

IQBAL'S PANENTHEISM

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I

Examine Western philosophy from an Islamic standpoint and one characteristic of it is inescapable: from Thales to Wittgenstein Western thought has been for the most part invariably insular, insufferably parochial. European and American thinkers, in so many ways so diverse, have been from the time of their Greek forebears virtually as one in their provincial assurance that such ontological, cosmological and theological speculation as is worthy of their notice is a product of their Western culture.

The philosophy of Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) affords a notable case in point. In the world of modern Muslim thought he stands alone. His *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*¹⁸ aspires to a place akin to that occupied by al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din* ("Revivification of the Religious Sciences"). His philosophical poetry is regarded by many Muslim scholars as a worthy postscript to the *Diwan* and *Mathnavi* of Jalaluddin Rumi. In his Pakistani homeland, and through-out the world of Islam, he is accorded a respect verging at times on reverence. And yet you will seek in vain through the pages of most modern European and American philosophy for a mention of his name.¹⁹ He is unknown

¹⁸ London, 1934.

¹⁹ One prominent exception is Hartshorne & Reese's *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago, 1953), pp. 294-97.

even to the compilers of philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Were Iqbal's philosophy purely Islamic in background and interest, such lack of notice might be expected. But such is not the case. Through years of study and travel in England and on the Continent Iqbal became thoroughly conversant with and steeped in the West and its culture. A student of McTaggart and James Ward at Cambridge (1905-1908), a Ph.D. from Munich, he encompassed the range of European thought from Plato to Bergson, rejecting much in the former, absorbing much from the latter. Nietzsche has left his mark upon him, as have Wundt, Lotze and William James. But this is not to imply that Iqbal is merely another Asia-tic turned Western eclectic. For Ghazali and Rumi also have been his teachers, the Prophet and the Qur'an his constant source of inspiration. It is this fusion of patterns of philosophical and religious thought foreign to each other that constitutes Iqbal's "Reconstruction" an achievement possessing a philosophical importance far transcending the world of Islam. Iqbal, in fact, has added yet another dimension to that cosmological point of view associated in the West with such names as Whitehead, Berdyaev, Montague, Hartshorne and William James. In the measure of his contribution to this point of view lies the enduring philosophical significance of his thought.

AT the heart of Iqbal's philosophy²⁰ lies the existentialist conviction that Reality is ultimately inexpressible purely in terms of reason and science. This is not to deny the import of these latter. Whatever view of man, universe and God we ultimately arrive at, it must, Iqbal thinks, be one in which the data of science are accounted for, one in which the demands of reason for coherence are met. Yet below and above the level of science and reason there is that which man knows simply because he feels it and intuits it. There is, to use Bradley's terms, the intra-relational as well as the supra-relational. There is pretension which is not yet apprehension; there is feeling. The real is the rational—and then some.

Is Iqbal's philosophy, then, no more than a species of mysticism? By no means, if by "mystic" you understand one who renounces the use of reason and the materials of science. Iqbal is no more a mystic, and no less, than Hegel, Bradley, Whitehead or Berdyaev, because he, like they, finds some facets of this universe expressible only in the language of metaphor or poetry. Like these (Western) thinkers he too finds Reality in some respects surd, of a

²⁰ By "Iqbal's philosophy" I mean, unless otherwise indicated, that point of view expressed in the philosophical poems of his later years, *The Secrets of the Self* (*Asrar-i Khudi*), tr. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, 1920) ; *The Complaint and the Answer* (*Shikwah and Jawab-i Shikwah*), tr. Altaf Husain (Lahore, 1954), and his major prose work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. The limitation, is necessary since, as with most thinkers, Iqbal's philosophy encompasses a development from the aesthetic pantheism characteristic of his early poetry, and his *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London, 1908) to the personalistic panentheism of those later writings whose viewpoint it is here our concern to elucidate and analyze. For a brief account of Iqbal's early position, see M. M. Sharif, v "Iqbal's Conception of God," in *Iqbal as a Thinker* (Lahore, 1944), pp. 107-12.

character that can neither be explained nor explained away. If one wishes an example, one has, Iqbal would argue, merely to look within to that finite centre of experience denominated by the words “self” or “soul.” Psychiatrist, behaviourist, mystic, all have fallen short in the attempt to explain this, so far, inexplicable. Yet for every man his “self” is the fundamental fact of the universe.²¹ With it alone does any philosophy properly begin, and the philosophy of Iqbal is no exception: “...my perception of things that confront me is superficial and external; but my perception of my own self is internal, intimate, and profound. It follows, therefore, that conscious experience is that privileged case of existence in which we are in absolute contact with Reality and an analysis of this privileged case is likely to throw a flood of light on the ultimate meaning of existence.”²²

What, then, is this “self” we begin with? It is not, Iqbal thinks, a thing, material in nature, describable in terms of the morphology of a stuff. It is not a Scholastic soul-substance. Nor, on the other hand, can it be conceived as a mere succession of psychic states, a stream of consciousness.²³ It is rather something which, while doing justice to both Permanent and Passing, makes neither

²¹ “To my mind, this inexplicable finite centre of experience is the fundamental fact of the universe. All life is individual ; there is no such thing as universal life” (The Secrets of the Self, pp. xvi-xvii).

