

# IQBAL'S ANALYSIS OF MUSLIM CULTURE — A CRITICAL STUDY

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Iqbal's analysis of Muslim culture is primarily based on the method of induction which has given birth to the spirit of the concrete. Before undertaking a critical study of the method, it is essential to summarize the views of Iqbal as set forth in his lecture, 'The Spirit of Muslim Culture'.

Iqbal begins with the idea of prophecy and differentiates between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. The former returns from 'the repose of unitary experience' whereas the latter does not long to return and when he re-returns, he does not bring much meaningful message for mankind. The pragmatic value of the prophetic experience is, no doubt, of immense significance, 'Why' (inspiration) is a universal property of life. During the early, stages of mankind, prophetic consciousness was parsimonious in the realm of thought and action. With the birth of inductive intellect, prophecy withered away in the world of Islam. Man re-gained an independent posture. Mystic experience, however, remained possible and desirable for it integrated emotion with reason. There was no qualitative difference between the prophetic and the mystic consciousness. The idea of finality in Islam meant that with the cessation of prophecy the era of Divine authority had ceased to exist:

Besides inner experience, Nature and History were the vital sources of know-ledge. The concrete and the dynamic spirit of the Quran was a point of departure from the speculative method of Greeks. It provided essential foundations for the growth of the modern world. The intellectual revolt against Greek heritage was visible in all avenues of thought including Mathematics, Astronomy and Medicine. It made its presence felt in Ash'arite Metaphysics and more profoundly in Muslim rejection of Greek logic. The limitations of purely speculative method gave birth to the quest for definite principles of knowledge. Nazzam's method of doubt was further developed by Ghazzali who anticipated the method of Descartes. The rationale was to provide strong foundations to the body of knowledge. In the realm of logic, Ghazzali remained essentially the follower of Aristotle. It was 'Iraqi and Ibn Taimiyya who undertook the

task of repudiating Greek logic. Abu Bakr Razi rejected Aristotle's first figure and anticipated the inductive method of John Stuart Mill. Ibn-i-Hazm laid stress on sense-perception as source of knowledge. Ibn-i-Taimiyya sponsored induction as a mode of argumentation. It gave birth to the method of observation and experiment. Al-Beruni and Al-Kindi made scientific contributions in the field of psychology. Bacon took the inductive method from the Muslims and passed it on to the Western world. The west, however, is not keen in appreciating the Islamic origin of her method.

The spirit of Muslim culture concentrates on the knowledge of the concrete, the finite. By dint of capturing and empowering the concrete, the human intellect passes beyond the concrete. The Greeks were merely oriented to the finite. Their ideal was proportion not infinity. As the Muslims were committed to the latter they developed a better understanding of space and time. Greek atomism with its corresponding concept of absolute space was not acceptable to the Muslims. The Ash'arites like the modern atomists tried to overcome the problem of perceptual space. Tusi in the realm of Mathematics felt the necessity of abandoning the very notion. It was, however, left to Al-Beruni to clearly perceive that a static view of the universe could not apprehend the function idea. Time was real and it was not a mere agent of space. This was the reason that Whitehead's view of Relativity was more acceptable to the Muslims than that of Einstein. The religious psychology of 'Iraqi and Khwaja Muhammad Parsa comes closer to the modern concept of space and time. Though 'Iraqi inherited the classical prejudice of a static universe, yet he tried to give a dynamic interpretation of the problem. However, his failure to discern the relation between Divine time and serial time did not let him appreciate the phenomenon of perpetual creation.

Ibn-i-Maskawaih's theory of evolution and Ibn-i-Khaldun's concept of history both are wedded to the dynamic spirit of the Muslim culture. History is another source of knowledge. The Quran frames the laws of the rise and fall of nations which are laid down as historical generalizations. It also establishes the principles of historical criticism. Islam initiated a scientific study of history. The sense of human unity and the dynamic conception of time were the basic ingredients of historical understanding. In the figure of Ibn-i-Khaldun, the revolt against Greek thought found its final fruition.

The revolt of Islam against Greek speculation gave birth to the anti-classical orientation of the modern world. Since Spengler conceived each culture as a specific organism without any relation to the preceding or following cultures, therefore, he was bound to deny this reality. Also, his attempt to equate Islam with 'imagian culture' showed his miserable failure to understand the essence of Muslim culture.

