

Resurrecting God: Iqbal's Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam as a Response to Nietzsche's Greatest Challenge – The Genuine Philosopher¹

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Abstract

Nietzsche asserts that after the death of God the only way to live meaningfully is through *commanding* and *legislating* values but he is ambiguous as to how the future philosophers create values. I argue that this question takes center stage in Allama Mohammed Iqbal's philosophy and poetry. This essay demonstrates this as the starting point of Iqbal's philosophy and examines how he responds to the problem posed by Nietzsche through a rejection of his *eternal recurrence* and conception of time which cannot admit of the possibility of creativity. I argue that Iqbal's notion of *Khudi* derived from his close reading of the Quran he (Iqbal) provides an answer to creating values after the death of God. In a sense describing Iqbal as more Nietzschean than Nietzsche himself: under this interpretation Iqbal completes Nietzsche's otherwise incomplete project – the genuine philosopher. I demonstrate both a reconciliation between eastern and western thought and simultaneously one between Islam and Nietzschean thought. This opens a bridge to an otherwise underexplored yet philosophically rich ground.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Iqbal, Islamic Philosophy; Self; Value;

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,

There is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,

The world is too full to talk about.

Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*

Doesn't make any sense

—Rumi, *Divan-e Shams-e-Tabrizi*, trans. Coleman Barks & John Moyne.

Nietzsche famously presents us with the task of the philosophers of the future. When God had lived, the creation of values was no difficult task: the prophet or philosopher merely needed to convince his own self that the values came from another source (God)². Now that God has died the philosophers must take up this burden themselves and be “commanders and legislators” of value³. In *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche communicates to us the task of the philosophers of the future⁴, he asks whether there are such philosophers. In the course of this paper, we discuss the question of the task of the

¹ A note on the foreign language text (excluding the German): 1. I have chosen to preserve the original script where translation would do injustice to the poetic eloquence contained. In these cases, the necessary translation is provided in either parentheses or in the following expositions. 2. In some cases, I have chosen the transliteration instead, this is in cases where though the poetic eloquence is essential – seeing the choice of words is necessary to the argument. And 3. In places I have only provided the translation, this is primarily where prose is translated, and in some cases where either the language of the poetry is not important or it is necessary that the full verse be understood. Translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

² Nietzsche, WP §972

³ Nietzsche, BGE §211

philosophers after the death of God and ask whether Nietzsche's explanations of these philosophers provide an answer to how values can be commanded without God. We conclude here that Nietzsche asserts the necessity for such philosophers but is ambiguous on the possibility of their existence.

At this point we turn our attention to Iqbal, a poet and philosopher from the east whose philosophy answers the problem we have raised. Iqbal's influence on the Indian subcontinent is perhaps second to none, and it is therefore superlatively unfortunate that his ties with the western philosophical tradition have gone for the most part unnoticed. In Pakistan he is celebrated as the 'spiritual father', that the nation is the realization of his dream. His Allahabad address in 1930 is considered to have laid the grounds for what was to become Pakistan. His impact though is not restricted to Pakistan, he is also equally if not to a greater extent revered in India. The armed forces in their annual parades play his "سارے جہاں سے اچھا" (Saare Jahaan Se Achha), when in 1984 the first Indian astronaut spoke to the then prime minister Indira Gandhi, he described his view of India with these same words. And Mahatma Gandhi when imprisoned in Pune sang Iqbal's words 'over a hundred times'. He is also held in esteem by the former and current Iranian supreme leaders both of whom have held that his poetry inspired the 1979 revolution. An exposition of Iqbal's work opens then the door to a new *West-Eastern Divam*.

Though much ink has been spilled discussing the compatibility of Nietzsche and Iqbal's philosophical work (Browne⁵ argues that Iqbal's philosophy is merely an "oriental adaptation" of Nietzsche; some⁶ argue that the two bear no relation and are wholly distinct there is no literature that attempts to reconcile Iqbal's work as a continuation of the Nietzschean project – this line that we take is made obvious from a discussion of Iqbal's comments that directly address Nietzsche. The position we take is closest to Nicholson⁷ and Schimmel⁸, both of whom argue in differing degrees that "Iqbal's philosophy owes much to Nietzsche"⁹ but is distinct in its metaphysics. We differ from this in that we take Iqbal to be a continuation of Nietzsche. This discussion on the one hand explores the question of value creation and its possibility in Nietzsche's work; but more importantly, it describes Iqbal's view of Sufi cosmology alongside its Nietzschean inheritance. Besides allowing an interpretation of Nietzsche's work, this also permits a new understanding of the ideas that shaped both the Indian sub-continent and current Islamic thought.