²² Reconstruction, p. 44.

²³ “Consciousness,” as Iqbal sees it, “is something single, presupposed in all mental life, and not bits of consciousness, mutually reporting to one another” (ibid., pp. 96-97).

character to be an epiphenomenon of the other.²⁴ It is, in a word, ego.

This is not to imply that “ego” is to be regarded as something over and above what it experiences, for “inner experience is the ego at work.”²⁵ The very essence of egohood is directive purpose,²⁶ creative movement,²⁷ action. “Thus my real personality

²⁴ The Fichtean overtones of this conception of “self” are most obvious in Iqbal's poetry, as, for instance, these lines (187-96) from *Secrets of the Self*:

The form of existence is an effect of the Self,

Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self,

When the Self awoke to consciousness,

It revealed the universe of Thought.

A hundred worlds are hidden in its essence:

Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.

By the Self the seed of opposition is sown in the world:

It imagines itself to be other than itself.

It makes from itself the forms of others,

In order to multiply the pleasure of strife.

²⁵ Reconstruction, p. 97. Also “The life of the ego is a kind of tension caused by the ego invading the environment and the environment invading the ego. The ego does not stand outside this arena of mutual invasion. It is present in it as a directive energy and is formed and disciplined by its own experience” (ibid.).

²⁶ “Mental life is teleological in the sense that, while there is no far-off distant goal towards which we are moving, there is a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of value as the process of life grows and expands” (ibid., p. 52).

is not a thing, it is an act. My experience is only a series of acts, mutually referring to one another, and held together by the unity of a directive purpose. My whole reality lies in my directive attitude. You cannot perceive me like a thing in space, or a set of experiences in temporal order; you must interpret, understand, and appreciate me in my judgments, in my will-attitudes, aims, and aspirations.”²⁸ Here will and intellect, mind and ego, coincide, for mind (or thought) is ego viewed as “a potency which is formative of the very being of its material. Thus regarded, thought or idea is not alien to the original nature of things; it is their ultimate ground and constitutes the very essence of their being, infusing itself in them from the very beginning of their career and inspiring their onward march to a self-determined end.”²⁹

What we call Nature is but ego as event and act. That this is so becomes clear when we look at this conception of self (ego, mind) in the light of the traditional mind-body problem. Iqbal finds the solution of Spinoza and Descartes equally inadequate:

Parallelism and interaction are both unsatisfactory... We have seen that the body is not a thing situated in an absolute void; it is a system of events or acts. The system of experiences we call soul or ego is also a system of acts. This does not obliterate the

²⁷ “On the analogy of our conscious experience, then, the universe is a free creative movement. But how can we conceive a movement independent of a concrete thing that moves? The answer is that the notion of a ‘thing’ is derivative. We can derive ‘things’ from movement; we cannot derive movement from immobile things” (ibid., p. 48).

²⁸ Ibid , p. 98.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

distinction of soul and body; it only brings them closer to each other... The body is accumulated action or habit of the soul; and as such undetectable from it. It is a permanent element of consciousness which, in view of this permanent element, appears from the outside as something stable. What then is matter? A colony of egos of a low order out of which emerges the ego of a higher order. when their association and interaction reach a certain degree of co-ordination.³⁰

In Iqbal's universe there is no such thing as "a purely physical level in the sense of possessing a materiality, elementally incapable of evolving the creative synthesis we call life and mind."³¹ As in Whitehead, so also in Iqbal, philosophy of nature becomes a philosophy of organism, becomes panpsychic evolution in which nature is to be "understood as a living, ever-growing organism whose growth has no final external limits."³² As in Whitehead, so

³⁰ Ibid., p. 100. Cf. also: "physical organism—that colony of sub-egos through which a profounder Ego constantly acts on me, and thus permits me to build up a systematic unity of experience. Are then the soul and its organism two things in the sense of Descartes, independent of each other, though somehow mysteriously united? I am inclined to think that the hypothesis of matter as an independent existence is perfectly gratuitous" (ibid., p. 98).

³¹ Ibid., p. 101. Cf. also: "The truth, however, is that matter is spirit in space-time reference. The unity called man is body when you look at it as acting in regard to what we called the external world; it is mind or soul when you look at it as acting in regard to the ultimate aim and ideal of such acting. . . .The ultimate Reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. . . .There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit" (ibid., p. 147).

