From Representationalism to Pragmatism: Muhammad Iqbal's Reading of Religion in Modernity

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The transliteration in this project follows the Library of Congress Transliteration schemes for non-Roman scripts. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. All translations of qur'anic verses are from Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, ed. *The Study Quran*. New York: HarperOne, 2015.

Chapter 1: Representationalism and Pragmatism

Introduction

> He who used the magic of his pen to construct an Alexandrian wall to contain the flood of westernization, who was our defense against the global epidemic of secularism and irreligiosity, whose being sought to revolutionize our apathy into activity and struggle – he is no longer with us. The brightest lamp of our hopes has been snuffed by the cruel hands of death.[1]

These are the eulogistic terms in which Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) was remembered shortly after his death in an issue of the Aligarh magazine dedicated to his life and work.[2] The themes that the essays and poems expound in this special "Iqbal issue" of the magazine – poetry, philosophy, theology, politics, education, nationalism, the threat of secularism, the prospects of Muslim renewal (*tajdīd*) and reform (*iṣlāḥ*)[3] – encompass the wide-range of Iqbal's institutional and literary activities. Iqbal was called to the bar at London, trained as a philosopher at Cambridge and Munich, worked as an educationist and professor of philosophy at Government College and Islamia College in his adopted hometown of Lahore, served in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and as the president of the Muslim League, and was a widely acclaimed Persian and Urdu poet in his lifetime.[4] As is the case for many prolific and popular scholars, the vast expanse of Iqbal's work as a politician, poet, activist,

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[1] Laiṣ Ṣiddīqī, ed., '*Ālīgaṛh Megzīn* 16, no. 2 (1938).

[2] For other, comparably eulogistic obituaries written after his death, see: "Sir Muhammad Iqbal." *The Times of India*, Apr 22, 1938, 10; "Death of a Great Indian Muslim Poet." Apr 22, 1938, 13; "All-India Tributes." Apr 22, 1938, 13.

[3] Cf. Jansen, J.J.G., "Taǰdīd", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7276> and Merad, A., Algar, Hamid, Berkes, N. and Ahmad, Aziz, "Iṣlāḥ", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0386>

[4] Numerous biographies have been written on Iqbal's life. See, for instance, Javīd Iqbāl, *Zindah Rūd: 'Allāmah Iqbāl kī mukammal savāniḥ ḥayāt* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2004); Lini S May, *Iqbal: His Life and Times* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1974); Khurram Ali Shafique, *Iqbal: An Illustrated Biography* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2006).

and public intellectual,[5] has generated a multifarious and contested legacy. In the intellectual and political landscape of post-partition South Asia, "the last and the greatest thinker of the Aligarh movement,"[6] has been summoned as a sanctioning authority on both sides of any given contentious issue. Muslim separatists, Indian nationalists, socialist movements, dictatorial regimes, democratic politicians, Islamists and modernists – these are just a few illustrations of varying and at times opposing camps that have deployed Iqbal's life and work as a resource for arguing and legitimating their claims. Perhaps fittingly, then, W. C. Smith's survey of Islam in India discusses Iqbal under two sections; one titled, "Iqbal the Progressive," and the other, "Iqbal the Reactionary."[7] The institution of the "Iqbal Academy Pakistan," a statutory body of the government of Pakistan, established shortly after the partition of India, has further proliferated and complicated Iqbal's political and intellectual reception.[8] The academy has helped generate and sustain the field of "Iqbal Studies," with several universities in Pakistan offering programs on the various facets of the life and work of the poet-philosopher of Pakistan.[9]

Within the vast secondary literature generated on Iqbal's life and literary activity, his philosophic magnum opus, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*,[10] has received

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[5] Iqbal Singh Sevea notes that the best way to capture the range of Iqbal's activities is to think of him as an activist intellectual. Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and Nationalism in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 13.
[6] Hassan, Riffat, "Introduction," in *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*, ed. H.C. Hillier and Basit Koshul (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 1.
[7] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islām in India: A Social Analysis* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1946).
[8] The purpose of the institution is "to promote and disseminate the study and understanding of the works and teachings of Allama Iqbal." For more, see http://www.iap.gov.pk/index.html
[9] Apart from publishing books and hosting conferences and events that pertain to and curate Iqbal's legacy, the academy publishes English, Persian, and Urdu journals that focus on Iqbal's life and work. For more, see: http://allamaiqbal.com/publications/pub.htm
[10] Henceforth, *The Reconstruction*.

comparatively scant attention.[11] Mustansir Mir, translator of Iqbal's verse and editor of Oxford's bibliography on Iqbal, notes that *The Reconstruction's* philosophic content "still awaits a detailed study,"[12] roughly eighty years after its initial publication.

The limited scholarly attention that *The Reconstruction's* philosophic concerns has received mirrors the ambiguous and contradictory character of the reception of the rest of Iqbal's corpus. Heroic appraisals of the text label it a "fresh spark" in modern Islam as it emerges out of the "slumber of the middle-ages,"[13] and declare *The Reconstruction* to be a successful project of synthesizing religion and science, sometimes leading to ecstatic pronouncements of *The Reconstruction's* essential rootedness in "the epistemology of the Qur'an."[14] Alternately, dismissive appraisals describe the project as "Islamic propaganda,"[15] "new wine into old bottles,"[16] as anachronistic apologetics that attempts to achieve the impossible, viz., framing and constructing relationships between discursive traditions (Islam

[11] Suheyl Umar, former director of the Iqbal Academy, and author of two commentaries on *The Reconstruction* notes that this is partly because of the immensely complicated nature of the text and partly because it was published in English; both factors served to limit its readership within India (personal communication). Also see, Muhammad Suheyl Umar, *K̲h̲ū ṯbāt-i Iqbāl: Na'e Tanāz̲ur Me̲n̲*, 3rd ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2008), 19–44.

[12] Mustansir Mir, *Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2006), 80. Several editions of *The Reconstruction* have been published over the years, commissioned by Oxford University Press, The Iqbal Academy, and most recently by Stanford University Press. All the citations from *The Reconstruction* in this text are from the Stanford edition: Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. M. Saeed Sheikh (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[13] Henry E. Allen, "Signs of a Renaissance in Islam," *The Journal of Religion* 15, no. 1 (1935): 88–90.

[14] Khurshid Anwar, *The Epistemology of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1996), 219. For other heroic assessments, see Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, "Iqbal's Ideas for the Restoration of Muslim Dynamism," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 2, no. 2 (June 30, 2011): 377–402; Adibah Abdul Rahim, "The Spirit of Muslim Culture According to Muhammad Iqbal," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 5, no. 8 (2015): 725–29; Robert Whittemore, "Iqbal's Panentheism," *The Review of Metaphysics* 9, no. 4 (1956): 681–99; S. E. Ashraf, *A Critical Exposition of Iqbal's Philosophy* (Patna: Associated Book Agency, 1978); Charles Taylor, "Preface," in *Islam and Open Society* (Dakar: Codesria, 2010), xi–xii.

[15] D. S. Margoliouth, *Review of The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, by Mohammad Iqbal, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1935): 406.

[16] A. S. Tritton, review of *Review of The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, by Mohammad Iqbal, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 7, no. 3 (1934): 694.

and European science) that are essentially incommensurate.[17] More sophisticated critical-constructive appraisals offer varying degrees of approval and disapproval to Iqbal's approach and methods in their assessment of *The Reconstruction's* concern of re-envisioning the scriptural resources of Islam in the context of colonial modernity. And they tend to evaluate and modify *The Reconstruction's* attempts to "build bridges" between the pre-colonial intellectual heritage of Islam and discourses rooted in post-Enlightenment Europe.[18]

Despite their differences, the various styles of reception (heroic, dismissive, critical-constructive) of *The Reconstruction* acknowledge and concur that its plain-sense is ambiguous, thematically eclectic, and philosophically contradictory. Recent, more textually focused studies that have wrestled with *The Reconstruction*, attempt to refer its ambiguous and troubled plain-sense to the chaotic and crisis-ridden intellectual context of colonial modernity. Such studies interrogate *The Reconstruction* as a project that is forged in the midst of and as a response to imperial modernity and its inauguration of the various "epistemological crises" that threatened the capacity of the Islamic intellectual tradition and

[17] Muhammad Maroof Shah, *Muslim Modernism and the Problem of Modern Science* (Delhi: Indian Publishers' Distributors, 2007). Also see Arthur Jeffrey's acerbic review of *The Reconstruction*, wherein he questions Iqbal's basic familiarity with Western and Arab philosophy: Arthur Jeffery, "Il Modernismo Musulmano Dell'Indiano 'Sir' Mohammad Iqbāl," *Oriente Moderno* 14, no. 10 (1934): 505–13.

[18] The assessments offered by this particular style of engaging *The Reconstruction* are usually carried out in relation to some philosophic criteria to which *The Reconstruction's* text is subjected and thereafter found lacking, or needing modification, or a complete over-haul. See, for instance, Ishrat Hasan Enver, *The Metaphysics of Iqbal* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1944); M. M. Sharif, *About Iqbal and His Thought* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1964); Saeeda Iqbal, "Muhammad Iqbāl's Dynamic Rationalism," in *Islamic Rationalism in the Subcontinent* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1984), 219–330; Nomanul Haq, "Iqbal and Classical Muslim Thinkers," *Iqbal Review* 50 (2009), http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/aproct09/index.html. I would also like to state that these three styles of criticism (heroic, dismissive, critical-constructive) name tendencies and quite a few authors display more than one. For instance, Fazlur Rahman, "Iqbal and Modern Muslim Thought," in *Hundred Years of Iqbal Studies* (Islamabad: Pakistan Academy of Letters, 2003), 427–38.

scriptural resources to bear political ideals, ethical imagination, rationality, or truth.[19] These studies approach *The Reconstruction* as an attempt to critically engage with the political, social, institutional, and epistemological imaginaries of colonial modernity and seek to imbed *The Reconstruction* in an identifiable context with respect to which its claims acquire meaning. For instance, Iqbal Singh Sevea argues that *The Reconstruction*, and Iqbal's corpus more generally, critically refashions key philosophic concepts of colonial modernity such as nationalism, liberalism, the secular and the religious, while also transforming concepts of *qawm* and *millat* from Islamic intellectual history.[20] Chad Hillier, using Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of epistemological crises, argues that:

> …the epistemological crisis [that Iqbal grappled with] was the confrontation of Western modernity. Modernity (or Enlightenment) is its own distinctive intellectual-social-moral narrative histories…and when Modernity's values (e.g. anti-traditionalism, liberalism) conflicted with the dominant traditional values of…Islam, crisis ensued. Modernity's charge was that…Islam [is an] antiquated particularistic [tradition, which is] unable to participate in the modern world.[21]

Such cognitive and moral crises were propelled, in no small measure, by pedagogic environments such as missionary schools and modern universities designed, in part, to rid the natives of India of their superstitious beliefs and false religions.[22] Muslim thinkers entangled

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[19] I am thinking here of studies such as Yaseen Noorani, "Muhammad Iqbal and the Immanence of God in Islamic Modernism," *Religion Compass* 8, no. 2 (February 2014): 60–69; Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal*; SherAli Tareen, "Narratives of Emancipation in Modern Islam: Temporality, Hermeneutics, and Sovereignty," *Islamic Studies* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 5–28; Javed Majeed, "Iqbal, Cosmopolitan Modernity and the Qur'ān," in *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, and Postcolonialism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), 116–34; H.C. Hillier, "Iqbal, Bergson and the Reconstruction of the Divine Nexus in Political Thought," in *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*, ed. Hillier, H.C. and Basit Koshul (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 167–200. Yasmin Lodi "Martin Buber and Muhammad Iqbal: A study in the modernizing mind" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1995); Naveeda Khan, *Muslim Becoming: Aspiration and Skepticism in Pakistan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

[20] Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal*, 1–35.

