books.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal would have been well acquainted with the deeds of the Jews and Christians towards Allah's prophets, His *Deen*, and Books before 1905 based on his understanding of the Quran, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Confound Truth with Falsehood - Surah Al Baqarah 2:42
2. Knowingly Conceal the Truth - Surah Al Baqarah 2:42
3. O People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with falsehood, and knowingly conceal the truth? – Surah Al Imran 3:71
4. Those unto whom We have given the Book recognize it as they recognize their children, but knowingly conceal the truth- Surah Al Baqarah 2:146
5. Truly those who deviate with regard to Our sign are not hidden from Us- Surah Fussilat 41: 40
6. When God made the covenant with those who were given the Book.....they cast it behind their backs and sold it for a paltry price-Surah Al Imran 3:187
7. It is they who have purchased error at the price of Guidance- Surah Al Baqarah 2:16; 86 Surah Al Tawbah 9:9;
8. Sell not the pact of God for a paltry price -Surah Al Nahl 16:95

Although, the details of such kind of treacherous behaviour are not found in the body of knowledge of *Ummat-e-Muhammadiyya*, therefore it is assumed that Iqbal would have been a seeker of all such details, which he certainly came across during his visit and stay in Europe. As far as the behaviour and deeds of Jews and Christians are concerned towards *Deen Allah*, *Kitab Allah*, and *Rasool Allah*, this article would have encompassed all the three aspects of their deeds. However, as per the title of the article, we will entail our discussion related to the Book of Allah i.e., the Quran.

As far as the attitudes and deeds of Jews and Christians towards the books of Allah i.e. Tanak and Gospel are concerned, before 1905, Iqbal might have been aware about it through the available body of knowledge that is found in the Muslim World, which may be

regarded as negligible as to get an insight of their methods and procedures of distorting the original message of Tanakh and Gospel. Moreover, this knowledge is only found in the following verses of Quran:

1. **Distortion of the original message**- “Among those who are Jews are those who distort the meaning of the word” (Surah Al Nisa 4:46)
2. **Breaking of Covenant and distortion of the word**- “Then for breaking of their covenant, We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They distort the meaning of the Word” (Surah Al Maidah 5:14)
3. **Distortion of the meaning of the word** - “they distort the meaning of the word” (Surah Al Maidah 5:41)
4. **Listen to lies** - “Those who listen to lies” (Surah Al Maidah 5:42)
5. **Unlawful consumption**- “and consume what is unlawful” (Surah Al Maidah 5:42)
6. **Turning back from the Original Message of Allah**- “they turn their backs, and they are not believers” (Surah Al Maidah 5:43)
7. **Spreading Lies**- “Who listen to lies and spread it to others” (Surah Al Maidah 5:41)
8. **Distorting the Word of God after hearing**- “hear the word of God and then distort it after they had understood it” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:75)
9. **Writing Book by their hand selling it as Book of God**- “So woe unto those who write the book with their hands, then say, ‘this is from God,’ that they may sell it for a paltry price” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:79)
10. **Substitute the Book of God**- “But those who did wrong, substitute a word other than that which had been said to them” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:59)
11. **Hear and disobey**- “They said, ‘We hear, and disobey” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:93)
12. **Make Division**- “Such as We have sent down for those who make division” (Surah Al-Hijr 15:90)
13. **Made the Quran into fragments**- “Who made the Quran into fragments” (Surah Al-Hijr 15:91)

The aforesaid verses of the Quran in the light of statements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) highlight that the Muslim *Ulema* and Elders of *Ummat-e-Muhammadiyya* will do the same with the Book of Allah as People before them i.e., Jews and Christians did with the books of Allah as mentioned in the said verses of the Quran. Iqbal

having knowledge of Jews and Christians behaviour and attitude towards the book of Allah as mentioned in the Quran visited Europe for studies. It seems that his visit to Europe for studies was as per the Divine Plan so that he could get the answers of the questions which he could not find within the available body of Islamic Knowledge in the Muslim world. He stayed in Europe for three years (from 1905 to 1908). During his stay in Europe his efforts were focused to get the answers of the questions which would have been haunting him after coming across with the aforementioned statements of the prophet of Islam and verses of the Quran. These questions can be listed as follows:

1. Is the statement of the Prophet of God incorrect?
2. Is the knowledge of the Prophet of God imperfect?
3. Are the statements of prophet of God based on his assumption?

As per the Muslim *Ulema* and Jurists, the Quran which we have is as it was handed over by the Prophet of Islam to the Companions. As per the Muslim Scholars, *Ulema*, and Jurists, there is no chance of distortion of even a word, and punctuation. The dichotomy between the belief system of *Ulema* and the statements of *Rasool Allah* about the distortion of the original message of Allah made Iqbal an unsatisfied soul as he loved the Prophet of Islam to the core of his heart. Under such circumstances, he would have definitely decided to do research on (i) statements of the Prophet of God, and (ii) Truthfulness of the statements of the Prophet.

The 19th C. Europe delved into the explosion of Cognitive Intellect, Philosophy, and Knowledge. Muhammad Iqbal's contact with the early Twentieth Century European World, which was experiencing cognitive revolution made him Allama Iqbal. As per my knowledge, the Urdu world and Muslim *Ummah* is ignorant about the role of cognitive revolution of 19th C. Europe in transforming Muhammad Iqbal into Allama Iqbal. The forward of *Kulliyat-e-Iqbal* written by Shaikh Abdul Qadir elaborated a little bit of Iqbal's experiences in Europe and its role in his transformation. The impact of his visit in transforming him can be explained in hundreds of pages, which is not desirable here. According to Shaikh Abdul Qadir, "A new epoch in Iqbal poetry started from 1905-08. During this time he stayed in Europe.....During this time two drastic thoughts came to his mind.....One day, Iqbal told me that he would like to renounce poetry.....Prof. Arnold agreed with me and it was decided that renouncing poetry is not right for Iqbal.....However, this lead Iqbal to change his language of poetry

from Urdu to Persian, and Iqbal gave preference to Persian over Urdu language”.³

In the 19th C., Biblical study in the Jewish and Christian world exploded like a volcano. In actuality, the research and investigation in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) started in the 18th C., but it reached its zenith in the 19th C. The research and investigation in the OT and NT revolutionized the world and it affected each and every aspect of human life. The OT for Jews is called Tanakh, an acronym which derives from the three types of holy writings: *Torah* (Law); *Neviim* (Prophets); and *Ketuvim* (Writings). The discourses on OT and NT revealed that the division of scriptures into verses and chapters was not in the minds of the original authors, but later innovations. Verses were introduced in the 9th C., and chapters in the 13th C. The order of the books of the Hebrew Bible differs from that of the Christians Old Testament, while the Catholic OT has inter-testamental books and the Protestant OT does not. Moreover, there is a great disagreement on the meanings of the words used in OT and NT. Thus, the scholarship and analysis relating to OT and NT revolutionized all aspects of human life i.e., intellectual, philosophical, societal, political, economic, and civilizational. In fact, these discourses on OT and NT were going on between two groups of Christians and Jews i.e., Catholic and Protestants; Orthodox Jews and proponents of reformed Judaism, and they based their observations on research and Investigation of OT and NT. This discourse encompassed all the discipline of human sciences and revolutionized the process of cognitive explosion. In this reference, it feels pertinent to mention here the discourse which occurred among the notable scholars of 18th and 19th C related to OT.

The Historical Method of Analysis: This method first used and developed by the German theologian and Biblical scholar named Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780-1849). His book *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel* (Textbook of the Historical-Critical Introduction to the Bible-1817) laid the foundation of higher criticism movement, which reached its apogee with the persuasive synthesis of Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), a German Biblical Scholar and Orientalist, who is known for his critical investigations into OT history and the composition of Hexateuch. However, this movement of historical criticism reached its zenith with the scholarship of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel's major works include “*The Phenomenology of Spirit*” (1807), “*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*” (1817) and “*Philosophy of Right*” (1821). Hegel proved to be one of the most important

scholar in this field who revolutionised the process of philosophical, and intellectual understanding of the OT and laid the foundation of Hegelianism, a Philosophical School based on his writings. Hegel's immediate followers in Germany are generally divided into the Hegelian Rightists (also known as Right Hegelians or Old Hegelians); the Hegelian Leftists (also known as Left Hegelians or Young Hegelians); and Centralist Hegelian. The Rightists Hegelians developed Hegel's philosophy along lines which they considered to be in accordance with Christian theology, and took his philosophy in a politically and religiously conservative direction. The Right Hegelians felt that the series of historical dialectics had been completed, and that Prussian society as it existed was the culmination of all social development to date. Among the Rightists Hegelians, Johann Philipp Gabler (1753 - 1826), Karl Friedrich Goschel (1784 - 1861), and Johann Eduard Erdmann (1805 - 1892) are very famous.

The Leftists Hegelians accentuated the anti-Christian tendencies of Hegel's system, and believed that there were still further dialectical changes to come, and that the Prussian society of the time was far from perfect. The list of Leftists Hegelians includes the names of those who changed the course of discourse in philosophy and started a new epoch of the Western Civilization. Famous Leftists Hegelians are as follows:

1. Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804 - 1872),
2. Max Stirner (1806-1874)
3. David Friedrich Strauss (1808 - 1874),
4. Bruno Bauer (1809 - 1882),
5. Karl Marx (1818-1883)
6. Friedrich Engels (1820 - 1895)

Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz (1805 - 1879) is one of the famous Centralists Hegelians. This German based Hegelianism also influenced British School of Philosophy and laid the foundation of British Idealism. Among British Hegelians T. H. Green (1836 - 1882), F. H. Bradley (1846 - 1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848 - 1923), J. M. E. McTaggart (1866 - 1925), H. H. Joachim (1868 - 1938) and J. H. Muirhead (1855 - 1940) are famous ones. During his stay in England, Iqbal came very close to McTaggart and benefitted from his ideas and work.

With reference to the Scholarship of OT, two more scholars are worth mentioning here:

1. Johann Karl Wilhelm Vatke (1806-1882), and
2. Georg Heinrich August Ewald

W. Vatke was one of the founders of the newer Hexateuch criticism. He published his book *Die Religion des Alten Testaments nach den kanonischen Büchern entwickelt* (The religion of the Old Testament developed according to the Canonical Books), which contained the seeds of a revolution in the ideas held about the Old Testament in the same year in which David Strauss published his seminal work *Life of Jesus*. Georg H. A. Ewald, was a German orientalist, Protestant theologian, and Biblical Exegete. H. Ewald's work on 'Hebrew Grammar' inaugurated a new era in biblical philology, and he was regarded as "the second founder of the science of the Hebrew language" by Ferdinand Hitzig (1807-1875), who was himself a Biblical critic. His seminal work, which was the result of his thirty years hard labour titled as "*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*", is considered outstanding work in Historical Criticism branch of research.