³² Ibid., p. 54. It is, however, important to note that the inspiration for Iqbal's panpsychism is not any thinker of the West but rather the famed Persian mystic,

also in Iqbal, nature so understood is not simply blind, purposeless life-force. As unity, as ego in action, it is through and through teleological, but not in the sense of a fixed plan.

The world process, or the movement of the universe in time, is certainly devoid of purpose, if by purpose we mean a foreseen end—a far-off fixed destination to which the whole creation moves. To endow the world process with purpose in this sense is to rob it of its originality and its creative character. . . . It is purposive only in this sense that it is selective in character, and brings itself to some sort of a present fulfilment by actively preserving and supplementing the past. To my mind nothing is more alien to the Quranic outlook than the idea that the universe is the temporal working out of a preconceived plan. As I have already pointed out, the universe, according to the Quran, is liable to increase. It is a growing universe and not an already completed product which left the hand of its maker ages ago, and is now lying stretched in space as a dead mass of matter to which time does nothing, and consequently is nothing.³³

Are we, therefore, to conceive the universe as lacking deity? By no means. “The movement of life, as an organic growth, involves a progressive synthesis of its various stages. Without this synthesis it will cease to be organic growth. It is determined by ends, and the presence of ends means that it is permeated by

Rumi. Iqbal acknowledges as much in his *Reconstruction*, quoting at length and with obvious approval from Rumi's *Mathnavi*. See especially pp. 115 if.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

intelligence.”³⁴ At the level of cosmic unity this intelligence must be conceived as Ultimate Self,³⁵ Divine Ego. Immanent in nature,³⁶ the source of the emergent, it is, in the words of the Qur’an, “the first and the last, the visible and the invisible.” What we call Nature is but a fleeting moment in its life.³⁷ To know Nature is to have knowledge of its behaviour.³⁸ As character is to the human self, so is Nature to this Divine Self. “In the picturesque phrase of the Quran, it [Nature] is the habit of Allah.”³⁹

Reality is, therefore, essentially spirit. But, of course, there are degrees of spirit... I have conceived the Ultimate Reality as an Ego; and I must add now that from the Ultimate Ego only egos proceed. The creative energy of the Ultimate Ego, in whom deed and thought are identical, functions as ego-unities. The world, in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego, is the self-revelation of the ‘Great I am.’ Every atom of Divine energy, however low in the scale of existence, is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of egohood. Throughout

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

³⁵ “. . . the ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life. To interpret this life as an ego is not to fashion God after the image of man. It is only to accept the simple fact of experience that life is not a formless fluid, but an organizing principle of unity” (ibid., p. 58).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 53.

³⁸ . Ibid., p. 54.

³⁹ Ibid.

the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man.⁴⁰

The cosmological problem here is, of course, the relation of finite ego to Ultimate Ego, psyche to Omnip psyche. In Iqbal's words, "The real question which we are called upon to answer is this: Does the universe confront God as His 'other', with space intervening between Him and it?"⁴¹ Iqbal's answer is an unqualified "No." "The universe cannot be regarded as an independent reality standing in opposition to Him."⁴² "The universe . . . is not an 'other' existing per se in opposition to God. It is only when we look at the act of creation as a specific event in the life-history of God that the universe appears as an independent 'other'. From the standpoint of the all-inclusive Ego there is no 'other'. In Him thought and deed, the act of knowing and the act of creating, are identical."⁴³

The scientific justification for such a view Iqbal finds to lie implicit in the theory of relativity itself. "We cannot," he remarks in his essay "The Self in the Light of Relativity":

construe ever-present externality to mean the total independence or absoluteness of what appears as external to the self. Such an interpretation would contradict the very principle which discloses its relativity. If, then, in view of the principle of relativity, the

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 73.

object confronting the subject is really relative, there must be some self to whom it ceases to exist as a confronting 'other'. This self must be non-spatial, non-temporal—Absolute, to whom what is external must cease to exist as external... To the Absolute Self, then, the Universe is not a reality confronting Him as His 'other'; it is only a passing phase of His consciousness, a fleeting moment of His infinite life. Einstein is quite right in saying that the Universe is finite but boundless. It is finite because it is a passing phase... of God's extensively infinite consciousness and boundless because the creative power of God is intensively infinite. The Qur'anic way of ex-pressing the same truth is that the Universe is liable to increase.⁴⁴

This is to say that God Himself is liable to growth. "The future certainly pre-exists in the organic whole of God's creative life, but it exists as an open possibility, not as a fixed order of events with definite outlines."⁴⁵

Is God then imperfect? If "perfection" precluded growth the answer would have to be "Yes." But "perfection" need not be so conceived. Change in the sense of a movement from an imperfect to a relatively perfect state is not, Iqbal argues,⁴⁶ the only possible

⁴⁴ In Bashir Ahmad Dar, *A Study in Iqbal's Philosophy* (Lahore, 1944), pp 397-98.