[21] Hillier, H.C., "Theo-political crisis & reform: Moses Mendelssohn and Muhammad Iqbal on Law and Society" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 275-6.

[22] Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas Publication House, 1978), 144–54. Also see Sajjad Rizvi, "Between Hegel and Rumi: Iqbal's Contrapuntal Encounters with the Islamic Philosophical Traditions," in *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*, ed. Hillier, H.C. and Basit Koshul (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 112–41.

in such pedagogic environments – and Iqbal as a graduate of a Scottish missionary school in Sialkot, Government College Lahore, and a professor of philosophy, Persian, and Arabic was fully implicated in the educational institutions of the Raj – struggled with and reflected on the implications of European learning for the discursive resources of Islam. One of the most significant strands of such struggles was reflection on the concepts of religion, philosophy, science, revelation, and their possible inter-relations. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is Iqbal's most sustained philosophic discussion of these themes. Abdulkader Tayob, a contemporary scholar of the thematizations that characterize Islamic discourse as it is crafted in relation to modernity, describes *The Reconstruction* as philosophic reflection that seeks to "address modernity's challenges to traditional ideas of religion and culture."[23] Javed Majeed, in his introduction to *The Reconstruction's* "American edition" describes it as a philosophic exploration in which "Islam becomes an acute manifestation of the problem religions as a whole face in relation to modernity's processes of secularization and disenchantment and its 'scientism.'"[24]

The Reconstruction's philosophic concerns of mediating relationships between religion, scripture, science, and philosophy were originally developed in the form of a series of invited lectures. Iqbal delivered these lectures for the Madras Muslim Association, the Osmania University at Hyderabad, and finally for Aligarh Muslim University in a "lecture-tour" during 1929.[25] Later on in 1930 and then in 1934, with the addition of a lecture, this

[23] Abdulkader Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 33.
[24] Javed Majeed, "Introduction to Muhammad Iqbal's The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam," in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), xii.
[25] For an account of Iqbal's lecture tour, see Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Cughtāʾī, "'Allāma Iqbāl Kā Junūbī Hind Kā Safar," in *Mutaʿalliqāt-i K̲h̲uṭbāt-i Iqbāl* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1977.), 17–45 and Rafī'uddīn Hāshmī, *Taṣānīf-i Iqbāl Kā Taḥqīqī o Toẓīḥī Muṭālaʿah* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1982), 313–23. *Zindah Rūd*, Iqbal's biography written by his son Javed Iqbal, also dedicates a chapter to Iqbal's tour of Madras, Hyderabad, and Aligarh as he delivered these lectures. See, Iqbāl, *Zindah Rūd*, 449–92.

"Bible of Modern Islam,"[26] was committed to print. Reflecting on the purposes of these lectures, Iqbal notes their audience (*mukẖāṯib*), in the main, is Muslims who are shaped by western discourse, who "urgently demand" to understand Islam, philosophy, and the new sciences in commensurate terms.[27] Iqbal's "constructive" (*ta'mīrī*) project consists in addressing the crises that ensue when the intellectual forces that shape and guide the development of "Muslim youngmen" appear to be at war.[28]

The philosophic content of *The Reconstruction*, then, is situated and formed in an environment that is perceived as being characterized by epistemic crises – recall, for instance, the terms in which Aligarh magazine described Iqbal as a bulwark against the "global epidemic of secularism" and the "flood of westernization." The most symptomatic of these crises is the capacity of the intellectual and formative resources of Islam to bear meaning, rationality, and truth. Modernity,[29] especially as it is embodied in science, including physics, biology, and psychology, as well as philosophy, including "schools" such as empiricism and rationalism, traceable to Descartes, Locke, and Kant, among others, is an unsettling condition. Especially for communities whose narratives and weltbilds involve characters such as Prophets, a speaking God, and texts that are received as containing God's speech and communication to Prophets. In the face of weltbilds that emerge out of Newtonian, Cartesian, Lockean, Humean, Darwinian, and Freudian inquiries into the nature of reality, how can a community claim access to divinity and revelation?[30] All the more so if

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[26] Umar, *Kẖūṯbāt-i Iqbāl: Na'e Tanāẓur Meṉ*, 10.
[27] Ibid. Also see: Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, xlv-xlvii.
[28] Muhammad Iqbal, "The Muslim Community - A Sociological Study," in *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, ed. Latif Ahmed Sherwani, 5th ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2009), 118–37.
[29] Iqbal variously uses the words "modernity," "the modern man," "modern thought and experience," "Europe," "the west" as synonyms throughout *The Reconstruction*.
[30] Iqbal raises these concerns throughout *The Reconstruction* and I take them up in my analysis in the following chapters.

the community in question claims that the contents of a particular text were revealed in the form of speech at a particular moment in history to a particular individual, which individual embodies the perfect example for human conduct. The crises and contradictions of modernity that Iqbal thematizes in *The Reconstruction* are encapsulated in a remark that A. J. Wensinck, one of the founding editors of Brill's *Encyclopedia of Islam*, makes in his correspondence with Iqbal. Wensinck writes:

> It seems to me that Islam is entering upon a crisis through which Christianity has been passing for more than a century. The great difficulty is how to *save the foundations of religion when many antiquated notions have to be given up.*[31]

"Modernist" Islamic discourse in colonial India – especially that which was produced by thinkers who were allied with the educational institutions of the Raj as students, faculty, and administrators – was a significant site animated by the perception that the discourses of colonial modernity imperil the "foundations of religion" and demand that "antiquated," pre-modern notions "have to be given up" in the light of those discourses. As an emblematic modernist text, *The Reconstruction* is deeply concerned with discovering habits of knowing that are appropriate to the knowledge claims of the scriptural resources of Islam as well as the knowledge claims of the "new sciences" inaugurated by modernity. Its focus is articulating habits of thought that can nurture simultaneous commitment to the authority of scripture and the authority of experimental and observational investigation of social and natural reality.

Thesis

My basic contention in this study is that at the heart of *The Reconstruction's* attempt to form concepts of religion, Islam, science, scripture, and their inter-relations are two

[31] Latif Ahmed Sherwani, ed., *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, 5th ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2009), 6. Emphasis mine.

competing tendencies of what it means to know something. The core argument of this study is that *The Reconstruction's* attempts of conceptualizing religion, of interpreting the claims of modern philosophic and scientific discourse as commensurable with religious discourse, and its arguments for establishing the cognitive authority of scriptural claims, are beset by two interwoven, conflictual epistemological tendencies, which I label *The Reconstruction's* "representationalist" and "pragmatic" tendencies. I describe their role in *The Reconstruction* as that of "leading tendencies."[32] My use of the concept of leading tendencies is analogous to the way Peter Ochs uses it in *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*. In his pragmatic method of reading Peirce's corpus, Ochs develops this concept, in part, to describe the:

> statements of the elemental rules of inquiry that…guide the production of particular theses [in a text]… A pragmatic reading [of a confused and equivocal text] is successful if…the reader can refer all contradictions among the text's theses to contradictions among [the text's] leading tendencies…Conflicting leading tendencies may be symptoms of profound conflicts within the author's thinking, or within the practices in which the author participates.[33]

My contention, then, is that the confusions and contradictions of *The Reconstruction's* theses about a rationality appropriate to religion, scripture, and science, are a consequence of the confusion between its representational and pragmatic conception of knowledge. I ascribe four features each to both these leading tendencies, which I shall describe in the following sections of the chapter. But, in brief terms, what I name *The Reconstruction's* representationalist tendency conceives:

i) knowledge as descriptive propositions
ii) knowledge as something based on incorrigible foundations
iii) knowledge claims as binary entities

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[32] Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27.
[33] Ibid.

iv) the structure of knowledge as something describable on the analogy of an essential core and a peripheral husk

What I label *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic tendency consists in conceiving knowledge:

i) as a performative attempt to name and redress a problematic context of inquiry
ii) as a triadic relation
iii) as probabilistic claims
iv) as both vague (i.e. contradictory) as well as clear (i.e. consistent) claims about the object of knowledge

The basic task of my study is describing and clarifying these two tendencies of knowing and displaying how they shape *The Reconstruction's* project of articulating a rationality that is appropriate to conceptualizing religion, science, scripture, and their inter-relations. These two epistemological tendencies, I shall argue, burden *The Reconstruction* with unresolved confusion and its equivocal and ambiguous plain-sense is a consequence of their co-presence. I shall contend that *The Reconstruction*, itself a modernist text, is a confused and equivocal modernist text because it builds on and attempts to repair the modernist conceptualizations of knowledge that it inherits and criticizes. In my reading, then, the text's representationalist tendencies are vestiges and marks of its struggle to offer pragmatic forms of repair to approaches – towards religion, scripture, science and their relationships with each other – that are informed by representational conceptions of knowledge. In labeling the relationship between *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic and representationalist tendencies as "reparative," I am a borrowing a locution from Nicholas Adams. As a contemporary commentator of *The Reconstruction*, Adams describes Iqbal as a "reparative reasoner," and this designation, in

part, characterizes the ambiguities of *The Reconstruction's* approach to resolving relationships between religion, scripture and science.[34]

In the chapters that follow, I begin the task of isolating and clarifying the pragmatic and representationalist tendencies of *The Reconstruction* by analyzing a prototype of a consistent display of representationalism that serves as an illustration of the modernist tendencies of knowing that *The Reconstruction* inherits as it tries to repair them. For my prototype, I have chosen to analyze the innovative and path-breaking exegetical essays on the Qur'an by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of the "Aligarh movement," and arguably the most significant late nineteenth century modernist thinker of colonial India.[35] While the likes of Syed Ameer Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Shibli, or any number of Indian Muslim modernists may serve as fine exponents of the epistemological tendencies that inform Iqbal's intellectual habitus and to whom *The Reconstruction* is addressed,[36] Sir Syed's oeuvre is uniquely suited to my present purposes. Apart from the fact that Sir Syed is widely recognized as perhaps the most influential Indian modernist,[37] two warrants inform my choice.

First, there is considerable evidence that links Iqbal's modernist conceptualizations with Sir Syed's religious thought. For instance, Tayob notes that Iqbal's philosophic reflections on religion, Islam, and their meaning in modernity are fruitfully read as

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[34] Nicholas Adams, "Iqbal and the Western Philosophers," in *Muhammad Iqbal: A Contemporary*, ed. Muhammad Suheyl Umar and Basit Bilal Koshul (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2008), 69–78.
[35] These essays have been collected in a 16 volume collection of Sir Syed's extensive essays, pamphlets, and articles: Sayyid Ahmād Ḵẖān, *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānipatī, 1-16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis-i taraqī-yi adab, 1962). For a detailed biography of Sir Syed, see: Ḵẖvājah Al ṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāved* (Lahore: 'Ishrat Pablishing haws, 1965).
[36] Cf. Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, 11th ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978). Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Intiḵẖābāt-i Shiblī*, ed. Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī (A'ẓamgaṛh: Ma ṭba'-i Ma'ārif, 1940). Abūlkalām Āzād, *Tarjūmān al-Qur'ān* (Kalkattah: Tarjūmānulqur'ān Āfis, 1949).
[37] Cf. Johanna Pink, "Striving for a New Exegesis of the Qurʾān," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12, no. 1–2 (2010): 56–82. Rotraud Wielandt, "Exegesis of the Qur'an: Early Modern and Contemporary," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, vol. 2, 6 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006), 124–42. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan: 1857-1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 31–56.

