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# IQBAL'S CONCEPT OF ETERNITY

Naeem Ahmed

In ordinary language we use certain concepts which have acquired special meanings because of their common and frequent usage. The same concepts are sometimes used without any alteration in scientific and philosophical discourse. Aristotelean division of a proposition, for example, into subject and predicate led philosophers to the formulation of the concept of "substance" which was supposed to be the underlying substratum of attributes. This division was made for the sake of linguistic convenience. Whenever we have to refer to a sensible property of a thing, say, to the colour of a table, we use a name "the table" and then brownness or whiteness is predicated of it. We say "The table is brown". We have no other means to refer to the brownness of the table than making a distinction between "the table itself" and "brownness". The impression is given as if "the table itself is over and above its sensible properties. Logically, the notion of the "table itself" is absurd. The table is the sum of its sensible properties. With the withdrawal of its sensible properties, the table will disappear; we will not be left with any sort of simple entity called "table-in-itself". Thus the philosophers of the past found themselves involved in metaphysical difficulties because of the ordinary usage of language.

Among other concepts born of ordinary language, there is the concept of time. Time, for a layman, is a succession of changes. We tend to think that changes, whether in our consciousness or in the objects of external world, are successional. This conception of time gives rise to serious difficulties. Zeno was the first thinker who pointed out these difficulties inherent in the ordinary conception of time.

A very important difficulty created by this conception of time is that we have become accustomed to thinking in terms of "beginning" and "end". Every thing that exists, we tend to suppose, must have a beginning and an

end. The words “before”, and “after” are born of the commonsense conception of time according to which events happen in a successional manner and the duration between two events is regarded as “event-less”. The succession of events is expressed in language by the words “before” and “after”. By the commonsense conception of time, we have become accustomed to think of a thing or a happening with reference to its beginning and end. This is not only in the case of time that we have evolved a peculiar and rigid frame of reference, but our conception of the physical world is handed down to us by our remote ancestors. It requires great labour to change the habit of thinking in terms of those concepts whose roots shade off in the mist of antiquity. This is why the people of the past found it highly difficult to leave “geocentric” tendency and accept Copernicus’s view that the earth moves around the sun.

Whenever we endeavour to understand Einstein’s Theory of Relativity or any other theory presented in the light of this ‘theory, we find that our previous concepts, which are rooted in common sense, are serious impediments. Iqbal’s concept of eternity cannot be understood without the knowledge of the Theory of Relativity, and to understand the Theory of Relativity requires a fundamental change in our imagination and habits of thinking, Russell gives an interesting example to make the point clear:

“Let us suppose that a drug is administered to you which makes you temporarily unconscious, and that when you wake you have lost your memory but not your reasoning powers Let us suppose further that while you were unconscious you were carried into a balloon, which, when you come to, is sailing—’with the wind on a dark night--the night of the fifth of November if you are in England, or of the fourth of July if you are in America. You can see fire works which are being sent off from the ground, from trains, and from aeroplanes travelling in all directions, but you cannot see the ground or the trains or the aeroplanes because of the darkness. What sort of the picture of the world will you form? You will think that nothing is permanent: there are only brief flashes of light which, during their short

existence, travel through the void in the most various and bizarre curves. You cannot touch these flashes of light, you can only see, them. Obviously your geometry and your physics and your meta-physics will be quite different from those of ordinary mortals. If an ordinary mortal were with you in the balloon, you will find' his speech unintelligible. But if Einstein were with you, you will understand him more easily than the ordinary mortal would, because you would be free from a host of preconceptions which prevent most people from understanding him.”<sup>1</sup>

History of the Term. A brief account of the history of. the term “eternity” will make it easy to understand what Iqbal has to say on the subject.

“Eternity” is derived from the Latin *aeternus*, a contraction of *aeviternus*, which, in turn, is derived from *aevum*, a word from the same root as the English words “ever” and “aye”. In Greek, the corresponding adjectives are even more obviously connected with the notion of everlasting existence. This is the original sense of the word “eternal” and probably also the sense that is still the most common in ordinary language. But in certain philosophical contexts, the notion of everlasting existence is expressed rather by “sempiternal,” eternal being reserved for the sense of “timeless”.<sup>2</sup> We may say that eternal is that to which the category of time cannot be applied, for example, in mathematics and logic there are certain expressions which are regarded as “timeless”. “Twice two are four” or “The straight line is the shortest distance between two points” are the sentences which are timeless. We can't say, “Twice two were four” or “The straight line will be the shortest distance between two points.”

In the case of sempiternal, beginning in time is accepted but end in time is denied. The word “sempiternal” may be regarded as synonymous with “everlasting”. Human ego is sempiternal or everlasting (or, as Iqbal calls it,

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<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A.B.C of Relativity*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, III, 64-65.

immortal), if it has a beginning, in time. The universe is eternal, if it has no beginning and no, end in time.

Parmenides is the first Greek thinker who put forward clear and definite theory of eternity.<sup>3</sup> Only Being, Parmenides' holds, is and Not-Being is not. Being cannot arise from Not-Being, because *ex nihilo nihil fit*. So Being has arisen from Being itself, that is, it has no beginning. Similarly, Being can pass on either into Being or into Not-Being. Not-Being is not. Hence Being will pass on into Being, which amounts to saying that Being has no end. Being is, therefore, "eternal". It neither was at any time nor will be, since it is now all at once our "a single whole" [Parmenides, "The Way of Truth"].

In Parmenides, we discern a conception of the mode of existence which is in the timeless present. The same conception appears in Plato when he attributes eternity to Ideas or Forms and time to the mundane existence. Some critics contend that Plato had never asserted the objectivity of Forms and that by the eternity of Forms, he had meant what is understood by the timelessness of definitions or mathematical entities. They think that Plato's doctrine of the objectivity of Forms is the result of wrong interpretation of Aristotle. Whether Plato ascribed objectivity to Forms or took them as mathematical entities, the fact is beyond the shadow of doubt that he did believe in the eternity of Forms in the sense that they have no beginning and no end in time and that they are not subject to aging. Hence, one thing is to be noted that, like Zeno and Parmenides, Plato did not deny reality to time. In *Datums us* (3pb5), he speaks of the creation of time.

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<sup>3</sup> Although a conception of cyclical time-order is to be found in the Pythagorean society, yet it was never presented as clearly and definitely as Parmenides did. Parmenides is said to have been associated with the Pythagoreans in his youth. He might have learnt this doctrine from them. In Indian philosophy the concept of eternity had appeared much earlier than Parmenides or the Pythagoreans. As some historians of philosophy maintain that Pythagoras had visited India and that he learnt the doctrine of transmigration of souls from the rishis it may be said that the Greek concept of "eternity" is Indian in origin. This issue, however, deserves further research and separate treatment.

“Time was created with heaven.” He also speaks of time as the moving image of eternity (Timaeus, 37d).

Aristotle’s conception of eternity is somewhat different. He applies the term “eternity” to a number of beings. The universe as a whole, the celestial spheres, the moon, the matterless Intelligence and the Unmoved Mover--all are eternal in the sense of having no beginning and no end. When he speaks of the eternity of the universe and other moving objects, he means an infinite time by it, because, for him, change and time are identical and an infinite change implies an infinite time. The universe, he holds, is a ceaseless and gradual development of matter into form. There-fore, the question of its coming to an end does not arise. The moment will never come when the universe, as a whole, will achieve its end, i.e. Pure Form, in time. Although Pure Form is absolutely real, yet it is non-existent in the sense of being temporal and spatial. Pure Form is the unachievable end of the moving universe. At the same time, however, it is the beginning of the universe, so far as the logical order is concerned, because Form is that which is logically prior to matter. The form of a seed, say, an actual pine tree, is given as a potentiality before the seed, the matter of the pine tree, begins to grow.

Now, we can bring out the difference between Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of eternity. Plato’s world of Ideas is completely free from temporal relations. But, like Parmenides, he does not deny the reality of time. On the other hand, he ascribes all temporal relations to the sphere of becoming and believes that eternal is that to which the category of time does not apply. Aristotle, retaining Platonic sense of eternity, refers to more than one eternal being. Aristotle has, along with the beings to which time is inapplicable, given eternity to time itself, the absence of which is a mark of eternity for Plato.

In subsequent thought these ideas are echoed and re-echoed in various degrees. In Jewish and Christian theology we come across a certain interpretation of God in which such expressions as “The First” and “The



Last” are supposed to stand for the negation of temporal relations. Bahya and Maimonides take the terms “First” and “Last” and referring to God’s absolute priority and posteriority.<sup>4</sup> Augustine has drawn a distinction between the “ever-fixed” (*Semper Stantis*) and the “never-fixed” (*Numquam Stantis*) to explain the nature of eternity and time. Boethius is also of the opinion that the infinity of time should not be confused with the eternity of God. “Wherefore, if we will give things their right names, following Plato, let us say that God is eternal and the world perpetual.”<sup>5</sup> In all medieval philosophic writings this distinction was maintained and a different term *aevum* was coined to signify the infinity of time and thereby keeping it apart from the eternity of God. Suarez has given a list of scholastic views on eternity.<sup>6</sup> But he himself has given a special meaning to the term “eternity”. He thinks that such statements as “God has no beginning and no end in time,” and “Change and movement cannot be predicated of God,” are negative definitions of the eternity of God. What God’s eternity positively means is that His essence implies His necessary existence; God’s essence and His necessary existence are identical.

Now I briefly mention Spinoza’s conception of eternity. In this regard, he has accepted the scholastic view that substance should exclude all temporal relations. He was aware of the distinction between the eternal and perpetual or what is sometimes called “*sempiternai*”. The infinite duration of becoming should not be confused with the eternal existence of God. Indeed, in common speech, we speak of the eternity of the world when we mean its eternal duration in time, but this is an erroneous use of the term. It is only because of the defective terminology that we say “the world has existed from eternity”. As we have already seen, Boethius had also tried to remedy this defect by introducing the use of the term “perpetual”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hobot ha-lababot, 1, (Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, pp. 262-63).

<sup>5</sup> Stewart and Rand, Eds., *Consolatio Philosophiae*, VI, 402-03i Wolfson, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>6</sup> Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, Disp. I, Sec. III.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfson, op. cit., pp. 36567.

Spinoza further distinguishes between the eternity of that which exists and the eternity of that which does not exist. Here he is referring to the self-evident ideas or axioms of Descartes. Axiomatic truths are eternal, but they are non-existent. Hence the eternity of these first principles should not be confused with the eternity of God. Wolfson refers to the “peculiar Cartesian passage” which Spinoza had in mind. “When we apprehend that it is impossible that anything can be formed of nothing, the proposition *ex nihilo nihil fit* is not to be considered as an existing thing, or the mode of a thing, but as a certain eternal truth which has its seat in our mind, and is a common notion or axiom.”<sup>8</sup>

From the above passage, it becomes clear that Spinoza applies the term “eternity” to existent or, more appropriately, real beings. It is only God Whose essence involves existence. All other things have possible existence. God’s essence implies His necessary existence. Now Spinoza defines eternity as an “attribute under which we conceive the infinite existence of God”. When Spinoza says that essence involves existence, he means the fact of being “causeless”. Since it is only in the case of God that His essence and existence are identical, God is to be regarded as *causa sui*—(causeless) or infinite-infinite in the sense of being undetermined by a cause. God, for Spinoza, is the cause of Himself: “By cause of itself, I understand that whose essence involves existence or that whose nature cannot be conceived unless existing” (Def. 1).

“By substance I understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself” (Def. 3).

“It pertains to the nature of substance to exist” (ibid, Prop. 7).

Two points in Spinoza’s conception of eternity are to be noted.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

(1) He has accepted the traditional view that Reality excludes all temporal relations and is, consequently, immovable, imperishable, indivisible (and is all that which the exclusion of time logically calls for).

(2) He has admitted the identity of essence and necessary existence only in the case of God Who is infinite.

Einstein's Conception. The traditional view of an infinite, eternal, indivisible and unmovable substance as the ultimate ground of every thing reappears in Newton's conception of "absolute space" in a different garb. The problem which troubled Newton was that of distinguishing relative motion from "absolute" motion in a universe which represents degrees of motion. To give a mechanical view of the universe, he looked for a point in space which was absolutely at rest. This is why he spoke of the possibility of somebody in the "remote regions of fixed stars or perhaps far beyond them" which is absolutely at rest. But he thinks that to prove this is impossible. Then he puts forward the notion of "absolute space" in order to determine the relative motion of planets. Lincoln Barnett remarks:

It seemed to Newton that space itself might serve as a fixed frame of reference to which the wheeling of the stars and galaxies could be related in terms of absolute motion. He regarded space as a physical reality, stationary and immovable; and while he could not support his conviction by any scientific argument, he nevertheless clung to it on theological grounds. For, to Newton space represented the divine omnipotence of God in nature."<sup>9</sup>

Thus to prove his law of Inertia, he put forward a hypothetical view of absolute space of ether which to him was absolutely at rest. "Absolute space, in virtue of its nature and without reference to any external object

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<sup>9</sup> Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, p. 40.

whatsoever, always remains immutable and immovable... Relative space is a measure of or a movable part of the absolute space. Our senses designate it by its position with respect to other objects.”<sup>10</sup> Newton’s conception of time is also similar. He says:

“Absolute true and mathematical time follows in itself and in virtue of its nature uniformly and without reference to any external object whatsoever. It is also called duration. Relative, apparent and ordinary time is a perceptible and external, either exact or unequal, measure of duration which we customarily use instead of true time. such as hour, day, month, year. . All motions may be accelerated or retarded. Only the flow of absolute time cannot be changed. The same duration and the same persistence occurs in the existence of all things, whether the motion be rapid, slow or zero.”<sup>11</sup>

After Newton, Faraday gave a slightly modified conception of ether as the carrier of electric and magnetic forces. The case for ether was further strengthened by Maxwell’s discovery that light is an electromagnetic phenomenon which consists of waves and is capable of propagation in vacuum at a constant pace. For the scientists of the second half of the nineteenth century, the notion of any kind of waves (e.g. sound waves, water waves) presupposed a medium to occur in. So, to account for the propagation of light as electromagnetic waves through vacuum, the conception of a very fine medium was put forward. This medium was denominated ether. Thus the mechanical scientists retained Newtonian absolute space.

In 1881, two American physicists, Michelson and Morley, performed an experiment by means of their delicate device “interferometer” which was made to record the velocity of light. Michelson-Morley experiment created doubts as to the actual existence of ether. “The one indisputable fact

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<sup>10</sup> Raziuddin Siddiqi, “Iqbal’s Conception of Space and Time,” Iqbal, The Poet of Tomorrow, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

established by Michelson-Morley experiment was that the velocity of light is unaffected by the motion of the earth. Einstein seized on this as a revelation of universal law. If the velocity of light is constant regardless of the earth's motion, he reasoned, it must be constant regardless of the motion of any sun, moon, star, meteor or other system moving anywhere in the universe. From this he drew a broader generalization, and asserted that the laws of nature are the same for all uniformly moving systems. This simple statement is the essence of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity."<sup>12</sup>

Einstein held that there is no fixed frame of reference, i.e. there is no absolute space. The movements of planets, stars and galaxies are to be determined with respect to each other. Long before Einstein, Leibniz had visualised that space is merely an order of relations of things among themselves. If all things are withdrawn from the universe, space will also disappear.

The Newtonian conception of absolute time is also no; C acceptable to Einstein. There is not such thing as absolute, eternal and unvarying duration flowing from infinite past to infinite future. Like space, time is also a form of perception. If no event takes place, there will be no moment, no hour or no day. Just as space is a possible order of things, so is time a possible order of events. The subjectivity of time is explained in Einstein's own words:

“The experiences of an individual appear to us arranged in a series of events; in this series the single events which we re-member appear to be ordered according to the criterion of ‘earlier’ and ‘later’. There exists, therefore, for the individual, an I-time, or subjective time. This in itself is not measurable. I can, indeed, associate numbers with the events, in such a way that a greater number is associated with the later event than with an earlier one. This association I can define by means of clock by comparing the order of events furnished by the clock with the order of the given series of events.

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<sup>12</sup> Barnett, op. cit., p. 45.

We understand by a clock something which provides a series of events which can be counted.”<sup>13</sup>

Time, according to Einstein, is not an objective concept. The clocks and calendars to which we refer our experiences are geared to our solar system. Therefore there is no such thing as “the simultaneity of two events”. Two events may be simultaneous for a person in one frame of reference but may not be simultaneous for another in a different frame of reference. At 7 p.m. from New York you telephone a friend of yours who is in London where it is midnight. You will say that you are talking “at the same time”. This is because both of you are in the same frame of reference, i.e. the planet earth. For the person who is outside this system, these two events may not be simultaneous. Thus Einstein showed that the notion of absolute time is as false as the notion of absolute space. The universe we live in does not consist of two fundamentally different and independent categories of space and time as Descartes had held. Space and time, on the contrary, are relative and dependent on each other. We should not speak of absolute time or absolute space because our universe is made up of single “space-time-continuum” in which both space and time are equally important. Now, the old conception of three-dimensional world is replaced by the notion of four dimensions of the world, i.e. breadth, length, depth and “time”.

It is now time we should try to portray the picture of the universe in the light of the Theory of Relativity. This is known as Relativistic Cosmology. But before we try to understand the nature of Einsteinian universe, we should take note of a few possible types of worlds. In what follows a few models or types are given in which our world may exist.