With regard to the Historical Method of the study of OT, five more scholars are worth mentioning here, as they are responsible to use this method extensively in their study of OT. They are as follows:

1. Edouard Guillaume Eugène Rues (1804-1891)
2. Karl Heinrich Graf (1815-1869)
3. Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891)
4. Julius Wellhausen, and
5. Bernhard Duhm (1847-1928)

Julius Wellhausen researched on Hexateuch published in 1833 titled as "Prolegomena to the History of Israel", which is one of the critical study on OT.

As far as New Testament (NT) is concerned, Tübingen School and its critics played an important role in it. David Strauss (1808-1874) laid the foundation of Tübingen School with the publication of his book "Das Leben Jesu" (The Life of Jesus) in 1834. Bruno Bauer's book on "Kritik der Evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker" (Criticism of the Evangelical History of the Synoptics), published in 1841 is also one of the fundamental book in this series. Among critics of Tübingen School are J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889), B.F. Westcott (1825-1901), and A Von Harnack (1851-1930). Moreover, it feels pertinent here to mention a book titled as "Die Geschichte des Koran" (The History of Quran) written by Theodore Noldeke, a famous disciple of Georg H. A. Ewald. It is certain that Iqbal had gone through this book in particular and the writings of Western scholars pertaining to OT, NT and Quran in general. After having gone through the scholarly work of aforementioned Biblical Scholars, he became aware about the methods and procedures of Jewish and Christians priestly class

which they used to distort the original message of Holy Scriptures as highlighted in the Quranic verses (2:42; 3:71; 2:146; 41:40; 3:187; 2:16/86; 9:9; 16:95; 4:46; 5:14; 5:41; 5:42; 5:43; 2:75; 2:79; 2:59; 2:93; 15:90; 15:91). Besides, he also became aware about the condition and pattern which would have to develop in the body of Muslim *Ummah* after the Prophet as per his (PBUH) sayings about the role of *Ulemas* and Elders in the distortion of the original message of Quran. Thus, Iqbal became more focused towards the Quran and tried to understand the reality of the statements of the Prophet of Islam, which could not be wrong as per his thoughtfulness. This was the time when Iqbal faced the worst crisis in his intellectual life and decided to leave poetry. However, a question arises here, why did he want to renounce poetry? Or what did he want to do instead of writing poetry? A close and in-depth investigation of the matter reveals that he would like to renounce poetry for prose writing. He intended to focus on research in *Deen Allah*, *Kitab Allah*, and *Rasool Allah* as this work could not be possible in poetry. Iqbal shared this idea of renouncing poetry with prose with Abdul Qadir, and he did not endorse Iqbal's views. Since Iqbal was adamant to renounce poetry, the matter was placed before Prof. Thomas Walker Arnold for an insightful guidance and direction. The decision of Prof. Arnold pertaining to Iqbal's intellectual crisis is one of the most critical decision in the history of mankind as it was related to a thinker, and philosopher like Iqbal. His decision reveals his comprehensive understanding of Islam and the profoundness and astuteness of Iqbal's mind. However, it is not easy to comprehend the insight into Arnold's decision for which he had gone through an extraordinary contemplation of mankind's history as explained in the Quran, OT, and NT, which is a prerequisite of such a critical decision. To understand the vision of Arnold's decision, three aspects should be kept in mind about the Thomas Walker Arnold, which are as follows:

1. Capability and competencies of Arnold.
2. His understanding of mankind's history, and role of societies and individuals in pushing the human race ahead.
3. Extensive understanding of Iqbal's intellect.

To get an idea about the capabilities and competencies of Arnold, an overview of his accomplishments will be worth mentioning, which are listed as follows:

1. His early education took place in the City of London School and higher education in Magdalen College, Cambridge University, London.

2. He was appointed as a Professor at Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College, Aligarh.
3. He was appointed as a Professor of Philosophy at Government College, Lahore.
4. He became Dean of the Oriental Faculty at Punjab University.
5. He also worked as Librarian at the India Office in London.
6. He was appointed as Education Advisor to Indian students in Britain.
7. He was appointed as Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental Studies, University of London.
8. His perspicacity and insight into Islamic history could be best understood by his writings i.e., *The Preaching of Islam* (1896); and *Al-Muatazilah* (1902).

He was having amplitude and profound understanding of crisis which occur in the life of thinkers, and how do it affects the society at large before giving his decision on Iqbal's intellectual crisis, such as:

1. The intellectual struggle of great Jewish philosophers and history of reformation in Judaism i.e., Moses Ben Maimon/Musa Bin Maymun (1135-1204); Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677); Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819); and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and its effect on society.
2. The history of reformation in Christianity and intellectual struggle of Christian Philosophers i.e., John Calvin (1509-1564); Martin Luther (1483-1546); and Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) and its effect on society.
3. The history of reformation in Islamic Society, and the contribution of great Islamic Philosophers and reformers with special reference to Indian Subcontinent, which was Arnold's specialization. He had witnessed the same during his assignments in India as Professor of MAO, Professor in Government College, and Dean in Punjab University. In this reference two points were his focus of attention:
 - i. Improvisational, reversing and lagging nature of prevalent Educational curriculum of Islamic World-Based on his personal interaction with Shibli Noumani and analysis of his imperatives, Arnold concluded that the current state of Educational curriculum found in Islamic World is unchangeable as it is highly conditioned, centuries would require for any change directed towards breaking this conditioning and taking the Muslims out of this conditioning.
 - ii. The efforts and consequences of implementing any strategic change agenda to reform educational curriculum prevalent in

the Islamic World- Having Observed Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's efforts of reforming education system in the Islamic World and the resistance of Muslim Ulemas and Elders to Syed's call, Arnold came to know that Muslim world of Syed Ahmad Khan is more conditioned and dangerous than the Christian World of Martin Luther.

Arnold had an insight of Iqbal's innovative and thoughtful mind, which is evident from Iqbal's poem '*Nala Firaq*'. With this reference, he had many points in his mind related to Iqbal's decision of leaving poetry for prose writing, such as:

1. Iqbal was an extension of Sir Syed's efforts to take the Muslim World out of darkness. Moreover, Iqbal was well aware of the Western Knowledge base and its objectives.
2. Iqbal's prose might be more catastrophic than Sir Syed's prose to the Muslim World for which Muslim World was not ready. In this backdrop, Iqbal's efforts of reformation in the Islamic World might prove catastrophic and fail in the first step.
3. On the other hand, preventing Iqbal's intellectual journey would be a great crime against humanity.
4. Keeping in view the Muslim World, their history and polity, poetry is the only way out to reach the elders and masses and calling them towards reformation in such challenging circumstances.

Thus, in the light of his knowledge of Islamic World and Western reformation movements, Arnold pronounced his decision that Iqbal should not renounce poetry.

Iqbal's intellectual journey in the enlightened environment of Europe enhanced his academic acumen and transformed him into a philosopher, thinker, and reformer, who directed his poetry as a means to reform Islamic society, which had become corrupt through its continuous living in a conditioned environment. This feature has been aptly presented by Sir Muhammad Iqbal as-

*Tasawwuf Tamaddun Shariat Kalam; Butan-e-Ajam Ke Pujari Tamaam!
Haqeeqat Khurafat me Kho Gayee; Yeh Ummat Riwayat me Kho Gayee!*⁴

In Mysticism, Culture, Fiqh and Theology; All follow their primordial faith of worshiping idols! The true Islamic doctrine has been lost in absurdities!

Therefore, Iqbal was confronted with the problem of choosing the language for his poetry, as Urdu was not regarded much advanced to express the gravity of his ideas, so he decided on Persian to express his ideas and thoughts. The same problem was faced by Mirza Ghalib, and he said:

Farsi Been Ta bah Beeni Naqsh Haya Rang Rang

Bagzar Aaz Majmua-e Urdu ke Berange Man Ast!

Look something over my Persian (Poetry) so that you could find myriad of (enchanted) colours. So far as my Urdu (Poetry) is concerned it is just like my sketch.

Therefore, Iqbal made a drastic decision of choosing Persian over Urdu for expression of his ideas into poetical form.

This detailed note on Iqbal's intellectual journey and influence of Enlightenment is necessary for us to get a proper view of Iqbal's perspicacity of the Quran. Moreover, the above discussion was desired to portray his real image as a philosopher, thinker, and reformer, since the Muslim society considers him as a poet. Iqbal had serious objection upon his recognition as a poet, which is evident from the given couplet.

*Meri Nuwa-e-Preshan Ko Shayari Na Samajh
Ke Main Hun Mebram-e-Raaz-e-Darun-e-Maikhana*

Do not take my confounded notes as poetry, I am, indeed, one who knows the secret of the tavern.

*Dar-e-ghame Degar Basouz Deegra Ra Ham Basouz;
Ghuftmat Roushan Hadeesi, Gartawani Dar Goush*

Smolder for other's agony and let other's smoulder too. I am telling you an elucidative thing listen if you possess (a hearing) ear.

*Keh Gye Hain Shayari Juzweest Aaz Peghambari
Haan Suna De Mehfil-e-Millat Ko Pegham-e-Sarosh*

It is told that poetry is part of Prophecy (which Prophets do accomplish). So, go and tell the people what heaven does pronounce.

Iqbal's ideas on Quran can be best understood through his following couplets:

1. The Ummat-e-Muslima has abandoned Quran-

*Wob Zamane Mein Mu'azzaz Thai Musalman Ho Kar
Aur Tum Khawar Huwe Taarik-e-Quran Ho Kar*

They were honoured in the World because they were true Muslims,
And You live a disgraced life as you have abandoned Al Quran.

2. In actuality, the message of Quran has become incomprehensible for common man-

*Aah, Iss Raaz Se Waqif Hai Na Mullah, Na Faqeeh
Wahdat Afkar Ki Be-Wahdat-e-Kirdar Hai Kham
Qoum Kya Cheez Hai, Qoumon Ki Imamat Kya Hai
Iss Ko Kya Samjhain Ye Bechare Do Rakat Ke Imam!*

Ah! Neither Mullah nor faqih envisages the fact that Unity of thought without unity of actions is imperfect! What is a community, and what is the meaning of leadership to the community? These Ulemas who lead community prayers have no clue of that

3. The meaning of Quran and its interpretation- Iqbal was well aware about the methods of tampering the scriptures, and he gave special emphasis on one aspects of it and that was Fiqhization of the Quran. Iqbal Said:

*Khud Badalte Nabin, Quran Ko Badal Dete Hain
Humre Kis Darja Faqeehan-e-Haram Be-Toufseeq!*

The jurists do not change their outlook but would prefer to change the Quran as per their outlook. Up to such extent Jurists have become corrupt and ignorant!