"successors" to Sir Syed's thematization of these issues.[38] In his correspondence with Sahibzada Aftab Ahmed Khan, one of the vice-chancellors of the Aligarh Muslim University, on issues pertaining to reforming Islamic theological thought, Iqbal acknowledges Sir Syed as a "prophetic" pioneer whose work needs to be built on and improved.[39] Riffat Hassan, one of the first doctoral students in the American academy to have penned her dissertation on Iqbal's philosophical thought, identifies Iqbal as the "greatest thinker of the Aligarh movement," initiated by Sir Syed.[40] Javed Majeed contends that *The Reconstruction* builds on and transforms Sir Syed's scriptural hermeneutics and conceptualizations of Islam.[41] But my concern is not establishing some form of unassailable historical continuity between these two figures.[42] My point is that since *The Reconstruction* was published in English, and delivered in the form of lectures across various Muslim universities, including Aligarh, it is self-consciously offered by Iqbal to Muslims whose intellectual habitus was shaped in no small measure by the modernist concerns and epistemological tendencies embodied in Sir Syed's religious thought. For my purposes, this makes Sir Syed's thought a fruitful avenue for elucidating the epistemological tendencies that informed the intellectual context Iqbal sought to repair, tendencies that informed the intellectual context in which he delivered his lectures, and to which *The Reconstruction* is addressed.[43]

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[38] Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 32.
[39] Bashir Ahmad Dar, ed., *Letters of Iqbal*, 3rd ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2015), 153.
[40] Hassan, Riffat, "Introduction," 1. For Hassan's monograph on Iqbal, see: Riffat Hassan, *An Iqbal Primer: An Introduction to Iqbal's Philosophy* (Lahore: Aziz Publishers, 1979).
[41] Majeed, "Iqbal, Cosmopolitan Modernity and the Qur'ān," 123.
[42] Additionally, by identifying Iqbal as a modernist and juxtaposing him against another, I do not mean to rehearse the facile binary between traditionalist reformers on the one hand, and modernists on the other. Iqbal's political writings, his poetry, and his prose have a foot in all the five or six camps of 19th and 20th century reformist thought that Sajjad Rizvi identifies in South Asian intellectual history. Each of these "camps" or tendencies is productive of its own sets of "modernisms" because of its location within the apparatus of colonial modernity. See: Rizvi, "Between Hegel and Rumi: Iqbal's Contrapuntal Encounters with the Islamic Philosophical Traditions," 112–13.
[43] Cf. Muhammad Suheyl Umar, *Dar-i Ā'īnah Bāz Hai* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2009), 59–61.

Second, I do not mean to suggest that *The Reconstruction* may not be read fruitfully by its juxtaposition against other contexts of inquiry or by identifying other features of the problematic context in which it is situated. In fact, there is a veritable industry of monographs titled "Iqbal and X."[44] My work on Sir Syed in this study is offered in the service of a specific pragmatic aim: I am reading Sir Syed for the sake of presenting a clear and consistent model of the representationalist tendencies in *The Reconstruction*, tendencies that are not at display as fully or as consistently in Iqbal as they are at display in Sir Syed's religious thought. The exercise is intended to, first, isolate Iqbal's pragmatic tendencies from his representationalism in order to diagnose the confusions that mark *The Reconstruction's* arguments and, second, to help me display how the former is an attempt to repair the latter. In the service of this very aim, the next two section discuss features of *The Reconstruction's* representationalism and pragmatism.

The Reconstruction's Representationalism

This study ascribes four features to the epistemological tendency that I have identified in *The Reconstruction* as representationalism. These features become less abstract and more specific during the course of my textual analysis of *The Reconstruction* but, for the sake of initial clarity, this section offers brief notes of the way that I shall be handling them in my study.

The first feature is to assume that the function of knowledge claims – whether religious, scientific, or philosophic – is to represent already-given objects and states of affairs. To make a knowledge-claim is to articulate a proposition, or to draw a picture, or to conceptualize an idea, which "mirrors" or corresponds to that which the proposition, picture,

[44] C.f. "Iqbal and Kant," "Iqbal and Leibniz," "Iqbal and Fichte," "Iqbal and Hegel," "Iqbal and Mctaggart," in T. C. Rastogi, *Western Influence in Iqbal* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1987).

or idea is about.[45] Religious claims, then, are "reports" or "indexes" that inform and describe certain states of affairs or sets of experiences. Similarly, the task of science and philosophy is to develop propositions that describe reality. The media through which a claim is communicated, whether language, pictures, or any other semiotic form, function as "conduits" or "containers" that faithfully relay information about the objects of knowledge from one context to another.[46] That which a knowledge claim refers to, is what it is, irrespective of its involvement in processes of reference.

The second feature assumes that the structure of knowledge is analogous to the structure of a "building"; that in order to construct knowledge claims, the knower must be able to specify and identify the propositions, ideas, experiences on the basis of which she makes knowledge claims. The "ground" or "foundations" on which the building of knowledge rests is itself self-legitimating and should ideally form an unassailable and necessary relation with its object. One of the fundamental tasks of any inquirer, in this view, is to identify the "ground" on which he stands and to articulate methods or processes through which any other inquirer may be able to stand on the same ground. Susan Haack notes that "foundationalism" is characterized by two complementary principles: "(i) that some of our beliefs are epistemologically privileged (certain, indubitable, incorrigible or whatever)…and (ii) that any of our other beliefs that are justified, are justified by means of the support of these privileged beliefs."[47] Richard Bernstein in his study of Descartes' search for secure foundations of knowledge notes that foundationalism entails the search for some sort of

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[45] Cf. Rorty and Dewey's account of the western philosophic tradition in Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) and John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, 6th ed. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960).
[46] Michael J Reddy, "The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 164–201.
[47] Susan Haack, "Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community," *The Monist* 65, no. 2 (1982): 168.

"Archimedean point" that serves as a "permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness."[48] Foundational claims, then, are not offered with respect to some context of inquiry but are put forth as universal, as emerging in some sense out of generic human experience.

Binarism, which is the third feature in my analysis of *The Reconstruction's* representationalism, assumes that any given universe of discourse must obey the principle of non-contradiction. Ochs describes binarism as the "tendency to overstate and over-generalize the usefulness of either/or distinctions...'Binarism' refers…to the inappropriate application of either-or distinctions to settings of irremediable ambiguity and probability."[49] When a problematic claim or practice "S" is encountered, to be binarist is to assume that the logical contradictory of the claim or practice in question "Not-S" is the only secure means by which the problematic claim may be addressed. And that the universe of all possible claims is exhausted by S and Not-S. More technically, in Ochs's words:

> The binarist assumes, for example, that some term (x) names a given object in the world (o), that some clear proposition involving x (x is y) is true because it corresponds directly to some claim about o (o is y), and that any apparently contradictory claim about o (o is z) contradicts the true proposition and is therefore false.[50]

The combination of foundationalism and binarism leads to the conclusion that in order to be resolved, suspect claims, and the practices that have generated them, have to be replaced with novel claims that are the contradictories of the suspect claims. Religion or Science, Tradition

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[48] Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 8.
[49] Peter Ochs, "Re-Socializing Scholars of Religious, Theological, and Theo-Philosophical Inquiry," *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (October 2013): 208–9.
[50] Ibid., 209.

or Modernity, Reason or Faith, Rationalism or Empiricism are instances of the application of an either/or logic to entire universes of discourse, which are divided into 2 sets and analyzed as contradictories.[51]

The fourth feature of Iqbal's representationalist tendency is to conceive of the object of knowledge as composed of certain essential features that are global and timeless, along with other inessential features, which are contingent and context-specific. This entails imagining that the purpose of inquiry is to gain access to the substantial or essential features of the object of inquiry. This "core" is predicated as being universal and timeless, whereas the "husk" represents contingent, time-specific, and less interesting features of the object. Tayob in his study of Sir Syed and Iqbal notes that this way of conceptualizing religion and Islam is germane to their work. He notes that modernists' predication of a core to the object of their interest, viz., Islam, was a strategy they employed in order to gather a sense of stability and a "foothold" in a world that otherwise appeared to them to be chaotic and senseless.[52]

These inter-related features of reasoning about knowledge, its relationship with its object, and the agent of knowledge, permeate *The Reconstruction's* argumentation. They are at display, for instance, when Iqbal claims that proper introspection, carried out by any given human being, will inevitably lead to the conclusion that "selfhood" is the most fundamental category in terms of which the universe ought to be interpreted; when he claims that Islam is a religion of peace (over and against the claim that it is a religion of violence) and that all the wars fought during the Prophet's lifetime were "defensive" (over and against the claim that

[51] Cf. Adams' account of Hegel's reception of western philosophy and his attempt to redress its shortcomings in Nicholas Adams, *Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 1–16.
[52] Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 23–48.

Islam is a "blood-thirsty" religion); when he claims that during the course of Islam's history, a "Magian crust" has formed itself over the "original core" of Islam.[53]

An important part of my analytic labor in this project consists in isolating the various ways that the features I have identified in *The Reconstruction* as representationalism shape its arguments. Thereafter, to distinguish them from another set of epistemological norms that also permeate *The Reconstruction* and with which they are in tension. As I mentioned earlier, I have labeled this other set *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic tendency of conceptualizing knowledge and the next section provides brief notes on its features.

The Reconstruction's Pragmatism

The first feature of The *Reconstruction's* pragmatic tendency is that it assumes that knowledge claims are performative, rather than propositional, and their function is to diagnose and correct the problematic practices of reasoning in which those claims are situated. Knowledge claims are stimulated by the "intrusion of external realities" that breaks some habit of expectation about the world, and their purpose is to "conceive some habit of action in the world that would not be…interrupted by the present circumstances."[54] Knowledge claims are verified, then, with respect to their capacity to resolve the problems that afflict a context of knowing, rather than according to their capacity to mirror or correspond to a given state of affairs. The meaning of claims is displayed in the habits of practice of some community of inquirers. The "truth" of practices of inquiry, whether philosophic, scientific, or scriptural, is a function of their capacity to address and repair broken practices of reasoning. As knowledge claims, their task is to adjust and modify some broken habit or expectation operative in the context of the claimant.

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[53] I explore all these claims in detail in the following chapters
[54] Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 191.

The second feature is that knowledge is "triadic." In using the word triadic, I am borrowing a technical term from C. S. Peirce, one of the founding figures of pragmatic methods of inquiry. Simply put, a triadic claim is offered not generically or universally, but with respect to some habit of knowing. According to this epistemological feature of *The Reconstruction's* pragmatism, knowledge claims are ineluctably marked by the contexts in which they are offered or uttered. More technically put, in the terms of Peirce's semiotic vocabulary – which was developed, in part, to express and distinguish triadic claims from other forms of claims – knowledge claims (sign-vehicles) about something (object) are uttered with respect to an implicit or explicitly displayed context of knowing (interpretant). As I elucidate *The Reconstruction*'*s* pragmatic tendency in this study, Peirce's semiotic vocabulary will be one of our guides in navigating their triadic character. Nicholas Adams, utilizing Peirce, offers a helpful, quick way to distinguish between "triadic forms" and "binary forms" of making knowledge claims. Triadic forms of making knowledge claims gesture toward some aspect of the environment in which the claim is offered. Binary forms leave their environment unstated and tend to invite the forms of over-generalized predication that I discussed as binarism in the previous section.[55]

The third feature is that pragmatic claims are offered as probabilistic, potentially measurable according to a ratio that displays the degree to which an expectation is likely to be fulfilled in the course of an inquiry.[56] Stated differently, a pragmatic claim is offered in the form of a hypothesis about the consequence of some activity, which consequence may be

[55] Nicholas Adams, "Long-Term Disagreement: Philosophical Models in Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism," *Modern Theology* 29, no. 4 (October 2013): 162–63. Also see, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, eds., *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934-35), vol 2, par. 233-53. Future references to this collection will be to *CP*, followed by volume and paragraph number.
[56] Cf. *CP* 5.411-68.

measured as a statistical expectation. When confronted by a problematic claim or practice, a pragmatic claim is offered as a hypothesis that could potentially (possibly or probably) address the features of the problematic claim or practice that need to be addressed. The style of justifying such a claim, rather than being foundational, is regressive, reasoning back from effect to cause. This entails imagining how the problematic practice or claim that is being examined could be a possible or probable consequence of some feature of a knower's environment that needs attention and thereafter offering suggestions about how that feature could be modified.[57]