Suppose a bug is confined on a straight line. The bug cannot move sideways or up and down. Its movement will be restricted to backward or forward. Now the bug’s movement is confined to the straight line which has a definite measurement, the world of the bug will be finite. And since the bug

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

cannot go beyond the ends of the segment of that line, its world will be regarded as finite and bounded.

If the bug is placed on the perimeter of a circle, it can still move forward and backward. However, in this case, its movement will not be hindered by the “ends”. So, on the perimeter of a circle, the bug will keep on moving without ever confronting any barrier. Its world, now, is unbounded. But since the perimeter of the circle is a definite measurable length its world will be still finite.

You can have the idea of two-dimensional world, if you put the bug on the surface of a square or a sphere. In the case of a square the bug can move in any direction, forward and backward and also sideways. But it cannot move off the surface. Since the area of the surface is measurable, its world is finite; and since it cannot keep going in a straight line through the edges of the square, its world is bounded. In this case its two-dimensional world is finite and bounded. Now, in the case of a sphere if the bug is not allowed to go off the surface, its two-dimensional world will be finite and unbounded. A gain, if it is put on an infinitely large flat plane, its two-dimensional world will be infinite and unbounded.

You can have a rough idea of three-dimensional world if you put the bug in a spherical hollow shell. This will be its three-dimensional world, because it can move up and down in addition to forward and backward and sideways. This three-dimensional world will be finite; since the area of the shell will be measurable and bounded; since the movement of the bug in a straight line will be barred by the wall of the shell.

In order to have a picture of three-dimensional world which is finite and unbounded, you should suppose that the bug lives with a whole family of bugs in a space which has no physical boundaries. Now assume that each and every bug is very huge and massive. This group of bugs cannot disintegrate because of its gravitational attraction as a whole. Thus no bug will be in a position to leave its family. Moreover, the gravitational attraction is so strong

that light rays will not be able to leave the mass of bugs either. Therefore, whenever any bug will try to see in the direction of space beyond the group, its sight will curve back towards the group, always producing “bugs in his eyes,” and it will never be able to see beyond the group—“straight ahead” for each bug always will mean towards the centre of the group. The bugs will not be conscious of any physical barrier; though, as far as they know, they will live in a world which is unbounded. Their world is finite since the size of the group as a whole is finite and the group constitutes their world.

An example of a three-dimensional world which is infinite and unbounded could exist for a bug if we left it alone to roam all by itself in an infinite space without any gravitational masses or other forces to hinder it. Or, if there were other bugs present, their universe could still be infinite in an infinite free space, provided that gravitational attraction could be turned off and on like other types of physical attraction.<sup>14</sup>

According to Newton, the universe was like a finite island in an infinite ocean of space. Therefore we can say that the Newtonian universe is finite and bounded.

Einstein does not subscribe to Newton’s view for the following main reasons.

(1) Newton’s theory implies that the light and energy continuously radiated by the stars would go off into the vast space beyond the stars, never to return. If this is true, then the energy of the universe will gradually dissipate and a day will come when the universe will disappear.

(2) Einstein had mathematical reasons to reject the Newtonian conception of the universe. In a world situated in the vast ocean of space, the average density of matter throughout the universe would have to be zero. The laws of Newton were predicted on the fact that light travelled in a

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<sup>14</sup> This illustration has been taken from Coleman, *Relativity for the Layman*, p. 105.



straight line. The General Theory of Relativity showed, however, that light rays are deflected by gravitational masses. On the basis of the results of the General Theory, Einstein concluded that our universe is finite and unbounded. The universe is finite because the entire mass of the universe is measurable and, according to his calculation, the radius of the universe is about 200,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles.

Iqbal's Conception Iqbal is a great admirer of Einstein. He agrees with him that the conception of an Absolute Space is unworkable both on philosophical and scientific grounds:

“.. . The scientific view of nature as pure materiality, is associated with the Newtonian view of space as an absolute void in which things are situated. This attitude of science has, no doubt, ensured its speedy progress; but the bifurcation of total experience into two opposite domains of mind and matter has to-day forced it, in view of its own domestic difficulties, to consider the problems which, in the beginning of its career, it completely ignored. The criticism of the foundations of the mathematical sciences has fully disclosed that the hypothesis of a pure materiality, an enduring stuff situated in an absolute space, is unworkable.”<sup>15</sup>

He accepts Professor Whitehead's presentation of the Relativity Theory:

“.. . Modern science regards Nature not as something static, situated in an infinite void, but a structure of interrelated events out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time.”<sup>16</sup>

Although Iqbal accepts the notion of space-time-continuum,<sup>17</sup> yet he attaches priority and superiority to time. The relation of space and time is like the relation of body and mind. Iqbal thinks that to take into consideration all the characteristics relevant to philosophical interpretation of the world is

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<sup>15</sup> Reconstruction, pp. 35-36.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> In Jāvīd Nāmāh, the spirit Zarwān stands for space-time continuum.

beyond the purview of science. Hence we should turn to our own inner conscious experience for a further understanding of the nature of time.

Iqbal, like Bergson, draws a distinction between serial time and pure or real time. McTaggart had not recognised this distinction. Hence he was erroneously led to deny the reality of time. A close reflection on our own inner mental life reveals the fact that our consciousness is not made up of static and distinct states. Our conscious life is a perpetual and indivisible flow of change in which past keeps on accumulating in the present and it “gnaws” into future. Future is merely an open possibility; it is not an already drawn line upon which we are to travel. “If we regard past, present, and future, as essential to time, then we picture time as a straight line, part of which we have travelled and left behind, and part lies yet untravelled before us. This is taking time, not as a living creative movement, but as a static absolute.”<sup>18</sup> This real time is “pure duration” as Bergson called it. Serial time is the intellectual apprehension of pure duration. Intellect carves out distinct and static bits from the indivisible flow of real time. Real time or pure duration is change without succession. It is associated with the appreciative ego. Serial time is the time of the efficient ego.<sup>18</sup>

Now, ultimate reality according to Iqbal is a rationally directed creative will in which life, consciousness and purpose are organically united. For Bergson, creative movement of life was not teleological. He thought that purpose would deprive the vital flow of creativity; evolution would become determined. Iqbal, however, thinks that purpose is not a distant goal towards which the Divine energy is directed. It is, on the other hand, inner necessity. Hence the presence of purpose does not affect the creative nature of ultimate reality. This ultimate reality Iqbal conceives as a self and calls it Ultimate Ego or Supreme Ego. Nature is its self-expression. In his own words:

“A critical interpretation of the sequence of time as revealed in ourselves has led us to the notion of the ultimate Reality as pure duration in.. which

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<sup>18</sup> Reconstruction, p. 58.

thought, life, and purpose inter-penetrate to form an organic unity. We cannot conceive this unity except as the unity of a self--an all-embracing concrete self- the ultimate source of all individual life and thought... To exist in pure duration is to be a self and to be a self is to be able to say 'I am'. Only that truly exists which can say 'I am'. It is the degree of the intuition of 'I-amness' that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being. We too say 'I am'. But our 'I-amness' is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not-self. The ultimate Self, in the words of the Quran 'can afford to dispense with all the worlds'. To Him the not-self does not present itself as a confronting 'other', or else it would have to be, like our finite self, in spatial relation with the confronting 'other'. What we call Nature or the not-self is only a fleeting moment in the life of God. His 'I-amness' is independent, elemental, absolute. Of such a self it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception. As the Quran says, 'Naught' is like Him; yet 'He hears and sees' Now a self is unthinkable without a character, i.e., a uniform mode of behaviour. Nature, as we have seen, is not a mass of pure materiality occupying a void. It is a structure of events, a systematic mode of behaviour, and as such organic to the ultimate Self. Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the Quran it is the habit of Allah. From the human point of view it is an interpretation which, in our present situation, we put on the creative activity of the Absolute Ego. At a particular moment in its forward moment it is finite; but since the self to which it is organic is creative, it is liable to increase, and is consequently boundless in the sense that no limit to its extension is final. Its boundlessness is potential, not actual. Nature, then, must be understood as a living, ever-growing organism whose growth has no final external limits. Its only limit is internal, i.e., the immanent self which animates and sustains the whole. As the Quran says: 'And verily unto thy Lord is the limit' (53: 14).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

The Universe is an expression of God and all existents are organically related to Him as ideas, desires, emotions, caprices, etc., are related to the finite human mind.

In Muslim theology, the problem of time is discussed along-side the problem of ultimate Reality. This is, Iqbal points out, for two main reasons:

“[i] According to the Quran, the alternation of day and night is one of the greatest signs of God, and [ii] partly to the Prophet’s identification of God with Dahr (time).”<sup>20</sup>

Now the time of the Ultimate Ego or God is fundamentally opposed to the time of finite egos. Time, according to an ordinary ego, is a ‘succession of individual “nows”’. This view of time, which was accepted by the Ash’arites and Newton, gave rise to serious difficulties referred to by Iqbal:

“...From this view it obviously follows that between every two individual ‘nows’ or moments of time, there is an unoccupied moment of time that is to say, a void of time. The absurdity of this conclusion is due to the fact that they [the Ash’arites] looked at the subject of their inquiry from a wholly objective point of view. They took no lesson from the history of Greek thought, which had adopted the same point of view and had reached no results. In our own time Newton described time as ‘something which in itself and from its own nature flows equally’. The metaphor of stream implied in this description suggests serious objections to Newton’s equally objective view of time. We cannot understand how a thing is affected on its immersion in this stream, and how it differs from things that do not participate in its flow. Nor can we form any idea of the beginning, the end, and the boundaries of time if we try to understand it on the analogy of a sifam. Moreover, if flow, movement, or ‘passage’ is the last word as to the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

nature of time, there must be another time to time the movement of the first time, and another which times the second time, and so on to infinity.”<sup>21</sup>

Iqbal does not accept the traditional view of time as a succession of individual moments. He, on the other hand, refers to Professor Rougier (Rongier in Reconstruction), Professor Alex. ander and Mullah Jalal-ud-Din Dawwani and concludes that “infinite varieties of time [are] relative to the varying grades of being intervening between materiality and pure spirituality.”<sup>22</sup> Time of gross and material bodies is successional and divisible into past, present and future. Though the time of spiritual beings is also successional, yet its passage is such that a whole year in the time of gross bodies is not more than a day in the time of an immaterial being. Time at the level of God, becomes absolutely non-successional. Iqbal writes:

“Rising higher and higher in the scale of immaterial beings we reach Divine time—time which is absolutely free from the quality of passage, and consequently does not admit of divisibility, sequence, and change It is above eternity; it has neither beginning nor end. . . . Thus Divine time is what the Quran describes as the ‘Mother of Books’ in which the whole of history, freed from the net of causal sequence, is gathered up in a single super-eternal ‘now’.”<sup>23</sup>

Here we should note that Iqbal has made a distinction between the appreciative self and the efficient self. Serial time belongs to the efficient self and it is only partially helpful in understanding the nature of reality. Appreciative self, however, lives in pure duration or Divine time and grasps the whole of reality in a single, indivisible act of perception. Here the reader should recall Russell’s example given in the beginning of this article. If under the effect of the drug administered to you, you have lost your previous memories but not your reasoning power and now sitting in the balloon you

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 74-75.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

form a new conception of the world, your geometry, your physics and your metaphysics will be absolutely different from those of ordinary mortals. Your thoughts and your language will be unintelligible for an ordinary mortal. But you will understand what Einstein would say because you have caused that fundamental change in your imagination which is a prerequisite for understanding his views. Our habits of thinking and our concepts are geared to serial time or the time of efficient self. So we tend to suppose that everything has a beginning and an end. But if we are free from a “host of pre-conceptions” and live in pure duration or Divine time, then the question “What is the beginning and the end of the universe?” will lose all meaning and significance. A deeper analysis of conscious experience, thinks Iqbal, enables us to attain to the level of appreciative self where the opposition of change and permanence, of serial and real time, is reconciled.<sup>24</sup> Iqbal writes

“...The life of the self consists in its movement from appreciation to efficiency, from intuition to intellect, and atomic time is born out of this movement. Thus the character of our conscious experience—our point of departure in all knowledge—gives us a clue to the concept which reconciles the opposition of permanence and change, of time regarded as an organic whole or eternity, and time regarded as atomic. If then we accept the guidance of our conscious experience, and conceive the life of the all-inclusive Ego on the analogy of the finite ego, the time of the Ultimate Ego is revealed as change without succession, i.e., an organic whole which appears atomic because of the creative movement of the ego. This is what Mir Damad and Mulla Baqir [sic] mean when they say that time is born with the act of Creation by which the Ultimate Ego realizes and measures, so to speak, the infinite wealth of His own undetermined creative possibilities. On the one hand, therefore, the ego lives in eternity, by which term I mean non-successional change; on the other, it lives in serial time, which I conceive as

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<sup>24</sup> Iqbal’s interpretation of Barzakh can very well be understood in the light of Russell’s example. Death is not the end of an ego. After the death and before resurrection, the ego remains in Barzakh, a place where it attains adjustment to a new spatio-temporal order.

organically related to eternity in the sense that it is a measure of non-successional change. In this sense alone it is possible to understand the Quranic verse: "To God belongs the alternation of day and night."<sup>25</sup>

It has now become clear that, according to Iqbal, the ultimate Reality is a Self Who expresses Himself in the laws and behaviour of Nature. He is the absolute "First" and "Last," i.e. has no beginning and no end. Finite egos "proceed" from Him and live like "pearls" in the flow of "Divine energy". Iqbal thinks that human ego has a beginning in time. But once having come into existence, it will not perish, i.e. it is immortal. Human ego then, as already pointed out, is sempiternal in medieval terminology. Only God or Supreme Ego is eternal because He has no beginning and no end. Iqbal's position has become some what pantheistic. But he has at several places avoided pantheism and rather criticized it. If Nature is organically related to God and finite egos proceed from Him, then the question arises "What fundamental difference is there between God and finite egos and how finite egos retain their identity?"

This question, though very important and significant, is outside the scope of this article. I have dealt with it elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-78.

<sup>26</sup> Vide my article: "Wafā'-i Insāni t Wafā'-i Kabīr se Ta'alluq—Iqbāl kī Nazar Men," Awraq, October 1975.

# THE EVOLUTION OF IQBAL'S POETIC THOUGHT

Riaz Hussain

## A Myth Exploded

It is high time that a myth which has for long reigned supreme in the intellectual and literary circles should be exploded. It is this: To begin with, Iqbal was a nationalist poet of the secular Congress brand. During the closing years of his life his mind underwent a sudden metamorphosis and he began to consider it his duty to represent the cause of Islam and the Muslim people in India. Like all other wrongs, this myth is founded on the misinterpretation of a fact. It is true that there is a remarkable difference in the early and later poetry of Iqbal. But what is regarded as a change of heart in Iqbal is nowhere visible in his works. He did not suddenly change his religion at forty or forty-five at which period of his life he is credited to have turned away his face from the god of secular nationalism to bow before the ideal of a religio-political nationhood. Iqbal was born a Muslim, lived as a Muslim and died as a Muslim. All through his life he studied and adored the Islamic lore. Historical evidence suggests that the direction of his mind never changed from the beginning to the close of his life. All that the young poet who published "Kohistān Himālyah" in the first issue of the Makhzan may be accused of is patriotism, and patriotism does not make one a secularist. "Nayā Shiwālah" was only a plea for peace and sanity in a riot-torn country and this too cannot be equated with the advocacy of a single nationhood for India. His most consistent message from which he did not deviate for a single moment all through his life is contained in the couplet:

یہ دور اپنے براہیم کی تلاش



میں  
ہے  
صنم کدہ ہے جہاں لا الہ الا  
اللہ

He spoke as a Muslim nationalist, an Indian patriot and as a champion of Asia's struggle against Western capitalistic hegemony. He was not dramatising his emotions, but actually feeling them. Not a Shakespeare or a Ghālib was he, but a Milton or a Ḥālī. His was not an individual Odyssey, but the Odyssey of a nation, of an age. Freedom of the subcontinent, and of the East, and reconstruction of the world on the pattern of Islam—these were the three tiers of his intellectual and practical endeavour. It is the usual custom to divide the evolution of Iqbal's poetic thought into three stages. Let us follow this pattern and look at the evidence thrown up by each stage. In the early stage of his poetry which closes with the poet's departure to Europe, we find in him a restless energy for action. He is engaged in exploring the ground.

لاؤں وہ تنکے کہیں سے آشیانے  
کے لیے  
بجلیاں بے تاب ہوں جن کے جلانے  
کے لیے

His gaze rests on the Himalayas which border his land; he delves into the past glories of Islam, takes cognizance of the plight of the orphans, or the civil strife in the subcontinent. Then he leaves for Europe to take a broader look at the world. For the first time his mind grasps the facts of international life. The most crying problem, it appears to him, is the resolution of the conflict between the Exploited East and the Exploiting West. This realisation kindles in him a restless spirit to turn a practical fighter in the cause of human liberation and abandon his Muse for good. A friend and confidant of the poet at this time, Shaikh Abdul Qadir, in his preface to Bāng-i Darā tells

us: “Shaikh Muhammad iqbāl one day told me that he had resolved to take a vow to abandon his Muse for good and devote the time spent in writing poetry to some other productive effort. I said to him that his Muse was not of the kind which should be abandoned. His poetry had that healing effect which might cure the ills of our backward nation and our unfortunate land. Hence it would not be proper to suspend such a useful God-gifted power. Shaikh Ṣāḥib [Iqbāl] was rather impressed by my argument and it was agreed that the final decision would be taken according to the opinion of Arnold. If Arnold agreed with me Shaikh Ṣāḥib would alter his decision to abandon Muse. If, however, he agreed with Shaikh Ṣāḥib, then Shaikh Ṣāḥib would carry out his design. I consider it fortunate for the world of learning that Arnold expressed his agreement with my view and it was decided that Iqbāl's decision to abandon the Muse was unjustified.” [Translated from Urdu]

He was persuaded to remain wedded to his Muse, but the Muse had to adapt to deliberations upon relations between East and West, the rise and fall of nations, the social, political and above all economic problems facing mankind. The world to him is a battlefield ; the sharpest weapon is a stable Ego.