*Abkaam Tere Haq Hain Magar Apne Mufassir
Taveel Se Quran Ko Bana Sakte Hain Pazand*

Your laws are just, but our exegete; transformed Quran into the footnote of Avesta-e-Zind through inauthentic, biased exegesis!

Iqbal was well aware about the statement of the prophet of Islam which is narrated as follows: “Indeed, Islam began as something strange (unrecognized) and it shall soon return as it did occur earlier. Thus, there is good news for the strangers (unrecognized)”⁵⁵, and for the actualization of this statement of the Prophet of Islam, Muslim *Ummah* is in need of having thorough understanding of the Quran as it was possessed by the Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and developing a true Islamic Spirit in the heart of each and every individual Muslim so that he could be called *Momin*. Therefore, Iqbal said:

*Tere Zameer Pe Jab Tak na Ho Nuzool-e-Kitab;
Girah Kusba Hai Na Raazi Na Sahib-e-Kashaf*

Unless the Quran’s each verse and part be revealed unto your heart; You cannot be benefitted with the knowledge of Islam which has been given in the form of the Quran.

There is a general belief that above mentioned couplets from *Bal-e-Jibril* have been dedicated to Fakhruddin Raazi, however, I am sure that this interpretation is incorrect. As per my study, Iqbal would like to state that without having a sound understanding of the original doctrine of Quran as possessed by the Prophet of Islam and his Companions, one cannot get an insight of real Islamic Knowledge as given in the form of the Quran as well as could be benefitted out of it.

4. Original Quranic doctrine cannot be possessed with the help or assistance of prevalent Islamic educational curriculum, knowledge of Quran, and Islamic Educational System.

5. The reason of centuries old intellectual, ideological, and scientific insensitivity among the Muslims is the erosion of Quranic Language, Informed Understanding of Quran, Quranic Science from the Muslim Society. Therefore, Iqbal Said:

Magar Woh Ilm Ke Moti, Kitabein Apne Aaba Ki;

Jo Dekhein Inko Europe Me To Dil Hota Hai Seepara!

When one finds those pearls of knowledge- the works of our forefathers in Europe the heart is broken into pieces.

Ghani Rozē Siyah Peer-e-Canaa Ra Tamasha Kun

Ke Noor Deeda Ash Roshan-e-Kund-e Chashm Zulekha Ra

O! Ghani! Look at black (agonizing) days of the blind old man of Canaan (Jacob), how the light of his eyes enlightens the eyes of Zulaikha (instead of his).

6. The Muslims are being annihilated across the globe due to their ignorance of Original doctrine of the Quran. Iqbal addressed them as Ignorant and conditioned falcon in these couplets from *Bal-e-Jibril*:

Who Faraib Khurda Shabeen Jo Pala Ho Kargason Mein;

Ussay Kya Khabar Ke Kya Hai Rab-o-Rasm-e-Shabbazi

A falcon who has been raised and nurtured among the vultures remains ignorant of its strengths and strategies of hunting.

7. The Muslim *Ummah* is without Quranic Leadership and has become priest ridden, the Ulemas of Ummah due to their anti-Quranic behaviour and attitude have lost all their potential which is required to give leadership to Ummah. Now these Ulemas are bound to slavery, blindly following their ancestors in defiance of the prohibition of ancestor worship by Allah, lacking all initiatives to research of research of the Quran and Statements of Prophet of Islam. Iqbal Said:

Halqa-e-Shouk Mein Who Jurrat-e-Andesha Kahan

Aab Mehkoomi-o-Taqleed-o-Zawal-e-Tehqeeq!

The mystics, who were keen to spread their faith, are silent now and thought for them a dread; Alas! The state of bondage deprives of zest, slaves tread the beaten path and relinquish quest to know the truth.

8. According to Iqbal, following steps are needed to revitalize the Ummah and to actualize the statement of prophet of Islam i.e., Islam will return as it began:

- i. Restoration of Original doctrine of the Quran through reinstatement of Quranic language, and informed understanding of the Quran.
- ii. Replacement of prevalent Islamic educational curriculum with the restored Quranic curriculum.
- iii. Restoration of Quranic Curriculum shall be followed by Quranic Science.

Therefore, Iqbal said in his famous poem “The Rise of Islam”:

Sabak Phir Pad Sadaqat Ka, Adalat Ka, Shujaat Ka;

Liya Jayega Tujh Se Kaam Duniya Ki Imamat Ka!

Once Again Read the Lesson of Truthfulness, Justice, and Bravery;
Then you will be asked to lead the World

Notes and References

- ¹ *Sahib Bukhari*, Hadith No.7320
- ² *Jami` at-Tirmidhi* 2180; Book Reference: Book 33, Hadith 23; English Translation: Vol. 4, Book 7, Hadith 2180
- ³ Excerpt from the Forward of *Kulliyat-e Iqbal* by Shaikh Abdul Qadir
- ⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, Saqi Nama, *Bal-e-Jibril, Kulyat-e-Iqbal*, Educational Book House, Aligarh, 2013, p.124
- ⁵ As reported by *Sahib Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad*, and Al-Albaanee

EXPLORING IQBAL'S VISION OF
CONSCIOUSNESS: BRIDGING MYSTICISM,
SCIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into Sir Muhammad Iqbal's exploration of inner religious experience, focusing on his philosophical views on consciousness, ego, and mysticism. Drawing upon both Newtonian physics and Quantum mechanics, the article examines the intersection between science and spirituality in understanding consciousness. Iqbal's concept of ego and self aligns with modern definitions of consciousness, challenging both materialism and dualism, and highlighting the limitations of reductionism in explaining consciousness. The article further explores the complexities of consciousness, emphasizing Iqbal's belief that science and religion may eventually converge. It also analyzes Iqbal's views on mystic experiences as a higher form of consciousness, examining how these experiences transcend physical limitations, allowing individuals to connect with the Ultimate Reality. Through references to modern scholars, mystic traditions, and quantum theory, the article situates Iqbal's metaphysical ideas within contemporary discussions on consciousness, aiming to synthesize scientific, philosophical, and mystical insights into a unified theory of consciousness.

Iqbal's thoughts on inner religious experience are spread over several chapters of the *Reconstruction*. We need to articulate some basic information on Newtonian physics and Quantum mechanics (Heisenberg's theory of wave front).

There is exists an ambiguity of various terms such as ego, self, consciousness, mind, cognitive systems, mental state, psyche and soul. All these terms mean the same thing. Indeed, the exact meaning of some of them is not very clear. However, to simplify our task, the word consciousness will be used which now dominates the recent literature on the subject. In fact, in our opinion, Iqbal's use of the word ego and self fully satisfies the characteristics of consciousness. We were led to this conclusion, when Iqbal explicitly stated that the path towards understanding of ego passes through consciousness.¹

Inasmuch as consciousness is concerned, there is little doubt that we are standing on the crossroad of materialism and dualism. The difficulty lies in the fact that none of these creeds provides us with a full appreciation of the exact nature of consciousness. Whatever has been discussed so far, makes it clear that most of the ideas presented lie at the intersection of science and philosophy. The path carved by science leads to the thicket of brain, where most neurobiologists admit that they do not yet know how and where consciousness arises. The other path winds through philosophy which has been nurtured by ancient as well as modern ideas. The question we are going to raise is that: Do the two tortuous paths have a meeting point? It was the hope of Iqbal that *"the day is not far off when religion and science may discover hitherto unsuspected mutual harmonies"* ². As the knowledge stands today and the way its frontiers are expanding, it appears almost a certainty that the dream of Iqbal will be realized in the coming decades, though in the present state of our knowledge only a few indications point in this direction. We will amplify these indications and leave it to the reader to draw his own conclusions. For this purpose, as Scott (2000)³ remarks, "we must construct consciousness from the relevant physics and biochemistry and electro-physiology and neural assemblies and cultural configuration of mental states that science cannot yet explain." To this may be added the metaphysical construct leavened with faith embedded in the edicts of the revealed knowledge.

Iqbal was right when he remarked, "classical physics (Newtonian) has learned to criticize its own foundations. As a result of this

criticism the kind of materialism, which it originally necessitated, is rapidly disappearing.”⁴ Some physicalists do agree with this viewpoint. Yet, the enthusiasm which quantum physics generated with its probabilistic occurrence of conscious events, turned the physicalists into reductionists, who believed that everything including consciousness can be explained through the laws of physics. This does not seem to be the whole truth, since more recently a number of physicalists have started challenging the reductionist approach. We will cite a few examples.

Walter Elasser, a theoretical physicist (1966)⁵ following Niels Bohr (1933)⁶ developed ideas about biology. He wondered at the “immense number of possible structures at each level of biological hierarchy which far exceed the number of organisms that actually exist.” It was, therefore, difficult to develop biological laws by averaging over identical individuals. Organisms were said to be radically inhomogeneous, because, “they contain structure within structure within structure, at any level from grossly macroscopic to molecular one.” This suggests that different configurations in very small dimensions may eventually, in time, transform (evolve) into macroscopic configurations. Such a process which runs through the whole fabric of biology cannot be validated through the presently known laws of physics. It is perhaps because of this reason that Erich Harth (1995)⁷ comes out with a severe criticism of physicalists in the following words:

To say that all of human affairs are describable and explainable in strictly physical terms, is sheer nonsense. It is equally nonsensical to assert that introducing such elements as political philosophies or laws, or a climate of opinion, means resorting to some kind of mysticism. We cannot expunge such concepts from a discussion of social dynamics. It must be apparent to all but the most simple minded reductionist that the attempt to construct a true physical theory of society would be a foolish undertaking.

Philip Anderson (1972)⁸, a condensed matter physicist, expressed similar views. He argued that:

the reductionist hypothesis does not by any means imply a ‘constructionist’ one. The ability to reduce everything to simple fundamental laws does not imply the ability to start from those laws and reconstruct the universe. In fact, the more the particle physicists tell us about the nature of fundamental laws, the less relevance they seem to have to the very real problems of the rest of science, much less to those of society. The constructionist hypothesis breaks down when confronted with the twin difficulties of scale and complexity.

In the same vein the Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann, in his book: *The Quark and the Jaguar* (1994)⁹ remarks that “the concept of theory of everything is a misleading characterization unless ‘everything’ is taken

to mean only the description of the elementary particles and their interactions. The theory cannot, by itself, tell us all that is knowable about the universe and the matter it contains, other kinds of information are needed as well.”

Some of the criticism we have cited in the preceding paragraphs on the fixity of reductionist approach about the physical basis of consciousness gives us a clue that their understanding is flawed, if not completely wrong. So much so that even our acceptance of the physics of matter is beset with a number of caveats.