Killing God

To understand Iqbal's solution to Nietzsche, we must first understand what the Nietzschean death of God means for value. In this section we restrict our discussion to understanding the creation of values for the philosophers before and after the death of God. We demonstrate first that the creation of values before the death of God was relatively easy: there was always God to lift the burden. We then briefly discuss the death of God and conclude the section with understanding what must now be done by philosophers of the future to create values; finally, we conclude that, though this is a necessity for Nietzsche, on its possibility he is ambiguous. In the second section we discuss Iqbal's reconstruction of Sufi cosmology following his encounter with Nietzsche's nihilism, arguing that he solves the problem of creating values post the death of God.

When God Lived

⁴ Though Nietzsche does not explicitly mention the philosophers in BGE §211 which is being referenced here, he does so in WP §972 which served as a draft to §211, it is therefore fair to conclude that he is speaking of the philosophers.

⁵ Browne, E. G. Friedrich Nietzsche and the Orient. Oxford University Press, 1959.

⁶ Dar, (2001). & Popp, 2007.

⁷ Nicholson, 1955, p.7

⁸ Schimmel, 1954, pp. 145–157

⁹ Nicholson. 1955

In the past the creation and preservation of values was not a problem, Nietzsche relates to us that after great toil he has identified two distinct kinds of philosophers, the first who “want to ascertain a complex fact of evaluations” and the second “those who are legislators of such evaluations”¹⁰. These two “means of comfort” are attributed to Mohammed and Plato¹¹. Though a more thorough examination of the Mohammedan type of philosopher occurs in a later section, for our current purposes we will restrict ourselves to a discussion of how the philosophers of the past created values and how the death of God affects value creation.

These past philosophers have always had a metaphysical commander, a God who says “Thou Shalt.” Plato for instance when he convinced himself that the “good” as he desired it was not the good of Plato but the “good in itself.” This was the eternal treasure (God) that some man, named Plato, had chanced to discover on his way! Such thinkers have always been able to relieve their consciousness with “the hypothesis of a “god” or “eternal values,” and with this their values neither could be nor needed to be an “I will”¹²

Slave morality for instance, prior to the death of God, was conceived by the Jews through an inversion of the aristocratic equation (aristocratic equation (good = aristocratic = beautiful = happy = loved by the gods) out of “a most profound hatred”¹³ and was then reaffirmed by Christianity¹⁴.

The Death of God

Until this point the philosophers did not need to take up a burden, instead they only needed to be “executors of more ancient or higher commands.”¹⁵ But the values which derived their force from the other world eventually lose this force. This other world was God, but Christian morality brings an end to Christianity because it turns against the Christian God.¹⁶ Christian morality posits the highest values which inevitably devalue themselves¹⁷ and now “Nihilism stands at the door”¹⁸. God’s death thus “unchains the earth from its sun”¹⁹. Nietzsche sketches this process of decay in *How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable*²⁰, where the true world is God’s realm. For Plato and the first philosophers this world was accessible, “I, Plato, am the truth.”, but as the idea of the true world was refined over time it became obscure until such a point where it becomes superfluous and eventually, we have abolished it. The true world for us remains only as a fable, and the philosophers of today no longer can lighten their burden in the way that those in the past could, instead they must carry it themselves.

After God’s Death

¹⁰ Nietzsche. WP, §972

¹¹ It is unclear what type of philosopher Muhammad is attributed to. On the one hand, Nietzsche mentions two philosophers and immediately follows with mention of Muhammad and Plato, it appears as though these correspond to the first and second. But also, when discussing the second type of philosophers he distinguishes Plato and the Religious founders, this might imply Muhammad belongs to a sub-class of the second type. If this were the case, it’s absurd at best that he mentions Plato first after discussing Plato first. In the interpretation I take, Muhammad is seen as a distinct type of person though distinguished from the Mohammedans he later discusses; in the sense that Christianity is distinguished from Jesus.

¹² Nietzsche. BGE, §211 & WP §972

¹³ Nietzsche. On the Genealogy of Morality, First Treatise, §7

¹⁴ Nietzsche. The Antichrist, §5

¹⁵ Nietzsche. BGE, §199

¹⁶ Nietzsche. WP, §1

¹⁷ Ibid., §2

¹⁸ Ibid., §1

¹⁹ Nietzsche, The Gay Science, §125

²⁰ Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols.

We now stand at a doorway into the unknown. Never before has humanity been at such a place. Our values are no longer backed by God, instead we are forced into an encounter with nihilism. The spirit no longer can answer to the great dragon whose name was “Thou Shalt”, instead it must fight back as the lion does with its “I will”. And it is only once the spirit fights back that it can become child – and the child creates new values.

This brings a new age where philosophers must carry the burden themselves, take the task of creating values upon themselves. The philosophers of the future must be “commanders and legislators” of value, their only path forward is teaching “man the future of man as his will, as dependent on a human will”²¹, the great dragon is replaced with the spirit becoming child.