From this brief summary, the scenario of Muslim culture as envisaged by Iqbal stands absolutely clear. For him, Islam gives a dynamic conception of the universe. And the intellectual revolt of Islam against Greek thought gave birth to the anti-classical spirit of the modern world. Before probing these findings in detail, it is exceedingly imperative to lay down certain fundamental points in this regard. Iqbal tries to understand the spirit of Muslim culture in reference to the Greek culture which precedes it and the modern one which follows it. His thought and language, thus remains enmeshed in the tracks of both these worlds. The categories of 'static' and 'dynamic' 'classical' and 'anti-classical' which he uses so often, reflect this basic limitation. The method of comparison thus used, puts the essence of Muslim culture in oblivion. Also, his consideration of ancient cultures as the relics of the past, arises due to a false equation of the immutable with the static. The main reason for this misunderstanding is that he did not differentiate clearly between reason and intellect. His acquaintance with higher Sufism and the authentic tradition of Muslim philosophy did give him some inkling of intellect, but he could not capture the essence of this tradition. His purely religious views of the world coupled with an extensive exposure to Western science and philosophy made him oblivious of intellectual metaphysics. He did not appreciate that the very concept of rational meta-physics was a contradiction in terms. In the twilight of reason he attempted, to fathom the mysteries of the universe. If he would have embarked on the road of understanding Islamic intellectuality in the light of Eastern metaphysics, he would have seen for himself the fallacies or the rational venture.

The Greeks, as such, had no idea of prophecy. Iqbal built a case for prophetic and mystic consciousness on the level of religious experience. He provided an experiential basis to religion. And this constitutes his chief strength. However, his rational treatment of prophecy remained enigmatic. In his attempt to bring mystic experience at par with other levels of normal

experience, he assigned a complementary status to the categories of thought and intuition. But he understood them in the rational sense with the result that intellectual intuition as envisaged by the Eastern metaphysics remained opaque to his consciousness. He says: "In fact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says, is only a higher kind of intellect".<sup>268</sup> His agreement with Bergson on this point clearly shows that he accepted the Western concept of intellect and intuition which were not in consonance with the primordial tradition. The matter did not end here. He used these categories to assert that Islam and the essence of the modern world were not opposed to each other. The weakness of this argument shall be evident in the course of this article.

The main problem with Iqbal was that he wrote in a religious tradition under the umbrella of Western thought and kept this religious tradition aloof from its intellectual foundations. In the ultimate analysis, it alloyed itself with the forces of European culture. This was precisely the reason that he felt no need of grounding revelation in pure intellectuality. He did not touch the chords of Islamic esoterism either. This resulted in a peripheral understanding of prophecy. The true relation which exists between intellect and revelation has been profoundly expressed by Schuon in these words: "The Intellect is infallible in itself or it is nothing; pure Intellection is a subjective and immanent Revelation just as Revelation properly so called is an objective and transcendent Intellection".<sup>269</sup>

We fail to agree with Iqbal in what he has said in denying the qualitative difference between the prophetic and the mystic experience. The prophet possessed the faculty of intellect in its fullest expression. Revelation was a process of actualization. From this emerged the reality of Divine authority. With the birth of inductive reason, there came a qualitative change in the nature of intellect. Now, no one could possess this faculty in its absoluteness. One could only inspire for particular intellection. All intellection had to be rooted in the Tradition.

The Muslim thinker's revolt against Greek philosophy was manifold. It was ratio-empirical and not intellectual as erroneously thought by Iqbal. The Ash'arites lacked intellectual metaphysics. Iqbal himself admits this in these words. "... yet, on the whole, the object of the Ash'arite movement was

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<sup>268</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 3.

<sup>269</sup> F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, p. 31.

simply to defend orthodox opinion with the weapons of Greek Dialectic".<sup>270</sup> He further says: "But Ghazali remained on the whole a follower of Aristotle in logic".<sup>271</sup> Even those Muslim thinkers who criticized Greek logic did not achieve much. They lacked true metaphysical basis. 'Iraqi and Ibn-i-Taimiyya did not repudiate Greek logic on the basis of intellectual foundations. Abu Bakr Razi's criticism of Aristotle's first figure reflects the inductive spirit only. The same is true of Ibn-i-Hazm who considered induction as the only form of reliable argument. The Muslim logicians did succeed in pointing to-wards certain limitations of Greek logic but that was-a partial success. Against', he fixed nature of Aristotelian logic they postulated sense-experience as a source of knowledge but they failed to understand the metaphysical basis of logic. Without metaphysics, logic remains a very limited discipline. It tends, in the ultimate analysis, to distort true understanding of Reality. The Western tendency to consider logic as all-embracing is equally fallacious. In a traditional doctrine, logic is a de-terminate aspect of the principles belonging to universal order. It takes its light from these principles. In their absence, logic loses its ultimate validity and reliability. Schuon says "Logic, in other words, is perfectly consistent only when exceeding itself".<sup>272</sup>