⁴⁵ *Reconstruction*, p. 75. Cf. also : "We are gradually travelling from chaos to cosmos and are helpers in this achievement" (*Secrets of the Self*, p. xvii); "The universe is not a completed act : it is still in the course of formation. There can be no complete truth about the universe, for the universe has not yet become 'whole' (*ibid.*, p. xviii).

⁴⁶ *Reconstruction*, p. 57.

form of life. The Creative Self at any moment of His existence possesses the totality of the achievement of the universe, hence is properly denominated “perfect.” If creation is continuous, the future open, the universe growing, then the perfect, surpassed of all others in that it includes within itself all Being and value, may and must surpass itself.⁴⁷

Is God then infinite? If by “infinity” you mean boundless immensity in space, immeasurable stretch of serial time, Iqbal’s answer is “No.”

God cannot be conceived as infinite in the sense of spatial infinity. In matters of spiritual valuation mere immensity counts for nothing... . Space and time are possibilities of the Ego, only partially realized in the shape of our mathematical space and time. Beyond Him and apart from His creative activity, there is neither time nor space to close Him off in reference to other egos. The Ultimate Ego is, therefore, neither in the sense of spatial infinity nor finite in the sense of the space-bound human ego whose body closes him off in reference to other egos. The infinity of the Ultimate Ego consists in the infinite inner possibilities of His creative activity of which the universe, as known to us, is only a

⁴⁷ The logic of this viewpoint has been most extensively and persuasively argued by Charles Hartshorne in his *Man’s Vision of God* and in his essay, “The Logic of Panentheism,” in *Philosophers Speak of God* (see especially pp. 506-08).

partial expression. In one word, God's infinity is intensive. It involves an infinite series, but is not that series.⁴⁸

It is not that series because for *lqbal*, as for Bergson, time is not serial passage but pure duration,⁴⁹ "an organic whole in which the past is not left behind, but is moving along with, and operating in, the present."⁵⁰ Is God then in time? Rather it is that time like space, like change, like Nature itself, is a function of the character of God. For God as Ultimate (Absolute) Ego is, as we have seen, the whole of Reality.

He is not so situated as to take a perspective view of an alien universe: consequently, the phases of His life are wholly determined from within. Change, therefore, in the sense of a movement from an imperfect to a relatively perfect state, or vice versa, is obviously inapplicable to His life. A deeper insight into our conscious experience shows that beneath the appearance of serial duration there is true duration. The Ultimate Ego exists in

⁴⁸ Reconstruction, p. 61. Cf. also: "True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity; and the moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite ego must be distinct, though not isolated, from the Infinite" (*ibid.*, p. 112).

⁴⁹ "Personally, I am inclined to think that time is an essential element in Reality. But real time is not serial time to which the distinction of past, present, and future is essential; it is pure duration, i.e. change without succession. . . . Serial time is pure duration pulverized by thought—a kind of device by which Reality exposes its ceaseless creative activity to quantitative measurement. It is in this sense that the Quran says: 'And of Him is the change of the night and of the day' (*ibid.*, (pp. 55-56).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

pure duration wherein change ceases to be a succession of varying attitudes, and reveals its true character as continuous creation.

To the Creative Self change cannot mean imperfection. The perfection of the creative self consists, not in a mechanistically conceived immobility... It consists in the vaster basis of His creative activity and the infinite scope of His creative vision. God's life is self-revelation, not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached. The 'not-yet' of man does mean pursuit and may mean failure; the 'not-yet' of God means unfailing realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process.⁵¹

From the standpoint of pure reason it might appear that we have here to do with merely one more species of pantheism. Indeed, Iqbal himself admits pantheism to be the inevitable outcome of a purely intellectual view of life.⁵² Yet if Iqbal's God is at all identifiable with the Qur'anic Allah—and such Iqbal intends Him to be—the conception unfolded above cannot possibly be pantheistic. How then is the “inevitable outcome” to be avoided? The answer to this question is at once an answer to the question as to how we come to know God.⁵³ As Iqbal sees it, the sole

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁵² Ibid., p. 58.