The question that emerges is how this burden can be carried by future philosophers whose task is a “hard, unwanted, unavoidable task”. We take Mertika’s²² view here, interpreting *The Stillest Hour*’s moment of reckoning as the same moment described in BGE 211 and WP 972, that when Zarathustra is told “your fruits are ripe but you are not ripe for your fruits!”, Nietzsche tells us that though all that is needed to command values is there the means to command them is not, “Zarathustra’s values are ready, already created, but he is not ready to bear the thought of commanding them”²³. We take the questions asked at the end of BGE 211, “Are there such philosophers today? Have there ever been such philosophers? Must there not be such philosophers?...?”²⁴, to be genuine questions about the possibility of the philosophers of the future i.e., though there is no question that such philosophers are necessary; they must be, but can they be?

Resurrecting (The) God²⁵

It is here that we take the end of Nietzsche’s thought and beginning of Iqbal’s. Iqbal has famously said of Nietzsche in his *Payām-i Mashriq*²⁶ that *قلب او مومن دماغش کافر است* (His brain is unbelieving, but his heart is a believer), and in his *Stray Reflections*²⁷ from 1910 he writes, “only a few have realized the meaning of his [Nietzsche’s] madness”. Though he does say that his philosophy developed from a close reading of the Quran, this is not to say that it was not influenced by the thought of others. For our present inquiry we proceed from two questions: 1. What Iqbal thinks Nietzsche missed, and 2. How Iqbal solves Nietzsche. For the latter we proceed in three stages: 1. We lay out Iqbal’s explicit notes on Nietzsche’s shortcomings, 2. We understand Iqbal’s Khudi, 3. We bring the two together and answer the question posed by the first section of this paper.

What Nietzsche Missed

To begin our inquiry, we look towards what Iqbal believes Nietzsche missed. In his *Bal-e-jibreel*, Iqbal says,

اگر ہوتا وہ مجذوب فرنگی اس زمانے میں
تو اقبال اس کو سمجھاتا مقام کبریا کیا ہے²⁸

²¹ Nietzsche. BGE §203

²² Mertika, 2026.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Nietzsche’s ambiguity on the future philosophers is reaffirmed by the choice to end the aphorism with ellipses; I take it to signify that this is an open-ended question that Nietzsche does not yet have a full answer to. This is the problem Iqbal responds to.

²⁵ Iqbal conceives ‘Allah’ as distinct from ‘God’. Grounded on La Illaha in the Quran, meaning *there is no God*.

²⁶ Iqbal, 1923.

²⁷ Iqbal, 1910, 30.

²⁸ Iqbal, 1935.

Were that foreign mystic in this generation, then Iqbal would have explained to him what *maqam-e-kibriya* is²⁹. We know that the mystic being spoken of is Nietzsche from Iqbal's mention of him in the final lines of the poem, the question we ask is what the *maqam-e-kibriya* is that Iqbal would have taught him. *Maqam-e-kibriya* is often translated in this poem as the 'I am', which though not wholly inaccurate is far from doing the poem's eloquence justice, literally *maqam* is place and *kibriya* is great, as in 'the great place' but both of these words have a Quranic lineage that must be acknowledged – *Kibriya* is a form of *Kabir*, The Great, which is among the most important characteristics of God (Quran 17:43), as in *Allahu-Akbar*, while *maqam* is a spiritual rank (place) – for instance the one that Muhammad is granted: the *maqam mahmud*³⁰ (Quran 17:79). Hence in Iqbal's poem we take the *maqam-e-kibriya* to be the divine station, but equally the 'I am', since the divine station is the ultimate personality³¹. Therefore, what Nietzsche missed is the divine station, this is reinforced if we look to his *Javid Name*:

آنچه او جوید مقام کبریاست
این مقام از غفل و حکمت ماوراست³²

Iqbal tells us here that *what he (Nietzsche) sought was the maqam-e-kibriya, but that it is beyond aql (reason) and hikmat (wisdom)*³³, this *maqam-e-kibriya* is to be identified with Iqbal's *Khudi*³⁴ hence the alternative translation, 'I am'. Therefore, before we proceed in our investigation, it becomes necessary that we understand Iqbal's *Khudi*.

