

# HIDDEN KHUDI: A CO-WORKER WITH GOD

AN ESSAY ON THE CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUALITY  
IN THE WRITING OF MUHAMMAD IQBAL  
Dr. Thomas Stemmer

**“In an over-organized society the individual is altogether crushed out of existence. He gains the whole wealth of social thought around him and loses his own soul.”**

(Muhammad Iqbal<sup>1</sup>)

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## SLOW INTRODUCTION

Ever since the script has been invented the art of writing is confronted with the eminent question: Why? Why do we write about great thinkers? Most certainly because they have something helpful to say. There is something *universal* in what they think and therefore it is appropriate to pick up their ideas and subject them to the flashlights of reason, intuition, scientific study, research, discussion, poetry, kitchentable conversations, artwork and – more generally speaking – presentation for the benefit of others. A great thinker is a universal thinker. Everywhere scholars, artists or *hommes de lettres* are able to refer themselves to them in order to get the best out of those ideas.

*Muhammad Iqbal* (1877 – 1938) is a universal thinker. He has something to say for people of different creeds, world views or frameworks of mind. Since everybody is *one of a kind*, or in other words: an individual, Iqbal's ideas concerning individualism are certainly the first and foremost object of study. Ideas of individuality appeal to the individual just *because* he is an individual. It is a matter of the *heart*. So what has Muhammad Iqbal to say about individuality? Does he present a concept? A system? An idea? It is well worth

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<sup>1</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, April 1999, p. 120. (All quotes in this essay refer to this edition of Iqbal's "Reconstruction".)

the effort to try to understand what this great poet-philosopher has to offer about a very important topic such as this.

So how should we approach the concept of individuality in the work of Muhammad Iqbal? After all, the topic is so close to life that one should take care. Nobody wants to behave like an elephant in a china shop.

I propose here to approach the topic of a concept of individuality in Iqbal's writings by *slowly* moving forward, moving in circles around it and finally get a glimpse of it through some kind of thoroughly looking at what is being presented. It is more of a slow phenomenological approach than mere understanding. It reflects an aspect of contemplation or gentle cogitating. Or to put it into simpler, more straightforward terms: Maybe it is helpful to move toward the topic in the way a **cat** deals with the world. A wise statement about cats by the US-American author William S. Burroughs might serve here as a definition for my further proceeding on these few modest pages I call an "essay":

**The cat does not offer services. The cat offers itself. Of course he wants care and shelter. You don't buy love for nothing. Like all pure creatures, cats are practical. To understand an ancient question, bring it into present time.<sup>2</sup>**

That is the approach I shall try to follow. Maybe it is not the effort to explain Muhammad Iqbal's ideas but to surround and to locate them on an inner spiritual map.

So the first thing I did after the initial idea to write down this essay was to contact the son of Muhammad Iqbal, Dr. Javid Iqbal, and to ask him about it all. I quoted a fine article written by him<sup>3</sup> in which he further defines the way in which Muhammad Iqbal was a philosopher, or rather a *poet-philosopher*. I was happy to receive a good answer that helped me finding my way:<sup>4</sup>

*When I say that Iqbal had no philosophic system to offer, and that therefore he was not, strictly speaking, a philosopher; I mean that he definitely was interested*

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<sup>2</sup> Burroughs, William S., *The Cat Inside*, Harmondsworth, 2002, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Iqbal, Dr. Javid, "Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", *Iqbal Review*, Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Vol. 43, No 2, April 2002, pp. 1–11.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Javid Iqbal in a letter to the author, February 17, 2004.

*in some aspects of philosophy but he was not a philosopher in the academic sense like, for instance, Kant or Hegel. In other words, he had a world view or a philosophy of his own like Goethe, Nietzsche, Shakespeare, Rumi, Ghalib and Bedil. Thus as a poet-philosopher, his philosophy of individualism (Khudi), in the singular and collective sense, is like the philosophy of any of the above mentioned poet-philosophers. These poet-philosophers did not have any philosophical system to present in the form of philosophical systems of Hegel, Kant, Leibnitz etc. If you keep this distinction in mind, you would be on the 'right' track.*

This statement led me to the expression I coined as *Hidden Khudi*, and which I chose as a title for this essay. Very definitely, there is the idea, the importance of individuality or individualism but it is not systematically presented to the readers. This is not a misfortune but a chance. It allows the reader to think on his own: The reader is, after all, an individual person, too.