The fourth feature of Iqbal's pragmatic tendency is that it allows knowledge claims to be vague. "Vagueness," like "triadicity" is a technical notion from Peirce. Simply put, an epistemic environment that permits vagueness admits that there may be some objects of knowledge that are appropriately handled by claims that disobey the principle of non-contradiction.[58] Daniel Weiss, in a recent study of Herman Cohen's articulation of concepts that are appropriate to religion, argues that the "communicative inconsistencies" and rational contradictions that inform Cohen's concepts are not a "sign of faulty reasoning," but a way of developing concepts that are appropriate to the paradoxical character of the object of Cohen's inquiry (i.e. religion).[59] Similarly, Shahab Ahmed, in his ambitious and extensive articulation of a conceptual vocabulary appropriate to the complex phenomenon of Islamic history, develops the notion of "coherent contradictions."[60] I am not claiming – and neither, in my reading, are Weiss and Ahmed – that in certain contexts contradictory claims "mirror" reality

[57] Peter Ochs, "Reparative Reasoning: From Peirce's Pragmatism to Augustine's Scriptural Hermeneutics," *Modern Theology* 25, no. 2 (2009): 194–95.
[58] For Peirce's account of the difference between vague and non-vague claims, see: *CP* 5.505.
[59] Daniel H. Weiss, *Paradox and the Prophets: Hermann Cohen and the Indirect Communication of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34.
[60] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 405–541.

better and more accurately than non-vague claims. Instead, this feature of *The Reconstruction's* pragmatism entails the following three sub-claims. First, that the consequences of a practice of inquiry are appropriately predicted in vague terms.[61] Second, that activities required to resolve a particular problematic practice may violate the principle of non-contradiction. Thirdly, that descriptions or instructions for activities that successfully navigate a problematic situation may legitimately be vague.[62]

These set of features comprise *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic tendency of conceiving knowledge. They are at display, for instance, when Iqbal argues that concepts are instruments that help an organism navigate the complex environments in which it finds itself; when he claims that conceptions about Islam have to account for the presence of unity and diversity, permanence and change, in the history of Islam; in his style of arguing that the human self is unified and free; when he develops relationships between the concepts of experience, knowledge, and reality.[63]

The relationship in *The Reconstruction* between its pragmatic tendency of conceiving knowledge (knowledge as performative, contextual, probabilistic, and vague) and representationalist tendency (knowledge as propositional, essential, foundational, and binary) is unsettled. While my primary goal is clarifying how both sets of epistemological tendencies govern *The Reconstruction's* patterns of reasoning, by isolating *The Reconstruction's* pragmatism from its representationalism, I intend to show that the relationship between these two tendencies is one of repair. Pragmatism is not a simple rejection of representationalism

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[61] Statistical expectations are paradigmatic cases of vague claims: to claim that the consequence of an activity, X, is likely to be Y, say, 80% of the time, is to claim that the consequence of X is likely to be Not-Y 20% of the time.

[62] As noted earlier, Ahmed and Weiss contend that concepts such as "coherent contradictions" need to be developed in order to understand and relate with the features of complex phenomena such as "Islamic history" or "Jewish thought."

[63] All three sub-claims are explored in the following chapters in detail.

but an attempted repair. Their confused status in *The Reconstruction* speaks to the unresolved character of Iqbal's repair of the epistemological context he is operating in. Consider each of the sub-features I have isolated in pragmatism and representationalism. The pragmatic sub-features do not entail a flat denial of the representational sub-features, but an attempted modification: from propositional to performative; essential to contextual; foundational to probable; binary to vague. Admitting vagueness does *not* dispense with binary distinctions, but requires that their domain of reference be specified. Binary claims are appropriate and indispensable in any setting where conventional claims such as "pass the salt" or "the cup is on the table" are being uttered and exchanged. Admitting vagueness is not denying the applicability and efficacy of binary claims in such every-day situations. To admit vagueness is, firstly, to contextualize the efficacy of the principle of non-contradiction as a measure with which to interrogate claims. Secondly, it is introduce the notion that certain contexts of inquiry are not served well if interrogated in binary terms. As I stated earlier, Weiss and Shahab Ahmed's work demonstrates that phenomena such as "Jewish thought," or "Islamic intellectual history," are only adequately handled if approached in vague or non-binary terms. Ochs notes that:

> 'binarism' is a strong tendency to overstate and over-generalize the usefulness of either/or distinctions. I assume that we appropriately rely on such distinctions whenever we seek to communicate something clearly: when, for example, someone says 'pass the salt,' meaning 'salt and not pepper.' But I also assume that such communications are appropriate only within groups of language users who tend to share common understandings of some sets of terms and only in settings where communication does not require ambiguity [i.e. vagueness, in Peirce's sense] or judgments of probability. 'Binarism' refers only to the inappropriate application of either-or distinctions to settings of irremediable ambiguity and probability.[64]

[64] Ochs, "Re-Socializing Scholars of Religious, Theological, and Theo-Philosophical Inquiry," 208–9.

Similarly, Performative claims do not dispense with propositions, but entail modifications in how we understand the referential function of propositions. As I noted in the previous section, according to Iqbal's representationalist tendency, knowledge claims are offered as if they are conduits through which the objects of such claims become visible to the claimant. Whether such claims are conceived to be linguistic propositions or pictures or mental impressions, their health is guaranteed by the fact that they somehow attach or correspond with their referents. Conceptualizing knowledge claims as performative does not entail that one simply gets rid of propositions or pictures or diagrammatic tools more broadly in conceptualizing an object.[65] Contextual (or triadic) claims do not dismiss notions of mind-independent reality or enduring and permanent phenomena, but assert that such phenomena are vague and become clear in context-specific ways.[66] Probabilistic inquiry does not dispense with the idea that in any given inquiry, certain claims function a-critically or indubitably; probability entails a modification of the way such claims may be accessed: through abductive, regressive reasoning, rather than through some unassailable procedure of grounding knowledge claims.[67]

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[65] Peirce's now classic description of what the word "lithium" refers to is particularly instructive here. Peirce notes: "If you look into a textbook of chemistry for a definition of *lithium*, you may be told that it is that element whose atomic weight is 7 very nearly. But if the author has a more logical mind he will tell you that if you search among minerals that are vitreous, translucent, grey or white, very hard, brittle, and insoluble, for one which imparts a crimson tinge to an unluminous flame, this mineral being triturated with lime or witherite rats-bane, and then fused, can be partly dissolved in muriatic acid; and if this solution be evaporated, and the residue be extracted with sulphuric acid, and duly purified, it can be converted by ordinary methods into a chloride, which being obtained in the solid state, fused, and electrolyzed with half a dozen powerful cells, will yield a globule of a pinkish silvery metal that will float on gasolene; and the material of *that* is a specimen of lithium. The peculiarity of this definition—or rather this precept that is more serviceable than a definition—is that it tells you what the word lithium denotes by *prescribing what you are to do in order* to gain a perceptual acquaintance with the object of the word" (*CP* 2.330), emphasis mine. The key thing here is that the description of lithium involves propositions that prescribe percepts or rules of action, rather than seeking to mirror the reality of lithium. Cf. Frederik Stjernfelt, *Natural Propositions: The Actuality of Peirce's Doctrine of Dicisigns* (Boston: Docent Press, 2014).

[66] John Deely, *New Beginnings: Early Modern Philosophy and Postmodern Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 151-182. The section titled "Religion in Triadic Terms" in Ch. 3 of this project illustrates this aspect of Iqbal's pragmatism.

[67] *CP* 5.440-46.

During the course of this study, as I:

a) diagnose the ambiguities of *The Reconstruction's* patterns of reasoning as a product of two epistemological tendencies in the text
b) isolate the way these two tendencies shape *The Reconstruction's* articulation of a rationality appropriate to religion, scripture, and science
c) refer one of the two (representationalist) to the modernist epistemological context Iqbal is operating in and describe the other (pragmatic) as Iqbal's attempt to intervene and modify the perceived short-comings of that context
d) ascribe the confused co-presence of both tendencies in *The Reconstruction* to the unresolved character of Iqbal's attempted repair of his epistemological context

I am drawing on the hermeneutical strategies of scriptural reasoners such as Ochs, Adams, Weiss and their methods of approaching philosophic texts whose plain-sense is equivocal. The technical side of this study, particularly as it pertains to the bulk of my work, viz., isolating the pragmatic and representational tendencies in *The Reconstruction*, shall continue to rely on Peirce's semiotic tools. They are well-suited to this and analogous studies because these tools were developed by Peirce for the purpose of isolating the pragmatic dimensions of his thought from the errors of the practices of reasoning he inherited and reiterated in the earlier part of his career.[68] I shall burden my readers with the technical side of my work gently and incrementally during the course of this study and, in order to avoid rhetorical ugliness, I shall continue to rely on footnotes for some of the more technical claims I shall make about the epistemological distinctions between pragmatism and representationalism in *The Reconstruction*.

[68] Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 3–19. *CP* 5.411-436

Chapter 2: Sir Syed's Representationalism

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan; educationist, essayist, knighted functionary of the judicial apparatus of the British empire in colonial India, and founder of Aligarh Muslim University, is one of the most innovative figures in the development of discourses that sought to conceptualize productive and commensurate relationships between pre-modern Islamic intellectual traditions and the "new sciences" (*'ulūm-i jadīdah*).[1] One of the elemental features of Sir Syed's "modernism" (*jadīdīyat*)[2] is to argue that for "religious" (*dīnī*) claims to be sound they have to, in some sense, be commensurate with "scientific" (*sā'insī*) claims. I shall clarify what Sir Syed means by the terms religious and scientific and what is entailed in such claims being commensurate by working through Sir Syed's exegetical writings on the Qur'an that contain his reflections on religion, scripture, and science.

My purpose is to show the features of knowing that inform Sir Syed's project of re-describing and recovering the capacity of religious claims to be expressive of truth in the context of colonial modernity. I shall show that Sir Syed argues that religious claims, when they function well, function like other knowledge claims to adequately describe the objects they are about. He recovers the capacity of religious claims to adequately describe their referents by identifying the husk of ill-conceived beliefs and practices (viz., reposing trust in miracles, believing in the supernatural, anthropomorphizing nature) that, unfortunately,

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[1] Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "'Ulūm-i Jadīdah," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, 2nd ed., vol. 7, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis-i taraqī-yi adab, 1991), 211–12.

[2] See Bashir Ahmad Dar, "Sayyid Ahmad and Modernism," in *Herald of Nineteenth Century Muslim Thought: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Cug̲h̲tā'ī (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 125–30 and Bashir Ahmad Dar, *Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1957). For a recent account of Sir Syed's modernism that places it in opposition to colonial discourses, see: Khurram Hussain, "Islam as Critique" (Ph.D., Yale University, 2011). For an account and illustration of the way Sir Syed shaped modernist concerns in India, see: Ahmed H. al-Rahim, "Translation as Contemporary Qur'ānic Exegesis: Ahmed Ali and Muslim Modernism in South Asia," in *The Two-Sided Canvas: Perspectives on Ahmed Ali* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 136–50.

inform "historical" Islam. And, thereafter, isolating this husk from the kernel of Islam, which accords with God's intentions (*maqṣad-i Ilāhī*), faithfully imitating the form as well as content of the beliefs of Muhammad and his companions.[3] This kernel – which comprises propositions that correspond with the objects they refer to – is accessed by a foundational principle of interpretation through which the scriptural resources of Islam should be approached. This foundational principle sunders Sir Syed's intellectual practice from the practices of inquiry he inherits. As Sir Syed conceives it, his task is to construct and perform a prototype of intellectual practice that has the capacity to address the cognitive ills that ail Muslim intellectual practices in relation to religion, scripture, and science in colonial India. The epistemological side of Sir Syed's performance of this prototype is what I have labeled representationalism[4] and, for my purposes, illustrates the epistemological environment in which *The Reconstruction* conducts its task of establishing commensurabilities between religion, scripture, and science.