The principle of 'doubt' as initiated by Nazzam and developed by Ghazzali was an advance over the purely speculative nature of Greek philosophy but it fell short of true certitude.\* Such a method was an

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<sup>270</sup> Iqbal, 'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 4.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>272</sup> F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, p. 46.

\* This view of Ghazzali's doubt, largely spread through the works of the orientalist and uncritically accepted by modern Muslim writers, to say the least, is a facile judgment that betrays a lack of understanding as well as a tendency that tries to classify every notion according to its preconceived categories. For an illuminating discussion of the issue see Osman Bakr, "The Meaning and Significance of Doubt in al-Ghazzali's Philosophy" in *Iqbal Review*, Lahore, April-June 1985, pp29---48. (Editor's Note).

See Osman Bakr, "The Question of Methodology in Islamic Science", in *Muslim Education Quarterly*, where he deals with the limited role of the scientific/inductive method in Islamic sciences and in Islamic epistemology in general. Of particular interest is his treatment of the questions concerning the precedence of Islamic civilization in the application of the Scientific Method over the modern West and its influence on the latter in this regard. He also critically examines the notion that modern science was created by means of a single methodology only, the famous so called Scientific Method. (Editor's Note).

impediment in the pursuit of true knowledge. Iqbal was fascinated by it, perhaps, for the reason that a way was prepared for Descartes method.

Iqbal states that the experimental method is not a European discovery. The inductive spirit of the Quran gave birth to the method of observation and experiment. For us, there is no ground to dispute either the Islamic origin of the inductive method or its transmission to Europe by Bacon. We have, however, certain reservations regarding the inductive method. The method, as such, has registered a great qualitative advance over Greek thought but the place assigned to it by Iqbal and the Western world is highly unjustified.\*\* Divorced from the intellectual foundations, the method tends to become a reality in itself, which hampers true understanding of the universe. Guenon has made a remarkable observation in this regard. He says: ...Orientals show a strongly marked tendency to disregard applications. This is quite understandable, because any one who above every thing else cultivates the knowledge of universal principles can only take a lukewarm interest in the special sciences when one knows as a mathematical certainty, or one might even say as a more-than-mathematical certainty, that things cannot be otherwise than what they are, one becomes as a matter of course disdainful of experiment, because the verifying of a particular fact, whatever its nature, never proves anything more or anything different from the mere existence of that particular fact; at most, the observation of facts can occasionally provide an example to illustrate, but in nowise to prove, a theory, and any belief to the contrary is to labour under a grave delusion. This being so, there is clearly no object in pursuing experimental sciences for their own sake, and from the metaphysical point of view they only possess an incidental and contingent value, like the objects they are applied to.<sup>273</sup> The European crisis in the field of physical, social and religious sciences is precisely due to the lack of these universal principles. Schuon says: "...the foundations of modern science are false because, from the "subject" point of view, it replaces Intellect and Revelation by reason and experiment, as if it were not contradictory to lay claim to totality on an empirical basis; and its foundations are false too because, from the "object" point of view, it replaces the universal Substance by matter alone, either denying the universal

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<sup>273</sup> R. Guenon, *An Introduction to Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 41-42.

Principle or reducing it to matter or to some kind of pseudo-absolute from which all transcendence has been eliminated."<sup>274</sup>

Though Iqbal admits that the capture of the concrete makes it possible for the human intellect to go beyond the concrete, yet-he forgets that in the absence of true metaphysics, it is the concrete which ultimately, captures and overpowers man. Schuon says: "Concretism coincides with what may be described as 'factualism', or the superstition of the fact, a fact being regarded as the opposite of a principle, the opposite therefore of what current prejudice regards as an abstraction. On the religious plane the tendency is- to emphasize moral facts at the expense of intrinsic spiritual realities, instead of maintaining a balance — humanly necessary — between inward and eternal values and social applications, or between essences and forms".<sup>275</sup> The tragedy of the concrete, understood in the historical perspective, is that the Muslim Universities of Spain were not committed to the primordial tradition of Islam. Hence they could not impart the total ideal of the Infinite. Since then the Western world is lost in the tracks of finite.