⁵³ “Scholastic Philosophy has put forward three arguments for the existence of God. These arguments, known as the Cosmological, the Teleological, and the Ontological, embody a real movement of thought in its quest after the Absolute. But regarded as logical proofs, I am afraid they are open to serious criticism and further betray a rather superficial interpretation of experience” (ibid., p. 27). The reason for their failure is, from Iqbal's point of view, “that they look upon ‘thought’ as an

possible answer to this latter is that we know God by intuition,⁵⁴ which is to be conceived not as a faculty of knowledge qualitatively distinct from reason or perception, but rather as a quality implicit in cognition at every level. Thus while intuition is feeling, this is not to imply that it is purely subjective, for as Bradley and White-head have shown, feeling itself reveals cognitive content. To see that this is so we have, Iqbal suggests, merely to reflect on the character of our knowledge of our own self. And as it is at the level of the finite self so is it at all levels. Man rises in intuition from the discovery of self to the awareness of life as centralising ego,⁵⁵ rises finally to the intuitive experience of God as universal, unifying, telic power. For Iqbal as for Ibn Arabi, “God is a percept ; the world is a concept”⁵⁶; for Iqbal as for Bergson, Bradley and Whitehead, the Ultimate is known because felt, believed because intuited. Strictly speaking, the experience which leads to this gnosis is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent on an inner biological trans-formation which cannot

agency working on things from without. This view of thought gives us a mere mechanism in the one case, and creates an unbridgeable gulf between the ideal and the real in the other” (ibid., p. 29). It is precisely because this gulf between ideal and real cannot be admitted that all scholastic forms of argumentation for God must involve an element of speciousness.

⁵⁴ For a detailed account of Iqbal’s conception of intuition, see Ishrat Hasan Enver, *The Metaphysics of Iqbal* (Lahore, 1944), pp. 19 if.

⁵⁵ *Reconstruction*, p. 58. Cf. also : “The world-life intuitively sees its own needs, and at critical moments defines its own direction” (ibid., p. 140).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

be captured in a net of logical categories.⁵⁷ Whitehead calls it “transmutation.” For Bradley it is what we mean in speaking of the transformation involved in the passage from the relational to the supra-relational level of experience. Whatever it is named, it is, none the less, that quality of experience which leads the self beyond the intellectual with its inevitable pantheism to complete itself in the possession of that attitude which, for Iqbal, is religion.⁵⁸ To come to the realisation of the meaning and significance of this religious level of experience is, Iqbal thinks, to see for once and all the inadequacy of pantheism as a theological description.

We have seen that for Iqbal the relation of finite to Infinite Ego is one in which “true infinite does not exclude the finite,” but rather “embraces the finite without effacing its finitude,” and in so doing “ex-plains and justifies its being⁵⁹—which is to say that “the world in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Religion is defined by Iqbal as “a deliberate enterprise to seize the ultimate principle of value and thereby to reintegrate the forces of one’s own personality” (ibid., pp. 178-79). So defined, religion “in its higher manifestations is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual” (ibid. p. 178). “Religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action ; it is an expression of the whole man” (ibid., p. 2). “The ultimate aim of the religious life [is] the reconstruction of the finite ego by bringing him into contact with an eternal life-process, and thus giving him a metaphysical status of which we can have only a partial understanding in the half-choking atmosphere of our present environment” (ibid., p. 183).

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

in the human ego, is the self-revelation of the ‘Great I am’.”⁶⁰ Expressed either way, it is clear that Iqbal does not intend that the Infinite be regarded merely as an abstract totality of finites. In both forms, the notion of a unity transcending its parts is plainly implied. In short, Iqbal’s conception is not pantheism but panentheism, understanding by this latter “the doctrine that the world is not identical with God (pantheism), nor separate from God (deism), but in God (theism), who in His divine nature transcends it.”⁶¹

To confirm this we have but to look to the central position occupied in Iqbal’s thought by the notion of the individual. At no point in his philosophy does Iqbal describe the Absolute in terms of featureless totality.⁶² God is always “Ultimate Ego,” “Creative

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

⁶¹ Funk and Wagnall’s Unabridged Standard Dictionary. Panentheism as here defined differs from theism in that it either (1) leaves open the question as to whether God is to be conceived as personal (the theistic viewpoint), or as non-personal, or a-personal, or it (2) leaves open the definition of “Person,” assuming that God is de-fined as such.

⁶² Commenting on the view espoused by Farnell in his Gifford Lectures on the attributes of God, Iqbal remarks that "It may, however, be said that the history of religious thought discloses various ways of escape from an individualistic conception of the ultimate Reality which is conceived as some vague, vast, and pervasive cosmic element, such as light. This is the view that Farnell has taken... I agree that the history of religion reveals modes of thought that tend towards pantheism; but I venture to think that in so far as the Quranic identification of God with light is concerned Farnell's view is incorrect... Personally, I think the description of God as light, in the revealed literature of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, must now be interpreted differently... The metaphor of light as applied to God, therefore, must. in

Self,” “Omnipsyche.” As regards the character of the finite, the description is throughout in terms of selves or egos. The reference is always plural. Even in his doctrine of transformation (transmutation) Iqbal is at pains to stress his conviction that the individual is neither in time nor eternity lost in God. “The end of the ego’s quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality; it is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it.”⁶³