This chapter is divided in three parts. In the first part I discuss Sir Syed's principles of exegesis (*usūl al-tafsīr*) and the conceptions of religion, scripture, science, and their inter-relations embedded in those principles. In the second part I examine specific passages from Sir Syed's commentary on the Qur'an. The purpose of this section is to show Sir Syed's principles in action. This section also furnishes specific illustrations of Sir Syed's attempt to structure non-antagonistic relationships between claims that emerge from different and seemingly antinomous sources. I show how Sir Syed's exegesis delivers a discursive universe in which the claims of pre-modern scriptural texts and the claims of the new

[3] Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 2, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1965), 197–257.
[4] That is, knowledge as propositional, essential, foundational, and binary.

sciences are able to cohere because they describe reality in similar, identical, and non-contradictory terms. The third section, building on the first two, summarizes how Sir Syed's overall project of articulating religious thought anew is informed by representationalism.

Sir Syed's Principles of Exegesis

Sir Syed situates his exegetical writings on the Qur'an in a narratival context that locates him both within the history of the British Empire in India as well as Islamic intellectual history more broadly. Sir Syed notes that after the mutiny (*ġẖadar*) of 1857 – a complicated "revolt" against the British East-India company, involving disgruntled sepoys, the Queen regent of Oudh, the Mughal Emperor, and various factions of North Indian elite – he was moved to reflect on and reform (*Iṣlāḥ*) his community.[5] His reflection convinced him that the Muslims of India could meaningfully address the political, economic, and intellectual crises they were undergoing if, "they [learnt] those new arts and sciences (*'ulūm-o-fanūn-i jadīdah*) that are the source of pride of other communities, and to learn them in the language that reigns supreme – by God's will – in our land."[6] In order to fulfil this aim he set up a society for translating scientific and historical texts from English into the vernacular and, among other things, established one of the first modern "Muslim" colleges in Aligarh.[7] Sir Syed notes that his literary and institutional endeavors were viewed with suspicion and

[5] Sir Syed's ancestral home was ransacked during this conflict and, by all accounts, including his own, it was a transformative ordeal. After the *ġẖadar* Sir Syed wrote copiously to dispel the notion that it was a "Muslim" uprising, that it was possible for Muslims to be fully Muslim and fully loyal to the crown. For more, see Sayyid Aḥmad K̲ẖān, *An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India* (Meerut: Mofussilite Press, 1860); Sayyid Aḥmad K̲ẖān, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (Benares: Medical Hall press, 1873); George Farquhar Irving Graham, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1909), 15–48; Mushirul Hasan, *A Moral Reckoning: Muslim Intellectuals in Nineteenth-Century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8–18.

[6] Aḥmad K̲ẖān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 198.

[7] See J. M. S. Baljon, "Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Social and Educational Work," in *Herald of Nineteenth Century Muslim Thought: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Cug̲ẖtāʾī (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 103–24; Ḥālī, *Hayāt-i-Javīd*, 317–95; Graham, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*, 49–63.

opposed by the Muslim community. He discovers that the source of his interlocutors' anxieties was a particular assessment they shared:

> whoever engages with the modern arts and sciences – whether Christians, Hindus, or Muslims – end up bidding farewell to their religious beliefs (*maẕhabī 'aqā'id*)…[those who engage with] modern arts and sciences deem the conclusions of the new sciences to be true and accurate and when they find that their religious beliefs are contrary to the new sciences, they judge them to be false.[8]

This state of affairs prompted Sir Syed to conduct an inquiry into whether there was weight in the assertions of the *'ulamā* about tensions and contradictions between the new sciences and the claims contained in the Qur'an. His initial research was quite disappointing; Sir Syed finds that *tafsīr* texts are filled, almost without exception, with spurious, inaccurate, and mythical content. This content, in Sir Syed's judgment, is neither reflective of the qur'anic text itself nor its reception during Muhammad's life-time:

> [Given the state of *tafsīr* literature] I began, to the limit of my capacities, to reflect on the Qur'an in order to discover the principles on which its structure (*naẓm*) rested. And, to the limit of my capacities, I found that the principles on which it rests, and which are discoverable in it, are not in tension with the 'new sciences.'[9]

The principles with which Sir Syed approaches the Qur'an are sourced out of the text of the Qur'an and serve as the fundaments or secure ground on which it rests. The *Tahrīr fī usūl al-Tafsīr*, which contains these principles, is composed of two series of letters. These letters are exchanged between him and his close associate, Mehdi Ali Khan, who was a frequent contributor to *Tahẓīb al-Aḵẖlāq*,[10] one of the first members of Sir Syed's Scientific Society,[11] and served as one of the secretary of the Aligarh University, founded by Sir Syed.[12]

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[8] Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 198–99.
[9] Ibid., 200.
[10] See Baljon, "Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Social and Educational Work," 106; Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāved*, 163–67.
[11] David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 76–81.
[12] For his biography see Amīn Zuberī, *Ḥayāt-i Moḥsin* ('Aligaṛh: Muslim ūnīvarsiṭī pres, 1934). Also see Abdul Sattar Khan, "A Great Stalwart of the Aligarh Movement: Nawab Mohsin-Ul-Mulk," *Pakistan Annual Research Journal* 49 (2013): 45–58.

Mehdi Ali, who initiates the correspondence during which Sir Syed articulates his principles of exegesis, is quite perturbed after having read some of Sir Syed's exegetical essays on the qur'anic narratives of miracles performed by Jesus and Moses in their prophetic careers as well as his exegesis of the jinn. What perturbs Mehdi Ali is that Sir Syed argues that the qur'anic text does not affirm Jesus' miracles, or Moses' miracles, or the existence of angels and of the jinn.[13] He says to Sir Syed:

> I am saddened that you have taken up opinions (*masā'il*) that educated Europeans nowadays – those who are not religious in either belief or practice – believe to be true. And have read the verses of the Qur'an [in accordance with those opinions] in such a way that…even the word independent interpretation (*ta'vīl*) does not do justice to [the eisegetical character of] your work. You heartily curse Muslim exegetes and refer to them as blind imitators of Jewish commentators of the Bible. But you, yourself, have reposed your trust in the non-religious thinkers of this age...and have interpreted the Qur'an [according to their pattern of thinking]. Neither the context of the verses of the Qur'an, nor the words of the text, nor the idiomatic and grammatical conventions of Arabic support your claims.[14]

In fact, according to Mehdi Ali, Sir Syed's reading of the Qur'an is entirely contrary to the intentions of its utterer.[15] In his reply to this line of criticism, Sir Syed thanks Mehdi Ali for reading his *tafsīr* in confrontational (*muk̲h̲ālifānah*) rather than devotional (*mu'taqidānah*) terms.[16] Sir Syed focuses on Mehdi's contention that his *tafsīr* is contrary to the intentions of its utterer and contends that Mehdi is blinded by the prejudices of his upbringing. The fact

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[13] For an introductory account on the place of angels and the jinn in Islamic intellectual history, see MacDonald, D.B., Massé, H., Boratav, P.N., Nizami, K.A. and Voorhoeve, P., "D̲jinn", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0191> and Reynolds, Gabriel Said, "Angels", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson.

[14] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 201–2. Mehdi Ali closes his letter with the following request: "Nothing would please me more than you relieving me of my doubts. Because in many places [your *tafsīr*] is so noble (*'umdah*) and pure (*pākīz̲ah*) and elevated (*a'lá*) that, after the Qur'an and hadith, if someone were to recite it and learn it by heart, he would [gain the status] of an *'ālim* and true Muslim in this world and would be deserving of the rewards that God has reserved for true Muslims (*sace musalmān*) in the world to come" (Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 202).

[15] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 202.

[16] Ibid.

that Mehdi Ali continues to cling on to the fantastic tales he was told as a child makes him susceptible to trust the *ʻulamā* and the *mufassirūn*, whose work appears to him as the disclosure of God's intentions.[17] It is not Sir Syed but Mehdi who is misguided because he trusts the eisegetical impositions of the *mufassirūn* on the text, over Sir Syed's more reliable commentary. Sir Syed pleads with Mehdi Ali to not receive – like the *mufassirūn* – "the religion of Islam as stories about fairies and devils."[18] Mehdi Ali's next, extremely detailed and caustic retort is worth recounting because it sets up Sir Syed's elucidation of his principles of exegesis and it illustrates the epistemologically problematic environment in which Sir Syed's modernist concern of building commensurabilities between religion and the new sciences was stimulated.

Mehdi Ali begins by stating that he prefers to be "entrapped in the quick-sand of received doxa"[19] rather than, like Sir Syed, attempt to build relations between religion and the new sciences. Following Sir Syed means "risking descent into a deep cave, alight with the fire of darkness."[20] Sir Syed may think Mehdi Ali childish for believing in miracles or the existence of angels and the jinn, but the proponents of the new sciences, whose work Sir Syed wishes to make commensurate with scriptural claims, would likely ridicule Sir Syed and his attempt to make peace between scientific and scriptural claims:

> My beloved [Sir Syed]! You have accused me of not understanding the elevated character of your exegesis because of my adherence to the stories I was fed as a child, which stories have damaged my capacities of thought and reflection. But tell me – if the philosophers and scientists of this age who...are spreading a new light in the world – if they say about you that even though you [Sir Syed] have given up imitation of your ancestors, think their books are rubbish (*raddī*), make fun of (*taẓḥīq*) the *ʻulamā*

[17] Sir Syed tells Mehdi Ali: "You may think my work wrong, you may not accept it but [neither your upbringing nor your trust in the '*ulamā* and *mufassirūn*] is grounds for claiming that my work is contrary to God's intentions" (Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 204). Maq 2 204.
[18] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 207.
[19] Ibid., 209.
[20] Ibid.

> and exegetes...but – despite your elevated reason, enlightened consciousness, investigative thought, wise mind – are *still* entrapped by the tales you were told as a child...and continue to believe in God and Prophets [How shall you respond to them?] I do not mean to insult you but...the philosophers...and practitioners of the new sciences say exactly this about people who hold religious ideas.[21]

Mehdi Ali then launches a volley of remarks that cast further doubt on the notion that the sciences of their time could form non-adversarial relationships with the discursive resources of Islam: "According to the science of our age...God is reduced to a speculative hoax and a product of old fashioned and stale thought."[22]; "A God who creates...listens, knows, is wise...how can someone who thinks on the pattern of Hegel and Darwin" affirm such a being?[23] If there is a God that Darwin and Hegel affirm, it is not the God of Abraham and Muhammad but a mere "first cause."[24] Mehdi Ali's letter culminates in a hail of pronouncements:

> Modern science has issued its fatwa: God's existence is suspended. Prayer and worship are a product of the fear and anxiety of ignorant and unrefined people. Prophethood is a veil of deception. Revelation (*vaḥī*) is a myth. Inspiration (*ilhām*) is a dream. The soul is perishable. The Day of Judgment is a hoax. Reward and punishment are human fantasies. Heaven and hell are meaningless words. Human-beings are advanced apes.[25]

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[21] Ibid., 212-3. Mehdi Ali continues: "Hence a great European thinker in a popular book – where he denies God's power and intentionality and knowledge… has described God only as a necessary first cause...he says [that belief in a necessary first cause rather than a personal God] is free of old ideas and more reasonable than them. Doubtless, it requires its adherents to be strong of heart [in comparison with weak-willed religious believers]. And another one of them says: 'That which people call a creator God is, in fact, a creation of people themselves and a personification of human attributes.'...He thinks people who believe in God are fools and idiots…and he says about a pure book like the New Testament that, 'in my opinion, in order for any intelligent person to be convinced that the New Testament is a human creation, and a barbaric one at that, all they have to do is open it up and give it a read…'rid your eyes of the blindfold of devotion,' he says, 'your heart of fear, and your mind of spurious thoughts…[and you shall blame yourself] for considering, even for a minute, that the author of this work is rational, and good, and pure.' These are not the ideas of one or two authors but most of those familiar with science look upon religious people...with bewilderment and pity. Lo! Unless one reaches that pinnacle of knowledge wherefrom these people [speak]...one appears to them as entrapped by ancestral ideas [about God, Prophets, resurrection, and salvation]" (Aḥmad K̲ẖān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 214-15).