Their irony of fate is that the Muslim Philosophers dealt with the Infinite rationally. It gave them a dubious view of space and time. From the metaphysical point of view, space and time are differently manifested. Ash'arite atomism did score a few points against Greek atomism but as it lacked true metaphysics, it could not understand the real nature of things. The same is true of modern atomism. Though Tusi and Al-Beruni, in the realm of Mathematics, committed themselves to a dynamic conception of the universe yet they failed to understand the non-dynamic aspects of thought. Since they lacked true principles, therefore, both Whitehead and Einstein could not unravel the essence of space and time. 'Iraqi succeeded to a certain extent in this regard but that was by virtue of religious experience.

The concrete, the finite are the manifestations of the Real. Without the disclosure of the Real, the universe is a closed book. Knowledge begins with the immutable. It is from the primordial source that the manifestations attain meaning. This is precisely the reason that intellect and revelation remained prior to inductive 'reason. Mere rational or empirical demonstration of the concrete leads, ultimately, to scientism which is the logical outcome of the

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<sup>274</sup> F. Schuon, *Light On The Ancient Worlds*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>275</sup> F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, p. 30.

principles to which modern world stands committed. Schuon says: "...a distinction has to be made between terrestrial thought, aroused by the environment and finding its terms within the environment, and celestial thought aroused by that which is our eternal substance and finding its terms beyond ourselves and, in a final analysis, in the Self".<sup>276</sup> For us, there is a dialectical relation between the immutable and the finite. If the concrete is not considered as the manifestation of the Real, then, true understanding of the universe becomes an impossibility, Ibn Ata' Allah further expresses the idea in these words: "How can it be conceived that something Veils Him, since, were it not for Him, the existence of everything would not have been manifested?"<sup>277</sup>

Iqbal was fascinated by the idea of evolution initiated by Jahiz and developed by Ibn-i-Maskawaih. Aristotle's concept of evolution as a transition from potentiality to actuality was rightly seen as representing a static universe. But does the dynamic view of evolution narrate the entire story? The answer is certainly, no. From the metaphysical point of view, the notions of evolution and progress have no such meaning. They are simply the manifestations of the Real, the Immutable. Iqbal's rational attempt to understand the process of evolution has gone on the wrong tracks.

Iqbal rightly considers History as a source of knowledge. Beside historical generalizations, Quran states the canons of historical criticism. The scientific treatment of history merits great consideration. Unfortunately, the development of history as a science has not been very successful in the Muslim world. The uncritical acceptance of historical facts punctuated with the phenomenon of personality cult has violated the essence of history. The reason being that the scientific method alone cannot save such a discipline. In the absence of metaphysical principles, historical reality remains in oblivion. Likewise, the unity of mankind can be achieved only by remaining committed to the principles belonging to the universal order.

Ibn-i-Khaldun treated history as a scientific discipline. He considered time as a creative moment against the Greeks who considered it either as unreal or circular. Iqbal calls him a forerunner of Bergson. He says: "His chief merit lies in his acute perception of, and systematic expression to, the spirit of the

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<sup>276</sup> F. Schuon, *Language of the Self*, p. 241.

<sup>277</sup> Ibn At ' I I lah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, p. 26.



cultural movement of which he was a most brilliant product. In the work of his genius the anti-classical spirit of the Quran scores its final victory over Greek thought..."<sup>278</sup> Without underestimating the achievements of this great thinker, we simply ask a question: "How could a thinker hostile to Metaphysics win the final victory over Greek thought? The inductive method alone can neither reveal the entire anti-classical spirit of the Quran nor defeat the ideas of the classical heritage. It is also powerless in the face of traditional civilizations.