Because individuality is plural, this doctrine cannot be pantheistic; because outside of God there is no individual, there is nothing, deism is meaningless. It is theistic to the degree that individuality connotes personality. It is panentheistic because according to it God as individual, while not other than that universe which is His physical being, is more than the sum of egos and sub-egos of which this universe is composed. To those who have followed the exposition thus far, this concern to establish Iqbal’s view as panentheism may seem to border on labouring the obvious. Yet such labouring is necessary if only for the reason that at least one interpreter of Iqbal’s thought has seen fit to deny that Iqbal’s view is panentheism because “Either the Ultimate Ego holds the finite egos in His Imagination; or He holds them in His Being. The first alternative is pantheistic. Iqbal would not hold it; it is not justified by the facts of our experience of our own

view of modern knowledge, be taken to suggest the Absoluteness of God and not His Omnipresence which easily lends itself to pantheistic interpretation (Reconstruction, pp. 60-61).

⁶³ Ibid., p. 187; cf. also pp. 91, 94.

self. The human ego, if regarded as a creation of the imagination of God only, would be life-less and no more than imaginary.”⁶⁴ If this is what panentheism really means then we must, I think, admit the soundness of the argument. But with all due respect to the author, it would appear that he has here badly misconceived the meaning of the term. However variously it be defined, panentheism has never meant merely the holding of the finite in God’s imagination. At least no panentheist of philosophical stature has ever so maintained. Of course, to hold that God (before creation) possesses that finite in His imagination which, after creation, He holds also in His being, is orthodox doctrine for any theist who maintains the dogma of creation *ex nihilo*. But Iqbal does not seem to accept this dogma,⁶⁵ and to define panentheism as the holding of the finite in God’s being appears to be no more than an alternative manner of expressing the definition we have already adopted.⁶⁶ If such be so, then Enver’s summary of Iqbal’s conception of the relation of God and the universe expresses precisely that view we have all along been concerned to delineate, i.e.

⁶⁴ Ishrat Hasan Enver, op. cit., p. 72

⁶⁵ The reservation is necessary, because while Iqbal holds to a doctrine of "continuous creation" (*Reconstruction*, pp. 47-49, 97-98), which he claims *is* essentially Islamic (ibid., p. 131), it is doubtful whether Islamic orthodoxy, which accepts creation *ex nihilo*, would find the two doctrines compatible. On this point it may well be that Iqbal has reconstructed Islamic religious thought somewhat more extensively than the original architects would care to acknowledge.

⁶⁶ See above, p. 72.

We must hold that the Ultimate Ego holds the finite egos in His own Being without obliterating their existence. The Ultimate Reality must be regarded as of the nature of the self. But further this self does not lie apart from the universe, as if separated by a space lying between Him and ourselves. The Ultimate Self, therefore, is not transcendent, as is conceived by the anthropomorphic theists. He is immanent, for He comprehends and encompasses the whole universe. But he is not immanent in the sense of the pantheists of the traditional type, because He is a personal and not an impersonal reality... He is in short immanent and transcendent both, and yet neither the one nor the other. Both immanence and transcendence are true of the Ultimate Reality. But Iqbal emphasizes the transcendence of the Ultimate Ego rather than His immanence.⁶⁷

III

To unite in one motion the Absolute of cosmology with the Person of monotheism is, as James Ward has remarked, the problem for twentieth-century philosophers. By and large they have shirked it—some, like Hegel, Bradley and Alexander, by emphasizing the Absolute to the virtual exclusion of the Person; others, such as the Scholastics and the Christian Existentialists, by exalting the Person to a degree beyond which philosophers committed to a coherently reasoned approach could give assent.

⁶⁷ Enver, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

A small group—Berdyaev, Whitehead, Hartshorne, are names which come to mind—have met the problem head on. To this last group must now be added the name of Iqbal.

In a sense, the task that Iqbal has set himself is even more difficult than that attempted by these last named thinkers, for Iqbal has sought to accomplish not merely the personalization of the Absolute, but to do so in such manner as to render his conception true in character and spirit to the teaching of the Qur'an. Because Islam, like Christianity, has for far too many centuries been dominated by a dogmatic scholasticism, this is an undertaking of somewhat greater difficulty than it need have been. Hence, for Iqbal, as for many philosophers and theologians of the West, any revivification of religion must begin with the recognition that the scholastic outlook, far from constituting a divinely sanctioned truth, is rather a philosophical straitjacket of which religion must be divested if it is to live. Applied to Islam this means a panentheistic reinterpretation of the teaching of the Qur'an, and throughout his work Iqbal is concerned to show that this teaching is not simply harmonious with his "reconstruction" but actually requires it. This, he thinks, becomes clear when we stop to consider the nature and character of the Person envisaged by the Qur'an in juxtaposition with the view of God which has been set forth above.