When Iqbal was formulating his thoughts on the *Reconstruction*, the only fundamental particles known at that time were electrons, protons and neutrons, of which the atoms are made of. However, it is now known that neutrons and protons are constructed through the bricks of most elementary particles named Quarks (Gell-Mann, 1994)¹⁰. Given the fact that quarks are the most elementary particles, it is not difficult to draw the conclusion that all physical objects, living or non-living, including man are made from Quarks. This raises the question:

(a) where do the quarks come from,

(b) what was the state of matter before the big bang, which, through the condensation of matter, existing prior to big bang, resulted in the emergence of the universe and

(c) as we have shown earlier, the universe is under constant expansion (now experimentally verified), which means that there is a continuous showering of quarks from within or without the universe. On this count, philosopher Barry Dainton has made an interesting observation which is reproduced below from his book: *Stream of Consciousness (2000)*¹¹:

The idea that physical space is itself the product of interaction among pre-spatial particulars is one that physicists have been toying with. Although the spatial dimensions we are familiar with are commonly supposed to have originated with the big bang. If the physical has the pre-spatial ingredients, this could easily have predated the big bang, and perhaps explain why it occurred at all. Suppose these same pre-spatial ingredients are responsible for the generation of consciousness, a proposal which cannot be rejected out of hand, given the non-spatial characteristics of at least some sort of experience. This supposition leads to the striking conclusion that consciousness turns out to be older than matter in space, at least as to its raw materials.

This statement may be analyzed in the context of Iqbal's vision of the “Directive Force (Amr)” which, according to him, has been operating prior to the incident of big bang and continues to perpetuate subsequent to the emergence of the universe. Of further interest to us is the identification by Iqbal of Divine time and Divine

space in which the mystic lands himself in periods of mystic experience. Unfortunately, neither the mathematics nor the physics of today are yet able to provide a satisfactory answer for the kind of time-space order that prevailed prior to the big bang. Is it not true as Iqbal implicitly conceives, that mathematics and physics have not been invented by man, they only discovered them? In fact, laws of physics accompanied the emergence of the universe when condensation of matter was taking place. How? We have no answer, except that we have to turn to the “Directive Force”, as insisted by Iqbal.

More explicit statement on this subject is that of Swanson (1994)¹², who proposed the idea of *agnostic materialism*. The same is reproduced below:

The idea that mind-body problem is particularly perplexing flows from the unjustified and relatively modern faith that we have an adequate grasp of the fundamental nature of matter at some crucial general level of understanding, even if we are uncertain about many details. Agnosticism is called for because it seems so clear that this cannot be right if materialism is true. (1994: 105).

Equally important are the views of another philosopher, McGinn (1991)¹³, who in his book: “Consciousness and Space”: presents the following remarks:

That the brain must have properties other than those currently recognized, since these are insufficient to explain what it can achieve, namely the generation of consciousness. The brain must have aspects that are not represented in our current physical world view, aspects we do not understand, in addition to all those neurons and electrochemical processes. There is, on this view, a radical incompleteness in our view of reality including physical reality.” (1995: 157).

On the basis of this valid criticism on the reductionist position by eminent scholars of the same profession, we can make a statement that there is incompleteness in the physicalists view regarding consciousness which they leave entirely to the neuronal activity of the brain.

Using another line of thought developed by Barry Dainton (2000)¹⁴ we can arrive at the same conclusion, though in a somewhat modified form. The philosopher approaches the problem by taking into account the philosophy of phenomenism initiated by Husserl (1900)¹⁵. In doing so, his analysis takes note of: (a) phenomenism per se; (b) experience; (c) understanding; (d) awareness; (e) unity of consciousness; (f) phenomenal space; and phenomenal time. All these aspects have been discussed in the perspectives of consciousness. The same are also addressed in relation to physicalism as well as dualism, however, without committing himself

completely to any one of these creeds. Though he does not subscribe to the Cartesian type of substance dualism, yet maintaining that the only merit of dualism in any form lies in the fact that it implies unity of consciousness (see also Iqbal on unity of consciousness). This constitutes a substantial part of his thesis designated as phenomenal consciousness, in which he sees its ultra organic “relationship with experience.” By experience he means “states or items with a phenomenal character.” To be able to build his arguments, he, like Iqbal, draws distinction between “experience of understanding and perceptual experience.” The former in the words of Iqbal means inner religious experience, even if generalized, it amounts to introspection; the other, however, is the same which Iqbal calls normal experience (verifiable, sensible). What is phenomenism, however? A brief analysis of this philosophy will be in order for the reason that it may give us some clue as to whether science and philosophy do really have a meeting ground as predicted by Iqbal. In the process of developing an understanding of phenomenism, we will also make reference to the related issues, for example, experience, thought, awareness and understanding.

The discipline of phenomenology may be defined initially as the study of structures of experience (emphasis: experience) or consciousness. More exactly, it is the study of phenomena; that is, appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience and the meanings we draw from it. Accordingly, phenomenology studies – “conscious experience” – as experienced from the first hand point of view (subjective). This field of philosophy has its own firm footing among other philosophical thoughts. Not surprisingly, it can be distinguished, or related to, other main fields of philosophy, namely, ontology (the study of being); epistemology (the study of knowledge), logic (the study of valid reasoning) and ethics (the study of moral values), among others. Since Edmund Husserl’s logical investigations (1900)¹⁶, this philosophy has been extensively debated in the 20th century and the debate continues unabated. (see, for example: Martin Heidegger)¹⁷. In order to pursue phenomenology in terms of experience or consciousness, we have to have our focus on: (a) pure description of lived experience, (Husserl, 1991)¹⁸, (b) interpretation of type of experience in relation with the contextual features, especially social and linguistic (Hermeneutics: Heidegger¹⁹ and others) and (c) the form and type of the experience. We have no intention of going into details of philosophy of phenomenology but will make an attempt to draw from it only to the extent that as to how it interprets experience (categorizes)? ; (b) how, if at all, it bridges the gap between science and philosophy? (c) how this can be

related to religious experience Introspectively? (d) how is unity of consciousness embedded in this philosophy? and (e) what is meant by phenomenological space and time? Answers to these questions may help us in constructing a unified theory of consciousness *sans* pure physicalism (reductionism).

We strongly emphasize that what makes an experience conscious is certain awareness one has of the experience while living through or performing it. As has been referred to earlier, Dainton distinguishes perceptual experience (sensible), from experience of understanding (non-sensible). Whatever the case may be, the introspection or inner awareness has been a subject of considerable debate in spite of Locke's (1897)²⁰ notion of self consciousness on the heels of Descartes' sense of consciousness. It does not mean as Bernato²¹ argued that awareness of experience is a kind of inner observation, as if one were doing two things at a time. In our opinion we consider such an experience as what Iqbal calls higher order perception of one's mind in operation, or, put in other words it is a higher order thought about one's mental activity (note how phenomenology comes out in support of Iqbal's views on consciousness). All this means that awareness, experience and consciousness should be placed within a single parenthesis, and further that it not only explains the unity of consciousness emerging from stream of consciousness, but is also an individuated subjective phenomenon— beset with intentionality. For a detailed discussion on the origin and development of phenomenology reference may be made to some interesting nineteenth-twentieth century works, such as: William Jame's *Principles of Psychology*; Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927)²¹ among others. From what we have been presenting on phenomenology, though briefly, we come to the conclusion that Rene Descartes in his epoch making "Meditation on First Philosophy" (1641) had argued that minds and bodies are two distinct kinds of being or substances with two different kinds of attributes or modes: bodies are characterized by spatio-temporal physical properties, while minds are characterized by properties of thinking (including introspection in the absence of stimuli from external physical objects). Centuries later, phenomenology would find, in the works of Bernanto and Husserl that mental acts are characterized by consciousness and intentionality, while natural sciences would find that physical systems are characterized by mass and force, ultimately by gravitational, electromagnetic, and quantum fields. Where do we find intentionality and consciousness in quantum electromagnetic— gravitational fields remains an enigma for

the physical order of this world. That is the mind-body problem today.

We have drawn the attention of the reader to the philosophy of phenomenology for the precise reason that by whatever name it may be called, it lies at the heart of mind-body problem. We close the discussion on phenomenology by referring to the works of Nagel (1970)²² and Searle (1983, 1991)²³. Nagel argued that “Many philosophers pressed the case that many qualia (pain, color cognition) are not addressed by a physical account of either brain structure or brain function. Consciousness has properties of its own. And yet, we know, it is closely tied to the brain. And, at some level of description, neural activities implement computation. In the same vein Searle argues in his book: *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (1991) and *Intentionality* (1983) in the following words:

Consciousness and intentionality are essential properties of the mental states. Our brains produce mental states with properties of consciousness and intentionality, and this is all part of our biology, yet consciousness and intentionality require ‘first person’ ontology. Computers simulate but do not have mental states characterized by intentionality (computers process symbols and symbols lack meaning, that is, no “semantics”). Thus Searle categorically rejects materialism and functionalism, while insisting that “mind is a biological property of organism like us: our brains secrete consciousness.

In essence then, phenomenology provides a kind of umbrella on biological, physical and social processes associated with consciousness and thus can be considered as a good candidate, though partially, for constructing a unified theory of consciousness, provided that we can neatly integrate it with Dennet’s hypothesis of neural assemblies, Eccles’ theory of Action Potentials including probabilistic traffic of afferent and efferent messages along the synaptic zones, world 2 of Popper related to soul or consciousness, and finally, Iqbal’s interpretation of Directive Force (Amr Rabbi). Most interesting part of this philosophy is the identification of phenomenal space and phenomenal time as having their existence independent of serial time and space, with characteristics to be discussed later.

Regarding relationship between consciousness and quantum theory, the theory in the hands of physicalists as well as dualists has taken different interpretations. One such interpretation, which is of interest to us, and which is likely to have great significance when we make an attempt to up-date Iqbal’s views on consciousness, ego and self, has been put up recently by Pratt (1977)²⁴ in his article: *Consciousness, Causality and Quantum Physics*. As we have explained earlier, the standard interpretation of quantum physics

assumes (a) indetermination, (b) quantum systems exist, objectively only when they are being measured or observed; (c) whereas mathematical description of the quantum world allows the probability of experimental results to be calculated with high degree of accuracy, there is no consensus what it means in conceptual terms. Thus, according to the uncertainty principle “the position and momentum of a subatomic particle cannot be measured simultaneously with accuracy greater than that of Plank’s constant”, (d) the particle can never be at rest, but is subject to constant fluctuations even when no measurement is taking place, and that “these fluctuations are assumed to have no causes at all”. In conclusion, it follows from (a) – (d) that quantum world is believed to be characterized by absolute indeterminism, intrinsic ambiguity, and irreducible lawlessness.