Iqbal's thesis that the anti-classical spirit of the modern world has arisen out of the revolt of Islam against Greek thought requires certain qualifications. The spirit of the modern world is not entirely anti-classical. It has not succeeded in severing all speculative ties from the Greeks. Though the method of observation and experiment reflects this anti-classical spirit, yet the deification of reason speaks of the classical bond. The errors of the Greeks have been well preserved in the modern world. What few genuine insights the Greeks inherited from the ancient world, the West failed to acknowledge. The spirit of the modern world is not so much anti-classical as anti-intellectualist. This is, perhaps, what makes the Muslim rationalists feel a strong sense of fraternity with the European world. They forget that from the intellectual point of view, Islam and the Western world are diametrically opposed to each other. The only point of contact was the religious tradition which the West has very neatly destroyed. The contemporary situation has been discussed by Rama P Coomaraswamy in, these words: "No Catholic can expect to keep his faith without considerable sacrifice and suffering".<sup>279</sup> The Post-conciliar Church has joined hands with the modern world. The final word has been left to posterity.

To appreciate fully the import of these views, we shall discuss two basic tendencies in Iqbal's thought: First, his rejection of ancient cultures. Second, his ambivalent attitude towards the modern world. Regarding the first point, he says, "The cultures of Asia and in fact, of the whole ancient world failed, because they approached Reality exclusively from within and moved from within outwards. This procedure gave them theory without power, and on

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<sup>278</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 142.

<sup>279</sup> R. P. Coomaraswamy, *The Destruction of the Christian Tradition*, pp. 257-258.

mere theory no durable civilization can be based".<sup>280</sup> One thing which stands absolutely clear in Iqbal is that his vision of the ancient world was-coloured by the prevalent notions of the Western world and the religious tradition alone could not ameliorate him. Under the impact of Western thought he endorsed wrong ideas regarding the ancient cultures. Schuon says: "Many things, with the ancients, now seem to us rudimentary for the simple reason that we are unaware of what these things meant to them, with the result that we set out to judge from fragments or on the basis of appearances of a quite deceptive kind".<sup>281</sup> He further says: "When one tries to reconstruct the psychology of ancestors one nearly always makes the serious mistake of failing to take into account the internal repercussions of corresponding external manifestations, for what matters is, not a progress towards an outward perfection, but the validity of our attitudes towards the unseen and the Absolute."<sup>282</sup>

Every study of the ancient cultures requires an understanding of its initiatic symbolism which is the key to traditional wisdom. All things participate in the universal principles. In other words, the multiplicity of the manifested world is the reflection of the primary unity. The understanding of which requires unveiling of traditional symbols Schuon says: "There are two aspects in every symbol; the one adequately reflects the divine Function and so constitutes the sufficient reason for the symbolism; the other is merely the reflection as such and so is contingent. The former of these aspects is the content; the latter is the mode of its manifestation."<sup>283</sup>

A purely rational analysis fails to decipher the real meaning of the unlimited possibilities inherent in the situation. It partially succeeds in the case of expressible but fails absolutely in the realm of inexpressible. Cooper rightly says: "The symbol, being derived from the archetype, must lead back to it and merge the finite mind with the infinite".<sup>284</sup>

All the great Traditions of the world are impregnated with rich symbolism. "And the disciples came, and said unto him. Why Speakest thou

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<sup>280</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>281</sup> F. Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, p. 87.

<sup>282</sup> F. Schuon, *Light On The Ancient Worlds*, p. 107.

<sup>283</sup> F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, p. 39.

<sup>284</sup> J. C. Cooper, *Symbolism: The Universal Language*, p. 110.

unto them in parables. He answered and said unto them. Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."<sup>285</sup> The revolt of Europe against her own religious tradition is primarily responsible for the loss of higher symbolism. The Western symbolists including Paul Tillich remain on the periphery. They have become the sponsors of a barren culture.

Iqbal's observation that the cultures of the whole ancient world failed, should be understood in a relative sense. The ancient world is the possessor of that traditional heritage without which the modern world cannot survive. Schuon says: "The whole existence of the peoples of antiquity, and the traditional peoples in general, is dominated by two presiding ideas, the idea of Centre and the idea of Origin... Every thing in the behaviour of ancient and traditional peoples can be explained, directly or indirectly, by reference to these two ideas, which are like landmarks in the measureless and perilous world of forms and of change."<sup>286</sup> The categories of success and failure cannot be applied as such to the ancient cultures. It is only the ancient world which by dint of pure intellectuality possesses the ultimate criterion of judging other cultures. It is not the other way round. The sharp distinction between the inner and the outer is the product of reason. The approach of intellect is unitive. There exists no dichotomy between theory and power in the great traditions of the world. The traditional world seems merely oriented to theory, for the West has installed power as a false absolute. Schuon has aptly remarked: "...if modern man is so intelligent, ancient man cannot have been so stupid".<sup>287</sup> The same idea has been expressed by Guenon in these words "... there are other ways of showing intelligence than by making machines".<sup>288</sup>