Khudi

Khudi, literally translating 'Self', is central to Iqbal's philosophy. The notion of *Khudi*, developed from Iqbal's close reading of the Quran, is precisely what distinguishes Iqbal's *mard-e-momin* (Ideal man) from Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Iqbal explains his philosophy of the *Khudi* in *Asrar-e-Khudi*³⁵ (Secrets of the Self) as a derivation of the Quranic *Ruh*, one of the words used for soul and spirit, distinguished from the *nafs*; the former is divine hence *ruh-al-khudus* (Holy Spirit), while the latter is the singular human spirit. As Khaliq describes,

Iqbal's use of the term "Khudi" is synonymous with the word of "Ruh" as mentioned in the Qur'an. "Ruh" is that divine spark which is present in every human being and was present in Adam for which God ordered all the angels to prostrate in front of Adam.³⁶

Iqbal explains the *Khudi* as closer to Leibniz's *I-atom* arguing that this is closer to the truth of the self than Nietzsche's conception of the self in which he follows Kant³⁷. Leibniz though also fails at a full understanding of the self because he does not think it capable of growth. Iqbal argues the question to be raised is not whether or not the I is a substance or not, but instead "whether it can be made to survive the shock of death and thus become a permanent element in the universe"³⁸, this becoming a permanent element in the universe meaning "bringing it into contact with the ultimate source of life"³⁹. This last

²⁹ Translating the above couplet.

³⁰ Muhammad's divine station that makes him a mediator for intercession (*Tawassul*).

³¹ Abdul Wahid, 1964.

³² Iqbal, 1932.

³³ Again, translating.

³⁴ This connection is found in Iqbal's *Note on Nietzsche*, translated in Syed Abdul Wahid's "Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal"

³⁵ Iqbal, 1915.

³⁶ Khaliq, 2011, pp. 122–124.

³⁷ BGE §13

³⁸ Abdul Wahid.

³⁹ Ibid.

point is understood with reference to Iqbal's *Stray Reflections*; where commenting on *Tawheed* he once again mentions Nietzsche,

Nietzsche thinks that belief in God makes man feeble. The wisdom of Islam consists in exploiting the idea of God in the interest of Man and transforming him into a source of power for the Tauhid of Islam means absolute freedom from fear and superstition in actual life. A mere intellectual belief in God does not count for much in Islam.⁴⁰

Tawheed in Islamic thought⁴¹ is the recognition of God's unity, accomplishing which permits becoming (absorbing the attributes of) God, on which the Quran says, *إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ* (Quran, 2:156) (indeed to Allah do we belong and to Allah we will return). This state of union with God is what Iqbal explains as the realization of Self (*Khudi*), but this is distinct from conceiving of the self as contingent on God, instead Iqbal quotes Rumi to explain *Khudi*:

The infant Muhammad got lost
and his nurse Halima, dissolved in tears
was consoled with the words:
'Do not grieve: he will not become lost to thee;
nay, but the whole world will become lost in him.'⁴²

The *Khudi* is not found in something external/otherworldly, but in the *khud* (self). The *Khudi* is in every self but must be elevated to the *insaan-e-kamil*, the latter being the expression for the higher man in Islamic mysticism. God here is *Khuda*, as in the ultimate *Khudi* (Self), for *Khudi* is understood as that which is *Khud* (self), or in simpler terms, the self-cause, pure self hence the True Self. This conception of the relation of man and God though is not a pantheistic view. We are not the same substance as God, instead God removes infinitely beyond us. This is understood by reference to Suhrawardi's and Ibn Arabi's works which describe God as eternal, in opposition to us who exist temporally, this relation is to be understood through degrees of perfection. Suhrawardi explains that if we consider two things, both of which fall under some universal concept, the difference between them must be that they differ with regard to perfection and imperfection⁴³, thus is to say that "everything that exists is united in the individuality of all existence; and at the same time, since existence includes variable intensity, it is existence that differentiates all distinct entities."⁴⁴ It is curious here to question whether existence (*wujood*) with self (*khudi*) are identical⁴⁵, Shiriazi among others suggests it is saying "existence is precisely the same as self-manifestation," though when he speaks of self it is a distinct sense than that of Iqbal's *Khudi*⁴⁶. It is interesting that Nietzsche makes a similar comment in a manuscript from 1911 which Kaufmann notes has been "omitted in all editions", Nietzsche says "The highest honor and power among men: even from the most powerful-the only genuine form of happiness-a privileged right to God, to immortality, under

⁴⁰ Iqbal, *Stray Reflections*, 1925, 4

⁴¹ This is not a universal interpretation- I acknowledge here distinct conceptions of Tawheed, but this is certainly the view Iqbal holds.

⁴² Rumi, Book IV, verse 975.

⁴³ Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (The Philosophy of Illumination). 1976

⁴⁴ Legenhausen, Mulla Sadra's View of God's Relations to the Sensible and Imaginal Worlds: Imagination and the Variable Intensity of Being.