All around the world the importance of man being an individual is stressed, be it in a political, philosophical or artistic context. Within the framework of religion or spirituality the situation could be described almost entirely in terms of individuality: **I** am here. Somebody must have created me. What do **I** have to do in order to understand? So what did Iqbal say? First and foremost, he described man as an individual using the terms *Khudi* or *Ego*. Consequently God appears in his writings as the *Ultimate Ego*. According to Iqbal, it was God's or the Ultimate Ego's will that man exists *as an Ego*. Iqbal said:<sup>5</sup>

*Thus the element of guidance and directive control in the ego's activity clearly shows that the ego is a free personal causality. He shares in the life and freedom of the Ultimate Ego who, by permitting the emergence of a finite ego, capable of private initiative, has limited this freedom of His own free will.*

Annemarie Schimmel wrote:<sup>6</sup>

**Iqbal has one favorite symbol for this Ego: that of the pearl which is, according to oriental imagination, created by a rain drop falling into the shell and forming there a jewel. In this symbol lies a silent opposition against the conventional**

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<sup>5</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Reconstruction*, pp. 86–87.

<sup>6</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie, *Gabriel's Wing. A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Lahore, 2000, p. 103

**mystical symbol of the drop which is lost in the vast ocean of the Godhead: the self should be preserved – though living in the ocean of divine being, it must concentrate on his own reserves and become more precious through this concentration –**

In this way one might easily understand the words from the *Javīd Nāma* that Muhammad Iqbal himself placed at the end of his philosophical masterpiece *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:<sup>7</sup>

*Art thou in the stage of 'life', 'death' or 'death-in-life' ?*

*Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify thy 'Station'.*

*The first witness is thine own consciousness –*

*See thyself, then, with thine own light.*

*The second witness is the consciousness of another ego –*

*See thyself, then, with the light of an ego other than thee.*

*The third witness is God's consciousness –*

*See thyself, then, with God's light...*

*If thou standest unshaken in front of this light,*

*Consider thyself as living and eternal as He!*

*That man only is real who dares –*

*Dares to see God face to face!*

*What is 'Ascension' ? Only a search for a witness*

*Who may finally confirm thy reality –*

*A witness whose confirmation alone makes thee eternal.*

*No one can stand unshaken in His presence;*

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<sup>7</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Reconstruction*, p. 157.

*And he who can, verily, he is pure gold.*

*Art thou a mere particle of dust?*

*Tighten the knot of thy ego;*

*And hold fast to thy tiny being!*

*How glorious to burnish one's ego*

*And to test this lustre in the presence of the Sun!*

*Re-chisel, then, thine ancient frame;*

*And build up anew being.*

*Such being is real being;*

*Or else thy ego is a mere ring of smoke!*

From this bold, strong and uplifting idea of *Self* or *Ego* or *Khudi*, we can go on in this little essay. Yet we shall see in the pages to come that this bold image of the Self in Muhammad Iqbal's writing is always related to the Divine and not an end in itself. So the *Khudi* is not to be described in words such as those I recently found in a *poem/noise – collage* by the Austrian poet Ernst Jandl, which seem to be a little bit silly, but made me laugh, though (of course they were purposely set this way in bad English by Ernst Jandl himself as a means of artistic expression):<sup>8</sup>

*tell me nelly if it's true*

*i am i and you are you*

*gravely nelly shook her head*

*i am i and you are dead*

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<sup>8</sup> Jandl, Ernst, *Das Röcheln der Mona Lisa. Gedichte, Szenen, Prosa*, Berlin, 1990, p. 175. I know, mentioning this part of a poem by Ernst Jandl (1925–2000) seems slightly childish, but being childish is the way every one of us started out in life long ago. So for a **slow introduction** to an essay this might be appropriate (I hope)...

I guess this introduction was slow enough to enable my essay to go on smoothly. There are still a few comments to be made and many of Iqbal's valuable thoughts and insights to be understood.