Taking exception to this classical view of quantum physics Bohm (1993)²⁵ and Bohm and Peat (1989)²⁶, expressed the view that abandonment of causality had been too hasty: “It is quite possible that while the quantum theory, and with it indeterminacy principle, are valid to a very high degree of approximation in a certain domain, they both cease to have relevance in new domains below that in which the current theory is applicable.” In our opinion, this is a highly intriguing statement which plunges us from science straight into metaphysics. This means nothing but an ontological interpretation of quantum theory, rejecting the two major assumptions of the theory, namely, absolute indeterminism and objective existence of quantum systems only when they are measurable and observable. Does this mean, as Bohm (*op. cit.*) suggests “that the quantum events are partly determined by subtler forces (presently unknown) operating at levels deeper than the known physical reality? We believe that this concept of Bohm brings him closer to the concepts of Eccles (synaptic fields) and that of Iqbal (Directive Force).

Physicalists tell us that a quantum system is represented mathematically by a wave function which is derived from Schrodinger’s equation. The wave function can be used to calculate the probability of finding a particle at any particular point in space. However, if wave function is assumed to provide a complete picture of quantum system, then this would mean that between measurements the particle dissolves into nothingness, and is probably present in different places at once. It has been agreed that wave function collapses in a mysterious way – violating the Schrodinger equation. This has no explanation in the classical quantum theory at the micro-level; though, it operates precisely at

the macro-level. We have brought this concept into discussion for the reason that theorists claim that “collapse of wave function is caused by consciousness thereby creating reality.” The theory also emphasizes that “only self conscious being such as ourselves can collapse wave function. In view of the above, it should be legitimate to assume that “the whole universe must have existed as ‘potentia’ in some transcendental realm (Directive Force) of quantum probabilities until self conscious beings evolved and collapsed themselves and the rest of the branch of their reality into material world and that objects remain in a state of actuality only so long as they are being observed by humans (Goswami, 1993)²⁷. The other view that even non self conscious organisms or even electrons can cause wave function collapse, has also been put forward (Herbert, 1993)²⁸. Whatever may be the case, the fact remains that the idea of wave packets spreading out and collapsing is not based on hard experimental evidence. Accordingly, we are inclined to go along with Bohm’s ontological interpretation that wave function gives only ill-defined and unsatisfactory notion of wave function collapse. Alternately, he suggests the real existence of particles and fields: “particles have a complete inner structure and are always accompanied by a quantum wave field; they are acted upon not only by classical electromagnetic but also by a subtle force, the quantum potential, determined by quantum field (Bohm and Hiley 1993)²⁹; Bohm and Peat, 1989³⁰; Hiley and Peat, 1991)³¹.”

The Bohm’s arguments say that particles are guided by quantum potential and provide connection between quantum systems. This represents a vast energy pool, recognized by standard quantum vacuum, underlying the material world. Very little is known about quantum vacuum (zero potential field) but its energy density is astronomical (10^{108} J/cm³). It is on this basis that he postulates: “It is quite possible that while the quantum theory, and with it the indeterminate principle, are valid to a very large degree of approximation in a certain domain, they both cease to have relevance in new domains below that in which current theory is applicable. It is interesting to note as stated by him that observation is not a necessary test for proving the existence of quantum world when it lies beyond its measurable domain, i.e., below the recognized quantum world. He, therefore, rejects the positivist view that something that cannot be measured or known precisely cannot be said to exist”. In other words, he does not confuse epistemology with ontology (compare this with Kant’s critique of pure reason).

After having addressed monistic materialism and dualism in the context of consciousness, (ego, self), now, in the same context, it will

be worthwhile to explore the possibility of whether insight into mysticism can be of any help in enhancing our understanding of the physical and biological intricacies involved in unfolding the mystery of consciousness. Setting aside the postulate of reductionists for a while, we turn to biologists and find out how they have found solution to the complicated biological phenomena such as the structure and function of genes. Without exception their approach has been to analyze the simplest variant of a complex structure and then seek an answer to the functional properties of a complicated system. Probably the most famous is the well known humble bacterium *E. Coli*. Its simple gene structure has allowed us to understand much of the gene functioning of complex species (opening up the field of genetic engineering). Similarly, many biologists have turned to the “memory” of a simple sea slug to understand our own more kaleidoscopic memory. In the same vein, as Iqbal has insisted in the *Reconstruction*, the real solution of the thickest of consciousness may be available in mystic experience. The question for us then is: what is mystic experience? How it operates and being individualistic, how can it be generalized? We will take these questions in the same order.

In recent years Robert Forman (1996)³² has succinctly addressed the question: Why mysticism? In his opinion

mysticism represents a simple form of consciousness. Usually our minds are enormously complex streams of thoughts, feelings, sensations, wants, snatches of songs, pains, drives, daydreams and, of course, consciousness itself, more or less awake of it all.

This is all “noise” and “detritus”. The task of a mystic is: (a) to clear away the noise to the extent possible; (b) to accomplish this he uses some forms of “meditation” or “contemplation”, (c) to recycle mental subroutine and thus systematically reduce mental activity; (d) to slow down the thinking process and to have fewer or less intense thoughts; and (e) to cause reduction of attention (minimize) to bodily sensations taking him away from fantasies and day dreaming. By using the techniques listed at (a) – (e), there is an inner calmness that prevails leading to complete silence inside. This is a perception and thought free state. Both mental and sensory contents evaporate into nothingness. In spite of this prevailing calm, a mystic “emerges confident that he has remained awake inside, fully conscious.” In Iqbal’s words this is what he calls higher consciousness. In both cases this level is “wakeful and contentless (non-intentional?). We have put a question mark on the word non-intentional for the reason that in our opinion the status of non-intentionality is subject to scrutiny - to be discussed later.

Now we discuss what Iqbal has to say about mysticism. We will now summarize his views, in particular, on finite-infinite contact happening through what he calls mystic experience. According to him, "It is especially in the period of 'discovery' that metaphysics is replaced by psychology and religious life develops an ambition to come into contact with ultimate Reality." He has recognized several features of this phase.

First, the epistemological structure of this experience is different from the normal (sensible) experience.

Second, it is erroneously assumed that it is life-denying process.

Third, for scientists it is "opposed" to "empirical outlook of our time."

Fourth, religious experience in its higher form "recognized the necessity of experience as its foundation long before science learnt to do so. In this regard, therefore, the only difference lies in the qualitative nature of experience. And as Iqbal says, "So it (religious experience) is a genuine effort to clarify human consciousness, and is, as such, as critical of its level of experience as Naturalism is of its own level." This ingenious line of argument, it may be observed, describes a circle around consciousness and experience. Indeed, Iqbal is trying to convey to us that in the mystic state there are long term shifts in epistemological structure which take the form of sequential quantum leaps in experience. This aspect has extensively been explored by Forman (1996)³³. According to him, the first step is "an experience of a permanent interior stillness even when engaged in thought and activity. This is a state in which one is aware of one's awareness while simultaneously remaining conscious of thoughts, sensation and actions. This has been called a dualistic mystical state (DMS). In the second phase it is described as a perceived unity of ones own inner experience. – the so-called "Unified mystical state" (UMS). This culminates in pure conscious experience (PCE) or what Iqbal states as higher conscious experience (HCE). Both ending up in a unified mystical state (UMS). It appears to us that a thought of high intensity (for example, a sustained ambition to come in contact with Ultimate Reality) may contribute to the persistence of the unitive mystical state. Similar views have been expressed by Williams (1995)³⁴ and Chalmers (1995)³⁵. Taken together, in agreement with Iqbal (1930)³⁶ and Forman (1995)³⁷ we are inclined to draw the conclusion that advanced mystical experience results from PCE with elimination of Sensible activity and a relatively high intensity of a unitive desire to sense its own quiet interior character more and more fully. Going a step further, Forman (op. cit.) distinguishes between apophatic and kataphatic mysticism. The latter is associated

with sensory experience and involves hallucinations, visions, auditions or even sensations like smell or taste while the former uses non-sensory language. So far, we have not attempted to relate mysticism with any particular theory of consciousness. Yet, we cannot avoid making a statement that it involves “phenomenological dualism” accommodating both normal experience and inner religious experience.

In dealing with mysticism, one question must be attended to carefully. This relates to the reliability and validity of the mystic experience, *per se*, since all mystic experiences are individualistic (first person). Would it then be justified to generalize such first person (subjective) experiences? Not necessarily, unless hard analytic approach is applied for arriving at a balanced equation for the consumption of a concrete mind. Iqbal in developing his metaphysical thesis on inner religious experience takes cognizance of this aspect. He is aware that religious experience is “incommunicable”. But “this does not mean that religious man’s pursuit is futile”. Why he makes this categorical statement? The reasons he cites have a considerable merit. First, it is only through religious experience that one can touch the heights of consciousness (ego). The same ego in daily life enters into sensible intercourse with the worldly objects around him, including the social norms. These characteristics of ego, living in serial time and absolute space, are of fundamental importance for normal experience (verifiable). This he calls “conceptually describable habitual selfhood”. There is, however another level of ego (self, consciousness) in which during inner religious experience, a stillness and calmness prevails inside, receiving no impulses from the outside world. It is a period of “discovery” - a period, in which a single desire of coming in contact with the Real entangles consciousness in its Pure form (PCE of Forman, or higher consciousness in the words of Iqbal). During this period, the self-entirely under the control of pure consciousness, divorces itself from real time and space and thrives in what Iqbal calls “Divine Time” and “Divine Space” (see for example, his reference to Iraqi in the *Reconstruction*). Further, the “unique metaphysical status, which the self enjoys under the spell of higher consciousness” is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent upon an inner biological transformation which cannot be captured in the net of logical categories “in this form alone the content of timeless experience can diffuse itself in the time movement and make itself effectively visible to the eye of history.” This is why he quotes Mohyuddin Ibn al-’Arabi that “God is a precept, the world is a concept.”³⁸ Thus, in view of the reasons cited

above, Iqbal believes that the method of dealing with reality by means of 'concepts' is not at all a serious way of dealing with it. Citing the inadequacy of science, he remarks that "science does not care whether its electron or (quark) is a real entity or not. It may be a mere symbol, a mere convention." Further, being highly critical of science he is dismayed that science has "ignored metaphysics altogether" in so far as the discovery of ultimate nature of Reality is concerned. He, however, concedes the involvement and control of "psychological and physiological processes" in tuning up the ego (self), for an immediate contact with the "Ultimate Reality". Such an experience, Iqbal thinks, "cannot but be individual in form and content." Hypothesizing on the existence of "potential types of consciousness lying close to normal consciousness,— he asserts that "the question of the possibility of religion as a form of higher experience is perfectly legitimate one and demands our serious attention." This is an excellent array of metaphysical arguments, yet, in view of the ascendancy of modern naturalism, it may be difficult to convince a concrete mind as Iqbal remarks himself that:

Modern atomism is however, unique. Its amazing mathematics which sees the world as an elaborate differential equation; and its physics which, following its own methods, has been led to smash some of the old gods of its temple, have already brought us to the point of asking the question whether causality – bound aspect of Nature is the whole-truth about it? Is not the Ultimate Reality invading our consciousness (and thus, ego) from some other direction as well. Is the purely intellectual method of overcoming the Nature the only method?