⁴⁵ A full explanation of this is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴⁶ Shiriazi 2008

certain circumstances to an unio [mystical union?].⁴⁷ Returning to Iqbal, to understand better the relation between the human and divine self it is helpful to look at his famous couplet from *Bal-e-Jibreel*:

Khudi Ko Kar Buland Itna Ke Har Taqdeer Se Pehle

(Raise yourself so much, that before every decree of destiny)

Khuda Bande Se Khud Puche, Bata Teri Raza Kya Hai⁴⁸

(god himself ask the person, tell me what is it that completes you)

It is important to note here that the audience who hears Iqbal's words here has no knowledge of what Iqbal means by *khudi*. In fact, the word as Iqbal uses it does not even exist within the vocabularies of this population. But this is not to say that the public does not know what he speaks of thanks to his use of the Farsi root *Khud*. Within this couplet, we are met with three instances of this same root: *Khudi*, *Khud*, and *Khuda*, the latter two though are part of everyday language, it is only *khuda* which is used in its normal sense. *Khud*, which is usually used to signify possession and translates also to self is here used in a dual sense. *Khuda bande se*, God from the person himself (*bande se*) already invokes the sense of *khud* that would otherwise be used, instead the *khud* occurs immediately after this thus applying not only to *bande*, but also to *khuda*. In this structure, Iqbal's use of *Khud* becomes a reflexive pronoun applying to both the individual being addressed as *banda* and to *Khuda* (God), though an unusual construction it remains wholly comprehensible to any Urdu speaker.

We can now look at the use of the word *Khudi* itself. Here though we preserve the Farsi root, attached to it is the feminine extension (i). This distinguishes it from the word for God, *khud* with a masculine extension (aa). God is infinite and thus seen as the universal through which is manifested all being, and here the self (*khudi*) is interpreted in virtue of its relation to God. This distinguishes it from *khud* that would otherwise be used. If this first verse fails to explain it, then the notion is reinforced by the second which as explained earlier links *khud* with both *banda* and *khuda*.

Iqbal's poetic genius with the use of *khud* though does not end here, consider now the temporal framing, *har taqdeer se pehle*, prior to every decree (of destiny), the use of *taqdeer* here is now the subject of our discussion. *Taqdeer* meaning decree takes its root in *Qadr* meaning worth, from which comes *Khudrat*, might. Iqbal in using *taqdeer* in conjunction with the *khud* language links together the notion of the becoming of *khudi* with its goal, the *mard-e-momin* holds a certain *qudrat*, mirroring again God's *qudrat* – as reflected in the common Urdu phrase, *khuda ki khudrat*, God's might. This relates further to the Islamic notion *Al-Qadr* which is divine destiny, from which comes God's 'name' *Al Qadir*, the all-powerful. With this we once again see the representation of the self (*khud*) through the infinite-self, is *Al Qadir*; Khaliq explains:

Khudi, for Iqbal, is a creative principle which functions the way will to live or will-to-power structures and over-arches the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche respectively. In its reactivity it is free and its freedom is limitless and unbound. At the same time Iqbal holds that *khudi* should always move within the self-imposed bounds of divinity since its act and since its acts and projects are translation of the divine will into history. There is no paradox in his view as it implies that *Khudi* is both historical and trans-historical.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, WP §359, footnote 95 in the Kaufman translation.

It is unclear whether Nietzsche is critiquing this view here, but the lack of evidence coupled with the previous and following aphorisms which are quoted in the 'Commanding Values' section of this paper justifies such an interpretation.

⁴⁸ Iqbal, *Wings of Gabriel*

The expanse of khudi is like a huge ocean with limitless scope for development. As the Qur'an says, God has made man in his own image and taught all the names. Hence, man is capable of acquiring knowledge and other divine attributes without of course having the essence of God in his being but when man achieves the ideal of being one with God, he attains infinity. Some Sufis call it a stage of final absorption in God, i.e. fana (self-annihilation) and some baqa (permanent state of being).⁴⁹

Completing Nietzsche

With this discussion we have together all the pieces necessary to spell out Iqbal's philosophy as a completion of the Nietzschean project. The incompleteness of Nietzsche's work that we have identified is a lack of a cohesive answer to how the future philosopher commands values⁵⁰. Iqbal answers this with his understanding of *Khudi*, it is necessary for this as is necessary for Nietzsche's future philosophers that the spirit first detach itself from the great dragon. Once the spirit is freed Nietzsche argues that the will must push forward its own value, on this Iqbal agrees. When Iqbal's work is looked at closely, it becomes evident that Iqbal does not criticize Nietzsche as Maruf⁵¹ argues but instead builds on Nietzsche. Iqbal's comments on Nietzsche express not an attack on his philosophy but merely a pointing at its deficiencies, and it is these deficiencies that the *asrar-e-khudi* seeks to make up. The line we take up is closer to Yilmaz⁵² who argues that Iqbal following his encounter with Nietzsche reconstructs the Sufi cosmology in light of nihilism.