Asrār-i Khudī and Rumūz-i Baikhudī are representative poems of this period, wherein the poet has mapped his ground, has entrenched himself and has clearly marked his targets. All that remains now is to start the action. “Ṭulū'-i Islām” (Urdu) and Payām-i Mashriq (Persian) launch the third stage of his poetic evolution, which corresponds to the last one and a half decades of his life.

Not content with expounding rules and ideology, the poet attacks from his chosen standpoint the problems of the day with reference to particular men and matters.

Significantly the appearance of “Ṭulū'-i Islām” provoked critical comment. “It appears that the imagination of the poet has weakened” which meant only that the poet was not using an embellished diction.

Iqbal shot back straight: “My intellect has clearly grasped the message which I wish to convey. Following the tradition of Arabic poetry I will say things now in clear and plain language.”

Evidence suggests that from then onward the poet was more anxious that his meaning was clearly understood rather than catering to the critics' palate with elegant diction. For a time, Urdu as a vehicle of thought receded from his mind and Persian took its place. Apart from “Ṭulū'-i Islām” and “Khic;r-i Rāh,” Iqbal expressed his new ideals in Persian only. Payām-i Mashriq.

Zabūr-i 'Ajam and /avid Nāmah followed. And then the poet again turned to Urdu.

Bāl-i Jibrīl has all the characteristics of plainness and elegance of expression which are the distinctive features of the best Arabic verse.

Critics, mostly Western-oriented, believe that the poet took too harsh a view of Western civilisation and that his opposition to the West smacks of vindictiveness. But, then, these critics perhaps consider that Iqbal was only indulging in an academic argument against the West, which he was not. In this last phase of his life and poetry, Iqbal was a practical fighter against all forms of oppression. He was displaying the outlook of an em-battled soldier against the enemy. The enemy was the West which exploited the East, the landlord who drank the blood of the tenant and the capitalist who sucked the very life out of the labourer and, of course, the Anglo-Hindu alliance that had conspired to keep the Muslims enslaved.

There was no place for him in the Congress ranks. How could there have been? He was a convinced Muslim, a believer in the socialistic

interpretation of Islam, the conceiver of a separate homeland in India for Islam, and a pan-Islamist.

# ISLAM AND THE POST-MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

## Islam and the Present day Crisis

Jalulul Haq

The concern of the present paper, as is indicated by the title is to discuss the various elements that constitute post-modern mind and deal with their bearing upon Islamic ideology. But at first it seems almost necessary to say a few words about the title itself. This will not only clarify many confusions but also supply the worth of and warrant, if any, to the whole discussion of this paper.

One may indeed find it questionable to add adjectively the word “post” to the word “modern” because of the tautological import that the whole epithet eventually turns to have. It may be said that the term “modern” by itself signifies what belongs to present, and there is, therefore, no need to modify it by adding any other word in order to distinguish it from the things belonging to past or future. Now, in ordinary sense it is quite true to say that the epithet “modern” carries all meaning that can be possibly had from the epithet “post-modern”. But technically the case is otherwise. The phrases like “modern thought” and “modern consciousness” purport meanings which are radically different from what is here meant by “post-modern consciousness”.

What is called modern era had its seed time in the twelfth century and emerging fully in the sixteenth century has ended up with the time of two great wars. We are now living in a post-modern age which has nothing in common, in its philosophy, sciences, sociology, religion, politics, etc., with the so-called modern age. As a matter of fact, the post-modern is as distinct and different from modern as distinct and different was modern with

medieval. The purpose of the present paper is to bring into light those new challenges which this post-war era has thrust upon an Islamic intellectual and which he must take account of in order to make his religion plausible and palatable to modern man.

Every culture provides for man a certain attitudinal orientation for life and world, a *Weltanschauung* or worldview which is formed by the general philosophical and scientific conditions of the time. Now the fundamental task of an Islamist is to point out the inner contradictions and inconsistencies to which the alien *Weltanschauung* of his time is exposed and then positively give Islamic solutions which can surmount these contradictions and remove the evils that inevitably result by the presence and prevalence of that inconsistent *W: Weltanschauung*. But it is a matter of great regret that the Islamist of today, as a rule, has failed to accomplish this task. He indeed appears to be not even fully aware of the great changes that have taken place in the various domains of knowledge.

It is not to say that an Islamic economist is not aware of the recent theories in economics or a Muslim scientist is ignorant of the new developments in his subject. His failure, instead, consists in his not having fully apprised and assessed the philosophical implications of those new theories which have so profoundly affected the attitude of man towards his life and world.

All the great works that have, in recent past, been done towards renovating and reconstructing Islamic ideology have their background in nineteenth-century thought. Although anachronistic for that matter, they have justification in the fact that the people whom they addressed were (besides the ignorant or traditionally educated believing community) largely those ingenious modernists (particularly Muslims) who, although living in a post modern world, were, mentally, in the main, strictly modern. These people were either under the influence of capitalist democracy profused with

the ideas of secularism and nationalism, or convinced of communism, or weary of both. By presenting Islam

as a complete code of life, it was tried to establish that Islam is not merely a religion in the sense in which Hinduism or Christianity are religions, but a parallel (and superior) ideology which can serve as an alternative to both capitalism and communism. It is true that there are still people who think in that old and outmoded way, for which reason it is useful to retain that approach in presenting Islam. But it would not be disputed that we are now to move ahead. We should understand and interpret Islam anew—in the light of new life conditions, new realities and new facts. We should probe and penetrate into the new maladies and malaises which ail the contemporary society and find out Islamic solutions of them.

What the modern man of the West had in common with his medieval counterpart was faith in an objective and impersonal truth in accordance with which he has to mould his whole life. He had a certain worldview which provided him with a moral code of action, a political theory and a summum bonum for life. Besides, he made spectacular progress in the realm of knowledge in general and in science in particular. All this accompanied by his political successes has made him overconfident and assertive. But the case with the new man is entirely different. He is a defeated, disturbed and demoralized person. The contradictions and con-fusions that his civilization has carried from its beginning are now completely exposed before his eyes. He is no longer enchanted by the great slogans like progress, liberty, science, etc., which used to fill his predecessors with great excitement and ecstasy.

The contemporary man has no faith in the objective truth and any talk of ideology or ethical code is for him nonsense. But on the other hand he cannot dispense with them for after all he is a creature with spirit and social instincts. The predicament of post-modern man is that he has lost faith in the very thing which is his absolute existential necessity. The absences of an ultimate concern has plunged him into a severe crisis—the crisis of

meaninglessness as it is now-a-days fashionably called. Islam is confronted today with not a boastful and aggressive civilisation, but, instead, a civilisation which is fairly willing to admit its follies and fallacies and failure. The task of an Islamic intellectual is accordingly to tell in what way should Islam react to and overcome this situation.

The Analysis of Crisis What characterises, in the main, the post-modern mentality is its “scepticism,” “nihilism” and “relativism” in all spheres of life—in knowledge, in metaphysics, in ethics and in politics. The whole foundation of medieval culture was grounded in one word “belief,” then the whole foundation of modern culture was grounded in one word “doubt”. Man said, “I doubt,” and the story of new civilisation began. Man doubted, but he was in his spirits as to the possibility of eventually finding out the ultimate truth. He still doubts, but he is no longer confident—nay, utterly hopeless, towards this possibility. And in this lies his basic psychological trauma. A sense of complete despair and disillusionment permeates his whole being. The state of affairs is obviously not a result of any accident but has its deep philosophical, cultural and historical roots in the following we shall, very briefly, attempt to peep and penetrate into these roots.

The first man who challenged the authority and thereby laid the philosophical foundation of modern culture was Descartes of France (1596-1650). Descartes thought he should doubt in everything—in God, in the physical world and even in his own existence. Authority (books, prophets and priests) ensure their existance, but they cannot be relied upon for they are too many and have often contradictory claims. Senses are other claimants to provide knowledge of them. But they are equally susceptible to doubt as we are often deluded and deceived by them (we see water in deserts while there is no water, we see a stick crooked while immersed in water although it is straight and so on).

Is then there no possibility of having real knowledge? Descartes says no. For when we doubt in everything, there is at least one thing which cannot be



doubted, viz the existence of the doubter. Doubt implies thinking and thinking cannot be performed without the existence of the thinker. "I think, therefore, I exist" was for Descartes an indubitable and self-evident proposition from which other equally certain propositions followed.

Descartes built through this method an edifice of self-evident truths in which the existence of God and physical universe was conspicuously affirmed.

Descartes' method is called rationalism and it characterised for a long time the Continental thought until it finally collapsed. British temperament, on the other hand, devised and developed another method, the method of empiricism, to arrive at certain knowledge. Its founder was John Locke (1632-1704) who agreed with Descartes in his refusal to submit before authority but disagreed with his opinion about the possibility of pre-experience knowledge. Our primary knowledge comes through sense-experience and for any knowledge to be true it must seek its testimony in experience. Experience accompanied with the power of inference is the source of all knowledge. We experience, for example, colour, tastes, smell, etc., which suggests that there are physical things in the outside world causing these sensations to our mind. Our own existence is affirmed by the simple intuitive experience that we have about ourselves. God also exists because everything in the world is caused by some other thing and the whole world, therefore, cannot exist without a cause. The ultimate cause of the world should be an omnipotent, omniscient and eternal being which is God. God, world and self are till thus proved through this method.

The third and by far the most important side of this tide which stood against the authoritarian knowledge was science. The concern of this new tide was not like rationalism or empiricism to seek grounds for belief in the existence of self or God or world. It was concerned merely to comprehend and uncover the great abysses and mysteries of the universe. It assumed the empiricists' justification of physical world and used the techniques of

deductive and inductive reasoning in forming generalisations. Methodically it aimed at breaking what Francis Bacon, the harbinger of scientific method, called the “idols of mind,” i.e. the presuppositions and prejudices that a tradition-bound man entertains.

Medieval Christianity had its own peculiar view about knowledge. Knowledge, according to this view, was conceived as something already given wholesale in outline in books and in detail in the minds of pious ecclesiasts even the purely scientific hypotheses explaining the phenomena of the universe were assimilated to sacred texts and were given a religious colouring. Ptolemy’s theory of geocentrism and many other Aristotelean ideas are cases in point. Science metamorphosed this conception of knowledge. Its primary task was to understand the nature of the universe bit by bit, objectively and dispassionately, without plunging into matters which are not subject to experiment and analysis. The conclusions of this new method in the long run were, or at least as it appeared then to be, fatal upon first the notion of God and then of the universe itself.

Rationalism, empiricism and science were thus, as methods, three substitutes of religion by means of which modern man hoped to arrive at the knowledge of truth. Now his betrayal consists in the realisation that not any one of them is capable of doing so. Logical reasoning contains an inner contradiction besides being prosaic, tyrannical and ruthless Empiricism, when carried to its logical conclusion, gives way to agnosticism. And science, in the last, is foundationless inasmuch as it bases its results upon inductive generalisations. This betrayal has changed the entire outlook of man with which he used to see the phenomena of life and universe. Contemporary man is anti rationalist, anti-empiricist and anti-scientist. The past one hundred years have witnessed the growth of a number of theories in different branches of knowledge which contradict the claims and conclusions of rationalism, empiricism and science.

Take, for example, first the Cartesian method of rationalism. "This method involved a discursive scheme in which a true and self-evident proposition entailed another true and self-evident proposition which itself in its turn entailed an equally true proposition, and the process continued indefinitely. There was constructed by this means a superstructure of propositions all true and certain and connected with each other by the principle of logical entailment. But there was hidden in it an assumption—assumption about the self-evident character of laws of thought (e.g. the same thing cannot at the same time be and not be). It was thought that these laws are true by themselves and need not be proved. But for one who was unwilling to start with such an assumption, rationalism as a method was unsatisfactory. Any method which claimed to supply genuine knowledge must be free from presumptions and prejudices. Rationalism failed to conform with this criterion and was, therefore, rejected.

Descartes's rationalistic method was criticised from another side also. This method, passing through Spinoza, Leibniz and others, culminated into the panlogism of Hegel in which reason was given almost the place of God. "What is rational is real and what is real is rational," was the main dictum of Hegel. Hegel conceived a rational World-Idea which, unfolding itself through a dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, determined the course of history. This idea was almighty and omnipotent and all the individuals, however great and powerful, were merely puppets in its hands. This was obviously a grave relegation of individual's existence. Kierkegaard, a junior contemporary and once a follower of Hegel, stood against it. He denied any reality besides man's individual existence and thus pioneered the philosophical movement of existentialism (also called irrationalism) which is a contrast of rationalism and logism.

Hegel's other contemporaries who attacked his logistic philosophy were Schopenhauer and Nietzsche who gave priority to will upon reason. Will, not reason, was according to them the primary principle in terms of which human life could be rightly explained. Their emphasis upon will

foreshadowed the twentieth-century Bergsonian voluntarism which was also a form of irrationalism. And since that time almost all the new philosophical schools and movements that emerged and prevailed in America, Britain and Continental Europe (e.g. Pragmatism, Neo-Realism, Logical Positivism, etc.) were, in some way or other, reactions of rationalism.

The greatest blow to rationalism, however, came from the Freudian discovery of the unconscious. Freud, as is known, in his therapeutic studies of the cases of hysteria and other forms of insanity, arrived at the conclusion that these are caused by some repressed desires of which the victim, in normal conditions, is not conscious. The nature of these desires is such that we think them wicked. Our socially determined conscience suppresses them and they remain lying like a prisoner in a dungeon, bursting out occasionally and causing scandal. Even our normal actions, which we ingeniously suppose as products of “thinking,” have, in fact, their source in those suppressed desires. We are indeed governed more by passion than by reason. The function of reason, in actual fact, is to help us hide what our most natural desires and drives are, by connecting a system of false beliefs and ideas. It is thus an unnatural and harmful phenomenon which leads ultimately to serious psychological illnesses and even to insanity.

These various philosophical and psychological criticisms proved devastatingly fatal to rationalism. It, however, continued holding place till the twenties of this century when it was finally completely superseded and swept away by pragmatic and neo realistic philosophies, but this was not the case with empiricism. In less than a hundred years from its start it was found that, when carried further in its arguments, it makes knowledge impossible. The argument was roughly of this form. According to empiricism, anything capable of being asserted is that which has its ultimate ground in sense-experience. A thing which is not experienced and which it is impossible to experience is non-existent. Now, what we experience when we say we know a physical thing (e.g. a table) are certain sensible qualities such as colour, shape, sound, etc. The table itself which we say bears these qualities is

experientially unknown and, therefore, non-existent. Mind too does not exist because what on the subjective side we experience are particular bits of sensations, each separated and independent, not any mental entity which subsists them. Mind and matter both are thus incapable of being asserted. Therefore the whole notion of knowledge collapses.

But if the logical conclusion of empiricism is scepticism, science is also cut off from its roots. The scientific method consists in explaining the occurrence of an event in terms of the pre-ceding event of which it is supposed to be an effect. This under-lies the assumption that a cause event necessarily entails its effect event. But, according to empiricism, no such categorization is possible. The experience of prick and the experience of pinching the needle are two altogether different and independent events and no logical connection can justly be sought between the two. It is true that the experience of pinching the needle is always in the past followed by the prick. But this does not logically prove that in future also the same will happen. The proposition, “all crows hitherto seen are black,” cannot entail the proposition that “all crows are black”.

Science, in fact, bases itself upon the inductive method in which one generalises a conclusion which is drawn from only a limited set of observed phenomena. It is, therefore, logically incredible; what at best science can claim to do is to provide a set of probable knowledge, by no means certain and universal.

This conclusion was first drawn by British philosopher Hume when he wrote:

“My intention then... is only to make the reader sensible of the truth of my hypothesis that all our reasoning concerning causes and effects are derived from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of sensitive than cognitive part of our natures. I have proved that the very same

principles which make us form a decision upon any subject and correct the decision by the consideration of our genius and capacity . . . when carried further and applied to every new reflex judgment, must be continually diminishing the original evidence, at last reduce it to nothing and utterly subvert all belief and opinion. If belief, therefore, were a simple act of thought, without any peculiar manner of conception, or the addition of a force and vivacity, it must infallibly destroy itself, and in every case terminate in a total suspense of judgment.”<sup>27</sup>

The denial of causation and induction, thus, not only slackened the foundation of scientific knowledge but of knowledge as such and the Western mind faced for the first time a crisis. The dilemma in the words of Bertrand Russell was this:

“The great scandals in the philosophy of science ever since the time of Hume have been causality and induction. We all believe in both but Hume made it appear that our belief is a blind faith for which no rational ground can be assigned...