### A CONCEPT ???

One might ask: Does Iqbal's notion of Self or *Khudi* constitute a concept in the philosophical meaning of the word? Is there a concept to be found between – let's say, his *Asrār-i Khudi* (where Iqbal stresses the value of Self, Ego or *Khudi*) and the somewhat softer *Ramūz-i bekhubdi* (which seems to “soften“ the “blow“ of the the *Asrār*)? Could it be found by diving into the philosophical depths of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*?

Probably not. Iqbal never sat down to put fine discriminations into a consistent system of the notion *Khudi*.

The word concept is derived from the Latin language (*conceptus*) and means a mental gathering in advance. It is *an idea or mental picture of a group or class of objects formed by combining all their aspects.*<sup>9</sup>

Either Iqbal had not done this (**because he was a poet**, possessing a direct approach to ideas beyond the limitations of a concept) or he had it as a premise but failed to name it (**because he was a philosopher** who does not always have to explain premises). To complicate things, Iqbal was in reality both: **a poet-philosopher**. And in addition to that, there were certain traits to be found in him, which Annemarie Schimmel tried to define by using the word **prophetic**. She subtitled one of her books on Muhammad Iqbal “**prophetic poet and philosopher**“.<sup>10</sup> I suppose everybody would expect a prophetic poet-philosopher to be beyond narrow concepts.

So let us state here that there is no philosophical concept of *Khudi* in the strict sense of the word. But let us go on.

### KHUDI, EGO, SELF: USING WORDS & DENOMINATIONS

An old saying goes like this: We are the children of the light but the victims of semantics. Every intellectual of any consequence has to face this

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<sup>9</sup> See *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Ninth edition, Reprint with Corrections, edited by Della Thompson, Oxford, 1998, p. 275.

<sup>10</sup> See the title of the book by Annemarie Schimmel, *Muhammad Iqbal. Prophetischer Poet und Philosoph*, München, 1989

fact. Certainly nobody wants to be victimized. So maybe Iqbal did not only set up a systematic evaluation of Self or Ego or *Khudi* because it was difficult, but also because he wanted to **remain *intellectually on the road* in respect to this most important problem?**! There have been efforts to combine some sort of religious life and thinking with some sort of on the road attitude in world history before<sup>11</sup>; so Muhammad Iqbal would not have been the first to try this way out at all... So he did not solve the problem of the value of individuality in a traditional way, but found the clarification of this point beyond words by heavy, refreshing dynamism of thought. I believe, Muhammad Iqbal kept surrounding the reality of the individual human being and its power to act wisely, avoiding lasting definitions and narrow mind patterns. For the benefit of *us*, the readers or scholars (who want to exercise the same right of free thinking). A very selfless act, indeed.

Yes, Iqbal stresses the importance of being an individual but he consciously refuses to give 'orders' as given to children.

Dr. Javid Iqbal, the son of Muhammad Iqbal, seems to hint at this fact when he writes:<sup>12</sup>

*Man's destiny lies in constant creative activity. Iqbal is categorial when he asserts:  
When act performed is creative, / It's virtuous, even if sinful.*

Muhammad Iqbal himself describes this dynamism in one of his poems in very beautiful, yet strong words:<sup>13</sup>

### ***Life and Strife***

*(in reply to a poem of Heine)*

*'Long years were mine', said the sea-shattered cliff,*

*'Yet never taught me what is this called I.'*

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<sup>11</sup> For example the religious efforts undertaken in this direction of a certain individual on-the-road-mysticism by authors and poets of the US-American *Beat Generation* during the 1950s and the 1960s, like for example *Jack Kerouac* or *Robert Lax* relating to Christianity or *Allen Ginsberg* and *Gary Snyder* relating to Buddhism or *Brion Gysin* and *William S. Burroughs* relating to some "home-made" mystical context.

<sup>12</sup> Iqbal, Dr. Javid, "Devil in the Triangle of Rumi, Goethe and Iqbal", in *Iqbal Review*, Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Vol. 42, № 4, October 2001, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> "Iqbal Muhammad: Life and Strife", translated into English by V. G. Kiernan, in *Poems from Iqbal*, Renderings in English with Comparative Urdu / Persian Text, Translated by V. G. Kiernan, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Lahore, 2003, p. 288.