[22] Aḥmad K̲ẖān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 222.

[23] Ibid., 220-1.

[24] Ibid., 220.Maq v 2 -- 220

[25] Ibid., 222.

How can Mehdi Ali's "revered Sir Syed, [his] beloved master (*murshid*)"[26] begin to think that rapprochement is possible between the new sciences – whose conclusions are clearly anathema to notions of God, prophecy, scripture – and Islam?

Sir Syed begins his response by remarking on the scattered and panicked nature of Mehdi Ali's critique. He maintains that each of the issues Mehdi is concerned about – God's existence, revelation, life after death – may be shown to be reasonable in the light of the new sciences (*na'e 'ulūm*); one does not need to rely on fideistic strategies to hold that such claims are true. The more immediately pressing problem before us, says Sir Syed, is that our debate is haphazard and scattered. Sir Syed can rectify this problem by providing Mehdi Ali the principles (*usūl*) of exegesis he has employed in his *tafsīr*. If Mehdi Ali agrees with these principles, his concerns about Sir Syed's interpretation of prophetic miracles, angels, and the jinn shall be allayed and their disagreements may be resolved.

The narratival context in which Sir Syed situates his principles of exegesis already displays the features of knowing that informs Sir Syed's overall project. Confronted by a divisive environment, one that pits religion against science, Sir Syed's proposed healing of this environment sets up a corresponding antagonistic relationship between Sir Syed's exegetical practice and the practices of qur'anic interpretation he inherits. Sir Syed's work is motored by the perception that the entirety of the *tafsīr* tradition is incorrigibly beset with problems that are beyond correction. This tradition has forsaken what Sir Syed takes to be its primary task; viz., describing the way the Qur'an was received and interpreted during the Prophet's life-time. It has, instead, laced the text of the Qur'an with unreliable, sometimes pre-Islamic Arabian, at others pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian myths. The conflict between

[26] Ibid.

the new sciences, which are a reliable means of conducting investigation into nature,[27] and scriptural claims has come about because the latter have been approached through what we are now in a position to judge are erroneous patterns. These patterns may have seemed reasonable at an early stage in both human history as well as the history of the Muslim community, but the improvement in knowledge demands that these patterns (and the foundations on which they rest) be discarded and replaced.

Sir Syed's judgment that he has inherited a practice, E_1, which is irrevocably errant, sunders his discursive universe into two: the errant practice of *tafsīr* on the one hand and a potential, constructed practice of *tafsīr*, E_2, on the other. The marker of distinction between E_1 and E_2 is that E_1 is errant and E_2 is not-errant. Hence, not only is Sir Syed's discursive universe divisible into two, the two components of this universe, E_1 and E_2, are contradictory; E_1 is errant, E_2 is not-errant. Sir Syed's practice of *tafsīr* (E_2) is accurate or true at the expense of the practice of tafsīr (E_1) he inherits. This is identical to the pattern through which Mehdi Ali, and Sir Syed's contemporaries, envision the relationship between religion (R) and science (S). As Mehdi Ali put it, either religious claims (*maẕhabī ḵẖayālāt*) about reality are true and there is a God, Prophets communicate with God, there is life after death etc. Or scientific claims about reality, contradictories of the aforementioned claims, are true.

Sir Syed's project of mending relations between R and S relocates the pattern of opposition between R and S to a pattern of opposition between E_1 and E_2. Only the construction of a possible pattern of interpretation in relation to the Qur'an can mend the divisiveness between religion and science. As you can see, Sir Syed's wholesale critique of

[27] Sir Syed's conception of nature and its relationship with scripture forms the central principle of exegesis through which he approaches the Qur'an. I take up this conception in the following paragraphs.

the tradition of practice that he wishes to repair through his own contributions sets up a contest governed by the law of excluded middle; either Sir Sayyid or the classical and medieval exegetes are trustworthy or accurate interpreters of the Qur'an. This is an epistemological environment that Peter Kang describes as strongly binary.[28] A typical feature of a strong binary is the extension of a particular predicate (is erroneous) beyond a specifiable and contextualizable referent (or index) to a non-contextualized and general referent such as "the *tafsīr* tradition." Insofar as the most significant marker of distinction between the practice Sir Syed criticizes (E_1) and the one he constructs (E_2) is the predication of error to one and non-error to the other, the differences between both sets of practices get re-described as oppositions. And insofar as knowledge means accurately mirroring reality, the predication of "is truthful" to either E_1 or E_2 entails that the other "is not-truthful."

The form in which Sir Syed's practice intervenes in the area of qur'anic interpretation is taken by him to be a display of a formal feature of how knowledge functions and "builds" on antecedent practices. For Sir Syed, the accumulation of knowledge by a community of reasoners and inquirers, in any given field of inquiry, is marked by severe disruptions. E.g., the transition from Ptolemaic astronomy to Copernican astronomy, from Aristotelian physics to Newtonian physics. In such moments the foundational assumptions of a particular epistemic environment (*zamānah*) are discarded and replaced by surer, more trustworthy foundations. In an essay titled "The New Sciences" (*'ulūm-i jadīdah*), Sir Syed notes that the transition from Greek sciences to modern, European sciences involves a replacement of the basic principles (*usūl*) on which the previous sciences stood and the erection of newer basic

[28] Peter Kang, "Mapping Triadic Vistas: A Commentary on the Work of Peter Ochs in Response to Leora Batnitzky," *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 8, no. 2 (2009), http://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/vol-8-no-2-august-2009-the-roots-of-scriptural-reasoning/mapping-triadic-vistas/.

principles.[29] In another essay titled "The Progress of Knowledge," (*Taraqqī-yi ʻulūm*) where Sir Syed discusses the distinctions between modern and ancient (*qadīm*) science, he notes: "The errors of Greek science are openly visible and [in its place] the new sciences stand on excellent and secure foundations (*mustaḥkam bunyād*)."[30] As the foundations on which knowledge rests become more secure, they are also able to represent reality more accurately. E.g. Greek sciences, with what we now know are faulty foundations, imagined the sun revolved around the earth and that the earth was stationary. Modern science describes the reality of the behavior of the sun in relation to the earth more accurately partly because the foundations on which it rests are truer to reality. For Sir Syed, then, the accumulation of knowledge is a historically extended, continuously ruptured process, which, as it unfolds, represents reality progressively more accurately.

Sir Syed's reworking of *tafsīr* imagines that the traditions or practices of reasoning that an actor or a community inherits is akin to a building.[31] This building, during the course of the history of the community that is "housed" in it, may continue to serve its needs with minor "repairs" and the addition of rooms here and there. But it is likely, with the passage of time, that the dwellers of this building shall discover that the fundaments on which it rests are in fact flawed. In such perceived moments of crisis, it would be incumbent upon those reasoners who have detected fundamental flaws in the structures of reasoning that their community has inherited to demolish the flawed building and to furnish novel, better, more secure foundations on which to build anew the practices of reasoning that shall sustain this

[29] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "'Ulūm-i Jadīdah."
[30] Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Taraqqī-yi 'Ulūm," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 7 (Lahore: Majlis-i taraqī-yi adab, 1991), 215.
[31] I shall show in the next paragraph that not only does Sir Syed imagine that knowledge is akin to a building but that the object of one's knowledge is also like a building. In fact, one of the primary tasks of an inquirer is to, to the best of their capacity, identify the foundations on which the object of knowledge rests and then construct the house of knowledge on identical foundations.

community.[32] Epochs are distinguishable from each other in part because they are served by different – and progressively more accurate – "grounding" knowledge-claims. Given Sir Syed's conception of knowledge, members of a community that belong to different epistemological epochs or regimes, funded by different epistemological assumptions, are involved in interminable conflict with each other to form accurate representations of reality.

The kinds of doubts the new sciences pose about religion – summed up in Mehdi Ali's recounting of the "fatwas" of modern science on religion – demand that the foundations on which interpretive relations with scripture are formed be laid anew. Sir Syed's principles of interpretation are offered in the service of this aim. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, he claims that the principles he seeks to articulate are identical to the principles on which the entire composition (*naẓm*) of the Qur'an rests.[33] This way of constructing the relationship between the object of one's inquiry and one's claims about it suggests that in order to interrogate one's object adequately (in this case the Qur'an) the inquirer is to imagine that one's object of inquiry – like the practices conducted to examine the object – is akin to a building. The foundations of the house of knowledge are secure and trustworthy to the degree that they are identical to the foundations on which the subject-matter of knowledge rests.

Sir Syed lays down 16 such principles whose over-arching purpose is to convince Mehdi Ali and Sir Syed's audience more generally that a) his exegetical concern of disproving miraculous and supernatural readings of the Qur'an and b) his concern of proving that the Qur'an's claims are congruous with the claims of western philosophy and science, rest on sound, qur'anic principles. The most prominent principle he employs to this end is

[32] In Haack's terms, Sir Syed imagines that the knowledge claims of a particular epoch (*zamānah*) are based on a set of epistemologically privileged and (seemingly) incorrigible and self-legitimating assumptions.
[33] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 200.

that "nothing in the Qur'an contradicts the law of nature,"[34] which he treats as synonymous with the phrase, "the work of God does not contradict the word of God."[35] Whereas Sir Syed makes amply clear that the phrase "word of God" (*vard āf Gād*) is one of his synonyms for the Qur'an, the phrase "work of God" (*vark āf Gād*) displays the imprecision of his conception of creation and that which knowledge claims are about. This imprecision is encapsulated in the vast range of linguistic expressions he uses to describe the "work of God." For example, he uses the phrases nature (*fi ṯrat*),[36] creation (*maḵẖlūq*),[37] existents (*maṣnū'āt-i 'ālam*),[38] law of nature (*qanūn-i qudrat*),[39] laws of nature (*qavānīn-i qudrat*),[40] the work of God (*ḵẖudā kā kām*),[41] the habits of God (*'ādat allah*),[42] as substitutable and synonymous expressions. Ali Bakhsh – one of Sir Syed's adversaries, who acquired various fatawa from India as well as Mecca and Medina, denouncing and anathemizing Sir Syed's approach to the Qur'an – and Christian Troll criticize Sir Syed's unclear deployment of these terms.[43] Troll, after acknowledging Sir Syed's "imprecise" understanding of nature, proceeds to clarify Sir Syed's position by arguing that the law of nature Sir Syed is trying to articulate is the "law of cause and effect," according to which all "events in the universe come about."[44]

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[34] Ibid., 239.
[35] Ibid., 246.
[36] Ibid., 239.
[37] Ibid., 246.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 206.
[40] Sayyid Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Mu'jizah Kī Ḥaqīqat," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 13 (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1993), 84.
[41] Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 206.
[42] Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Mu'jizah Kī Ḥaqīqat," 79.
[43] Christian Troll, "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 1817-98, and His Theological Critics: The Accusations of 'Ali Bakhsh Khan and Sir Sayyid's Rejoinder," in *Herald of Nineteenth Century Muslim Thought: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Cughtāʾī (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 326. According to Ḥālī, Sir Syed's biographer and associate, these fatawa declare Sir Syed to be the *ḵẖalīfah* (representative) of the Devil himself who is intent upon leading Muslims astray. See Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāved*, 517–19.
[44] Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, 176.