“Science as it exists at present is partly agreeable and partly disagreeable... If we emphasize the fact that our belief in causality and induction is irrational, we must infer that we do not know science to be true, and that it may at any moment cease to give us the control over the environment for the sake of which we like it. This alternative is however never purely theoretical; it is not one which a modern man can adopt in practice. If on the other hand we admit the claims of scientific method, we cannot avoid the conclusion that causality and induction are applicable to human volitions as much as to anything else... The out-come seems to be that the rational justification of science is theoretically inadequate, there is no method of securing what is pleasant in science without what is unpleasant. We can do so, of course, by refusing to face the logic of situation; but, if so, we shall dry

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<sup>27</sup> “An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,” in A.J. Ayer & Winch, Eds., *British Empirical Philosophers*, p. 445.

up the impulse to scientific discovery at its source, which is the desire to understand the world. ...”<sup>28</sup>

At this juncture a philosophy which could reconstruct the bases of knowledge became the need of the hour. The philosopher who first attempted this task was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) of Germany who, in his own words, was awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by Hume.

Kant’s reconstruction consisted in synthesising rationalism with empiricism and developing a metaphysics on the basis of what we call our more sense. He agreed with empiricists’ contention that what we can know of things are merely their apparent forms; their real nature remains hidden behind these appearances. But the apparatus through which we see them is such that the order in which things are arranged is genuinely revealed to us. This apparatus comprises space, time and different logical categories such as quantity, quality, relation, etc. Just as a person wearing a pair of blue spectacles sees everything blue, in the same way all our knowledge is determined by our objective constitution. And precisely for this reason we can be sure that all our experiences are universally true.

Aside from this we all possess a moral sense, i.e. we all believe that there are certain moral laws universally true and valid, e.g. truth speaking is good, stealing is bad, etc. Now, the presence of these moral laws demands justice which is that a person should be given happiness or torment proportionate to his virtue or vice it is clear that only Providence can ensure this justice. It is also clear that justice in most of the cases is not affected in this life. There should, therefore, be another life after death in this world. Besides, God must have also endowed men with freedom of will since otherwise there would be no such thing as virtuous or wicked action. God, freedom of will and future life are, thus, three basic assumptions that are needed in explaining the moral phenomena.

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<sup>28</sup> Russell's article “Is Science Superstitious?” in his Sceptical Essays, pp. 43-44.

Kant's reconstructive philosophy, although sublime and profound as it was, could not satisfy anyone and people very soon rejected it. In the following century Hegelian philosophy swayed the academic environment and consequently the problem of reconstruction of knowledge was thrown into background. But in the twentieth century it was again taken up by another philosophical giant, the great Bertrand Russell.

Russell's alleged aim in philosophy was to find out some objective and impersonal truths which religion was unable to give him. He first tried mathematics. But at a time when his work in this field was completed, his own pupil Wittgenstein showed the mathematical proposition as utterly devoid of any informative content. He then came to science. But science in its existing form was exposed to Humean criticism, i.e. it assumed the existence of physical things which Hume had shown to be non-existent.

Russell thought if he could construct functional substitutes of these physical things (and also of mind) which are strictly experiential, then the great riddle in the way of scientific knowledge can be removed. He dedicated his whole philosophical career of about fifty years towards this end. But success eluded him. He admitted his failure in no dubious terms when in the last he wrote:

“My philosophical journeys have been, in some respects, disappointing. When I was young I hoped to find some religious satisfaction in philosophy; even after I had abandoned Hegel, the eternal Platonic world gave me something non-human to admire. I thought of mathematics with reverence and suffered when Wittgenstein led me to regard it as nothing but tautologies. I have always ardently desired to find some justification for the emotions inspired by certain things that seemed to stand outside human life and to deserve feelings of awe. I am thinking... in part of the edifice of some impersonal truth, especially truth which, like that of mathematics, does not merely describe the world that happens to exist. Those who attempt to make a religion of humanism do not satisfy my emotions. And yet I am unable to



believe that in the world as known, there is something that I can value outside human being... And so my intellect goes with the humanists, though my emotions violently rebel. In this respect the 'consolations of philosophy' are not for me."<sup>29</sup>

Russell's admission of his failure was not the admission of an individual; the whole philosophical modernity admitted its defeat in him. The setback to philosophy was so serious that it abandoned its age long task of building a system of truths and knowledge. Today a curious sense of hopelessness and helplessness prevails among the philosophizing people, although very few of them are willing to admit it. The two major tides of contemporary philosophy, existentialism and linguistic analysis, are both antagonistic to metaphysical system building. This is not because, as their creators often pretend to hold, that metaphysics is dispensable, but because the disheartening experiences of the past have led them to a place where they are no longer confident about the possibility of having a sound system of it. Existentialists have engaged themselves in discussing the existential problems of an individual quite isolating him from his society and universe of which he is an unalienable part. Linguistic philosophers, on the other hand, are busy in analyzing, logically and/or linguistically, what, in the words of Bertrand Russell, "silly people say about silly things," turning, thus, philosophy into a nescience.

The fact, however, that science has been shown philosophically foundationless, was a phenomenon which could perturb only a few people belonging to purely philosophical circles. The objections to science were too theoretical to give any jerk or jolt to the scientists or educated men in general whose slumbers were far more deep and dogmatic. Science during this time made tremendous progress and this was all what a practical man could desire. Scientists too, therefore, as good practical men, thought it unworthy to pause

and reflect over such non-practical problems. What, however, made their pleasant dreams turned into frightful nightmares was the death of Matter-god (the Idol, in the language of Scriptures which followed the demise of God in the nineteenth century.

In pre-modern times, Western man believed in a God who was present everywhere, knew everything and controlled all the affairs of the world. But with the dawn of the era of Enlightenment, when science took hold of the minds of the people, the first thing to fall a prey to it was God. Like a continental king, he was first tolerated, then made powerless and in the last completely banished.

Previously, intelligent people believed in God because they were astonished by the extraordinary beauty and grandeur of the cosmos. There must be an intelligent Creator, so they thought, to produce such a harmonious and adjusted universe. Bacon who pioneered scientific method and criticized religion tooth and nail was a believer and reproached those who dared disbelieve. So did Copernicus and other philosophers and scientists of the time.

But then it was discovered that all the equilibrium and adjustment that we see in the universe is due to natural laws; God is not at all responsible for them. The world was like a machine, self-contained and self-governed, and of which every part was related and conditioned by some other part. All the events of the world were caused by some preceding event and nothing could happen miraculously. But, after all, there was the need of some-one to start the machine, to make the laws of Nature start functioning. This place was assigned to God. Newton, Kepler, Galelio, all believed in God, but a God having no power to interfere in the affairs of the world.

But this state of affairs could not continue for long people who held a mechanical view of the world and at the same time believed in God, were logically as well as scientifically inconsistent. It was argued that when natural laws sufficed to explain all the occurrences and happenings of the universe,

then why to assume gratuitously the existence of an outside creator. Deism, thus, which had, come by replacing theism, gave place to atheism. Nature which up to this time was an humble and obedient creation of God became herself God. She could no longer say to anyone as she previously did in Voltaire: “My poor son, shall I tell you the truth? I have been given a name that does not suit me at all. I am called Nature, and I am really Art (the Art of God).”<sup>30</sup> The new devotees praised the glory of Almighty and Sovereign Nature:

“O Nature, sovereign of all beings and ye, her adorable daughters, virtue, reason and truth remain forever our revered protectors. It is to you that belong the praises of human race; to you appertains the homage of the earth. Show us then, O Nature, that which man ought to do, in order to obtain the happiness which thou makest him desire. Virtue, animate him with thy beneficent fire. Reason conduct his uncertain steps through the paths of life. Truth, let thy torch illumine his intellect, dissipate the darkness of his road. Unite assisting deities your powers, in order to submit the hearts of mankind to your dominion. Banish error from our mind; wickedness from our hearts; confusions from our footsteps; cause knowledge to extend its salubrious reign; goodness to occupy our souls; serenity to occupy our bosoms.”<sup>31</sup>

Man rejected the belief in God as superfluous and superstitious and replaced Him by creating another deity, Nature (or Matter). But this apotheosis, in the words of the Qur’an, was a kalimah khabīthah (bad saying) and like a shape khabīthah (bad tree) it could not get a firm root,<sup>32</sup> and very soon crashed and collapsed. Relativity physicists discovered that there are in our world no such things as the substantial and extended small particles, the atoms. The universe is made, instead, of highly abstract entities (or

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<sup>30</sup> Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, Article “Nature,” quoted from Randall, *Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 275.

<sup>31</sup> Holbach's *Systeme de in Nature*, Chap. 14, quoted from Randall, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

<sup>32</sup> The Qur'an, xiv. 26.

nonentities) which it is impossible to conceive or comprehend; they can only be calculated through a very long and intricate procedure of mathematics.

The matter thus died and, with its death, the whole mechanical worldview which characterised chiefly the modernity became incredible. Scientists were driven out from their cosy and close-knit world to a world where only chaos and confusion existed. The notion of absolute time and absolute space was replaced by a relative space-time which made the notion of uniform and unbreakable natural laws impossible. They ceased to have the characteristic of determining the course of events since they overlapped and admitted discontinuity and leaps and jumps.

The death of Matter-god played havoc with the modern educated man and enhanced greatly his feeling of disgust and disillusionment. Man murdered God Who created him but could not save the god which he himself has created. The sword of science which killed God was sharp enough to kill matter also. Man fell short of both God and Idol. The poet could no longer say:

“Now I have decided I would worship the stone-idols so that when become weary I can strike my head and die.”

Man is by his nature a worshipping animal. God is for him a psychological necessity which he cannot dispense with. Godlessness, in human context, amounts to nothing but to restlessness. Man of today is rootless and the realisation of this is a great scandal for him.

Another factor, besides the death of Matter-god which has plagued the modern educated mind, is the collapse of the idea of progress—the idea that things are getting better and are better than before. Modernity is, indeed, characterised as much by its progressivism and optimism as by its faith in reason and science. The medieval past of the West was in one sense optimistic and forward-looking but in another sense conservative, even reactionary. It was optimistic in that it conceived a messianic future in which

all the evils and vices will be removed and man will be spiritually as well as materially perfected. But it was conservative because it did not believe in gradual progress; the golden period of history, according to it, will be realised by the descent of a Messiah. What lied at the root of this conservatism was its idea of essential wickedness of man. But in the era of enlightenment people rejected this idea and replaced it by the idea of essential goodness of man. Man was essentially a rational being and reason could not be anything but good. So, it was concluded, as the rationality will expand, things will be automatically improved. From Fontenelle and Condercet of the eighteenth century to the Utopian socialists and Marxists of the nineteenth century there is a whole chain of writers who sang the lullaby of progress. Some samples are as follows:

“Nature has set no term to the perfection of human faculties ... and perfectibility of man is truly infinite; and progress of this perfectibility, from now on independent on any power that might wish to halt it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has cast us.”<sup>33</sup>

“The imagination of poets placed the Golden Age in the cradle of mankind, in the ignorance and brutality of earlier times. It is rather the Iron Age which should be reflected there. The Golden Age of human species is not behind us; it is before us. It lies in the perfection of social order. It is for us to clear the path.”<sup>34</sup>

The scene, however, grew less picturesque and turned eventually grim and gloomy when some historians in their study of archaic cultures arrived at some very dismal and disheartening conclusions. Already in the early decades of the nineteenth century people had started studying and formulating the laws of historical dynamics, i.e. the laws to which the progress of any society

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<sup>33</sup> Condercet, *The Progress of Human Mind* (1794) quoted from Sidney Pollard, *Idea of Progress*, p. xii.

<sup>34</sup> Saint Simon, *The Reorganisation of European Society* (1814), quoted from Pollard, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

is subject. Their results converged, as a rule, upon the view that the direction of the historical movement from one stage to other is always towards betterment and perfection. The French positivist August Comte, for example, conceived human history as divided into three stages, the first and second of which were religious and metaphysical respectively. The third and last stage which was scientific was, according to him, the pinnacle of human progress in which man breaks all the fetters of dogma and prejudice and uses his intelligence and energy towards the realisation of a happy and wholesome social life.

But the conclusions of Comte and others like him were mere results of their romantic loyalty to their age then based upon a genuine insight into world history. With the widening of historical vision, people grew less optimistic and more skeptical towards the prospects of progress and perfection. The tendency culminated in the writings of social historians like Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee who prophesied the inevitable doom of Western culture.

The gist of the writings of the “philosophers of doom” was that every culture has its definite life span in which it emerges, flourishes and then decays and dies. Western culture, to be sure, is no exception to this general rule. Already having passed its prime and efflorescence, it has now entered the stage where nothing can save it from its inexorable fate to decline and perish. Spengler, for example wrote:

“...He who does not understand that this outcome [of the end of Western Culture] is obligatory and insusceptible of modification must forgo all desire to comprehend history, to live through history or to make history. ...That the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, hitherto looked on as the highest point of an ascending straight line of world-history, are in reality a stage of life which may be observed in every Culture that has ripened to its limit. ...”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> O. Spengler, *Decline of the West* (C.F. Atkinson, Tr.), I, 38-39.

These gloomy prophesies appeared being confirmed and vindicated when the two world wars played havoc with the Western society. The gigantic mass killing, the resulting disintegration of different social institutions and economic depression accompanied with an ever-increasing feeling of fear and anxiety led even the most optimist people to deem the doom of Western civilization imminent and inevitable. As a result, a paralysing and devitalizing cynicism and pessimism pervaded the whole Western. It is often contended that the picture above depicted is not true for the man of present-day society. Man has recovered from its economic bankruptcy and there is now more stability and peace in socio-political spheres. He is gradually forgetting his painful past and is breathing a new air of hope and confidence. The great suffocation of 'thirties and 'forties has ended and a fresh wave of optimism is blowing down in the nook and corner of contemporary society. But such speculations, one may say, are not results of any authentic insight into the existing realities of human conditions. From the viewpoint of the genial happiness of the individual, the situation has gravely deteriorated and worsened. It is true that man of today is economically more affluent, politically more stable, socially more at peace, technologically more advanced and militarily more strong, but what all these achievements are worth when they are helpless to ensure a free and fearless life for man?

They have even proved counter-productive. Man in the post-war era is more suspicious, fearful and insecure than he was at any time, in his past history. Even the more prosperous he is economically or powerful socially or politically, the more restless and anxious he is existentially. He is an intellectual giant but at the same time an existential dwarf. His science, his technology, his economic planning, instead of serving him, have made him a helpless slave. In a highly industrialized society he is treated as a machine whose only object is to serve the bigger machines. His actions have ceased to be his own. They are dictated and determined by what Erich Fromm in his *The Sane Society* has called "anonymous powers". They lack creativity, productivity and originality.

Man does not now feel himself the centre of the world. He is not the master of his acts or of the consequences of those acts; these have become his masters whom he obeys and whom he even worships. The depersonalizing effects of a highly technological environment has reduced his being into nothing. He has become robot-like, if not a robot. An absolute lack of commitment and conviction has created in his being a great emptiness, a void, which he often tries to fill by indulging into sex or drugs or now- 'a-days into “yoga”. He is dissatisfied, apathetic and bored. He lacks joy and happiness and a sense of futility and a vague feeling that life is meaningless permeates his whole being. The phenomenon is what is now-a-days called “alienation”. It pervades each and every section of society and completes the pictures of ideological nihilism which is the basic ailment of the post-modern man.

What is even more perturbing is the fact that this nihilism in matters of ideology or worldview, has extended, largely as a natural consequence, its black shadow upon the realms of ethics and politics as well.

When Western man severed his relation with medieval Christian tradition, its effect was not only felt in metaphysics. The realms of ethics and politics were equally affected. Man pursued an entirely different course in regard to his political organisation and forged quite new ethico-political ideals. Politically the two systems, which could survive the vicissitudes of highly turbulent and precarious political situation, are, as we know, capitalistic democracy and communism. But both the systems are looked at by post-modern man unfavorably, even contemptuously. The new man is quite disinterested in and apathetic towards the democratic ideals of liberty, peace, competition, etc., on the one hand and the communistic ideals of equality, economic freedom, etc., on the other. The reason is simply that both have subjected him, overtly or covertly, to the tyrannical and ruthless power of lifeless, mechanical environment and have thereby enhanced to a very high degree his sense of alienation and estrangement.



The situation in the realm of morals is even worse. After rejecting the religious morality of other-worldliness, Western man set himself for mundane materialistic pursuits. But this brought him only a greater amount of agony and anxiety. The result is that man has lost faith in the very idea of morality. To-day he is more governed by “drugs” than by canons and conventions of social ethics. There is a deep-felt crisis, “the crisis of values” as the academicians fashionably call it. In philosophical literature this crisis is best expressed and epitomised in “the death of God” theology of Nietzsche, in the loud colloquies of Dostoevsky’s “Underground Man” and in Sartre’s “Nauseatic” experiences.

Nietzsche’s proclamation of death of God was in fact not meant as much to create a metaphysical scandal as to alarm people about the grave consequences to which they are inevitably led by their banishment of God from their general philosophy of life. In *The Gay Science*, for example, he wrote:

“The greatest recent event—that ‘God is dead,’ that the belief in the Christian God has ceased to be believable—is now even beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe . . . and what must collapse on that this belief has undermined.... All that was built upon it, leaned on it, grew into it; for example, our whole European morality.”<sup>36</sup>

The problem was that when there was no God to command an ethical code, on what grounds can man be subjected and subordinated to moral law. Nietzsche offered his own solution of “Superman ethics,” but it was such that any sane person would fight shy of to accept. The problem, therefore, remained at its place. With the turn of the century, especially in the aftermath of two wars, it grew more and more pressing. Albert Camus in his novel *The Plague* depicts the character of an atheist, named Tarrau, who once spoke to his friend Rieux: “It comes to this.” Tarrau said almost casually: “What interests me is learning how to become a saint.” Dr Rieux, surprisingly

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<sup>36</sup> Walter Kaufmann, Ed.; *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 447.

replies: “But you don’t believe in God.” “Exactly,” says Tarrau, “came one be a saint without God?—that’s the problem, in fact the only problem I’m up against today.”<sup>37</sup>

The question “Can one be a saint without God?” epitomises the whole dilemma in which contemporary man finds himself bristled.