*A headlong-hurrying wave cried: 'Only if  
I move I live, for if I halt I die'.*

Prof. Fateh Muhammad Malik, who twice held the Iqbal Fellowship at the university of Heidelberg/Germany (from 1984 to 1988 and from 1992 to 1996), coined the phrase “*The only sin is not to be creative!*” in one of his lectures. Very *Iqbalian* indeed. So Muhammad Iqbal rises above mere concepts of individuality by ignoring them in the name of individuality. It is a poetical means to an end. It does not mean just playing around with words for the sheer joy of confusion. A vision of individuality remains to be seen this way. It is serious.

In an article about the life and work of Muhammad Iqbal, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* puts it this way:<sup>14</sup>

*Ultimately, the only satisfactory mode of active self-realization was the sacrifice of the self in the service of causes greater than the self.*

Muhammad Suheyl Umar finds the same trait in Iqbal in regard to his Wisdom Poetry. He writes:<sup>15</sup>

*Finally, art, even the highest as in the case of sapiential poetry, is only the means to an end. It is a manner of 'seeing through a glass, darkly,' and although it is far better than not to see at all, the utility of every art must come to an end when vision is 'face to face'.*

With his in mind I shall quote some of Muhammad Iqbal's finest ideas on individuality, as found in his philosophical book *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

*The only effective power, therefore, that counteracts the forces of decay in a people is the rearing of self-concentrated individuals. Such individuals alone reveal the depth of life. They disclose new standards in the light of which we begin to see that our environment is not wholly inviolable and requires revision.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *The New Encyclopædia Britannica, Micropædia*, Vol. 6, Ready Reference, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Chicago, etc., 2002, p. 373.

<sup>15</sup> Umar, Muhammad Suheyl, “*That I may See and Tell*”— *Significance of Iqbal's Wisdom Poetry*”, Iqbal Academy Brochure Series, No 2, Lahore, 2002, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Reconstruction*, p. 120.



*No doubt, the emergence of egos, endowed with the power of spontaneous and hence unforeseeable action is, in a sense, a limitation on the freedom of the all-inclusive Ego. But this limitation is not externally imposed. It is born out of His own creative freedom whereby He has chosen finite egos to be participators of His life, power, and freedom.*<sup>17</sup>

*The nature of the ego is such that, in spite of its capacity to respond to other egos, it is self-centred and possesses a private circuit of individuality excluding all other egos than itself.*<sup>18</sup>

*Another important characteristic of the unity of the ego is its essential privacy which reveals the uniqueness of every ego.*<sup>19</sup>

*Napoleon is reported to have said: ‘I am a thing, not a person’. This is one way in which unitive experience expresses itself. In the history of religious experience in Islam, which, according to the Prophet, consists in the ‘creation of Divine attributes in man’, this experience has found expression in such phrases as ‘I am the creative truth’ (Hallāj), ‘I am Time’ (Muhammad), ‘I am the speaking Qu’rān’ (‘Alī), ‘Glory to me’ (Bā Yazīd). In the higher Sufism of Islam unitive experience is not the finite ego effacing its own identity by some sort of absorption into the Infinite Ego; it is rather the Infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite.*<sup>20</sup>

This last quote might serve as a bridge to the next chapter about Iqbal’s idea of man being a co-worker with God, one of his major contributions to *universal* thinking.

## **CO-WORKER WITH GOD: EASTERN & WESTERN CONTRIBUTIONS TO MUHAMMAD IQBAL’S THINKING**

So the notion of Self, Ego or *Kbudi* is finally conceived as an attitude of the Self being a **Co-Worker with God**. Around the world, scholars are able to discover many fine or exciting definitions of individualism<sup>21</sup>, but hardly anybody is speaking of man as a co-worker with God.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>21</sup> Such as for example Ayn Rand’s definition: “*Individualism regards man – every man – as an independent, sovereign entity who possesses an unalienable right to his own life, a right derived from his own*

It seems, however, that at the core of Iqbal's non-systematical ideas about the importance of individualism, right in the middle of the picture of the individual being an individual and the individual giving selfless service, the notion of a co-worker with God combines all of Iqbal's thinking in this area. It answers the questions "Is man a free individual" and "*Why and to what ends is man an individual?*"

Dr. Javid Iqbal, his son, writes:<sup>23</sup>

*Iqbal through the constant strengthening of 'ego' expects man to become a co-worker or rather a counsellor of the Divine Being in creating a more perfect universe.*

So we can identify the idea of man being a co-worker with God as the innermost aspects of individualism in the writings of Muhammad Iqbal, but still we have to ask what exactly does he mean by that?