Rather than taking Sir Syed's imprecise descriptions of the work of God or creation or the law of nature as a problem that can be rectified by offering a clear definition, or an occasion to clarify his muddled thinking, I take Sir Syed's opacity as a symptomatic feature of his conception of that which knowledge claims are about. Stated differently, I take his opacity to be a symptomatic feature of his conception of nature and creation. Sir Syed has widely been described as a naturalist and a deist who imports regnant notions of nature and the "book of nature" from 19th century deistic theology as it was being articulated in England and elsewhere. Barbara Metcalf, for instance, notes that, "In [Sir Syed's] scheme God was a Deist First Cause, a remote impersonal God who did no more than set in motion laws that then worked themselves."[45] Similarly, Dietrich Reetz remarks that Sir Syed "followed a deist concept when he equated the Work and Word of God. [Sir Syed is like] Voltaire and Rousseau who supposed God had simply set the clockwork of the universe going…"[46] If Sir Syed is to be described as a naturalist, which is an epithet employed by his opponents to discredit him, as well as a label he re-claims for himself, it is important to specify the sense in which his conception of creation or existence is "naturalistic" and not view his position as purely derivative of naturalistic thought as it developed in Europe in the wake of the

[45] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India : Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 323.
[46] Dietrich Reetz, "Enlightenment and Islam: Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Plea to Indian Muslims for Reason," *The Indian Historical Review* 14, no. 1–2 (1988): 215. Peter Byrne marks out two elemental features of deism: first, religion is not tied to any specific historical moment and is beyond culture and history. Second: God's interaction with creation is uniform, law-bound and universal. For Byrne's general overview of deistic conceptions of God, please see Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion: The Legacy of Deism*, (London: Routledge, 2013), Ch. 3.

Enlightenment.[47] In fact, Sir Syed wrote an essay to dispel the idea that his conception of creation or "the work of God" is deistic.[48] In this essay, Sir Syed voices his critics' concerns in the following terms: if God has created the world according to certain patterns, then is it not the case that God has effectively been absolved (*ma'zūl*, *mu'a̤ṯ̤tal*) from the functioning of creation?[49] Just as the operation (*caltī*) of a watch is not related to the watchmaker who constructs it, does Sir Syed's position not entail that creation continues to function independent of its creator?[50] Sir Syed responds by claiming that God's relationship with the world is not comparable to a watchmaker's relationship with the watches she constructs. Nor is the functioning of a watch comparable to the functioning of the universe (*kā'ināt*). God's activity, which is the cause of all being, is not comparable to the activity of a watchmaker, who is the cause of a particular being, i.e. a watch. While a watch may be "self-sustaining" after it has left the hands of its constructor, the patterns that operate in the universe do not possess any agency or capacity to sustain their own activity. God is the ground and source that sustains (*qā'im*) the continual functioning of creation. As the perpetual sustainer and regulator of creation, "God is never out of work."[51] Contrary to Metcalf's assertion that Sir Syed believes that the universe works according to self-sustaining patterns and Reetz's

[47] Sir Syed's wide range of linguistic expressions to describe his naturalism, coupled with the already mentioned vast range of synonyms he uses for creation and existence poses a serious problem for translators. For example, a literal translation of Sir Syed's principle of exegesis about the "harmonization" of the word and work of God reads as follows: "No matter in the Qur'an can violate the law of nature." Such a translation is likely to fund and legitimate interpretive approaches that contend that Sir Syed wishes to legitimate the existence of some sort of "singular" or "unified" law of nature according to which it functions. My analysis in this chapter attempts to retain the vagueness of phrases such as *qānūn-i qudrat, qavānīn-i qudrat, 'ādat Allah* by translating them as the regularities, patterns or principles discoverable in nature, creation, or existence.
[48] The title of this essay translated in English reads: "Does Naturalism mean that God is Absolved?" See: Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Kyā Necur Ke Mānane Se Khudā Mu'a̤ṯ̤tal Ho Jātā Hai?" in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 3, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1984), 283–85.
[49] Ibid., 283.
[50] Ibid., 283-84
[51] Ibid., 285

claims that he models the universe as a "clockwork," Sir Syed is anxious to dispel the notion that the universe, by virtue of being rule-bound, is self-sustaining.[52]

A close inspection of Sir Syed's own clarifications and comments on what he means by the "work of God" or "creation" or "the laws of nature" suggests that Sir Syed is committed to the formal principle that that which knowledge claims are about a) is patterned and b) ultimately transparent to human cognition. Creation is characterized by rules and regularities which may be accurately captured and represented through reflection, manipulation, and investigation of creation. Stated differently, Sir Syed is committed to the formal principle that nothing in nature or creation is ontologically mysterious or unamenable to rational analysis and the patterns that constitute the course of nature are ultimately ascertainable.[53] He is not, by virtue of this formal commitment, committed to a fully ascertained or given body of knowledge about what such rules or patterns might actually be: "It is true that we are not aware of all the laws according to which nature operates. In fact, we are aware of very few laws and our knowledge of even those laws is incomplete (*nāqis*) and not absolutely definite (*pūrā*)."[54]

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[52] Sir Syed's conception of human agency in relation to the course of nature proceeds according to more usual deistic lines. Since everything in the universe occurs according to a set measure (*muqaddar*), the subjective wishes and prayers of prophets and ordinary human beings do not have any bearing on the occurrence of events in nature. Admitting the efficacy of petitionary prayer would amount to admitting that miraculous events that contravene nature do occur. It would also introduce a veiled form of anthropomorphism in the events of nature since they would be directly subject to the wishes and desires of human beings. In more concrete terms, God cannot be petitioned to (miraculously) cure diseases, bring about rain or influence the results of the lottery. However, this does not mean that the activity of prayer can be abandoned altogether. Prayer is an "instinctive" (*fiṯrī*) act and has the capacity of significantly altering the subjectivity of one who prays. It grants one the patience (*ṣabr*) and fortitude (*istiqlāl*) required to bear the burdens of life. The "objective" consequences of prayer are displayed in the form of the radical transformations it can bring about in the attitude and activities of one who prays and not in any fantastic, supernatural occurrences. See: Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Du'ā Aur Uskī Qubūliyyat," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 13, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1993), 55–64.

[53] This should not be taken to mean that Sir Syed imagines that the character of these patterns is mechanistic and Newtonian and that Sir Syed's formal commitment advances either a physicalist or a reductively mechanistic picture of creation. See Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Mu'jizah Kī Ḥaqīqat," 78–91.

[54] Ibid., 84.

The formal character of Sir Syed's commitment to the regularities that constitute the course of nature is evidenced in an essay titled "The Reality of Miracles" (*Mu'jizah kī ḥaqīqat*) wherein he recommends a three step process when one is confronted by what appears to be a strange, mysterious, or inexplicable event (*'ajīb vāqi'ah*):[55]

1. Gather evidence (documentary, perceptual etc.) that confirms the occurrence of the inexplicable event.
2. See if the data of your investigation can be explained and comprehended by means of the current understanding of the course of nature.
3. If step two fails, then, rest assured and accept (*taslīm*) that the inexplicable event is amenable to human cognition and that it occurred according to regularities or processes of nature that we are currently unaware of.

The point is that the incomprehensibility of strange or un-patterned events is a function of the ignorance of the investigator and the epistemological environment he is a part of. The patterns that course through nature or creation are always operative and never suspended or violated. Sir Syed grounds the inviolability of the course of nature as he discusses his principles of exegesis through various scriptural verses such as Q 54:49, 7:32, 30:29, 33:62. He reads verses such as 33:62 (…and you will find no alteration in the wont of God) as propositional descriptions of the inviolable character of the patterns that constitute creation. The inviolability of the course of nature constitutes an operational covenant (*'amlī 'ahd*) God abides by;[56] any unregulated, miraculous event that contravenes the course of nature (*k̲h̲arq-i 'ādat*) would make a liar out of God. In fact, if God had inserted human beings in a created

[55] Ibid., 84–90.
[56] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Mu'jizah Kī Ḥaqīqat," 82. Also see: Also see Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 230–38 and Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, 176.

order, some of whose features are intrinsically mysterious, that would have been akin to God asking a cow or a donkey to learn the rules of grammar.[57]

The referent of the knowledge claims of any inquiry is the work of God, i.e., one or another facet of creation. The history of human thought, punctured by foundational disruptions, is one of incrementally describing creation more adequately. The new sciences are (merely) one stage, albeit the most improved and advanced stage so far, of representing creation. Similarly, the claims of scriptural interpretation, which is an inquiry comparable to other fields of investigation into creation, make knowledge claims about God's word or the Qur'an. Sir Syed's central principle of exegesis, then, is that a methodologically sound investigation of God's speech and God's work will generate knowledge claims that are commensurate with each other.

But what does progress or advancement look like in relation to the investigation of scripture? How does Sir Syed's work improve upon his predecessors? Akin to the new sciences in relation to creation, Sir Syed's exegetical writings are involved in an "overturning" of assumptions about scriptural claims and the logics through which they should be approached. Sir Syed's exegetical principles seek to provide novel and more appropriate foundations for how the scriptural texts of Islam ought to be interpreted. Their purpose is to displace ancient and erroneous (*qadīm aur g̲hala ṯ*) principles of interpretation that have informed the "mainstream" of the *tafsīr* tradition. Sir Syed's argument is that his exegetical principles and particular knowledge-claims about the Qur'an, such as his claim that the Qur'an does not affirm the independent existence of angelic beings, or the jinn, or miracles, is a more accurate representation of the intentions of the utterer of the Qur'an and

[57] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 207.

that his claims accord with the reception of the Qur'an by Muhammad and his companions. By over-turning the mainstream of the *tafsīr* tradition, Sir Syed is recovering crucial elements of the Qur'an's "original" reception, which were obfuscated during the course of Islam's history. Epochs after him, Sir Syed argues, will be able to clarify and represent this original reception of the Qur'an and the intentions of its utterer even more fully and accurately. What actually happened as the Qur'an was interpreted and received during Muhammad's lifetime serves as Sir Syed's frame of inquiry and he anticipates that future historical scholarship (*tārīk̲h̲ānah taḥqīq*) is likely to improve upon and, if need be, radically over-turn his own work.[58] As Sir Syed carries out this task, he imagines two potential "charges" (*ilzām*) against his position. The first is the charge of anachronistic reading and the second, in Sir Syed's words, is the charge of "turning the Qur'an into a toy in the hands of its readers."[59]

Sir Syed claims that even though his interpretive claims may be novel, he will only rely on readings that would have been potentially available to the Qur'an's original readers. The linguistic conventions of Arabic language, idiomatic usages, and grammatical rules that were operative in the "speech of the Arabs of the *jāhiliyyah*" shall serve to protect Sir Syed from attributing anachronistic readings to the Qur'an.[60] Even if Sir Syed's interpretive conclusions are absent from, or were marginalized, in the Qur'an's reception history, that is not an argument for supposing that his interpretive work is anachronistic:

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[58] Ibid., 254-57.
[59] Ibid., 256.
[60] Sir Syed laments that it is unfortunate that "little of the texts of the *jāhiliyyah* period have reached us, and doubtless, a great portion of it is lost. The *'ulamā* of literature (*'ilm-i adab*) concede as much." The work of lexicographers, grammarians, poets will serve as an important guide, but, its paucity means that Sir Syed will rely on the Qur'an's text itself as a guide of the linguistic norms that govern it as well: "Doubtless, we are bound to refer to extant lexical and literary works [of Arabs of the *jāhiliyyah*] in determining the meanings of the Qur'an. But, let us suppose, we have firm evidence that some word in the Qur'an is used in a way that is not retained in [extant] lexical or literary works, we shall not hesitate in accepting [the meaning we have found uniquely operative in the Qur'an]. In doing so we shall not be treating the Qur'an any differently than the texts of the *Jāhiliyyah*" (Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl, 249).