To understand the reconstructed cosmology as a path out of nihilism, we begin by looking at the deficiency of the Nietzschean solution. Nietzsche's response to the problem of nihilism is the doctrine of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche argues that one must respond radically to the meaninglessness of existence, to affirm life so completely that one would choose to live the same life – over and over – infinitely. In *Ecce Homo* he describes *Thus Spake Zarathustra* saying: "The basic conception of this work, the *thought of eternal recurrence*, this highest formula of affirmation that can be achieved at all..."⁵³. Since the eternal recurrence though does not present itself in our view as a solution to the problem of commanding values, Iqbal suggests this is a result of Nietzsche's flawed conception of time of the eternal recurrence he says,

It is only a mere rigid kind of mechanism, based not on ascertained fact but only on a working hypothesis of science. Nor does Nietzsche seriously grapple with the question of time. He takes it objectively and regards it merely as an infinite series of events returning to itself over and over again. Now time, regarded as a perpetual circular movement, makes immortality absolutely intolerable. Nietzsche himself feels this, and describes his doctrine, not as one of immortality, but rather as a view of life which would make immortality endurable. And what makes immortality bearable, according to Nietzsche? It is the expectation that a recurrence of the combination of energy-centres which constitutes my personal existence is a necessary factor in the birth of that ideal combination which he calls 'superman'. But the superman has been an infinite number of times before. His birth is inevitable; how can the prospect give me any aspiration? We can aspire only for what is absolutely new, and the absolutely new is unthinkable on Nietzsche's view which is nothing more than a Fatalism worse than the one summed up in the word Qismat.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Khalid, 2011

⁵⁰ Mertika, 2026

⁵¹ Maruf, 1982, pp. 64–74.

⁵² Yilmaz, 2023.

⁵³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*. Why I Write Such Good Books

⁵⁴ Iqbal, 2013

That the eternal recurrence results inevitably in a determinism. A determinism he describes as *Qismat*, a view that necessitates predestination without any potential for free will leading to quietism. Iqbal points out that the eternal recurrence requires a finitude and therefore cannot admit of creativity. It is curious that this is not necessarily something Nietzsche himself would have disagreed with. Consider that Nietzsche says, “says the same things as my Zarathustra, only in a way that is different,”⁵⁵ and there is little to no mention of the eternal recurrence in *BGE*. Among the few mentions there stands *BGE* §56 where he calls it a Schopenhauerian pessimism and asks, “wouldn't this be *circulus vitiosus deus* [god as a vicious circle]?” Precisely what Iqbal's critique amounts to – that the eternal recurrence results itself in becoming an appeal to the external world, and one that does not admit of the possibility of creativity. In *Zarathustra* the third metamorphosis of the soul requires that the child become a creator, the philosopher can only in the third metamorphosis become a commander of values - it is not sufficient that the lion fight back with his “I will”. This is why when confronted by the *Stillest Hour* Zarathustra has no choice but to be ashamed of himself, he has denied the great dragon but cannot yet create his own values. It is with this thought that in his Javed-Name he says:

While *Laa* and *Illaa* are only stages along the road to a proper realization of the self,

He (Nietzsche) remained stuck in *Laa*, and did not rise⁵⁶ to *Illaa*;⁵⁷

Iqbal likens Nietzsche's thought to the first part of the declaration of *Tawheed*, *La Ilaha Illallah*, the two-part formula that begins ‘there is no God’, and continues ‘but God’, Iqbal likens God (Allah) with the ultimate *Khudi* (Self). To command value one must both deny God (all prior metaphysics) i.e., become the lion, but to move beyond this is a necessary ultimate affirmation of *Khudi*. Nietzsche's eternal recurrence therefore restricts him to moving beyond being, he says:

His enthusiasm for the future of man ended in the doctrine of eternal recurrence - perhaps the most hopeless idea of immortality ever formed by man. This eternal repetition is not eternal ‘becoming’; it is the same old idea of ‘being’ masquerading as ‘becoming’.⁵⁸

On Iqbal's understanding of *Tawheed*, we are free to posit *God* as an attainable final goal, God is not distinct from being but is being itself. Hence the decision to describe God as *Khudi*. The ‘I’ as Iqbal puts forth is capable of achieving permanence as an element in the constitution of the universe, it has the power of “absorbing the attributes of God”⁵⁹.

Commanding Values

Instead, Iqbal gives the three stages of spiritual expansion as in the *Asrar-i-Khudi*, which Iqbal describes through Quranic terminology as:

- (i) *Ita-at*: Complete surrender to the Law – the Camel
- (ii) *Zabt-nafs*: Self-control
- (iii) *Niyabat-Al Hiyah*: Vicegerency of God

In the *Note on Nietzsche*, Iqbal explicitly distinguishes this from *The Metamorphoses of the Spirit* since Nietzsche does not at all believe in the spiritual fact that he has described as *Khudi*. The solution that Iqbal finds (*Khudi*) is grounded in the eternal *now* whose realization yields the perfect man (*Insaan-e-*

⁵⁵ Nietzsche, September 22, 1886: Letter from Friedrich Nietzsche to Jacob Burckhardt

⁵⁶ This rising is the task - *kar buland* - in Iqbal's other work.