The same question was put, even earlier, by Dostoevsky in his famous novel the Brother Karantazov. Smerdyav says to his brother Ivan, “If there is no everlasting God, there is no such thing as virtue and there is no need of it.”<sup>38</sup> He freely acts according to this principle and goes as far as to kill his father.

An antagonism towards metaphysics and ethics and politics, together with an absolute skepticism in knowledge, is what characterizes, in the main, the neo-modern psyche. But there is also a third, and not least important, element to which we must now turn our attention. This is the idea of “relativism,” i.e. the idea that whatever is true is true for a certain time and place. It is a belief that any system of truth and value has, for its structure, a peculiar reference to its socio-temporal setting which delimits its validity and vitality to that setting. No truth or value system can justly claim to have relevance beyond the milieu in which it is burgeoned and blossomed. All the ideologies of the past, preached by prophets or postulated by philosophers, are, according to this idea, historically conditioned and the traditional notion of a universal, absolute and objective truth is nothing except a myth,

The idea of relativity of truth has, in recent decades, come to claim a very wide acceptance; many even take it as a liberating precept to be earnestly preached and propagated. In a less theoretical form it expresses itself sometimes into ideological pluralism and cosmopolitanism and sometimes into our much-discussed nihilism. For through its one aspect it may lead one

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 796.

to become liberal and permissive believing in a plurality of truths, all being equally credible. But, through another aspect it can also lead people to doubt and distrust every system and truth and finally the very idea of truth. This will be our latter conclusion.

It may be remarked that, as such, the idea of relativism is not quite a new one. Hindu antiquity has been familiar with it in its concepts of “Adikari Bheda” (the adaptation of the truth to the relative maturity of student) and “Sarva Dharm Sambhav” (possibility of all religions being true). The Jainists have this idea embodied in their doctrine of “Anekant veda” (the doctrine that reality is multi-faceted). Some Muslim sufis too, quite contrary to their religious belief, have shown allegiance to this idea. In ancient Greece, the same idea found expression in the philosophies of Protagoras and other sophists. In modern times, it is epitomised in Nietzsche’s saying that “Facts do not exist, only interpretations’. Pragmatic philosophies of William James, Dewey and Schiller hold the same even with a greater force and poignancy. But the main force to this idea came with the appearance of two new methodological tides, namely, Social Darwinism and Historicism in the realm of social studies. Today we have a separate discipline of “Sociology of Knowledge” (Wissenseseziologie, in original German) to study the differences in human thought with reference to the difference in their social contexts.

That the idea of relativism, although as old as the history of thought itself, remained a subterranean current is due to the fact that until fairly recent times people entertained a good faith in the possibility of having an objective and impersonal system of truth. Their minds were colonised by the great system-builders like Plato, Aquinas, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel. The relativists were treated by these mental imperialists as being not more than occasional trouble-creators. They were suppressed and crushed without much difficulty. But, when towards the close of the nineteenth century, there was accumulated a plethora of these systems each claiming for itself to possess the whole of truth, people, naturally, grew weary. The result in due course, was that they ceased to have an unconditional faith in either of them.

This opened the way for the later general acceptance of this idea on an enormous scale. It found among its philosophers and popularisers persons of no less stature than Nietzsche, Durkheim, Marx, Mannheim, Dilthey, Freud and Schiller.

The main argument that the advocates of relativism invoke in support of their theory stems from the anthropomorphic determination of knowledge. There is, they argue, an inevitable intrusion of subjective element in all cognitive processes which constricts the possibility of their being completely objective, impersonal and non-human. When man perceives reality it is always through a certain perspective which comprises the peculiar sort of perceiver's cognitive apparatus, his socio-historical environment, the language he speaks and his bias and prejudices and interests. Man cannot by any means eschew this perspective. Kant had shown that all the categories in terms of which man apprehends outside reality, even the space and time, are in his own mind. Besides, man is born and brought up in a social setting which influences and determines to an immeasurable degree his vision of truth. He cannot get rid of these influences and consequently cannot perceive facts quite objectively. Objectivity in the province of knowledge and truth is, therefore, a sheer myth and nothing more.

Apart from the anthropomorphic element, there are also at work certain social forces which prevent man to have an uncoloured vision of reality. In Marxian philosophy these forces comprised entirely economic factors. Marx tried to establish that the politics, religion, philosophy, art, morality of any epoch are in fact an outcome of the method of production and distribution prevalent in that epoch. His notorious notion of class-struggle underlied the idea that the two classes, the bourgeois and proletariat, have varied economic interests which affect their philosophies of life and lead eventually to conflict. Otto Bauer, a Marxian sociologist of knowledge, held the view that the perception of reality of a given class is determined by its work-experience. Bourgeois are idealists since their function is merely to chalk out grand plans

which are carried out by others. But proletarians come in direct contact with physical reality and are, therefore, materialists.<sup>39</sup>

The French sociologist Durkheim and his followers went even further. They held the view that even the most abstract things in the domain of knowledge, viz. the logical concepts, have a social origin, not quite being innate or empirical generalizations as the rationalists and empiricists claim them to be. Durkheim, in his celebrated work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious We*, undertook to discern that the concepts such as logical classes, species, genus, substance, space-time, etc., reflect and are modelled upon the social organisation of primitive tribe. He writes “At the roots of all our judgements there are a certain number of essential ideas which dominate all our intellectual life; they are what philosophers since Aristotle have called the categories of understanding: Ideas of time, space, class, number, cause, substance, personality, etc. . . . they are like the framework of intelligence. Now when primitive religious beliefs are systematically analysed, the principal categories are naturally found. They are born in religion and of religion. ...”<sup>40</sup>

Thus the hierarchy of genus, species and clans are representatives of the corresponding hierarchy of tribe, phratry and clan in the primitive society. The concept of a logical universal whole of which everything is part is derived from our primitive conception of the unity of society. Our notions of time and space too have their ultimate source in the factors which are religious and, therefore, social. The division of time into days, weeks, months, years, etc., “correspond to the periodical recurrences of rites, feasts, and public ceremonies.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the special distinctions of here, there, left, right, up, down, etc., are the distinctions that have emerged from the fact that 'different sympathetic values have been attributed to various regions.’<sup>42</sup> And, since all the men of a single civilisation represent space in the same

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<sup>39</sup> G.W. Remmling, *Road to Suspicion*; p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> 14. P. 9.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-13.

way, “it is clearly necessary that these sympathetic values, and the distinctions that depend upon them, should be equally universal, and that almost necessarily implies that they be of social origin.”<sup>43</sup>

These relativistic theses appeared being further confirmed when some philosophers of history challenged the feasibility of scientific method in the study of historical objects like art, religion and philosophy. The scientific positivist method, as we know, bases itself upon the realistic assumption in which the studying subject and the object being studied stand apart as opposite poles without admitting any possibility of contact or interaction. Now, this method is perfectly fit for the study of the lifeless material objects. But philosophy, art and religion are not objects. They are works. They are human creations and man always lives in history. The strictly historical nature of man disqualifies scientific analysis as a tool in the understanding of the man-made things. In order to have real insight into the human works of a particular age, one is required to establish a genuine communion with them. He has to divest himself with the concepts, value-standards and categories which are characteristic of his own age “to learn to substitute for them the corresponding concepts, value-standards, and categories of the period under examination”.<sup>44</sup> This whole procedure presupposes the view that no standards or concepts have a timeless validity. The relativistic conclusion, therefore, very conspicuously follows.

Islam vs Crisis Scepticism, nihilism and relativism are, thus, as is evident from the above description, three main ingredients of postmodern mind. There is an absolute and omnipresent doubt that haunts every section of society and every aspect of human life. The questions now arise: in what kind of relationship does Islam stand to this situation? What may be the nature of response that an Islamist can offer having been faced to it? Should he succumb, or make compromises or oppose it wholesale? Moreover, in the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-13.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Kecskemet's Preface to Karl Mannheim's, *Essays on the Sociology of knowledge*, p. 5.

case of conflicts, what may be his basic task that he should under-take in order to make his religion relevant and reasonable? The rest of the paper will be devoted to the answers of these questions. It may, however, be made clear that no detailed solution of the problems will be offered here. What is intended is merely to indicate in outline the nature of the work towards which efforts should be directed.

It may be said at the outset that Islam stands in complete antagonism to the sceptical and nihilistic ethos of the new world. Scepticism, as we have seen, amounts to a total denial of knowledge—knowledge of God, knowledge of the world and knowledge of one's self; and nihilism is the state of one's being completely disoriented in the matters of truth and value. But Islam, quite the contrary, is a positivist and world-affirming religion. It takes for granted the existence of physical universe and persuades (though not prove;) people for the belief in God and a super-sensory angelic world. The universe, although perishable ultimately, is, nevertheless, a creation of God and enjoys, therefore, at least a partial reality.

“Say (O Muhammad, unto the idolators): Disbelieve ye verily in Him Who created the earth in two Days, and ascribe ye unto Him rivals? He (and none else) is the Lord of the worlds.

“He placed therein firm hills rising above it and blessed it and measured therein its sustenance in four days alike for (all) who ask.

“Then turned he to the Heaven when it was smoke and said unto it and unto the earth: Come both of you, willingly come both. They said: We come obedient.

“Then He ordained them seven heavens in two Days and inspired in each heaven its mandate; and we decked the nether heaven with lamps and rendered it inviolable. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Knower” (xli. 9-12).

Human soul or self too is a reality which God has vouchsafed to man through an especial act of favour and grace.

“And (remember) when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am creating a mortal out of potter’s clay of black mud altered, so when I made him and have breathed into Him of My Spirit, do ye fall down yourselves unto him” (xv. 28-29).

Islam affirms the knowledge that man receives through senses or intellect or intuition.

“Lo! We create man from a drop of thickened fluid to test him; so we make him hearing, seeing” (lxxvi. 2).

“God hath made everything . . . ; then shaped him, and breathed of His spirit unto him and gave you hearing and seeing and heart: what little thank do ye return?” (xxxii. 6-8).

“And by the soul and Him who perfected it. And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it” (xci. 7-8).

Besides, there is an especial knowledge, 'ilm, that God imparts to man by revealing it to His chosen people, the Prophets, through some mysterious angelic agency.

“And thus have inspired in thee (Muḥammad) a spirit of Our Command. I hou knowest not what the Scripture, was nor what the Faith. But we have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of our bondmen. And lo! thou verily dost guide unto a right path” (xlii. 52).

In a word, Islam, as against the new spirit of faithlessness and non-commitment, is a religion of absolute faith and total commitment. It exhorts its followers to fully submit to their Creator and Sustainer God, Who is also the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.



“Allah it is who appointed for you the earth for a dwelling-place and the sky for a canopy and fashioned your shapes, and bath provided you with good things. Such is Allah, your Lord. Then blessed be Allah, the Lord of the worlds: He is the Living One. There is no God save Him. So pray unto Him, making religion pure for Him (only). Praise be to Allah, the Lord of worlds” (xl. 65).

So far as the idea of relativism is concerned, it is as repugnant to Islam as it is dangerous for society. A logical extension of its conclusions and their practical applications can result into nothing less than a complete return to barbarism and social anarchy. Relativisation of truths and values on a collective plane logically leads to their relativisation on individual plane. For, a person differs in his interests and attitudes as much as a society differs from another society. If one concedes to the demand of each society to have its own personal system of truths only on the ground of unavoidable peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, then he is bound to make the same concession for the individual also. There should, consequently, be as many truths as the number of individuals. This may put the whole social existence of man in peril.

It is cautious to note that not only secular academicians but those belonging to religious circles also have succumbed to the idea of relativism. Contemporary Hinduism is completely under its sway, partly under the impact of ideas imported from the West and partly because its own treasure is devoid of any single objective system of truths or values. What it has in the name of religion is a maze of philosophical theories, profound and sublime no doubt, but at the same time polluted with the superstitious dogmas and myths and unpracticable and even dangerous rites and rituals. This state of affairs compels its followers to take a relativistic stand in ideological matters and depreciate and derogate objectivity.

Christianity too, especially its liberal and protestant section, advocates this idea. But what is most surprising in this context is that even the Catholic

Christians, quite contrary to their violent objectivism of the past, have started showing allegiance to it. There is today a very common tendency among Catholic theologians to give, at least on an academic plane, assent to the truth-claims of other religions, while for themselves sticking to their own. Almost similar is the case with Buddhism. Buddha is too well known for his serene reluctance for the questions which are, in their nature, metaphysical and non-ethical.

But Islam cannot take any such attitude without liquidating its independent personality. Islam is a religion with complete objectivity in metaphysical as well as ethico-political realms. "There is only one religion acceptable to God which is Islam," is one of the quintessential propositions of the Qur'an. Reality is one and there can be only one true interpretation of it and this is Islam. All the Prophets since Adam down to Muhammad (peace be upon them all) have preached, practised and propagated this truth. All other religions, philosophies, theories, besides Islam, are satanic connections which only disrupt the peace and harmony of man's life in this world while exposing him to the eternal torment of the Hell in the other world.

Islam's insistence upon ideological objectivity is, in fact, quite reasonable. Man cannot dispense with it so long as he is a member of a frame of reference in which different individuals through their behavioural interaction build an outside and objective socio-political structure. The political organisation of every nation assumes, overtly or covertly, an objective world-view upon which it bases its notions of rights and duties, crimes and punishment, etc. No society can eschew formulating these notions unless it is willing to expose itself to the danger of complete annihilation. It is, therefore, no surprise if Marxian philosophy, one of the greatest advocates of the "suspension of belief" view, has turned, when made the political theory of an actual government, so violent in the emphasis on ideological objectivity. Democracy too, although allowing individuals freedom in certain aspects of life, has subjected them to a worldview which may or may not be their own.

The point is that if relativism is true, then all individuals should be given equal opportunity to live their life according to their own whims and wishes. The utilitarian justification of objectivity on collective plane, of which Nietzsche and American pragmatists have been the advocates, is incredible since it never happens that a whole society or even a majority of its members consciously agree upon the usefulness of a particular ideology so as to make it the creed of the State.

It, however, needs be made clear here that Islam is not opposed to relativism as such. It may, in fact, be in perfect agreement with the latter in its contention that all human interpretations of reality contain an inevitable human element which mars their status as a fully objective and impersonal theory. Obviously man cannot eschew his prejudices and interests, nor can he comprehend reality in all its intricate multiple aspects. Relativism is, therefore, a genuine doctrine inasmuch as it emphasizes this fundamental fact. But where it goes wrong is its view that all truths are relative. Islam, on the other hand, holds that only human truths are relative. Islam itself having its source in a Being, Who is completely free from human limitations and handicaps, cannot be bracketed with human ideologies whose relativity is beyond doubt.

It seems that, whether it is relativism or nihilism, the source of all evils lies in man's scepticism towards the possibility of knowledge. With the ramshackle of foundations of science, as we have seen, man has lost all faith in knowledge. The critique of reason has deprived him even of the criteria upon which he used to test or attest the truth-claims of different theories. The faithlessness in knowledge leads him either to look with indifference towards all ideologies or to ascribe them only a partial and provisional validity.

If so, then the most fundamental task for an Islamist be comes to provide knowledge a new basis. It appears that it is only by reconstructing

knowledge that one can restore and rehabilitate man's confidence in the truth, in the objectivity of truth and 'finally in Islam itself.

It may be remarked that the question of reconstruction of knowledge is posed not for quite the first time in Islamic history. The very same problem was faced, almost exactly nine hundred years before, to great Imām Ghazālī with the difference that in the latter case the sceptic was in Ghazālī himself and the exponents of reason and science were Muslims, not, though indirectly of course, the people of alien culture. In his short philosophical autobiography *Al-Munqidh Min al-Ḍalālī*, Ghazālī has related in very lucid detail how he renounced the world and set himself for the pursuit of truth at a time when he was at the pinnacle of his worldly fame and success.

At the time he was an acknowledged theologian revered and respected by all. But he became disgusted with the controversialist, pedantry and sectarianism in which the theologians of his age were inextricably caught. He found authoritarian knowledge incredible and endeavoured to find out certitude in the realms of sense-experience and reason. He thoroughly examined these two sources of knowledge but found them too unsatisfactory. His critique of knowledge is remarkably the same to what today, nine hundred years after, philosophers make of it. Sense-experience, he concluded, is fallible and reason foundationless. A serious doubt crept into his heart which grew stronger in due course and, for about two months, as he himself says, "I was not, it is true, explicitly or implicitly by profession, but morally and essentially a thoroughgoing sceptic."<sup>45</sup> He then turned to mysticism. He wandered for a long time into deserts, engaged in prayers, fasting, meditations and other devout practices taught by sufis. At last the truth reached him, not, as he says, through "a concentration of proofs and arguments," but through "the light which God caused to penetrate into my hart—the light which illuminates the threshold of all knowledge."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Claud Field, Tr., *Confessions of Ghazali*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Ghazālī, as is evident from the above, based his reconstruction upon a sort of mystical intuitionism which, however, to be modest, can find very meagre support from the Qur'an. The Qur'ān's approach to knowledge, it seems, is through and through of what may be called "commonsense reasoning" in which some-thing is established through a simple inference. For example, the existence of God is established simply by pointing to the extra-ordinary order and arrangement in the cosmos, implied in which is the inference of an indivisible Creator from the visible phenomenal world. The new reconstructions, it seems, must be based upon this simple procedure of reasoning, not upon a mysterious intuitionism which is (at least) non-Qur'ānic, besides being in-comprehensible to common man.