Now that Ultimate Ego must be Person is evident from the implications of Iqbal's cosmological scheme itself. If the universe is so constituted as to consist in an infinity of sub-egos unified

into egos, in turn unified into an all-inclusive ego, then it makes no sense to speak of this last as simply an all-pervasive life-force, for life, taking as it does the form of ego, implies individuality by this very act, and this is so whether we have regard to ego as finite or as all-inclusive infinity. If God is Ego, Self, God is Person.

So much might one admit, but the heart of the matter remains to be resolved since it is not at all self-evident that Iqbal's idea of "Person" and that of the Qur'an are one and the same. For while scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, seem to be more or less agreed that Allah is to be thought of as operatively immanent and concrete in this world, both Sunnite orthodoxy and the language of the Qur'an itself describe a creator God and celestial and terrestrial hierarchy which, taken literally, seems a far remove from Iqbal's Creative Self in process. Is the Qur'an then to be taken literally? Iqbal would say no, for as it is in Christianity, so here also, the presupposition of the possibility of any reconciliation between Scripture and philosophy is the recognition that Scripture need not, indeed cannot, be understood in all its parts in literalist or fundamentalist terms. Of course, the final word regarding the propriety or orthodoxy of any non-literalist interpretation is most properly left to the Qur'anic theologians. We only note here Iqbal's claim that Allah and Ultimate Ego are to be understood as one and the same.

The religious warrant for such an assertion is to be found by considering the Islamic notion of Creation. As noted above,⁶⁸

⁶⁸ See above, p. 67.

Iqbal takes this notion to mean not that single act with which the past began but rather a continuous and continuing process in time. And for support he cites that hadith in which the Prophet has declared, “Do not vilify time, for time is God.”⁶⁹ That such a reinterpretation of Creation is of immense importance for religion is obvious. For if Creation be conceived as the continuous unfolding and fulfillment by God in time of the unlimited possibilities open for His realization rather than, as orthodoxy has it, the making of a finished product outstretched in space, confronting God as His “other,” then such specifically religious doctrines as immortality and resurrection, evil and destiny, take on a new and reasonable character, the classic problems of relating God to the universe and creation to evolution admit at last of explanation free from paradox.

Consider immortality. If creation is continuing progress, God and the universe in the making, then immortality cannot be man’s by in-alienable right guaranteed by his faith. It cannot be a static condition to be achieved and enjoyed in an eternity of restful glory. On the contrary, as Iqbal never wearies of pointing out, “It is the deed that prepares the ego for dissolution, or disciplines him for a future career. The principle of the ego-sustaining deed is respect for the ego in myself as well as in others. Personal immortality, then, is not ours as of right; it is to be achieved by personal effort. Man is only a candidate for it... The ego must continue to struggle until he is able to gather himself up, and win

⁶⁹ Reconstruction, p. 10.

his resurrection.”⁷⁰ It is important to note that this “struggle” is not one which culminates with death: “...death, if present action has sufficiently fortified the ego against the shock that physical dissolution brings, is only a kind of passage to what the Quran describes as ‘Barzakh’... a state of consciousness characterized by a change in the ego’s attitude towards time and space.”⁷¹ Just what this “state” or “change” consists in can hardly be precisely defined. However, as Iqbal interprets it, it is not to be regarded as merely a passive state of expectation. Rather it is “a state in which the ego catches a glimpse of fresh aspects of Reality, and prepares himself for adjustment to these aspects... The resurrection, therefore, is not an external event. It is the con-summation of a life-process within the ego.”⁷² In sum, that ego is worthy of immortality which preserves itself even in the face of death, and passing through death to “Barzakh,” in “Barzakh” still maintains its tension in the face of Judgment. Notice that there is here no question of an “original sin” inhibiting man’s attainment of the goal. On Iqbal’s view there is no need for “Grace.”

Sin or evil, as Iqbal sees it, is not something which hangs over mankind as a curse which only God in His infinite mercy can lift. Rather is it a challenge— to be met and mastered by each acting in his own way. Had we known not evil, we could not, he thinks, recognize good ; if evil did not present itself as a factor to be overcome, ego would not have opportunity to achieve the

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 113-14.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 113.