⁵⁷ Iqbal, Javid Name

⁵⁸ Iqbal, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam

⁵⁹ Iqbal, Note on Nietzsche

kamil), the final stage of *Khudi*. This conception of time is grounded in Avicenna's neo-platonic interpretation of Islam, where the form of the Good is replaced by the Necessary Existent (Wajib-al-Wujood). Since the Necessary Existent exists, universally, outside of space and time it has no temporal experiences. This once again is analogous to the perceptions experienced by Leibniz's monads.

Returning now to Nietzsche's legislators of the future, he speaks of two means of comfort, that of Plato and that of Mohammed⁶⁰, he spells out in detail the means of comfort of Plato and says the "same will to blindness dominates the founders of religion in a much coarser form,"⁶¹. It is here that Nietzsche's misunderstanding of Islam lies, he explains the will to blindness as, "the command of a god; only as an "inspiration", is their value legislation a bearable burden...". The Quran says of Muhammad as a warning to precisely such interpretation of Islam, "وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ" (Quran 36:70), that it is not inspiration (*Shair*)⁶². Instead, Iqbal describes Islam as distinct from religion, he quotes here Rumi, "the weak lose themselves in God; the strong discover Him in themselves." Islam is thus distinguished from the other religions on the ground that its defining feature is not the other world which is the root of weakness and what leads to God's death, in this sense Islam is Godless, 'laa ilaha' being the denial of the other world, that there is no God (other world). Islam instead is focused on the self, helpful here is the ego's journey to the divine illustrated by Rumi: a lover knocks on the Beloved's (God's) door. He is asked, "Who is there?", "it is I" says the lover. He is turned away, "there is no room for thee and me" responds the voice. After a while, the lover returns, knocks, and when asked who is there, replies, "It is thou," and this time the door opens. On similar lines Iqbal describes Islam,

Islam is not a religion in the ancient sense of the word. It is an attitude – an attitude, that is to say, of Freedom and even of defiance to the Universe. It is really a protest against the entire outlook of the ancient world. Briefly, it is the discovery of Man.⁶³

On this interpretation of Islam, we understand why Nietzsche spoke so highly of the Order of Assassins. The order takes an interpretation of Islam akin to that of Iqbal, being influenced most directly by Ibn Sina, who was both Sufi – anticipating the thought of Ibn Arabi, and Ismaili, and Ismaili, the same sect that the Assassins followed. Nietzsche says of these Assassins:

That invincible order of Assassins, that free spirit order par excellence whose lowest ranks lived in an obedience whose like was never achieved by an order of monks, by some means or another they also got a hint about that symbol and watchword reserved for only the highest ranks as their *secretum*: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted"... Well then, *that was freedom* of the spirit, *with that*, faith in truth itself was renounced..⁶⁴

Nietzsche's failure to discover Iqbal's *Khudi* is a product of his failure to have understood this freedom. This leads him to asserting later that to be commanders the philosophers of the future "first need to deceive themselves... that is, by pretending as if they too were merely obeying"⁶⁵, prior to this he also speaks of a "need for obedience" which is "innate in the average person", Nietzsche though he recognizes the obedience of the Assassins does not understand how it must manifest in the philosophers of the

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, WP §972

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² The verse literally translates "and we have not taught him poetry, nor is it fitting for him". *Shair* here is usually translated 'poet', from this derives the textual interpretation of Ibn-Taymiyyah who considers poetry to be sinful. This is antagonistic to the Sufi interpretation and a deliberate attempt to discredit Sufi thought. Ibn Taymiyyah's Islam develops as a reaction to Ibn Arabi's thought. Instead, poetry here is more akin to Plato's Rhapsodes in the *Ion*, who are merely divinely inspired and have no knowledge of what they recite. The Quranic interpretation taken here is to refute interpretations of Quran 96:1-7 which take Muhammad to have been illiterate and merely a vessel for revelation.

⁶³ Iqbal, *Stray Thoughts*, 1925, 1 & 3

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, BGE. §24

⁶⁵ Ibid., §199

future. For the Assassins freedom is a product of their obedience itself, this is hinted to in §287 and §361 of the *Will to Power*. In §287 he describes the ordering of ranks as distinct for the leaders of the herd and for the herd, the former is to become master over the latter, this requires an obedience but not through an individual egoism. In §361 he describes that the goal of the higher man is not to destroy Christianity, he explains, “our drive of self-preservation wants our opponents to retain their strength-it only wants to become master over them.” Continuing in §362 we are told that this egoism must come through love. The obedience that the Assassins possess is not a deception but a response to power. To this Iqbal depicts Nietzsche’s failing to rise to the *illalah* thus:

And he passed away from this world while, yet he was ignorant of the position of
‘*Abdohoo*.