Anyway, even if Ghazālī's approach is sound, it stands in need of reformulation. What Islam needs today is another Ghazālī who can dive deep into the abysses of Western as well as Islamic wisdom and construct a philosophy which could rehabilitate men's faith in knowledge—knowledge, historical, scientific, rational as well as religious.

# CHINESE ALCHEMY AND A FEW OF ITS TERMS AS USED BY IQBAL

S. Mahdihassan

It is well established that alchemy existed at Alexandria, in India, in China, but recent research shows that it started in China and went as far as Alexandria. In China, alchemy is divisible into two phases, an esoteric or a spiritual system of acquiring immortality, and an exoteric or materialistic one which became the earliest form of pharmaceutical chemistry. The aim of alchemy in both these phases has been immortality. This specifies Chinese alchemy. Alchemy was founded by ascetics. In ancient times struggle for life was most severe and every male member of the community had to partake in hunting and exert physically as an active worker. The aged, being infirm, could not justify himself as a bread-earner and was excommunicated as a solitary denizen of a forest. Living alone the ascetic had to be his own grocer, his own cook and his own doctor. He needed, in the first instance, an energiser to be able to over-exert himself and keep himself alive. The Aryan ascetic discovered the ephedra plant of which the juice is Soma. Whitney,<sup>47</sup> who was a famous Indologist, writes that "the Aryans perceived that Soma had power to elevate the spirits under the influence of which the individual was prompted to and capable of deeds beyond his natural powers ; then they found in it something divine."Pharmacology of ephedrine<sup>48</sup> shows that as a typical energiser, it is antisomnolent and also an euphoriant. There is a similar energiser, still in use, with its euphoriant properties to make it popular and it is Khat of Yemeni Arabs, or *Catha edulis*. While Soma became god Soma,

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in J. Garrett, *Classical Dictionary of India* (Madras, 1871), p. 592.

<sup>48</sup> S. Mandihassan, "Soma, in the Light of Comparative Pharmacology, Etymology and Archaeology," *Janus* (1974), 61 : 91.

the god of herbal-ism among the Aryans, Khat became the Flower of Paradise among the Muslims since they could not deify the plant.

The original drugs the Chinese ascetics used as energisers are unknown to me. But their god of immortality emerges from a Peach, while a corresponding deity, called the Red Pine Master, is depicted covered with leaves to substitute a coat as though he personifies verbalism. Such an illustration is reproduced in Needham's classic on Science and Civilization in China.<sup>49</sup> Then living on an energiser the aged ascetic could support himself single-handed. He felt as though youth had returned and this led him to imagine further that he could retain youth for ever. But behind all such dreaming was the actual feeling of well-being conferred by the energiser. Later on plants were substituted by minerals, above all arsenic and mercury, and in China both herbal magic and mineral magic were exploited by ascetics needing rejuvenation and dreaming of immortality. Realising what the solitary old ascetic needed most we can conceive with what objective he must have founded alchemy. To quote Nicholson,<sup>50</sup> "Let us begin at the end. What is the far-off goal on which his eyes are fixed? The answer to that question will discover the true character" of alchemy, with both its phases. The founder was physically weak, yet he had to over-exert. This clearly meant that his ideal would be the robust health of youth with no hesitation to discharge any work needing physical energy. At the same time his appearance should reveal no wrinkle on the face as indicative of infirmity of old age. Naturally, if he can regain youth he can retain it for ever, and knowing no debility, disease or death, he would be immortal to become the Ideal Man. A synonym of ideal Man would be True Man, since a man living for ever would be true to his life, whereas a mortal, with ephemeral existence, could be looked upon as not having lived at all. Now, there is in Chinese also the term, Chen-Jen, True Man, for one who has acquired immortality. In ancient civilization Real

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<sup>49</sup> J. Needham, *Science and Civilization In China* (1976), Vol. 5, Pt. 3, p. 10, fig. 1342, the Red Pine Master, p. 41, fig. 1349. Ascension of the alchemist. See also note 10.

<sup>50</sup> R.A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self* (Lahore, Ashraf, 4th ed., 1950), p. viii.

Citizen was the free man who was also adult; minors and slaves had no civil rights and were therefore no real citizens. Thus Real Man would be another synonym of True Man, one sociologically considered, the other biologically. Let us now turn to the denizen of Heaven as conceived in Islam as also in other religions. He must be perfect in all respects to be able to live as an immortal in heaven. Then True Man or Real Man spiritually considered becomes Perfect Man. The word “perfection” is often used in the literature on alchemy but always axiomatically and thus left vague. Perfection signifies a quality or stage of immunity to any change for the worse. Taking an example, copper, as metal, is imperfect, since it rusts and can ultimately disintegrate into dust. On the contrary, gold is perfect being rust, proof, even fire-proof. In fact, we do use terms like “golden words” of a sage when we understand that they deserve to be remembered for ever and by every man. We mean they are to be everlasting. In the light of the above discussion we can form the series of equivalent terms as: Ideal Man=True Man=Perfect Man=Golden Man. Of these synonyms in Chinese there are the terms Chen-Jen=True Man or Perfect Man, and Chin-Jen=Golden Man.

Then if we are to select one of these two terms, Golden Man appeals as the more impressive being akin to Golden Words. Now, the term “Golden Man” was translated into Greek as Chrusanthropos and is found in the literature which nevertheless has been totally ignored and, where recorded, its significance has been declared unknown, as by Waley.<sup>51</sup> Thus the goal of alchemy had been immortality and the mortal who had acquired immortality was designated Golden Man, in Chinese as also in Greek.

Now comes the question how he could acquire immortality. We shall first discuss the easier or the exoteric system of Chinese alchemy. Man conceived Life=Growth, and could easily differentiate between perennial

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<sup>51</sup> A. Waley, "Notes on Chinese Alchemy," *Bull. School Or. Stu.*, London, Vol. VI (1932), Chrusanthropion on p. 12 and Chrusanthropos on p. 13.



plants and minerals. He concluded that the life-essence, according to its quantity, increases the life-span.

Now, in Animism even plants and minerals carried soul or life-donating principle and this was common to all forms of existence, be it a herb or a mineral. In this light plants became stores of soul with herbal-juice as a life-prolonging agent. Moreover, some plants were so rich in Soul-content that their juice could donate perfect growth or maximum possible growth to its acceptor. If man consumed it, his life-span would go on increasing for ever and herbal magic all over the world has offered some such herb of immortality. There is, however, a weak point which has been overlooked. The human body, as the container of life-essence, has been ignored. Hence came the suggestion of taking a metal and calcining it with some magical herb. The herbal soul would reincarnate in a despited metal, on claiming both, and give rise to an Incarnation Body, a herbal soul in a metallic body, as a herbo-metallic complex. Since the herbal juice is a growth donor, the metal complex, containing it, could be induced to grow to perfection, which means it would become gold. Then the calcined metal would grow into gold. In the light of its impressive effect, the herbal juice, which was used, could be called gold-making juice. Then the juice-made gold, or synthetic gold, as metal, would make the human body as strong and everlasting as gold as a substance is, and further, being juice-incorporate, it would keep on increasing life-span just as the herbal soul does in a perennial plant. Accordingly, better than any plant and better than gold itself, synthetic gold, as herbo-auriferous complex, would be the ideal drug of immortality. Thus arose alchemy as an off-shoot of herbal ism and at once explains why metallic gold, already available, was not preferred. The drug of immortality had to be dual-natured thereby independently making the corporeal system of man strong and everlasting, as also the life-essence or soul ever-growing. Making synthetic gold was to prepare no metallic gold but a herbo-auroferic complex. Here the more important item was naturally the herb, or rather its juice, as the gold-making juice.

In Chinese there is the term Chin-I, dialectic Kim-lya, literally Gold-Juice, signifying Gold-making Juice. This was Arabicised as Kīmiyā' and was translated into Greek as Chrusozonion. Like the term Chrusanthropos nearly all histories of alchemy further ignore the term Chrusozomion. Waley<sup>52</sup> alone, who records it, does not do justice to herbalism as the precursor of alchemy. By now we can recognise gold-making juice as perfect juice and this be-cause it can make a base metal perfect gold, when ordinary gold itself is not perfect. This requires realising the difference between freshly prepared gold, saturated with growth force, and bullion gold, as fossil gold, buried thousands of years beneath the earth. When ordinary gold is mixed with mercury an amalgam is formed which, when heated, separates into the two substances. On the contrary, when alchemical gold is inoculated into mercury, the former donates its power of growth to mercury and this, in turn, begins to grow to perfection, thereby becoming gold. Such gold behaves like a ferment, making its substrate like itself, on account of which alchemist prefers to call his gold ferment gold. A Buddhist-Chinese text dated A.D. 659 as quoted by Waley<sup>53</sup> states that "a speck of gold not larger than a grain of corn was produced after twelve years. However, there is nothing now to prevent making a mountain of gold." This makes ferment gold = perfect gold. A ferment is a living substance and to realise this we have to compare two formulae, (1) Life=Growth, (2) Life=Growth, + Reproductively.

A plant grows by itself and has life, but a ferment reveals more than vegetative growth; it can induce something else also to grow and such power is reproductivity. We have learnt how an amalgam, with ferment gold, became all gold, and above all that ferment gold itself is seed of gold. We accordingly find that gold-making juice was mono-elemental, or only a herbal soul, prolonging life, but ferment gold was perfect gold, dual-natured, making

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<sup>52</sup> Idem, "References to Alchemy in Buddhist Literature," Bn. School Or. Stu., London, Vol. VI, p. 1102. Ibid.

the body young and strong, and life ever-increasing, like that of 'a perennial plant or like a ferment. Above all it can reproduce its kind. Now, the consumer of perfect gold would also imbibe perfection, which it could not primarily do from a herb, even though this could make gold. Perfect Man, we have already discussed, was the aim of alchemy. To be perfect he had to assimilate I ferment gold or perfect gold. Then if a juice could be called gold-making juice, the gold-made immortal man could be called golden man. Thus arose the more popular synonym of Perfect Man as Golden Man. Admitting what perfect gold signifies, its consumer becomes Perfect Man. There is an entity growing more and more as growth-incorporate. There is another which confers growth upon an acceptor who thereby reproduces its kind. Briefly, instead of a single hideous giant, with all growth, we have more than one entity; each deservant of being called Perfect Man. Perfect gold was ferment gold, no mountain of gold; Perfect Man is a benefactor, the maker of others equally perfect. If God created man, the Perfect Man creates another as Perfect Man. Iqbal uses this term and its synonyms precisely in this sense.

It has been maintained by many historians of alchemy that alchemy arose at Alexandria and the Greek word *Chemeia* for alchemy signifies "Egyptian Art". Hopkins<sup>54</sup> in his book, *Alchemy Child of Greek Philosophy*, has done more than justice to alchemy as "Egyptian Art". He imagines that by technique it is Egyptian and by theory Greek. Now, the one technique which alchemy can boast of having developed most is distillation and, as far as I know, Egyptology reveals no case where even perfumes represent distillates. This point is perhaps the weakest link in the chain of reasoning which takes alchemy to Egypt, be it to Alexandria. Further, the theories supporting alchemy have been animism, dualism and monism. All these are as much Chinese as Greek so that altogether there is neither any special Egyptian technique nor incorporation of any special Greek doctrine. In fact, the Greek word *Chemeia* is the Greek transliteration of the Arabic word,

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<sup>54</sup> H.G. Hopkins, *Alchemy Child of Greek Philosophy* (Columbia University Press, 1934).

Kīmiyā', undertaken by a Bucharic-speaking Copt, as explained in detail previously.<sup>55</sup> Finally there is a brief but positive ' method of showing the Chinese origin of Alexandrian alchemy. If the entire vocabulary of alchemy were to be reduced to just two terms, one would be the gold-making juice or Kīmiyā. This would prepare Perfect Gold. And Perfect Gold is the drug that changes a mortal into an immortal, one deserving of being called Perfect Man or Golden Man. Then the two terms would be Chin-I, gold-making juice, and Chin-Jen, Golden Man, or Chen-Jen, True Man or Perfect Man.<sup>56</sup> Both terms exist in Chinese and in Greek.

We now turn to the esoteric side of alchemy. These are breathing exercises and others similar to the Indian Yoga system. It has been explained that the Chinese look upon such a system as a branch of alchemy and this because the two are parallel paths leading to the same goal, or immortality. Now, the impact of Chinese dual-natured alchemy upon the Arabs, before Islam, produced a differential effect, the materialistic system was adopted first Later came esoteric alchemy.

We have now to discuss the terms equivalent to Perfect Man. Hussaini<sup>57</sup> has published a monograph on Ibn al-'Arabī whose sufism culminates in the conception of al-Insān al-Kāmil, the Perfect Man. Ibn al-'Arabī equates, Perfect Man— Prophet Muhammad. Unless this is explained we cannot understand what Perfect Man actually signifies in esoteric alchemy. Any agency that makes Perfect Gold, in the first instance, is a powerful donor of life-force, or soul-power and when matter receives impacts of a powerful soul it becomes soul-like. A man assimilating elixir, best as Perfect Gold, becomes sublime. Jildakī,<sup>58</sup> who is a renowned authority on Islamic alchemy, writes that elixir can confer the power of being able to fly about, as though

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<sup>55</sup> S. Mandihassan, "Alchemy in the Light of Its Names in Arabic, Sanskrit and Greek," *Janus* (1960, 49-79).

<sup>56</sup> A Waley, "Notes on Chinese Alchemy," *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> S.A.Q. Hussaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn al-Arabi* (Lahore, Ashraf, 1970).

<sup>58</sup> M. Taslimi, "An Examination of the Work, *The End of Search*, by al-Jildakī," London University Inaug. Diss., 1954

man had become an angel. What this sublimity, applied to the human body, means is best visualised by the case of Jesus. He can be looked upon as Sublimity-incorporate. After his resurrection he could keep company with travellers who had gone far ahead. Yet he could eat with his disciples and show the wounds on his body to convince them that his flesh was the same as before, but naturally now so sublime that he could finally ascend to heaven in broad daylight.

Schep<sup>59</sup> has best explained the nature of Resurrection Body which is not to be taken for a ghost or a gaseous residuum of the body of Jesus. Likewise Mi'rāj signifies ascension by the Holy Prophet, with his original body, which was sublime enough to ascend to heaven. Whereas Jesus left the world after ascension, the Prophet returned to earth. The moment we interpret Mi'rāj as ascension, Muhammad becomes Perfect Man, as Ibn al-'Arabī would have it. Now this conception of flesh becoming sublime enough to acquire the power of ascension existed in Chinese alchemy even before Jesus. In an article on Elixir,<sup>60</sup> I have reproduced before a scene depicted by the Chinese showing the ascension of an immortal. Needham<sup>61</sup> adds another equally revealing ascension. Enough has been discussed to constitute the series of equivalents as, Chin-Jen (Golden Man)=Chen-Jen (True Man)=Insān al-Kāmil =Perfect Man. Iqbal has two further equivalent terms in Persian, Mard-i Haqq (True Man)=Mard-i Mū'min (The Believing Man).

Considering esoteric alchemy a little deeper we find it was adopted as sufism of which the earliest phase existed previous to Islam, like alchemy proper. The original two phases went almost together because their aim was identical. Even sufis of repute, like Ibn al-'Arabī and Dhun-Nūn Mišrī, tried

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<sup>59</sup> J.A. Schep, *The Nature of Resurrection Body* (Erdemans Pub. Co., 1964, U.S.A.).

<sup>60</sup> S. Mandihassan, "Elixir, Its Significance and Origin," *J. As. Soc. Pak.*, Dacca, VI, 39.

<sup>61</sup> Needham, *op. cit.*

both, alchemy and Sufism, but found the latter as the surer method. We have then to establish the Chinese origin of the word *Kīmiyā'*. With regard: to the origin of sufism, Siddiqui<sup>62</sup> mentions that foreign authorities on Sufism "Dozy and Nicholson," among others, pronounce Sufism to be "purely non-Islamic" in origin. He, however, plead, to the contrary stating that "it is not necessary to go outside the Quran and Hadith to look for the frame of mind which produced the ascetic movement in Islam culminating in the birth of Sufism there are verses in the Quran (such as): Obey not him who, followeth his own lust and whose case has been abandoned (XVIII: 29)." If such passages incorporate "Sufism in the Qur'an" no wonder others have discovered enough to cover Science in the Quran in three volumes. However, one is called upon here to respect zeal but not erudition. In trying to show the origin of alchemy I focussed attention on its two indispensable terms, Gold-making juice and Golden Man or Perfect Man. A similar procedure will reduce discussion on the subject to its minimum. The origin of sufism, as a system of acquiring immortality, is being ignored in favour of terms specific to statism, being taken to their real origin. To begin with, there is the word *ṣūfī* itself. Here I cannot imagine a more authentic explanation than that of al-Qushayrī, mainly because Ibn Khaldūn<sup>63</sup> endorses it. We read that "No etymology or analogy can be found for this term [*ṣūfī*] in the Arabic language. Theories deriving the word Al-Safa', purity, or from As-Suffah, Bench, or from As-Saff, Row, are impossible from the point of view of linguistic analogy. The same applies to the derivation from Al-Suf, Wool, because the Sufis were not the only ones who wore wool (Qushyari: Kitabur Risalah)." The subs use a term *fanā' fil-shaikh*, implying that if you respect and love the teacher these lies the road to salvation identical is the position in Chinese Taoism where the candidate of immortality has to call out the name of his teacher to finally identify himself with him. The teacher was addressed as *Shih-Fu Shih* is character 9909 in Giles<sup>64</sup> and means "a Teacher, a Model,

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<sup>62</sup> M. Siddiqui, *Concept of Muslim Culture in Iqbal* (Islamabad, 1970), p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> F. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah of ibn Khaldun* (19'8), III, 76. quotes al-Qushayrī.