I suggest, that we should take an indirect approach by looking at all the individualist theories or world views that have (or might have) influenced Iqbal in getting to this point of the notion "co-worker with God."

There is quite a handful of first-class influences from the **East** as well as from the **West**. Iqbal—once again—proves himself to be *a universal individual thinker, a contribution to world culture*.

I envision Muhammad Iqbal, therefore, as some kind of a precious cup, able to gather and to further develop some of the best ideas of mankind.

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*nature as a rational being. Individualism holds that a civilized society, or any form of association, cooperation or peaceful coexistence among men, can be achieved only on the basis of the recognition of individual rights – and that a group, as such, has no rights other than the individual rights of its members."* (Rand, Ayn, *The Ayn Rand Lexicon. Objectivism from A to Z*, The Ayn Rand Library, Vol. VII, edited by Harry Binswanger, New York, 1986, p. 218.

<sup>22</sup> It is vaguely hinted at by some small religious groups within the Christian area or in some of the writings within the Radhaswami/Sant Mat/ Surat Shabda Yoga tradition (Sikh mysticism). Another religion, called Eckankar, puts more emphasis on this idea (and roughly to the same extent, some of the Eckankar offshoots). But all in all, the basic idea is not very much appreciated within the domain of religion, theology, religious science, philosophy of religion or spiritual thought and practice... In most other cases, a lot of *interpretation* has to be used in order to dig out this idea within the fascinating world of religion(s). And sometimes, there is only a small gap between interpretation and *misinterpretation*.

<sup>23</sup> Iqbal, Dr. Javid, "Devil in the Triangle of Rumi, Goethe and Iqbal", in *Iqbal Review*, Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Vol. 42, № 4, October 2001, p. 11.

First and foremost, there are **Eastern** influences on his co-worker with God/ individualist ideas. To be precise, since Iqbal was a Muslim, his first influences are clearly coming from the Qu'ran. He backs up his view of man as a free ego and God as the Ultimate Ego with quotations from the Holy Book of Muslims. Probably the most prominent verse he uses is Sura 24, verse 35, which *seem* to give a non-individualistic vision at first:<sup>24</sup>

*God is the light of the Heavens and of the earth. His light is like a niche in which is a lamp – the lamp encased in a glass, - the glass, as it were, a star.*

But Iqbal goes on to analyze that this very verse strengthens the view of God as the Ultimate Ego. He states in chapter 3 of his “Reconstruction”:<sup>25</sup>

*No doubt, the opening sentence of the verse gives the impression of an escape from an individualistic conception of God. But when we follow the metaphor of light in the rest of the verse, it gives just the opposite impression. The developpement of the metaphor is meant rather to exclude the suggestion of a formless cosmic element by centralizing ht elight in a flame which is further individualized by its encasement in a glass likened onto a well-defined star. Personally, I think the description of God as light, in the revealed literature of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, must now be interpreted differently. The teaching of modern physics is that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded and is the same for all observers whatever their own system of movement. Thus, in the world of change, light is the nearest approach to the Absolute. the metaphor of light as applied to God, therefore, must, in view of modern knowledge, be taken to suggest the Absoluteness of God and not his Omnipresence which easily lends itself to a pantheistic interpretation.*

The other aspect of Iqbal’ s individualism (Co-worker with God by selfless service) is mentioned by him in the same chapter of his “Reconstruction” where he uses the congregational prayer of the Muslims as a symbol.<sup>26</sup>

*The real object of prayer, however, is better achieved when the act of prayer becomes congregational. The spirit of all true prayer is social. even the hermit abandons the society of man in the hope of finding, in a solitary abode, the fellowship of God. A congregation is an association of men who, animated by the same aspiration, concentrate themselves on a single object and open up their inner selves to the*

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<sup>24</sup> As quoted by Iqbal in the “Reconstruction”, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Reconstruction*, p. 51.