Iqbal says: "The Quran opens our eyes to the great fact of change, through the appreciation and control of which alone it is possible to build a durable civilization".<sup>289</sup> For us there is no denying the fact that change is very vital but it is not a solitary factor in the durability of civilization. Change has to be understood in reference to the immutable principle. Iqbal had some

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<sup>285</sup> St Mathew, XIII, pp. 10-11.

<sup>286</sup> F. Schuon, *Light On The Ancient Worlds*, p. 7.

<sup>287</sup> F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, p. 66.

<sup>288</sup> R. Guenon, *East and West*, p. 11.

<sup>289</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 14.

inkling of it when he posited the categories of eternal and permanence, but unfortunately he treated them rationally. In the absence of metaphysical principles, he became inclined towards change at the cost of the immutable. Guenon says: "It would also be wrong to confuse immutability with immobility... The immutable is not what is contrary to change, but what is above it; just as the "superrational" is not the "irrational".<sup>290</sup>

The modern world feels a strong aversion regarding the traditional heritage. It has blocked the communication with the ancient world. It is in the ultimate interest of the modern man to understand what the great traditions stand for. Nasr says: "the traditions of Asia have emphasized the hierarchic nature of reality, the predominance of the spiritual over the material, the sacred character of the cosmos, the inseparability of man's destiny from that of the natural and cosmic environment, and the unity of knowledge and the interrelatedness of all things".<sup>291</sup>

Iqbal says: "The Quran is a book which emphasizes 'deed' rather than 'idea'.<sup>292</sup> There is no denying the fact that the Quran lays emphasis on action but the action has to be rooted in the primordial tradition. Schuon says: "...all knowledge carries its benefit in itself, contrary to action which is only a momentary modification of a being and always is separated from its various effects. These effects belong to the same domain and order of existence as that which has produced them. Action can-not have the effect of liberating from action and its consequences cannot reach beyond the limits of individuality considered in its fullest possible extension. Action, whatever it may be, is not opposed to, and cannot banish, ignorance which is the root of all limitation; only knowledge can dispel ignorance as the light of the sun disperses darkness, and it is thus that the 'Self', the immutable and eternal principle of all manifest and unmanifest states, appears in its supreme reality".<sup>293</sup>

Iqbal's rationalism made him positive towards the West and negative towards the Greeks. The former taught him the priority of action whereas

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<sup>290</sup> R. Guenon, *East and West*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>291</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Western Science and Asian Cultures*, p. 5.

<sup>292</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Preface.

<sup>293</sup> R. Guenon, "Oriental Metaphysics", in J. Needleman (ed.), *The Sword of Gnosis*, Penguin Books Inc. 1974.

the latter made him aversive to speculation. True metaphysics does not accept this dichotomy. Strictly speaking, in the modern world, action is not opposed to idea but to contemplation. School says: "In man stamped with the fall, not only has action priority over contemplation, but it even abolishes contemplation".<sup>294</sup> For us, there needs to be a true harmony between action and contemplation. Both are united in a single whole. This is the traditional meaning of non-activity and non-action. This has to be qualitatively differentiated from inactivity and inaction. Cooper says: "Non-activity is a thing of the mind and spirit, the open mind and pure spirit which can move spontaneously in any direction in any given situation. Humanity is now so highly conditioned in mind by its beliefs and ideologies and worship of factual knowledge, that spontaneity is almost lost".<sup>295</sup> A similar idea is expressed thus: "By non-action everything can be done."<sup>296</sup> The matter does not end here. The Tradition goes so far as to say that "All actions are performed by the Gunas, born of Prakriti. One whose understanding is deluded by egoism alone thinks: I am the, doer."<sup>297</sup> Ibn 'Arabi also does not impute action to outward existence which is passive. It cannot perform any action by itself. It is the immanence of the Lord which performs the act. In all such matters, the primordial and universal tradition by which every name you may call it, Philosophia Perennis, Lex Aeterna, Hagia Sophia, Din al Haqq, Tao, Sanatana Dharma points towards Reality which is opaque to the modern man. The future of the modern man is at stake unless this tradition becomes translucent.