For Iqbal the "modern man with his philosophies of criticism and scientific specialism finds himself in a strange predicament. His naturalism has given him an unprecedented control over the forces of nature." Citing the example of evolutionary theory, he rightly points out: "How the same idea affects different cultures (Rumi in the East, and Darwin in the West)? In his view, mysticism in no way is linked with renunciation. If anything, it has to be used for expanding the world view of Islam, both for the mundane and spiritual progress of life, enabling man to live soulfully.

An account of Muslim mystics (Sufis) is available in: *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (1963).³⁹ We will, however, confine ourselves to the experiences of only a few well known mystics whose contributions to inner religious experience in the period ranging from 8th to 12th century illuminated the firmament of the Muslim world. Among them are included: Muhasibi (701-857), Hasan of Basrah (776), Rabiah al-Basri (713-801), Bayazid Bistami (d: 874), Junaid of Baghdad (d.910), Abd al Qadir Jilani (1077-1166), Shihab al-Din Suharwardy (1144-1253), Shihab al-Din Suharwardy Maqtul (b.1153)

and Ibne ‘Arabi (b.1165), among others. One of the earliest authentic works on Sufism is available in *Kitab al-Luma* of al-Sarraj al-Tusi who died in 988 A.D.). His work has been quoted extensively by a number prominent writers on the subject (al-Qushairi,⁴⁰ Ali Hajwairi (1330-AH),⁴¹ Farid al-Din Attar⁴² and al-Ghazali⁴³).

Rabiyah al-Basri (706-859) being unique amongst early mystics, presented the doctrine of “disinterested love of God”, which served both as a motive and a goal for her. This eminently distinguishes her from her contemporary mystics who would turn to Sufism either to seek reward of paradise or deliverance from hell. She adopted the axiom “that God is worthy of worship even if there is no motive of fear or reward.”⁴⁴ It has been narrated that one day she was carrying fire in one hand and water in the other. When asked: “What does this mean?” She replied: “I am going to light fire in the paradise and pour water on hell so that both may disappear and those seeking love of God may not do so for fear of hell or reward of paradise.”⁴⁵ Thus, the object of disinterested love, according to Rabiyah was union with God. She says: “My hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my desire.” Bayazid Bistami who died in 874 A.D., made an interesting statement that “a mystic can reach his goal through blindness, deafness, and dumbness”⁴⁶. This statement conveys the fact that a mystic enjoys complete inner stillness by cutting himself off from all external sensible bodily experiences. A similar mystic state has been recognized by Forman (1996) when he refers to pure conscious experience (PEE). Bistami describes his experience in the following words: “For twelve years I treated the self (ego, consciousness) in me as a smith does with his material”⁴⁷ heating and beating alternately in the fire of penance and with the hammer of blame, till it becomes a mirror. For five years I was busy polishing this mirror with different kinds of religious practices. For one year I looked within myself then I found everything dead before me and God alone living.” Attar, (132 A.H.). It may be noted that his experience of the state of unity resembled one of al-Hallaj (ann al-Haqq). “I went from God to God, until He cried from me in me, “Oh thou I, Glory to me: How great is my majesty.”⁴⁸ When I came out of myself I found the lover and beloved as one, for in the world of thought, all is one. This is why Iqbal quotes : “:God is a precept and not a concept” This precept is more vividly narrated in a state of higher consciousness identified as ascension, “As I lived through Him, I became eternal and immortal, my tongue became the tongue of unity and my soul the soul of abstraction. It is He who moves my tongue and my role is only that of an interpreter; talker in reality is He, and not I”.

Junaid of Baghdad was of mystic of different kind. Unlike Hallaj and Bistami who drank deep from their unitary experience and were intoxicated, Junaid advocates sobriety, because in this frame of consciousness, one maintains awareness of his self and does not lose sanity (as in intoxication). The story goes that when Hallaj visited Junaid, he refused to accept him as his disciple. Yet, Hallaj remarked, "O' Shaikh sobriety and intoxication are two attributes of man, and man is veiled from his Lord until his attributes are annihilated." Junaid's advocacy of the principle of sobriety *a la* mystics combined with his deep knowledge of theology, jurisprudence and ethics made him a model sufi (mystic) who was acceptable by all schools of Islamic thought. A relevant book on him: *Junaid of Baghdad* (Kazim 1995)⁴⁹ may be of interest to the reader.

A word about Hallaj at this stage would be in order because of the prevailing confusion about him between theologians and the students of mystic science. He was executed because of his two utterances: (a) "I am the creative truth." (ann al-Haq) and (b) "Destroy your Ka'bah". Iqbal defending Hallaj, indeed, thinks that "experience in the religious life of Islam reached its culmination in the well known words of Hallaj- 'I am the creative truth.' He refers to the French orientalist Massignon, whom he met in Paris. The fragments of Hallaj, collected and published by Massignon leave no doubt that the martyr saint could not have meant to deny the transcendence of God. We have already referred to the dialogue between Junaid al-Baghdadi and Hallaj. It is obvious that Hallaj belongs to the category of intoxicated mystics, which, in our opinion, though overwhelming, is not surprising. This state of higher consciousness, Iqbal thinks is "the true interpretation of his experience. It is not the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and bold affirmation in an undying phrase of the reality and permanence of the ego (consciousness) in a profounder personality." This is indicative of "unknown levels of consciousness". We intend to place this important statement within the ambit of our unified theory of consciousness when we will make an attempt to synthesize modern advances in physics and psychology: certainly, methods are now available which may enable us to assess various levels of consciousness as "knowledge-yielding experience." There should be little hesitation in accepting the statement of Iqbal that "the concepts of theological systems draped in the terminology of a practically dead metaphysics (can) be of any help to those who possess a different intellectual background."

Abd al-Qadir Jilani who lived between 1070 AD and 1166 AD makes a reference to four stages of spiritual development providing

an almost verifiable content in mystic literature. The four stages include:

- (a) Piety: when a person follows the religious law meticulously,
- (b) Reality: which is identical with saintliness. In this stage directive force (*Amr Rabbi*) is more evident and the inner voice dominates any other sensation,
- (c) Resignation: when the individual submits completely to God and
- (d) Annihilation: which is a level of consciousness merging the finite into infinite (as a precept), this is the unitive state. These stages are not different from those identified in the recent literature on mysticism (Forman 1996). For the Sheikh the onerous duty of a mystic is to lead the people to the way of God. An ideal mystic is one, “who, by example of his life and the words of his mouth helps the ignorant and misguided to the way of righteousness.” The mystical approaches adopted by Shihab al-Din Suharwardy (1144-1234 AD) and Shihab al-Din Maqtul (b.1153 AD) though more comprehensive and rigorously specified, address the stages of mysticism more or less in the same way as identified by Junaid of Baghdad.

In the history of sufistic Islam Ibn al-'Arabi's life and works have been lauded and criticized by various schools of thought. He was born at Murcia-South east of Spain in 1165 AD. His writings vacillated between pantheism and monotheistic doctrine of Islam. In finding a common fabric for the teachings of Islam, he uses esoteric language for mysticism and exoteric language for Islam. Yet, he is recognized as a pre-eminent thinker and a mystic. His mystical philosophy is a blend of thought and emotions, reason and intuitive knowledge. Again and again he refers his readers to mystic intuition. We are not concerned here with how far his philosophical and mystical ideas were in harmony with the established dogmas of Islam; indeed, we have included him in this discussion only for his views as a mystic. Reading between the lines, one can easily understand that he is a strong supporter of unity of being. He is the one who declares that “God is a precept not a concept.” Contrary to this Bayazid of Bistami and Junaid of Baghdad, speak of unity of vision, which we think is easy to explain on the basis of modern literature on mysticism and consciousness.

Mysticism continues to be a subject of extensive discussion in modern literature. Much of it, scientifically, or even from religious point of view, has developed in the lap of consciousness (ego, self). One intriguing issue which has created difficulties of interpretation and verification relates to the fact that inner religious experience,

whether in the past, or even today, constitutes unusual first hand reports of the mystics and is thus subjective. This criticism can be overcome by averaging out all personal experiences (as in experimental data). When we do so, it becomes a simple matter that there is unequivocal similarity in the experiences narrated by all genuine mystics to whichever religion they belong. The case of Muslim mystics has already been discussed. Forman (1998)⁵⁰ in his review has given an account of such experiences from mystics belonging to different faiths. Some of these reports are quoted below:

The first report is from Teresa Avila of what she calls the 'Orison of Union.'

"During the short time the union lasts, she is deprived of every feeling, and even if she would, she could not think of anything else. She is utterly dead to the things of the world I do not even know whether in this state she has enough life left to breathe. She is unaware of it. The natural action of all her faculties are suspended. She neither sees, hears, nor understands (James, 1902, p.409).

It can be seen that how similar is this statement with that of (a) Bayazid Bistami: A mystic can reach his goal only through blindness, deafness and dumbness; and (b) Attar: the more a man knows God, the more is he lost in him.

The second report is from Eckhart who also asserts the absence of sensory content as well as mental objects. The more completely you are able to draw in your powers and their images which you have absorbed, and the further you can get from creature and their images, and the nearer you are to this and the readier to receive it. If only you would suddenly be aware of all things, then you could pass into an oblivion of your own body as St. Paul did In this case memory no longer functioned, nor understanding, nor the senses nor the powers that should function so as to govern and grace the body In this way a man should flee his senses, turn his powers inward and sink into an oblivion of all things and himself. (Walsh, 1970, p.7).⁵¹

Thus, Whatever side of the lectern we sat, one thing is certain that when in a mystic state, be it the 'fourth stage' of Junaid of Baghdad, or fana (annihilation) of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani the bodily senses are eliminated and in the stillness that ensues, it is only inner religious experience which rides on the shoulders of higher consciousness that the ego is guided towards the intellectual vision (perception) of the Ultimate ego. This may be readily accepted on metaphysical grounds and as mater of faith, yet, the question- 'how it happens', remains to be answered. This discussion leads ultimately to synthesize physical, biological and psychological evidences, to come up with a possible unified theory of consciousness and the way it controls the ego (self).