<sup>64</sup> H.A Giles, *Chinese-English Dictionary* (1892).

to be taken as a pattern,” a benefactor in the person of a teacher. Fu is character 3736 and means Father. Then Shih-Fu=Master-Father. The Hindus would call him Guru. Now, in Ningpo dialect Shih-Fu becomes Sz-fu which was Arabside as Tṣuf or ṣūf. The term of endearment is the suffix “I,” in Arabic. Brother would be Akhu, but My Brother = Akhui.

Accordingly, My= Tsuf would be Tsuf-i=Sufi= My Guru. This etymology has been discussed in more details before.<sup>65</sup>

Next comes the word Dervish. Its Chinese original connotes “a scholar who lives in retirement,” devoted to contemplation rather than to teaching and guiding, like the Gant or Sufi. Then the actual Chinese term would be Tao-Lu-Yin-Shih. Tao is character 10780 and means righteous Path, or madhhab in Arabic. Lu is 7365, a synonym of Tan, and thus duplicates the sense. Yin, 13276, is translated as “retired, to keep out of sight (of public)”. Shih, another word here, as character 9992, means a scholar. Then the four words mean, Tao (Religion)—Lu (Religion)—Yin (Retired)—Shih (Scholar), and signify, “religious scholar living in retirement”. In Szechwan dialect these words would sound as follows: Tau-Lu-Yin-Shi. On becoming a loan-term the words underwent mutation and abbreviation yielding: Dau-Ru-Yi-Shi, which can be condensed into Darvīshī. Here the suffix “i,” meaning “one,” in Persian, being dropped finally produced the word, Darvish, also explained before.<sup>66</sup>

Thirdly comes the word Qalandar. The Chinese alchemist, Ko-Hung,<sup>67</sup> wrote that “among those who acquired (the right Path), Tao (madhhab), the mediocre among them will (not go to Heaven) but congregate on the Khun-Lun mountain,” the most elevated spot on earth itself. Thus Khun-Lun could be conceived as “Magicians' Mountain” where they can obtain herbs of

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<sup>65</sup> . S. Mandihassan, "The Chinese Origin of the Words, Kimiya, Sufi, Dervish and Qalandar in the Light of Mysticism," J, Univ. Bombay (1956), 25 (2) : 124.

<sup>66</sup> ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Lu-Chhiang Wu, "Ko Flung on the Gold Medicine," Am. Aca. Arts and Sc/. (1935), 70 : 248, Para 38.

immortality and remain as immortals. They would obviously occupy a lower status, than other spiritual elites. To the term Khun-Lun we have to add another as Tao-Erh. Tao is righteous Path, or madhhab as before, and Erb, as such, is given with character Erh, on p. 1068, as “Your reverence, the Taoist-Priest”. Then Khun-Lun (Magicians' Mountain) Tao Erh (Your Reverence) would signify, “a priest-like individual launching him-self on a magic-mountain”. Now Khun-Lua-Tao-Erh in the Szechwan dialect would be pronounced Khun-Lwen-Tau-Eris. Persians preferring Qāf and abbreviating the long term made h Qa-Lan-D-Er or Qalandar. In contrast to Dervish, a recluse who prefers to live unnoticed in an “ascetic's corner,” the Qalandar is a wandering ascetic, a vagabond among the ascetics. And Qalandar correspondingly in sufi literature always ranks lower than a Dervish. Usually, Qalandar is not a complementary term, whereas Dervish always is. Thus all the three important words Sufi, Dervish and Qalandar used by Iqbal are traceable to Chinese. Sufism is the Chinese system of acquiring salvation where reverence to the preceptor is the cardinal doctrine. Sufism in Islam rightly began when Ibn al-'Arabi equated, Muhammad =Perfect Man=Preceptor.



# IQBAL ON DEMOCRACY

Mohammed Maruf

Iqbal was basically a democrat. He was not only a theoretical politician, but he also practically participated in the politics of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. In 1926, he stood for election and was chosen to the Punjab Legislative Council. As Dr L.S. May writes, Iqbal was “an active member of this Council, speaking often on land revenue and taxation, demanding greater justice in land assessment and even land revenue deductions in hardship cases.”<sup>68</sup> In his speech of 10 March 1927, he pleaded the case for compulsory primary education,<sup>69</sup> and in his speech of 5 May 1927 on the 1927-28 Budget he advocated for better sanitation conditions in villages as well as for medical aid to India’s women?<sup>70</sup> He started his political career as a member of the National Liberal League but later on joined the A11-India Muslim League. When the Muslim League was split in 1928, Iqbal became Secretary of the Shafi’ branch, from which position he later resigned. Iqbal was actively involved in the political broiling of the sub-continent and, in many important respects, he rather moulded the destiny of Muslim India which was later to become Pakistan. Thus, Iqbal lived a full political life as a democrat. In Bāl-i Jibrīl, he ushers in the democratic era in these strong words:

سلطانی جمہور کا آتا ہے زمانہ  
جو نقش کہن تم کو نظر آئے مٹا دو<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Dr L.S. May, Iqbal: His Life and Times, p. 169.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> P. 110.

and links it, somehow, with the destiny of the teeming millions of India. He is opposed to all forms of feudal lordism, kingship, despotism, etc., and pleads that the people should be the captains of their own destinies.

To Iqbal, the form of government is a very important determining factor of human destiny and life. He disagrees with Alexander Pope who held: "Let fools fight for the forms of government," and says, "To my mind government, whatever its form, is one of the determining forces of a people's character. Loss of political power is equally ruinous to a nation's character."<sup>72</sup> History bears out his opinion because we find that people under dictatorial or despotic rules are generally submissive and meekish. Again, one of the reasons for the moral deprivation of Muslims was their loss of power in the subcontinent. Iqbal endorses the democratic system on the ground that it gives the individual a maximum of freedom and a fair play to his potentialities and capabilities. Democratic rule has its impact on scientific thought also. As Iqbal says: "The growing spirit of individualism in politics is not without its influence on contemporary scientific thought. Modern thought regards the universe a democracy of living atoms."<sup>73</sup> Thus, the government determines the character as well as the thought of a people; it has its inroad into the philosophical and scientific ideas of a nation. He goes on to add that a democratic system exerts a healthier influence on the thinking and conduct of a people. But "what is democracy to Iqbal?

Democracy is primarily a science or a methodology rather than an ideology or a philosophy, and this is how Iqbal seems to treat of it. It is a way to ensure and confirm a certain ideology through common suffrage. Iqbal subjects democracy as a methodology to searching criticism. To start with, it is a methodology and should be treated as such but as used in the West, this methodology is quantitative. Iqbal expresses this fact in the following verse:

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<sup>72</sup> 5. Dr. Javid Iqbal, Ed., [Iqbal's] Stray Reflections, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid , p. 41

جمہوریت اک طرز حکومت ہے  
کہ جس میں  
بندوں کو گنا کرتے ہیں تو لا نہیں  
کرتے<sup>74</sup>

In this method no discrimination is made on the basis of education, talent, mental calibre, and individual potentialities it fails to differentiate between a Fidel and an infidel, a Muslim and a non-believer; that is why Iqbal compares it to an unsheathed sword. He says in Gulshan-i Rāz Jadīd.

زمن ده اہل مغرب را پیامی  
کہ جمہور است تیغ بے نیامی  
چہ شمشیری کہ جاں ہامی ستاند  
تمیز مسلم و کافر نداند  
نہ ماند در غلاف خود زمانی  
بردد جان خود و جان جہانی<sup>75</sup>

It overlooks the important individual differences which modern psychology accentuates. A quantitative democratic system is prone to ignore these very important differences. The basic principle of this democracy is the utilitarian rule of justice: “Everyone to count for one, and nobody for more than one”<sup>76</sup> —the absolute principle of justice which is hardly just. Iqbal refers to the same quantitative approach to democracy when he says:

گریز از طور جمہوری غلام

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<sup>74</sup> Darb-i Kalīm, p, 150.

<sup>75</sup> 8. Pp. 167-68.

<sup>76</sup> The utilitarian principle of Justice or Equity as enunciated by H, Sidgwick.

پختہ کاری شو  
کہ از مغز دو صد خر فکر انسانی  
نمی آید<sup>77</sup>

Here Iqbal beautifully brings home the implicit fallacy of composition ingrained in the qualitative approach and urges that thinking of two hundred asses will not make one human brain. It was this argument which disillusioned Iqbal with the Western concept of democracy.

Again, democracy being a methodology, it will endorse any ideology which gets a common suffrage, irrespective of its moral import or its worth as an ideology. It is a method, as said before, and can be used to introduce or perpetuate any ideology for which is being used. This method is responsible for a motley variety of governments in the world, right from kingship and dictatorship to people's government; it perpetuates capitalism with as much force and justification in one country as socialism in another. Where it is fostering kingship in Britain and a presidential form of government in the U S A., it is endorsing dictatorship, the Russians claim. The capitalists, who have their leadership in America today have the pretensions that only capitalism is democratic because it does not interfere with individual rights; the socialists, divided into two blocs, assert that socialism and democracy are indivisible.<sup>78</sup> In the name of democracy, history tells us, thousands of atrocities have been committed in the world. In the hands of infidels, this method perpetuates infidelity, and has failed to mitigate the miseries and black spots of the world. In Bāl-i Jibrīl, Iqbal reports the Satan as saying:

جمہور کے ابلیس ہیں ارباب سیاست  
باقی نہیں اب میری ضرورت تہ افلاک!<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Payām-i Mashriq, p, 135.

<sup>78</sup> Article by N. Podgorny, "Socialism : Theory and Practice," June 1977

<sup>79</sup> P. 162.

Again, Iqbal condemns democracy which is divorced from religion or belief. The European democracy is pestered with this ill. Iqbal says:

مری نگاہ میں ہے یہ سیاست لادیں  
کنیز اہرمن و دوں نہاد و مردہ ضمیر  
ہوئی ہے ترک کلیسا سے حاکمی آزاد  
فرنگیوں کی سیاست ہے دیو بے زنجیر<sup>80</sup>

The European democracy is not only irreligious and faithless. it is also wrought by the capitalists for their own sinister designs. He says:

تری حریف ہے یا رب سیاست افرنگ  
مگر ہیں اس کے پجاری فقط امیر و رئیس!<sup>81</sup>

As said before, democracy can be equally efficaciously used to ensure supremacy of a ruling class or a community. In one of the verses Iqbal reports Satan saying:

ہم نے خود شاہی کو پہنایا ہے جمہوری لباس  
جب ذرا آدم ہوا ہے خود شناس و خود نگر<sup>82</sup>

Thus, democracy is also used to camouflage the same old king-ship and despotism. It is subservient to the perpetuation of same old system by sugar-coating it, and democracy provides the requisite sugar-coating. When Iqbal was disillusioned at this outer garb of democracy, he was forced to reject it in so far as it retained the racial and status preferences. He says:

<sup>80</sup> Darb-i Kalim, pp. 152-53.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 142.

<sup>82</sup> 15. Armaghān-i Hijāz (Urdu), p. 7.

شریک خریدتے      حکم ہیں      غلاموں      فقط      ان      کا      کر      نہیں      سکتے  
ادراک!<sup>83</sup>      جوہر

It is sometimes not good for a community to have a democratic approach. It may be very useful to a majority, but it will always keep a minority suppressed and wretched. This is also another use of democracy. It was in view of such a situation in the subcontinent that in 1886 Sayyid Ahmad Khan urged that “if the democratic principle was introduced in India, the Muslims would find themselves completely at the mercy of the Hindu majority.”<sup>84</sup> Democracy is not advisable if it is manipulated to suppress a minority, because it is, in itself, the handmaid of majority, irrespective of their views and the moral value of those views. If the case between the early Muslims and the non-believers of Mecca were decided by a common suffrage rather than in the battlefield of Badr, Islam would have been buried there and then. Iqbal very rightly says that democracy, being a methodology, is in itself neither good nor bad; it is the use to which we put it that decides its value, and which is again relative. He says:

خیر ہے      سلطانے      جمہور      کا      غوغا      کہ      شر؟  
تو جہاں      کے      تازہ      فتنوں      سے      نہیں      ہے      باخبر!<sup>85</sup>

It is not the rule of democracy, but the wicked designs of the present world which are pertinent, because democracy in itself is amoral like any other method. It is a sword, as Iqbal said, which knows cutting only, and not whom it cuts—a fidel or an infidel, a socialist or a capitalist, the bourgeois or the proletarian. But its forms in vogue, as we find in the West, are very malicious and devised to serve some sinister designs of the Western world. Again, talking of the ills of democracy in the West, Iqbal writes: 'Democracy

<sup>83</sup> Darb-i Kalim p. 139.

<sup>84</sup> Dr L.S. May, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>85</sup> Armaghān-i Hljāz (Urdu), p. 7.

has a tendency to foster the spirit of legality. This is not in itself bad; but unfortunately it tends to displace the purely moral standpoint and to make the illegal and the wrong identical in meaning.”<sup>86</sup> This tendency we have witnessed in the West, which has become more and more legal-minded, but has left the moral standpoint far behind. Democracy is among those potent reasons which have been responsible for the gradual consignment of morality to the grave. Keeping in view all these ills of the Western democracy, Iqbal epitomizes his polemic thus:

تو نے کیا دیکھا نہیں مغرب کا  
 جمہوری نظام؟  
 چہرہ روشن، اندروں چنگیز سے  
 تاریک ترا!<sup>87</sup>

Iqbal analyses his discussion on Western democracy in the following words: “The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich.”<sup>88</sup> He points out that the uses of imperial ambitions in Europe indicate that the Westerners are tired of democracy. This reaction against democracy in England and France has not only purely historical causes, but also deeper psychological causes.<sup>89</sup>

But where to get democracy free from all these ills? What is the proper use of this methodology? To Iqbal, unless man has right notion of life and is imbued with love and fraternity, democracy cannot be but oppressive and demonic. Democracy, free of all these ills, is possible only in a society which knows no apartheid, no racial or caste discrimination, no feudal relation-ship

<sup>86</sup> 19. Javid Iqbal, Ed., op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>87</sup> Armaghān-i Hijāz (Urdu), p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> The Reconstruction, p. 179.

<sup>89</sup> Pp. 121-22.

between master and slave, no hatred of one against the other. Only Islam has envisaged such a polity in which Maḥmūd (signifying the master) and Ayāz (signifying the slave) stand in the same ranks. Dr K.A. Hakim delineates Iqbal's notion of democracy thus:

“Islam imbibes constituents of the best possible democracy and, according to Iqbal, they need to be embedded in specific institutions. It was Islam that gave the lesson of equality of rights and practised it, included the concept of a republic among its basic teachings, taught that government should be run by a Council or *mushāwarat*. An ordinary subject could summon the *Amīr al-Mū'minīn* to the court as a respondent. Islam declared the freedom of conscience; gave the concept of a welfare state, the duty whereof was not only to run administration, but also to provide for the basic needs of the people; dispelled the colour and race differences. Everybody was at liberty to choose his own avocation and way of life. Islam played the pioneer in teaching that wealth should not concentrate in a few hands.”<sup>90</sup>

Islam at the moment is beset by narrow-mindedness and obscurantism, but “if it is freed from this narrow-minded and obscurant approach of the *mullā*, if the Muslims take to developing their spiritual potentialities rather than paying heed to the superficial form, they can offer the world such a kind of democracy that the political systems of England and America will feel shy and small.”<sup>91</sup>

This system will not be a quantitative approach, like counting of heads; it will be a qualitative assessment of the participants and the principle of equity ensuing upon it shall be: “Everyone according to his deserts, rather works”—in short, *Musāwāt-i Muḥammadī*.

As against the Western democracy, which I have described as quantitative in approach, the Islamic democracy delineated in the above

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<sup>90</sup> Dr. K.A. Hakim, *Fikr-i Iqbāl*, pp. 287-88.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, op. 288-89.



paragraph, I describe as “spiritual democracy” with a qualitative approach. This is possible only in a society consisting of developed egos, practicing Islamic or “Muhammedan” equality. Such a society Iqbal calls the Kingdom of God on earth.