⁷² Ibid., p. 114.

individuality demanded for it. Iqbal's view-point, both as regards evil and immortality, inevitably calls to mind the meliorism of William James,⁷³ as indeed Iqbal apparently intends that it should, for he adapts James's language to the conviction of Islam when he remarks apropos of evil and immortality that "The teaching of the Quran, which believes in the possibility of improvement in the behaviour of man and his control over natural forces, is neither optimism nor pessimism. It is meliorism, which recognizes a growing universe and is animated by the hope of man's eventual victory over evil."⁷⁴

Withal, we must not allow the melioristic character of Iqbal's re-interpretation of these doctrines to obscure the fact that his work is, from first to last, the work of a Muslim.⁷⁵ At every point he is at pains to indicate his conviction that his teaching is in all respects harmonious with the spirit and teaching of the Qur'an. He speaks and writes always from a standpoint within Islam. Thus, if in the sequel we find his re-construction to be a philosophic importance transcending the world of Islam, we must remember that in one sense at least it is in spite of his standpoint rather than because of it.

IV

⁷³ It is obvious that Iqbal here has in mind Chapter 5 of James's Pragmatism.

⁷⁴ Reconstruction, p. 77.

⁷⁵ This is most apparent in his poetry, as, for instance, these lines from *Jawab-i-Shikwah* (p. 36) :

THAT God (whatever its nature) is One, that this universe is animated (for better or worse) by purpose, and that it has a character and value, that this value is evidenced by the testimony of God to man in Scripture—in these convictions Islam and the religions of the West find common ground. To ascribe, therefore, an extra-Islamic significance to Iqbal's thought is to claim that his viewpoint contributes in important measure to the clarification and understanding of these common convictions, not only as regards their harmonization with secular knowledge as well.

Does it, in fact, do this? The conception of God as Absolute Ego, whatever its offence to the religious sensibilities of the orthodox, achieves

To my Muhammad be but true,

And thou hast conquered me;

The world is naught; thou shalt command My Pen of Destiny.

This much: it gives concrete meaning and plausibility to man's cherished belief that God is love. The conception of purpose as the realization by Self of value and character, however dubious in the eyes of materialists, achieves this much: it explains the relatedness of all things to God, and of God to all things, in such manner as to avoid the insoluble theological paradoxes inherent in the scholastic conception of God as simple, immutable, non-reflexive perfection.

Yet to say that Iqbal has given new plausible meaning to old paradoxical doctrine is but to state half the case. For in showing that nature and spirit are not alien to one another, and hence that it is not necessary for the man of religion to say no to his environment, he has pointed the way to a solution of the perennial conflict between science, philosophy and religion, a solution whose key is the recognition that “The scientific and religious processes are in a sense parallel to each other. Both are really descriptions of the same world with this difference only that in the scientific process the ego’s standpoint is necessarily exclusive, whereas in the religious process the ego integrates its competing tendencies and develops a single inclusive attitude resulting in- a kind of synthetic transfiguration of his experiences.”⁷⁶ Applied to philosophy, this is to say that, “While sitting in judgement on religion, philosophy cannot give religion an inferior place among its data. Religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man. . . . Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring from the same root and complement each other.”⁷⁷ The measure of Iqbal’s contribution to Western thought is, in large part, his success in showing that the proper understanding of meaning and relation of religion, philosophy and science will be attained only when men come to

⁷⁶ Reconstruction, p. 185.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

realise that each is only a perspective, but a perspective for the lack of which Reality would be the less.

THE SONG OF TIME

Translated from Iqbal's Payam-i Mashriq or "Message of the East" by Dr. Reynold A. Nicholson, Cambridge [Dr. Nicholson says that "The Payam-i Mashriq was written as a response to Goethe's West-Ostlicher.... The sage of the West, the German poet, who was fascinated by the charms of Persia, depicted those coy and wisdom beauties and gave the East a greeting from Europe. Although the Payam resembles the Divan in form, since both contain short poems arranged in sections, which bear separate titles, and also in its general motive, there is no correspondence as regard the subject-matter... much in the Payam is hard to comprehend and harder to translate.... It is worthwhile to become acquainted with Iqbal's rich and forceful personality."]

Sun and stars in my bosom I hold:

By me, who am nothing, thou art ensouled. In light and in darkness, in city and world, I am pain, I am life, manifold.

Destroyer and Quickener I from of old.

Chingiz, Timur—specks of my dust they came, And Europe's turmoil is a spark of my flame, Man and his world I fashion and

frame, Blood of his heart my spring flowers claim. Hell-fire and Paradise I, be it told.

I rest still, I move—wondrous sight for thine eyes! In the glass of To-day see To-morrow arise,

See a thousand fair worlds where my thought deep lies, See a thousand swift stars, a thousand blue skies ! Man's garment am I, God I behold.

Fate is my spell, freewill is thy chant. O lover of Laila, thy frenzy I haunt ;

As the spirit pure, I transcend thy vaunt. Thou and I are each other's innermost want;

Thou showest me forth, bid'st me too in thy mould.

Thou my journey's end, thou my harvest-grain, The assembly's glow and the music's strain. O wanderer, home to thy heart again! Behold in a cup the shoreless main! From thy lofty wave my ocean rolled.