At this stage it is imperative to discuss Iqbal's fundamental view regarding the Western world. He says: "...it is necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and, if necessary, reconstruction, of theological thought in Islam".<sup>298</sup>

This is precisely our point of departure from Iqbal. For us, Europe has nothing substantial to teach. Due to its lack of universal principles; it has not much to say to the rest of the world. The cult of science which it has

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<sup>294</sup> F. Schuon, *Light On The Ancient Worlds*, p. 49.

<sup>295</sup> J. C. Cooper, *Taoism: The Way of the Mystic*, p. 76.

<sup>296</sup> *TaoTe Ching*, XLVIII.

<sup>297</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 111,27.

<sup>298</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 8.

established is a pseudo-absolute. The only thing which she possessed of significance was the religious tradition which she has almost destroyed. The conclusion reached by her do not warrant any revision or reconstruction of theological thought in Islam. However, one fundamental lesson we can learn from Europe and that is to avoid the road she has taken. Inductive method belongs to our own tradition and we have not to uproot it in false imitation of the West.

Iqbal further says: "The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture".<sup>299</sup> Here, Iqbal has again the inductive method in mind while determining the position of both these cultures. This was partly responsible for the inflated role he assigned to this method. He also talked of the intellectual side of European culture. For us, Europe has no intellectual side. This, primarily, constitutes the crisis of the Western world.

Iqbal at times criticizes Europe and one is at loss to understand whether he is critical of its exterior aspect or the interior. However, keeping in view his main thesis on the subject, the balance moves towards the former. He says: "Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement".<sup>300</sup>

We fully endorse him on the subject with an addition that in almost all spheres the role of Europe is identical. But Iqbal stops short at the level of 'ethical advancement' and leaves out those realms out of his preview that are more vital and where the West has a far more subversive role to play.

Iqbal says: "It is only natural the Islam should have flashed across the consciousness of a simple people untouched by any of the ancient cultures, and occupying a geographical position where three continents meet together".<sup>301</sup> The dynamism of the Quran was a novel message for the Arab

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., O. 7.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

mind which lived amidst the static cultures touching its shores. It was in consonance with the Arab orientation to the practical. However, the Arabs were also familiar with certain religious traditions of the world. The Household of the Prophet developed an intellectual unexcelled standing of the Ultimate. 'Ali Bin 'Uthman Al Hujwiri says: "Ali is a model for the Sufis in respect to the truths of outward expression and the subtleties of inward meanings."<sup>302</sup> Ali symbolizes the intellectual tradition of Islam. The primordial sacrifice of Husain can only be understood in reference to this tradition. It is only the intellectual tradition which is oriented to the immutable. And this is the essence of Muslim culture. It qualitatively differs from the modern world which lacks this tradition. Guenon says: "For us, the outstanding difference between the East and West (which means in this case the Modern West), the only difference which is really essential (for all others are derivative), is on the one side the preservation of tradition with all that this implies, and on the other side the forgetting and the loss of this same tradition; on one side the maintaining of metaphysical knowledge, on the other complete ignorance of all connected with this realm."<sup>303</sup>

Before we conclude this analysis, it is necessary to say a few words regarding Iqbal's Doctoral Dissertation on 'The Development of Metaphysics in Persia'. His choice of writing on Persian Metaphysics itself speaks of his earlier interest in the field. But, due to certain influences including that of Professor T.W. Arnold, to whom he also dedicated this thesis, he embarked on a qualitatively different road. The term 'Development' was a veil in the understanding of metaphysics. The very beginning of his philosophical quest, thus, landed him in the orbit of Western categories. He says: "I have endeavoured to trace the logical continuity of Persian thought, which I have tried to interpret in the language of modern philosophy. This, as far as I know, has not yet been done."<sup>304</sup> For us, the language of modern philosophy was one of the main factors responsible for sealing the possibility of unveiling the quintessence of metaphysics. It is here that he needed a true teacher. However, in the presence of all these limitations, Iqbal still emerges as a more original thinker in this work than in the Reconstruction.

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<sup>302</sup> A. Hujwiri, *Kashf Al Mohjub*, p. 74.

<sup>303</sup> R. Guenon, "Oriental Metaphysics", in J. Needleman (ed.), *The Sword of Gnosis* Penguin Books Inc. 1974.

<sup>304</sup> Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, p. xi.