<sup>26</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Reconstruction*, pp. 73–74.

*working of a single impulse. It is a psychological truth that association multiplies the normal man's power of perception, deepens his emotion, and dynamizes his will to a degree unknown to him in the privacy of his individuality. Indeed, regarded as a psychological phenomenon, prayer is still a mystery; for psychology has not yet discovered the laws relating to the enhancement of human sensibility in a state of association.....*

*Prayer, then, whether individual or associative, is an expression of man's inner yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe. It is a unique process of discovery whereby the searching ego affirms itself in the very moment of self-negation, and thus discovers its own worth and justification as a dynamic factor in the life of the universe.*

Another— possible— influence from the East might be recognized in his strict monism. As the renowned German author Hermann Hesse (born in the same year as Iqbal) wrote in his foreword to Annemarie Schimmel's translation of the *Jāvidnāme*, there might be influences from Vedanta philosophy. Hesse wrote:<sup>27</sup>

*A Muslim of Indian descent, trained spiritually by the Koran, by the Vedanta and by Persian-Arabic mysticism (...)*

This very quote by Hermann Hesse leads us to Western influences on Iqbal. Hesse goes on to say:<sup>28</sup>

*(...) but also strongly touched by the problems of Western philosophy and conversant with Bergson and Nietzsche, leads us in ascending spirals through the provinces of his cosmos.*

Maybe the most prominent **Western** influence leading Muhammad Iqbal to his individualism and to the idea of a co-worker with God was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the theory of *Superman*.

Is Iqbal's free *Ego* the same as Nietzsche's *Superman*? Iqbal seems to be ambivalent about this point. He admires Nietzsche and at the same time he criticises him. Dr. Muhammad Maruf writes:<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> As quoted in Annemarie Schimmel, "Germany and Iqbal", in Koehler, Wolfgang (ed.): *Muhammad Iqbal und die drei Reiche des Geistes. Muhammad Iqbal and the Three Realms of the Spirit*. Band 3 der Schriftenreihe des Deutsch-Pakistanischen Forums e. V., Hamburg, 1977, S. 45–60. Hermann Hesse's foreword is quoted in an English translation on p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

To sum up, then, despite his appreciation of Nietzsche for his keen vision and burning heart, Iqbal subjects his philosophical system, especially his idea of the Superman, to criticism on the following scores:

- 1) His materialistic interpretation of historical forces;
  - 2) His misconceived notion of time which, according to him is circular;
  - 3) His denial of self or *kbndi* as a fact;
  - 4) His denial of immortality and the Hereafter;
  - 5) His mechanistic view of evolution which he conceived as an Eternal Recurrence;
  - 6) His failure to comprehend the true significance of his own vision;
- and he epitomises Nietzsche's total failings in the lack of proper spiritual guidance and ascribes this to his intellectual progenitors like Kant and his Western traditions.

Dr. Nazir Qaiser adds:

Unlike Nietzsche's superman who is an atheist, Iqbal's perfect man is God fearing and devoted religious man. This makes a fundamental difference. Faith in God goes a long way to develop human personality. Against Nietzsche's superman who has no brighter future, Iqbal's perfect man earns resurrection.<sup>30</sup>

And Annemarie Schimmel puts it this way:<sup>31</sup>

*What he aims at, is not man as measure of all things but as a being that grows the more perfect the closer his connection with God is, it is man neither as an atheistic superman who replaces a God 'who has died', nor as the Perfect Man in the sense that he is but a visible aspect of God with whom he is essentially one – but man as realizing the wonderful paradox of freedom in servanthip.*

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<sup>29</sup> Maruf, Dr. Muhammad, "Iqbal's Criticism of Nietzsche", in *Iqbal Review*, Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Vol. 23, No 3 (Iqbal Number), October 1982, pp. 37–44 (The quote is on pp. 43–44).