In a letter to R.A. Nicholson he briefly, but clearly, describes what he means by the Kingdom of God. He writes:

“The Kingdom of God on earth means the democracy of more or less unique individuals, presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth.”<sup>92</sup>

Thus, “Kingdom of God” and “spiritual” democracy mean the selfsame thing, according to Iqbal. The establishment of such a democracy necessitates enforcement of the Islamic Law, which is useful only after the Ijtihād or necessary reorientation of that Law to the demands and requirements of the time has been affected. What is worth noting, Iqbal believes that Ijtihād or reorientation in law can well be affected through democratic process. In the words of Iqbal:

“The republican form of government is not only thoroughly consistent with the spirit of Islam, but has also become a necessity in view of the new forces that are set free in the world of Islam.”<sup>93</sup>

Iqbal, in agreement with Turkey, believes that “the Caliphate or Imamate can be vested in a body of persons, or an elected Assembly.”<sup>94</sup>

In his discussion of Ijmā‘, as a source of Ijtihād, Iqbal re-commends that, in view of the present needs, the power of Ijtihād can best be vested in a Muslim legislative assembly rather than in a single representative individual. He says:

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<sup>92</sup> 25. A.J. Arberry (Eng-tr.), *Iqbal Namah*, Intro., p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> *The Reconstruction*, p. 157.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

“The transfer of the power of Ijtihād from individual representative of schools to a Muslim legislative assembly which, in view of the growth of opposing sects, is the only possible form Ijma can take in modern times, will secure contributions to legal discussion from laymen who happen to possess a keen insight into affairs. In this way alone we can stir into activity the dormant spirit of life in our legal system, and give it an evolutionary outlook.”<sup>95</sup>

He, however, suggests that “The Ulema should form a vital part of Muslim legislative assembly helping and guiding free discussion on questions relating to law.”<sup>96</sup>

Iqbal concludes his chapter on “The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam” (Ijtihād) in the following suggestion:

“Let the Muslim of to-day appreciate his position reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.”<sup>97</sup>

The spiritual democracy, unlike European democracies, did not emerge from any economic considerations. In 1916, Iqbal said:

“The Democracy of Islam did not grow out of the extension of economic opportunity; it is a spiritual principle based on the assumption that every human being is a centre of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character.”<sup>98</sup>

Had it grown out of the extension of economic opportunities, it would have been no less quantitative in its approach than the European democracy.

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<sup>95</sup> 28. Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>98</sup> Dr. R.A. Nicholson, *Secrets of the Self*, Intro., p. xxix, n.32. Quoted in Dr. Bilgrami, *Glimpses of Iqbal's Mind and Thought*, p. 94.

The very basis for such a type of democracy was laid down by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in his famous address of the Dhil-Ḥijjah (7 March 632). He said:

“The aristocracy of old time is trampled under my feet. The Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab. And a non-Arab has no superiority over the Arab. All are children of Adam, and Adam was made of the dust of the earth.”<sup>99</sup>

The fundamental basis of Islamic democracy is Tawḥīd. As Iqbal expresses:

“Islam, as a polity, is only a practical means of making this principle [of Tawḥīd] a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind. It demands loyalty to God, and not to thrones.”<sup>100</sup>

Again, Iqbal’s concept of democracy, as rightly said by Dr. H. H.

Bilgrami, is not limited to any particular geographical, racial or linguistic boundaries. Iqbal urges, while talking of Islam:

“As an emotional system of unification it recognizes the worth of the individual as such, and rejects blood-relationship as a basis of human unity.”

And this stress on the worth of individual is the very basis of democracy.

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<sup>99</sup> The Reconstruction, p. 147.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

# Book Review

**A.R. Tariq, Secrets of Ego. Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1977. Printed on good paper, full cloth bound. Demy 8vo., pp. 227. Price Rs: 45.00**

The book purports to be a “descriptive and comprehensive Translation of Allama Iqbal's 'Asrār-i-Khudi' “. The use of the word “descriptive” in this context and the omission of the definite article from before “Ego” in the book's title struck the Reviewer as somewhat odd. But the blurb on the cover-flap claims: “And here is the most emphatic and enlightening English translation of his [Iqbal's] unique work.” It further tells us that “The Translator has been studying Iqbal's Persian and Urdu works for the last thirty years, and he has dived deep into his Philosophy.” These declarations raised high the Reviewer's expectations when he started reading the book.

The translation is preceded by a Preface covering no less than 36 pages. Apparently the Translator is quite uninhibited in the use of hyperbole. He talks of the original text as dealing with “all the possible Aspects of 'Ego' in a philosophical and convincing style.” He adds: “In its language and expression, it is most musical and emphatic! In its meaning, it is highly educative, constructive and inspiring! In its literary beauties, it is Unique! As a matter of fact, there is a Divinity reflecting itself in all the verses of this book, without a single exception” (p. 9). This some-what bewildering spate of words is interlarded with interjections and italics. At pp. 10-11 of the Preface, one comes across the sentence: “He [Iqbal] devoted his entire life to the preachment of this innate and divine feeling in man.” The Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary gives the meaning of “preachment” as “a sermon in contempt; a discourse affectedly solemn”. The Reviewer feels sure that the Translator did not intend to attribute such an artificial stance to Iqbal. The choice of the word is injudicious. At pp. 11 and 13 again, one encounters captions such as “‘Ego' as proved by Holy Quran,” “‘Ego' as

proved by the Holy Prophet” and “Ego' as proved by Great Saints and Mystics”. Under the first caption occur the words: “How many and how great honours, distinctions and favours, Man has from Allah? —The Holy Quran represents them and explains them from the very beginning to the end!” The use of the words “proved” and “represents them” are likely to raise literary eyebrows. By the time the Reviewer had waded through half the reface, his mind began to be assailed by doubts about the linguistic equipment of the Translator, for the arduous task he had undertaken with such over-weening self-confidence.

Other unusual expressions came to light as the Reviewer proceeded further. At p.15, while discussing factors that strengthen the ego, the Translator mentions, inter alia, “A good 'Ideal”. The redundancy of the adjective here is obvious. At p. 16, Nietzsche's Superman is described as the “Beyond Man”. At p. 18, he says about a Perfect Man: “He is not a narrow-minded or prejudicial person at all, but is very generous and broad-minded by nature, to serve every human being, regardless of colour, creed and nationality.” Apart from the involved construction of the sentence, the word “prejudicial” has been wrongly used for “prejudiced”. In a footnote at p. 19, the Translator talks of “Space' however long it is!” Here “long” seems to be doing service for “extensive”.

Quotations from Western authors, which in the Translator's estimation are akin to Iqbal's views on the ego, cover pp. 20-26 of the Preface. The relevancy of most of them is open to grave question. The quotations are also marred by numerous misprints. The word “has been translated at p. 31 inaptly as “outer space”. It should have been “non-space”. The Translator's thirty years 'study of Iqbal his apparently failed to reveal to him the fact that “God's Trust” offered to Man (The Qur'ān, xxxiii. 72), is, according to Iqbal, the trust of a free personality and not Law, as he has specified at p. 12, probably in conformity with orthodox opinion.

Professor Nicholson's translation of the .Asrār-i Khudī, despite a few mistakes here and there, has held the field so far as a standard to be emulated. A fresh translation could be justified only if it at least equals if it does not supersede it. The Reviewer has discovered such identities or near identities between the present translation and Professor Nicholson's as would raise a strong suspicion that the present work may not be the product of a wholly original intellectual exercise. There is no word of acknowledgment of this indebtedness. The Translator has indeed tried to introduce some variations from Nicholson's version, to gain credibility for his work as an independent venture. Nicholson's translation is line by line, but Mr. Tariq has split up the two lines of a verse so as to form a stanza of three or four lines. He has either altered or omitted a word here or added a word there or in some instances changed the order of words and gratuitously introduced capital letters, italics and interjection marks to give his creation a fresh look. But these stratagems are too transparent for the camouflage to be effective. Where the Translator has departed from Professor Nicholson's rendering, the result has been more often than not disappointing. Given below are some instances of close correspondence between the two translations (T. indicates Tariq's translation and N. stands for Nicholson's).

Prologue:

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(1) When the world-illuming Sun Attacked the Night like a Bandit,

My Tears bedewed the cheek of Rose!

(2) My Tears washed away Sleep From the Eye of the Narcissus! My cries wakened the Grass And made it Grow!

(7) My Thought has hunted the Deer,

And slung it from my Saddle, Which has not yet leaped forth

N.

When the world-illuming Sun rushed upon Night like a brigand,

My weeping bedewed the face of the rose.

My tears washed away sleep from the eye of the narcissus,

My passion wakened the grass and nude it grow.

My thought hunted down and slung from the saddle a deer

That has not yet leaped

T.

From the wilderness of Non-existence!

(29) Unless the Bud expands Into a bed of Roses,

It is unworthy of the Bounty Of my vernal Cloud!

(34) None has ever told the Secret Which I will tell!

None has ever threaded

The Pearls of Wisdom,

As I do!

(39) Such a liquor makes Thought More sober and wise!

It makes a keen Eye, Keener !

(43) Arise, and pour pure wine Into my Cup!

Pour moon-beams into the dark night

Of my Thought;--

(56) I was complaining

Of the Sorrows of the World, And was bewailing

The emptiness of my Cup !

(86) That a Drop may become Co-equal with the Sea, And the grain of Sand, Grow into a Desert !

Chapter I

(7) Its self-deceptions are The essence of life I

Like the Rose it lives

By bathing itself in Blood! (9) It produces a hundred new

N.

from the covert of non-existence.

Unless the bud expand

into a bed of roses, It is unworthy of my

spring-cloud's bounty. No one hath told the secret which I will tell Or threaded a pearl of thought like mine.

It makes thought more sober and wise,

It makes the keen eye keener.

Arise and pour pure wine into my cup,

Pour moonbeams into the dark night of my thought.



I was complaining of the sorrows of the world, And bewailing the emptiness of my cup. That the drop may

become co-equal with

the sea

And the grain of sand grow into a Sahara.

Its self-deceptions are the essence of life;

Like the rose, it lives by bathing itself in blood. For one sky it produces

T.

Moons

For one Sky,

And for only one word,

A hundred Discourses!

(12) It is the fate of Moths

To be consumed by a Flame, For their suffering is justified By the Candle!

Chapter IV

(5) Like Omar, come down

From your Camell!

Beware of incurring obligations, Beware !

(10) Oh ! Do not scatter

The handful of your Dust ! Like the Moon, scrape food From your own Side!

(13) Lest you be put to Shame Before the Holy Prophet, On the Day, when every Soul Shall be Stricken with Fear!

(14) The Moon gets her Substance From the Table of the Sun, Therefore she bears the brand Of his bounty on her heart !

## Chapter VI

(4) The Tigers sprang forth From the Jungle

And rushed upon the sheep-fold.

N.

A hundred new moons, And for one word a hundred discourses.

"Tis the fate of moths to consume in flame:

The suffering of moths is justified by the candle.

Like Omar, come down from thy camel!

Beware of incurring obligations, beware

Do not scatter thy handful of dust,

Like the moon. scrape food from thine own side !

Lest thou be put to

shame before the Prophet

On the Day when every soul shall be stricken with fear.

The moon gets sustenance from the table of the sun

And bears the brand of his  
bounty on her heart.

The tigers sprang forth from the jungle

And rushed upon the sheepfold.

N.

Those fierce tigers beat the drum of sovereignty,

They deprived the sheep of freedom.

In slavery, for the sake

of repelling harm,  
The power of scheming  
becomes quickened.

The tiger-tribe was exhausted by hard struggles,

They had set their hearts on enjoyment of luxury.

His nature drowsed and cleated a dream,

His mind's eye created a mirage.

His phantasy is sunk in the jar of heaven:

I know not whether it is

the dregs or the brick

of the wine-jar.

Life is the hunter and desire the snare.

Desire is Love's message to Beauty.

He is a Khizr, and amidst his darkness is the Fountain of Life:

All things that exist are

T.

(6) Those fierce Tigers

Beat the drum of Sovereignty, And they deprived the Sheep Of their  
Freedom!

(12) In Slavery the power of Scheming

Becomes quickened

For the sake of

Repelling Harm !

(36) Since the Tiger-tribe [sic.] was already

Exhausted by hard struggle, And they had set their hearts On the  
enjoyment of Luxury;---

Chapter VII

(10) His nature drowsed And creared a Dream ! His mind's eye

Produced a Mirage!

(20) His doctrine is sunk

In the of Jar of Heaven ;

I don't know whether it is the

Dregs,

Or the Brick of the wine-jar !

### Chapter VIII

(4) Life is a powerful Hunter, And Desire is its Snare! Desire is Love's message To Beauty.

(16) He is a Khizr, and amidst his darkness

Is the "Fountain of Life" ! All things that exist in the

T.

Universe

Are made more Living by his Tears!

### Chapter IX

(12) The Grass springs up

In obedience to the law of growth,

But when it abandons [sic.] that It is trodden underfoot!

### Chapter X

(10) The dark clay,

Whose name is the "Body",—Our Reason always bemoans Its iniquity !

(17) Whosoever saddles tightly The Steed of his Body,

Sits like a Gem

On the Seal of Sovereignty !

Chapter XI

(7) I will tell you a Story

Of his Spiritual perfection, And enclose a whole Rose-bed In a single Bud !

Chapter XII

(I) A Bird was restless with thirst: The breath in his body was heaving

Like waves of Smoke !

(11) There, upon a Rose-twing [sic.]

N.

made more living by his tears.

The grass springs up in obedience to the law of growth:

When it abandons that, it is trodden underfoot.

The dark clay, whose name is the body—Our reason is ever bemoaning its iniquity.

Whosoever saddles tightly the steed of the body

Sits like the bezel on the seal of sovereignty.

I will tell a story of his perfection

And enclose a whole rose-bed in a single bud.

A bird was faint with thirst,

The breath in his body was heaving like waves of smoke.

Upon a rose-twig, a

T.

A drop of Dew gleamed

Like a tear in Nightingale's eye!

Chapter XIII

(9) It is a condensed

Wavelet of Smoke,

Endowed with a single Spark, \*Sprung from the Furnace !

N.

drop of dew

Gleamed like the tear in a nightingale's eye:

It is a condensed wavelet of smoke,

Endowed with a single spark.

\*This last line is a gratuitous addition on the original. Chapter XIV

(4) Sun and Moon were cast Like rue, on the Flame Of his Thought!

(10) The Brahmin laid the Seal Of Silence on his lips, And lent his ear

To the Sage's discourse:

Chapter XV

(32) Both, the royal Troops, And those of the Enemy, Are cloven in twain,

By the Sword of his Hunger!

## Chapter XVI

(6) Since I am well-acquainted With the harmony of Life, I'll tell you what is the Secret Of Life !

(31) The Sheikh answered: “O unbelieving Muslim!

Sun and moon were cast like rue, on the flame of his thought.

The Brahmin laid the sea of silence on his lips,

And lent his ear to the Sage's discourse.

Both the royal troops and those of the enemy

Are cloven in twain by the sword of his hunger.

Since I am acquainted with the harmony of Life,

I will tell thee what is the secret of Life

The Sheikh answered, “O unbelieving

T.

This is Vision and Ecstasy !—What have you to do with it ?

## Chapter XVII

(4) Its owner is exalted

Above “Hope” and “Fear”, And his hand is whiter



Than the Hand of Moses !

## Chapter X VIII

(1) O You ! Who is like Soul

In the body of the Universe, You are our Soul, and yet you are  
Ever fleeing from Us!

N,

Moslem,

This is vision and ecstasy: what have you to do with it?"

Its owner is exalted above hope and fear,

His hand is whiter than the hand of Moses!

O thou that art as the soul in the body of the universe,

Thou art our soul and thou art ever fleeing from us.

These are instances picked up at random from various parts of the book. They could be easily multiplied, but I refrain from adding to them for fear of overburdening this note. The discerning reader may draw his own inference from these tell-tale similarities. It would stretch the long arm of coincidence to breaking point if it is suggested that Mr Tariq shared with the late Professor Nicholson not only a common stock of English words but also his turn of phrase and style of expression.

Where Mr Tariq has departed from Professor Nicholson's version, the result is more often than not an unhappy reading. Here are some examples:

Prologue

(26) My Tune is more powerful

Than the capacity of the String

Of my Lute, yet I don't fear

If my Lute is broken!

(47) And set a high Price My song exceeds the range of the chord, Yet I do not fear that my lute will break. And sprinkle the dry

T.

\*At the Pearls of Tears;

N. herbs with my tears.

\*This is a translation of “r'5 yE; P ..r.I” which could be rendered as “And add my tears to my merchandise (or goods).”

(60) Strike the Tumult of Doomsday Upon your Liver !

Strike the chords of thine heart and rouse a tumultuous strain.

Mr Tariq has resorted to a too literal translation.

(80) I brought out the Almanac\* Of Human Life,

From the Laboratory of Phenomena!

And extract the secret of

Life's constitution From the laboratory of

phenomena.

\*The word in the original is “” which also means an almanac but here that equivalent would be clearly inappropriate.

## Chapter I 1

(3) For “Self-affirmation” brings forth

The negative Self to Light !

“Negative-self” is an odd phrase to use for “ ” which occurs in the original.

(6) It carries and moves heavy weights

With the strength of its own Arm,'

That it may become conscious Of its own strength!

Mr Tariq has misread “Le” in the original text wrongly as “—”.

In the poem on Plato, Mr Tariq has translated the word “c.)4l” as “fantastic things,” whereas the 'Allāmah was clearly refer-ring to Plato's well-known theory of Ideas. Professor Nicholson

Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.

It is slaying by the

strength of its arm That it may become

conscious of its own

strength.

had used “Ideas” as the equivalent of this word very appropriately.

In the headings of Chapters, the phrase << ,, repeatedly occurs. Mr Tariq translates it to “in the meaning of” instead of “showing” or “to the effect” as adopted by Professor Nicholson.

To be fair to Mr Tariq, I did land on one instance in which his difference from Professor Nicholson was eminently justified. The original verse (Asrār, p. 14) is:

“as I; L Unaccountably Professor Nicholson renders it as ;

“Power that is expressed and inert

Chains the faculties which lead to action.”

Mr Tariq has given a near accurate translation:

“It is a mute Power,

And is always restless for Action! And by “Action” it is bound To the means of Action”!

But this, like the proverbial solitary swallow, fails to betoken an intellectual summer. For a book of the character and antecedents outlined above, the price of the Publication is definitely on the high side.