With the manifestations he was in embrace, and yet he was unaware of them – ⁶⁶

Abdohoo here derives from the Arabic triconsonantal root *ABD* whose closest translation is slave. As Iqbal describes, though, the understanding of *ABD* is distinct from our understanding of slave; instead, *ABD* describes the obedience of the Assassins that Nietzsche admires. It is a realization of the *Khudi* in relation to the ultimate *Khudi*. The driving force of the ultimate *Khudi* though is not love as Khaliq depicts it when he says,

The moving principle behind such a bold and dynamic concept of khudi is *ishq* or love which Iqbal has drawn from the Sufis like Ibn- Arabi, Rumi, and Mansur –al Hallaj. For Iqbal, love is a life-force which enables us to determine our values, and which also enables us to strive for their attainment.⁶⁷

Instead, Iqbal in his *Stray Thoughts* addresses the misconception that Sufi thought holds love centrally as the moving principle, distinguishing on this basis Islam from Christianity. On Iqbal’s interpretation while Christianity describes God as love Islam does not, instead God in Islam is power, he says:

Christianity describes God as love; Islam as power. How shall we decide between the two conceptions? I think the history of mankind and of the universe as a whole must tell us as to which of the two conceptions is truer. I find that God reveals Himself in history more as power than love. I do not deny the love of God; I mean that, on the basis of our historical experience, God is better described as power.⁶⁸

We discover with this Iqbal’s full solution to the Nietzschean problem, he follows Nietzsche in the assertion that it is power which must be our guiding force, telling us, “Power is more divine than truth. God is power. Be ye, then, like your father who is in heaven.” God for Iqbal is distinct from the God that was killed by Christianity. Though God no longer is love, love is still essential but brought through the realization of power. This echoes §362 where we are told, “the greatest lovers are so from the strength of their ego--that love is an expression of egoism.” Love is produced from the recognition of power, it is not the driving force, but an accident of power which takes center stage in both Iqbal and Nietzsche. No longer is God this otherworldly figure, but is immanent, God is the ultimate, attainable Self (*Khudi*) to command values is to become one with God, but not in the Buddhist sense hence

⁶⁶ Iqbal, Javid Name

⁶⁷ Khaliq, 2011. Though Khaliq does not mention (Sheikh) Idries Shah, it is my intuition that he draws his understanding of the Sufi from Idries Shah who was by no professional standards a scholar and wholly misrepresents Sufi thought. It is from Shah that we get the false etymology of assassin as deriving from Hashish, representing them as individuals on drugs; this is incorrect, assassins in actuality derives from the Arabic *assas* meaning foundation/principle, in line with Nietzsche who describes their obedience.

⁶⁸ Iqbal, *Stray Thoughts*. 1910, 10

The weak lose themselves in God; the strong discover Him in themselves⁶⁹.

This reasserts a distinct sense of God, as we have seen Iqbal explain, Islam is not a religion in the ancient sense of the word, it is instead an attitude of Freedom and even of defiance to the Universe. Through power we create values, Iqbal's solution lies in understanding the limitations of Nietzsche's understanding of time that results in the eternal recurrence. Only once time is separated from eternity can one realize the eternal *now*, and the eternal now is achieved from the standpoint of God which is the same standpoint of the *insaan-e-kamil* (Ultimate Human). With this is derived Iqbal's formula to the values, to truth, "Power toucheth Falsehood, and lo! it is transformed into Truth."⁷⁰ With this formulation is explained Nietzsche's "most essential thing", "the feeling "Who am I? who is the other in relation to me?"⁷¹ I am *Khudi* and the other in relation to me is also *Khudi*.

Future Work

This paper has begun to situate Iqbal's work as a continuation of the Nietzschean project. It is by no means a complete exposition of Iqbal's metaphysics, instead it merely opens the window to future scholarship which understands this new place Iqbal holds in the history of philosophy – bridging the gap between scholarship in the East and West. The object of this paper is multifold, beyond situating Iqbal in the history, it presents a new approach to Nietzsche's conception of time, and the possibility of his influence from Islamic thought. Further it allows scholarship on Islamic theology and Sufi mysticism from a new lens. All of these have been hinted at varying degrees throughout the paper, but a full exposition of any of these is wholly beyond the scope of the current project.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1925, 1

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1910, 65

⁷¹ Nietzsche, WP §365

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