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BRIDGING FAITH AND REASON: THE
SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN
CONSCIOUSNESS IN ALLAMA IQBAL'S
THOUGHT

Dr. Tahir Hameed Tanoli

ABSTRACT

This article explores Allama Iqbal's profound insights into the spiritual foundations of humanity's relationship with God, emphasizing the integration of faith and reason as complementary pathways to understanding ultimate reality. Iqbal addresses the fundamental existential questions concerning the nature of the universe, humanity's role within it, and the ideal approach to align human conduct with divine purpose. By examining the limitations of poetry and philosophy, Iqbal elevates religion, particularly faith, as a transformative force capable of shaping civilizations. He argues that faith and reason are not antagonistic but rather interdependent, with faith offering a holistic vision of reality and reason providing a gradual understanding of its temporal dimensions. The article further contrasts Islamic thought with Western philosophical traditions, particularly the works of Immanuel Kant and Imam Ghazali, highlighting their differing approaches to metaphysics and the pursuit of divine knowledge. Iqbal's emphasis on spiritual experience as a verifiable, living reality aligns with Islamic teachings, rejecting the dichotomy between the material and spiritual worlds and advocating for a unified vision of existence. The article concludes with an exploration of the psychological insights of Islamic thought, as illustrated in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the pioneering work of Ibn Khaldun, underscoring the relevance of spiritual experience in comprehending the divine and shaping human consciousness.

Allama Iqbal's vision embraced a dynamic synthesis of religion, science, and modern thought, championing a progressive, spiritual outlook that harmonized with contemporary intellectual advancements. Iqbal believed in a living, evolving Islam that encouraged critical thinking and individual agency, urging Muslims to reclaim their rich intellectual heritage and embrace scientific progress without compromising their faith. By promoting "*khudi*" (selfhood) and advocating for an empowered spiritual identity, he aimed to bridge the gap between traditional beliefs and modern knowledge. His philosophy envisioned an Islamic society capable of thriving in a modern world, rooted in both ethical principles and rational inquiry, fostering a balanced integration of spiritual depth and scientific insight.

Allama Iqbal's thought centers on the harmonious integration of faith and reason, advocating a vision where both elements complement and enhance one another in the pursuit of truth and spiritual fulfillment. He emphasizes that faith, far from being blind belief, carries an element of understanding and is capable of transforming human character and society. Iqbal argues that reason and intuition are interconnected aspects of human consciousness, with reason offering partial glimpses of reality and faith providing a holistic vision. By drawing from Islamic teachings, Iqbal rejects the notion of conflict between the spiritual and material realms, proposing instead that true spiritual experience illuminates and elevates our understanding of the universe. His work highlights the importance of intuitive and empirical engagement, promoting a dynamic spirituality that encourages both intellectual inquiry and profound faith, ultimately bridging the gap between traditional religious beliefs and modern philosophical thought. Here are some dimensions of bridging faith and reason:

(i) Knowledge of the Relationship with God through Faith

While discussing the fundamental questions that have been confronting human consciousness since the beginning, Allama Iqbal touches on the various intellectual and scholarly sources that have dealt with these questions. What are those questions? While mentioning them, Iqbal asks: What is the nature and essence of the universe in which we live? Does it contain any permanent element in its structure? What kind of relationship do we have with this

universe? What is our place in it? What attitude and behavior should we adopt that aligns with our position in the universe, so that the universe assists rather than obstructs us in achieving our goals?

Allama Iqbal brings into discussion three major sources that attempt to answer these questions—poetry, philosophy, and religion. He begins by excluding poetry from this discussion, stating that poetry, by its very nature, is individualistic, figurative, unclear, and ambiguous. Therefore, one cannot rely solely on poetry to establish a foundation for answering such significant questions. After addressing poetry, Iqbal discusses philosophy and religion. When discussing religion, he asserts that religion, in its developed forms, is far superior to poetry. One reason for this is that religion never remains an individual matter; rather, its inclination is from the individual toward society.

Although human intellect is limited in its capacity to fully comprehend absolute reality and answer the fundamental questions mentioned above, religion surpasses these limitations and makes it possible to experience absolute reality.¹ As for philosophy, its essence lies in free inquiry. It questions every assumption and belief with skepticism. The very role of philosophy is to uncover the hidden aspects of those assumptions that humans have accepted without inquiry or criticism and to examine their validity through investigation—whether this leads to their confirmation, refutation, or the conclusion that human intellect cannot trace absolute reality.

Regarding religion, Allama Iqbal states that the essence of religion is faith. Philosophy begins its inquiry with the free critique of reason, while religion's journey starts with faith.² In this sense, religion and philosophy diverge from their very starting points. This is the principle of separation, which we have mentioned earlier in the introduction.

When discussing the conflict between reason and faith, Iqbal remarks that faith is the unseen treasure of life within the living heart of humanity, and reason is constantly lying in wait to steal it. He further clarifies that faith cannot merely be considered a feeling or mere acceptance; it contains an element of understanding and awareness. Religion, in terms of its impact on beliefs, is a system of truths that, when adopted, brings about a transformation in human character and conduct. This is the principle of affirmation that Allama Iqbal uses as the foundation in his Lectures.

Allama Iqbal asserts that this transformation has historically been a powerful means of shaping great civilizations, a fact acknowledged by Professor Whitehead as well.³

(ii) The Understanding of Human Thought and the Nature of Faith

Faith and reason, or intuition and thought, are not always in conflict or opposition to one another. Allama Iqbal argues that it is incorrect to assume that thought and intuition are different from each other because they both stem from the same source and complement one another.⁴ Thought perceives reality in a partial manner, while faith observes it in its entirety. Thought focuses on the temporal aspect of reality, whereas faith focuses on its timeless aspect. Faith is honored with a comprehensive vision of reality, while reason, due to its nature, structure, and disposition, gradually gains awareness of the various aspects of the whole, making a complete vision of reality possible. To make the observation of reality comprehensive, complete, and meaningful, both faith and reason need each other. Essentially, both faith and reason, or faith and thought, seek the same truth. Reality reveals itself to them according to their respective roles. Thus, it can be said that intuition is a higher form of reason, as Bergson expressed.⁵

(iii) Religion as a Living Experiential Reality

Since the goal of religion is to observe reality and attain a closeness to it that brings fulfillment from the fruits of that observation, religion cannot be regarded as merely a hollow system of beliefs. Early Islamic thought, being influenced by Greek philosophy, overlooked many aspects of the Quran's temperament and the truths of religion. Allama Iqbal notes that this approach also manifested in the attitudes of the Mu'tazilah in their defense of Islamic beliefs. When the Mu'tazilah perceived religion as merely a system of beliefs, they neglected the aspect of faith as a living and life-giving reality. By ignoring the possibilities of accessing reality beyond reason, they, under the influence of Greek rationalism, confined religion to a system of logical concepts. Naturally, this led to negative outcomes. The Mu'tazilah overlooked the fact that in the realm of knowledge, whether it is scientific or religious, thought cannot be separated from solid experience. Whenever thought, whether scientific or religious, is detached from solid experience, it becomes mere illusion.⁶ In the first lecture, Allama Iqbal seeks to address this shortcoming by affirming the possibility of spiritual experience.

(iv) The Resolution of the Conflict Between Ideal and Reality in Islam

The external possibility of spiritual experience cannot be established until the nature of the relationship between the external (appearance) and the internal (essence) is determined. In this context, Allama Iqbal highlights the differences between the approaches of Islam and Christianity. He writes that Christianity's attempt to restore the spirit of religion and spirituality is impossible because its fundamental attitude is a rejection of external forces. However, there is no contradiction between the external and the internal, as the external is already illuminated by spirituality. This contradiction can only be resolved if we correct our relationship with external forces and base it on an approach grounded in reality. In Islam, the ideal and the real are not in conflict because the life of external reality depends on its connection with the internal reality. The external reality serves as a sign and a means to access the internal reality.

Here, it is also necessary to clarify the perspectives of idealism and realism.

Idealism asserts that nothing exists in reality except for what is present in human thought, and that whatever we perceive in our mind is merely the expression of the things that come into our consciousness, while nothing actually exists in the external world. Kant objected to this, arguing that many external things exist that we are unaware of in their true nature. We only know their appearances—the aspects that reach our consciousness through the senses. In other words, we know things based on the impressions they make on our senses, and from these impressions, we give them names. The names we assign to things represent only their outward forms, while the true reality of things in the external world remains unknown to us.⁷

Realism, on the other hand, holds that the external world is real and that we perceive it through our senses. This is a fundamental, deeply rooted belief in human consciousness, and all distinctions of human awareness are built on this certainty. Scientific consciousness is also based on this foundation. Whether it is aesthetic awareness or moral consciousness, none of these can exist without the belief in external reality. Religious consciousness, too, cannot be attained without this belief. The sense of reality forms the basis of every possible concept we have. These concepts are also the foundation of human social consciousness, as social

awareness cannot exist without the belief in and acknowledgment of things in the external world. This is our general experience, and it is such a deep and firm conviction in humans that it is hardly doubted. Every thinker who has doubted it has ultimately failed in proving their skepticism.⁸

Allama Iqbal, rejecting the concept of a disconnect between the ideal and the real, explains the negative consequences of such a belief by stating that it would cause our lives to be fragmented into contradictory and conflicting parts. According to Islam's perspective, the external reality must be connected to the internal reality in such a way that it can absorb and illuminate itself through this connection.⁹ The spiritual experience or religious insight that Allama Iqbal discusses aims to eliminate, rather than acknowledge, the difference between the external and the internal.¹⁰

(v) The Beginning of the Understanding of Psychological States in the Times of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and in Later History of Islam

The Quran places great emphasis on the importance of psychological states and experiences, declaring that the critique and purification of these inner experiences are essential for the development of the human self. In Surah al-Shams, it is stated that both good and bad states and experiences occur within human consciousness (Al-Shams, 91:7-9). The process of separating the good from the bad is known as tazkiyah (purification), which leads to success. If one fails to complete this process of purification, the result is disorder, corruption, and ultimately, the failure to reach the desired goal.

There is an example in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that illustrates the critical examination of psychological experiences.¹¹ The Prophet (PBUH) paid special attention to the psychological states of a young Jewish boy named Ibn Sayyad, a story documented in the collections of Hadith. Allama Iqbal references this incident, citing Sahih Bukhari as an example, in which the Prophet (PBUH) went to test Ibn Sayyad and hid behind a tree to hear his mutterings. However, Ibn Sayyad's mother warned him of the Prophet's presence, disrupting his state. The Prophet (PBUH) remarked, "If only his mother had left him alone, the truth of his state would have been revealed."