<sup>30</sup> Qaiser, Dr. Nazir, *Iqbal and the Western Philosophers (A Comparative Study)*, Lahore, 2001, p. 54.

<sup>31</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie, *Gabriel's Wing. A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Lahore, 2000, p. 382.

Surely enough, Nietzsche is not the only Western influence on Iqbal concerning individualism but most probably the strongest influence. Therefore I have quoted only thinkers who compare Iqbal and Nietzsche. In order to highlight the idea of the human individual being a co-worker with God. I feel I should add an observation by Prof. Niaz Erfan who compared Iqbal and Sartre. He writes:<sup>32</sup>

*Thus he (= Sartre) writes in Being and Nothingness 'Either man is wholly determined... or else man is wholly free. Sartre casts his vote in favour of total indetermination. Man, according to him, is indetermined to the extent that his volition is conditioned neither by heredity nor by environment, nor by any goal, nor by traditional values. (...) as many critics have observed, this sort of freedom is in reality its own negation.*

*To reach somewhere a man must not only be free to move but must also have a goal or purpose. In other words, he is determined by the goal he pursues.(...)*

*According to him (= Iqbal), '... the element of guidance and directive control in the ego's activity clearly shows that the ego is a free personal causality.'*

Maybe— *and only maybe*— this chapter has given a good impression of how Iqbal's view of individuality of man as a co-worker with God stands at the crossroads of **East and West**. If so, good.

## **RESPECT FOR A GREAT THINKER**

*And if not?*

We can follow certain traces of Iqbal's thinking, where he— most probably— got some traits of his thinking from. But these are only quotes. Iqbal quotes Nietzsche and Goethe and the Qu'ran and Rumi, etc. Distinct lines of thinking run through philosophy, poetry and religion; this is *the sunny side up*. But have all quotes *really* contributed to thinking itself? Or do poets and philosophers think and the quotes are just added? Maybe thinking produces itself out of thin air?<sup>33</sup> I feel I am unable to give an answer. Let's say:

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<sup>32</sup> Erfan, Prof. Niaz, *Iqbal – Existentialism and other Articles*, Lahore, 1997, pp. 58–59.

<sup>33</sup> That reminds me of an old German saying that poets make their living *out of love and thin air* ("aus Luft und Liebe")...

Muhammad Iqbal was an extraordinary thinker and poet, whose eminent ideas about man being an individual (in the sense of being a co-worker with God) give freedom to readers. In one way or another he stands between East and West and people from Orient and Occident can profit from his work. It is like this: Iqbal— *as a universal thinker*— is standing on a high mountain developing lofty, liberating thoughts about the importance of individualism. Up there on the mountaintop Oriental and Occidental breezes can be felt. Iqbal was able to use even the slightest breeze and to turn it into a vital thought.

And after all, what is more important than man's individuality and his status as a co-worker with God? It is interesting that the **eagle**<sup>34</sup>, the bird that stands for individual freedom and has its nest some place high up in the mountains, appears so often in Iqbal's poetry. In the *Payām-i Mashriq* the eagle gives advice to its youngster:<sup>35</sup>

*Walking on rocks sharpens the claws.  
You are one of the yellow-eyed of the desert.  
You are noble of nature like the simurgh.  
You are noble-born, one who, on combat day,  
Draws out the pupil of the tiger's eye.  
Your flight has the majesty of angels,  
In your veins is the blood of the kāfūrī falcon.  
Under the humpbacked, revolving sky  
Eat what you catch, be it soft or hard.  
Do not take your food from another hand,  
Be good and take the advice of the good.*

Iqbal stands alone. The mark of a great thinker as well as of a great poet.



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<sup>34</sup> For a good impression of the Iqbalian eagle, it is maybe the best idea to watch and enjoy the wonderful and uplifting paintings and drawings of **Aslam Kamal**, the official painter of the poetry of Iqbal! In many pictures, the eagle, the proud bird, can be seen!

<sup>35</sup> As quoted in Mir, Mustansir, "The Eagle in Iqbal's Poetry", in *Iqbal Review*, Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Vol. 42, № 2, April 2001, pp. 27–37 (The quote is on pp. 34–35)