Allama Iqbal states that fortunately, the hadith scholars carefully recorded this event from the Prophet's life, yet early Islamic scholars were not fully able to understand the nature,

justification, and psychological significance of this act. Western thinkers, when they mentioned this event, failed to recognize the fundamental difference between the consciousness of prophethood and the consciousness of sainthood. Allama Iqbal refers to Professor McDonald's commentary and notes that McDonald, without understanding the essence of the Quran, commented on this incident.¹² Had McDonald understood the spirit of the Quran, he would have seen the signs of the intellectual and cultural movement that gave rise to modern empirical methods in the observation of Ibn Sayyad's psychological states.

Allama Iqbal writes that the first Muslim scholar who truly understood the meaning and value of this observation by the Prophet (PBUH) was Ibn Khaldun. Ibn Khaldun can rightly be considered a precursor to many concepts in modern psychology. He critically examined and analytically understood the essence of Sufi consciousness, coming very close to the modern psychological concept of the subconscious. Even Professor McDonald acknowledged this, stating that Ibn Khaldun's psychological insights closely resemble the ideas later presented by William James in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.¹³

Ibn Khaldun's concept of Sufi consciousness, particularly the idea of the subconscious (*tahatt al-shu'ur*), was not fully recognized by modern psychology until 1890, when F.W.H. Myers coined the term "subliminal self" or subconscious. This term quickly became common in religious psychology. It began to be used to explain aspects of human consciousness or ego that lie beyond ordinary awareness but continuously influence a person's spiritual, psychological, and behavioral dimensions. Later, William James used the concept of the "subliminal self" extensively to explain the human experience of spiritual closeness to the Divine, which one attains in religious life.

(vi) The Islamic Foundation of Spiritual Experience

Immanuel Kant fulfilled a prophetic mission in Germany when he explained the limitations of reason. In doing so, he placed a monumental obstacle in the path of rampant rationalism. Allama Iqbal states that a similar but even more significant achievement was accomplished by Imam Ghazali in the Muslim world. Initially, in Germany, rationalists were allied with religion, but they realized their limitations when attempts to prove religious belief through rational arguments failed. As a result, they separated faith from formal religion. Separating religion from faith was equivalent to

transforming it into a body without a soul. Consequently, ethics and higher values became devoid of spirit and reduced to mere utilitarian actions. This paved the way for the rise of secularism in the West under the influence of rationalism.

Ghazali, by exposing philosophical skepticism, performed a far greater task than Kant, as it had a profound impact on the Islamic world. Ghazali crushed the arrogance of rationalism, which was so narrow in its outlook that it recognized no other methods or principles of knowledge besides its own. However, the fundamental difference between Ghazali and Kant's achievements lies in the fact that while Kant, by limiting the function of reason, denied the possibility of knowing God, Ghazali, through philosophical skepticism, opened the door to intuition (*wijdan*) for seeking the truth and understanding reality.¹⁴

In this sense, the path to attaining closeness to God and spiritual experience is provided by Islamic thought, where intuition and heartfelt consciousness, grounded in a firm moral foundation, bear fruit in the quest for truth.

(vii) The Difference Between Kant and Ghazali's Methods

In discussing the difference between Imam Ghazali and Kant's approaches to knowledge of the Divine, Allama Iqbal writes that Kant, while adhering to his fundamental principles, could not affirm the possibility of knowledge about God. Ghazali, finding no hope in analytical reasoning, turned to the Sufi experience, thus discovering a separate domain for religion. As a result, Ghazali identified a method of knowledge independent of science and metaphysics that, through his own experiences and understanding, proved the validity of religion. This method not only establishes the credibility of religion but also provides justification for the truth of religious teachings without relying on science or metaphysics.¹⁵

In *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Deliverance from Error), Ghazali did not rely solely on reason. Instead, he moved beyond reason, employing intuition (*wijdan*) and the heart as sources of knowledge, demonstrating the possibility of spiritual experience. Here, instead of rational arguments, it is the strength of faith that acts as a guiding light to lead a person to the ultimate goal. In contrast, Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, denied the possibility of accepting truths that fall outside the realm of the senses. According to Kant, metaphysics deals with concepts that cannot be experienced. Similarly, metaphysics addresses the absolute totality

of all possible experiences, concepts that transcend reason and any possible experience.¹⁶

Kant argued that metaphysical concepts, by their nature, give the false impression that reason can perceive different things. However, these concepts only serve to complete understanding and perception. The result of this pursuit is an inevitable desire to fully comprehend reality as it is, which is impossible according to Kant.

Kant maintained that metaphysics deals with pure concepts that can never be encountered in any possible experience. This means that metaphysics concerns concepts whose truth or falsehood cannot be confirmed or validated through experience. In other words, the goal and purpose of metaphysics are these concepts, and everything else is a means to that end.¹⁷ According to Kant, the time had come for the end of traditional metaphysics. However, he also suggested that it was still unclear whether the definition and critique of reason's function and role for its potential revival were complete or not.¹⁸

In conclusion, Allama Iqbal's exploration of the relationship between humanity and the divine presents a compelling synthesis of faith and reason, rooted in a spiritual framework that aligns with observable reality. By critiquing the limitations of poetry and philosophy, Iqbal elevates religion, emphasizing its transformative power grounded in faith and lived experience. He underscores that faith and reason, rather than being adversaries, are complementary forces that provide a comprehensive understanding of truth, with faith offering an intuitive, holistic vision and reason contributing analytical precision. Addressing historical influences, Iqbal argues against the Mu'tazilah's rationalistic confinement of religion and highlights the importance of spiritual experience, drawing from both Islamic thought and modern psychology. Through his analysis, he seeks to reconcile the material and spiritual realms, offering a unified vision where the external world reflects inner spiritual truths. By comparing the philosophical contributions of figures like Imam Ghazali and Immanuel Kant, Iqbal illustrates the distinct Islamic approach that integrates reason, intuition, and divine knowledge, ultimately reaffirming the Qur'an's call for an enlightened engagement with both the universe and the divine.

Notes and References

¹ Religion, in its more advanced forms, rises higher than poetry. It moves from individual to society. In its attitude towards the Ultimate Reality it is opposed

- to the limitations of man; it enlarges his claims and holds out the prospect of nothing less than a direct vision of Reality. *Reconstruction*, p.1
- ² ... the incapacity of pure reason to reach the Ultimate Reality. The essence of religion, on the other hand, is faith; and faith, like the bird, sees its 'trackless way' unattended by intellect... *Reconstruction*, p.1
- ³ .. religion on its doctrinal side, as defined by Professor Whitehead, is 'a system of general truths which have the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended'. *Reconstruction*, p.1
- ⁴ Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. *Reconstruction*, p.2
- ⁵ In fact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says, is only a higher kind of intellect. *Reconstruction*, p.2
- ⁶ ... in the domain of knowledge - scientific or religious - complete independence of thought from concrete experience is not possible *Reconstruction*, p.4
- ⁷ Idealism consists in the claim that there are none other than thinking beings; the other things that we believe we perceive in intuition are only representations in thinking beings, to which in fact no object existing outside these beings corresponds. I say in opposition: There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, that is, with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses. Accordingly, I by all means avow that there are bodies outside us, that is, things which, though completely unknown to us as to what they may be in themselves, we know through the representations which their influence on our sensibility provides for us, and to which we give the name of a body – which word therefore merely signifies the appearance of this object that is unknown to us but is nonetheless real. Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p.40
- ⁸ That the external world is real and is directly revealed to us by means of our senses, is one of the most fundamental and deep-rooted convictions of man, a conviction on which all the developed forms of distinctively human consciousness are based. The scientific consciousness expressly builds itself upon this foundation, the artistic consciousness assumes its validity, the moral consciousness would be impossible without it, and the religious consciousness would not be unless it had this conviction. The sense of the real and its insufficiency is the presupposition of all that is a yearning for the ideal. These consciousnesses are forms of this yearning. Moreover they are outgrowths of social consciousness, and social consciousness is not possible without this conviction without the belief in an external world of things and men which is common to all. It is so deep-rooted that man has seldom doubted it; those who, like Descartes and Hume, have attempted so to do, have failed in the attempt and had to confess their failure. This conviction may be called the

realistic instinct, as the view of the existence and knowledge of the external world it affirms is called realism. What is this conviction more definitely, what does it involve, and what is the function of philosophy with respect to it?

Syed Zafarul Hasan, *Realism*, 1928, p.1

- 9 The life of the ideal consists, not in a total breach with the real which would tend to shatter the organic wholeness of life into painful oppositions, but in the perpetual endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and illuminate its whole being. *Reconstruction*, p.7
- 10 With Islam the ideal and the real are not two opposing forces which cannot be reconciled. The life of the ideal consists, not in a total breach with the real which would tend to shatter the organic wholeness of life into painful oppositions, but in the perpetual endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and illuminate its whole being. It is the sharp opposition between the subject and the object, the mathematical without and the biological within, that impressed Christianity. Islam, however, faces the opposition with a view to overcome it. *Reconstruction*, pp.7-8
- 11 The Prophet of Islam was the first critical observer of psychic phenomena. *Reconstruction*, p.13
- 12 *Ibid.*, p.14
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p.4.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p.4.
- 16 Metaphysics is concerned with the concepts whose objects are never given in experience, and also with the absolute totality of all possible experience itself; both are ideas of reason that transcend any possible experience. These ideas produce an illusion that reason can cognize objects through them. Kant emphasizes the importance of the distinction between ideas of reason and categories or pure concepts of the understanding. The transcendental ideas are obtained by reflecting on the three forms of the syllogism (categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive). The function of the ideas is to drive the understanding toward completeness in its cognition; the search for completeness leads the understanding to want to cognize noumena, which it cannot do. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, pp.xxx-xxxi
- 17 Apart from concepts of nature, which always find their application in experience, metaphysics is further concerned with pure concepts of reason that are never given in any possible experience whatsoever, hence with concepts whose objective reality (that they are not mere fantasies) and with assertions whose truth or falsity cannot be confirmed or exposed by any experience; and this part of metaphysics is moreover precisely that which forms its essential end, toward which all the rest is only a means. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, pp.79-80

¹⁸ But although the time for the collapse of all dogmatic metaphysics is undoubtedly here, much is still lacking in order to be able to say that, on the contrary, the time for its rebirth, through a thorough and completed critique of reason, has already appeared. All transitions from one inclination to its opposite pass through a state of indifference, and this moment is the most dangerous for an author, but nonetheless, it seems to me, the most favorable for the science. For if the partisan spirit has been extinguished through the complete severance of former ties, then minds are best disposed to bear out, bit by bit, proposals for an alliance according to another plan. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p.118