> [As I show that the Qur'an does not refer to miracles or anthropomorphic beings] some of my brethren will get angered and [will adduce evidence to show] that the Qur'an contains references to 'un-natural' miracles. [I shall reply politely,] 'The verses you have presented as proof of un-natural miracles in the Qur'an: is it possible to read them differently – remaining true to the linguistic and literary conventions, idiomatic and metaphorical usages of the Arabs?' [If such interpretations are possible, I shall rest my case.] If they reply by asserting that during the thirteen centuries of Islam neither the companions [of Muhammad], nor their successors (*tabi'īn*), nor the successors of the successors (*taba' tabi'īn*), nor the exegetes…set forth the meanings you have determined, we shall respond: 'Spare us this argument and tell us if the meanings we have determined are true to the words, idioms, metaphors of the Qur'an.'[61]

While historical readers may disagree with Sir Syed, his claim is that the principles of his inquiry are well-suited to the Qur'an's original reception, crucial elements of which may have, so far, escaped the traditions of its reception. His task is to represent meanings, as they were intended by God, and received in the context of the Qur'an's revelation and production. The original "core" of the Qur'an's reception is likely to become clearer with the passage of time as historians, theologians, exegetes, lexicographers approach the Qur'an with better evidence, and sounder, more reliable, foundations of inquiry. The task of critical, contemporary exegesis is to gather evidence in order to pierce through and go behind the reception histories of the Qur'an to discover its original reception. As long as there is evidence to support the claim that an interpretive reading was available to the original audience of the Qur'an's reception, the novelty of interpretive claims put forth, by itself, does not constitute proof of anachronism.

The second charge of Sir Syed's interlocutors, which builds on the first one, contends that interpreting the Qur'an according to epistemological assumptions that are foundationally ruptured during the course of the Muslim community's history makes a mockery of the text of the Qur'an. As I mentioned earlier, Sir Syed imagines that knowledge acquisition in

[61] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 240-41.

relation to an object is a foundationally grounded project that seeks to correspond to its object. During the course of knowledge acquisition certain moments entail that old foundations ought to be replaced by newer ones. These newer foundations are constructed in the hope of securing a more accurate vision of the object of knowledge, which Sir Syed variously labels creation, nature etc. Consequently, different epistemological epochs are in interminable competition with each other, with each successive epoch securing more accurate relations with nature or creation. If such fundamental discontinuities ought to be germane to the reception history of the Qur'an too, as Sir Syed contends and performs through his work, how can the communities of its reception maintain that the Qur'an is truth-bearing? Sir Syed articulates this charge in the following terms:

> It is said to us sarcastically: 'When Greek wisdom, astronomy, and philosophy spread among Muslims, then considered accurate and in accordance with reality, the *'ulama* of Islam affirmed portions of the Qur'an that seemed in agreement with those sciences, and tried to make commensurate with those sciences those portions (of the Qur'an) that appeared contrary to them. Today when it is known that these sciences were built on wrong first-principles, that their astronomy was absolutely opposed to reality, and when natural sciences have made more progress, you [Sir Syed] contradict those meanings which earlier '*ulama* determined according to Greek sciences and adopt other meanings which agree with the sciences of the present day. It will be no wonder if in the future these sciences advance further and the things which today appear fully ascertained may be proven wrong. The need will arise of establishing other meanings of the words of the Qur'an and so on. So the Qur'an will become a toy in the hands of its readers.[62]

Sir Syed responds to this line of objection by stating that any advance in the sciences that deal with nature shall belie only previous interpretations and leave the capacity of the Qur'an to represent truth intact:

> … as the sciences continue to advance and as we ponder over it [i.e. the Qur'an] with regard to these advanced sciences, it will become known that its words are in agreement with reality in the light of these (newer sciences too), and it will be proved

[62] This is a modified translation from Aziz Ahmad and G. E. Von Grunebaum, eds., *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan 1857-1968*, Reprint (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004), 38–39. For the original, see: Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 255-6.

> to us that the meanings we determined earlier, and which were proved wrong now, were a fault of our knowledge, and not of the words of the Qur'an.[63]

Sir Syed's response is not just addressed to Mehdi Ali and his interlocutors. He is gesturing toward his own life-history. More specifically, he is alluding to a tract he wrote in 1848 in which he argued for and defended the veracity of a geocentric Ptolemaic view of a stationary earth around which the sun resolves. He offered this as cosmological doctrine that had to be defended against the "teachings of the new sciences [being taught] in the Government colleges of Agra, Benaras, and Delhi."[64] By the 1860s, when Sir Syed starts penning his exegetical essays on the Qur'an, he becomes an advocate of a heliocentric view of the cosmos – and vehemently argues, against his former self, and asserts that the Qur'an does not contradict a heliocentric view of the universe. By reading the Qur'an such that it has the capacity to fund or be commensurate with both a geo-centric and a helio-centric conception of the universe, Sir Syed in fact disburdens the text of the Qur'an from the contents of any given picture of the cosmos while simultaneously burdening it with a formal claim, namely, that the Qur'an has the plasticity to continue to be commensurate to the representational capacities of any established set of '*ulūm* or practices of knowing. The Qur'an will be readable such that its contents will not contradict the progressively improving representational capacities of practices of knowing pertaining to nature or creation. What is more, such reading, while belying previous traditions of reading, is likely to shed light on and illuminate features of the Qur'an's original reception.[65] Just as creation is not belied when we discover that our representations of creation are faulty (i.e. geocentrism), in the same way,

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[63] Modified from: Ahmad and Grunebaum, *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan 1857-1968*, 39. For the original, see: Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 256.
[64] Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, 147.
[65] The examples from Sir Syed's exegesis that I will discuss in the following section illustrate this point.

the Qur'an is not belied when we discover that the history of our reception of the Qur'an rests on flawed foundations and is errantly descriptive of reality (i.e. miracles, beings such as angels and the jinn). In fact, for Sir Syed, not the fate of the Qur'an, but the fate of its investigators is on the line in any engagement with the text: It is the fate of the Qur'an's investigators that they shall be proven (fundamentally) wrong about the word of God – over and over again. Much in the same way that creation's investigators have been proven fundamentally wrong about the work of God, time and again. Just as creation's investigators are richer and truer for discarding geo-centrism for helio-centrism, for adopting Newton's physics over Ptolemy's, for Darwinian over non-evolutionary models of biology; in the same way, the Qur'an's investigators are likely to become richer and truer through Sir Syed and others after him who shall over-turn his work and radically revise the terms of historical, lexical, theological, hermeneutical etc. scholarship on the Qur'an.[66]

Sir Syed's Exegesis of the Qur'an

In this section I shall work through Sir Syed's exegesis of the jinn and the "miracles" of Moses and Jesus to illustrate how Sir Syed puts into practice the exegetical principle that nothing in the Qur'an contradicts the course of nature.

Sir Syed uses a combination of three strategies for tackling apparent references in the Qur'an to anthropomorphic beings and miraculous events:

1. He argues that the references in question are a retention and a report about the beliefs of the Arabs of the *jāhilī* period in such phenomena
2. When he comes across linguistic expressions such as angels (*malā'ikah*) or jinn in the Qur'an he finds textual warrants through which he can argue that a non-miraculous

[66] As I mentioned earlier, the case in relation to the Qur'an is a bit more complicated: what is being discovered or recovered through the progress of the *tafsīr* tradition are elements of the Qur'an's original reception and God's intentions with respect to that reception.

reading of the linguistic expression in question is historically, lexically, and idiomatically viable

3. Sir Syed offers an explanation – based on relatively stable hypotheses offered by the sciences of his time – of apparently inexplicable events contained in the Qur'an

Using the first strategy, when Sir Syed comes across terms such as angels (*malā'ikah*) or jinn or magic (*saḥar*), he finds textual warrants through which he can argue that the referents of these seemingly supernatural verses are the "erroneous and absurd" (*g̲ẖala ̣t aur behūdah*) beliefs of the Arabs of the *jāhilī* period or a product of their "speculation and imagination."[67] This strategy builds on Sir Syed's distinction of purposive (*kalām-i maqṣūd*) and merely instrumental (*kalām-i g̲ẖer maqṣūd*) text or speech. Sir Syed notes that an interpreter's basic challenge in relation to the Qur'an, and texts more generally, is investigating the purposes and intentions of the "utterer" of the text or speech she confronts (*kalām-i maqṣūd*). This is no simple task since texts and utterances rely on expressions and devices (*kalām-i g̲her maqṣūd*) that are not directly intended to convey the intentions of the utterer, but are subordinate to the larger purposes of the utterance. Distinguishing linguistic expressions that serve as mere vehicles for conveying intentions and purposes that lie beyond the semantic contents of such expressions from the actual purposes of the text is a significant hermeneutical challenge. The interpreter of the Qur'an is beset by this challenge because the Qur'an is replete with linguistic expressions that are employed purely instrumentally by God:

> In determining the meanings of the Qur'an [we must settle] whether the speech upon which we found our argumentation is the real end of what is said (*kalām maqṣūd*) or just the means of the speech (*gher maqṣūd*). For if it is the latter then argumentation cannot be based upon it. 'Not end' speech (*kalām ghair maqṣūd*) is found in the Qur'an in many places and in human speech too it occurs. For example God says, 'Verily, those who say our signs are lies and are too big with pride for them, for these the doors of heaven shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise until a camel shall pass into a needle's eye' (Sura 7:38). From this one cannot argue that at some

[67] Sayyid Aḥmad K̲ẖān, "Jinnon̲ Kī Ḥaqīqat," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid,* ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1965), 152.

> time in the future a camel will pass through the hole of a needle, because this is not the intention of what is said. It is meant to express the impossibility of the entry of those people into Paradise who belied God's signs. Likewise one cannot argue upon this verse that heaven has doors, for these words are not said with that intent, but are intended to express the idea that they will be deprived of God's mercy.[68]

The Qur'an contains linguistic expressions that retain the manner in which Muhammad's Jewish, Christian, and Polytheistic contemporaries employed such expressions. The occurrence of a word that was used in the context of its reception to refer to an element of the social world of its recipients is not sufficient evidence to suggest that the Qur'an endorses or promotes the reality of the element referred to.[69] Sir Syed's flagship example is that just as the Qur'an contains the expression idol or idols (*ṣanam, aṣnām*) but does not affirm the existence of Gods apart from God, so the Qur'an contains references to the jinn and magic, without simultaneously affirming the existence of anthropomorphic beings or supernatural events.[70] The notion that the universe is populated by the jinn, by powerful, invisible beings, created of smokeless fire, who have the ability to shift their appearances and perform fantastic feats is a vestige of the "erroneous and absurd" (*g̲hala ṯ aur behūdah*) beliefs of the Arabs of the *jāhilī* period, a product of their "speculation and imagination,"[71] not a reference to the reality of such beings.[72]

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[68] Modified translation from Ahmad and Grunebaum, *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan 1857-1968*, 36. For the original, see: Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 246–47.

[69] Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Jibrā'īl o Mīkā'īl Aur Farishtoṉ Kā Vujūd," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 13 (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1993), 164–65.

[70] For Sir Syed's applications of this hermeneutic device, please see: Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, "Farishtoṉ Aur Shai ṯān Kī Ḥaqīqat," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 13, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1993), 177–85; Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Haẕrat 'Īsá Kī Paidā'ish Aur Vafāt Kā Mas'alah," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, 2nd ed., vol. 14, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqi Adab, 1993), 310–47; Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Haẕrat 'Īsá Ke Mu'jizāt," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 14, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1993), 348–73 and Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Jibrā'īl o Mīkā'īl Aur Farishtoṉ Kā Vujūd," 157-176.

[71] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Jinnoṉ Kī Ḥaqīqat," 152.

[72] Sir Syed laments that Muslim exegetes in their analyses of the Qur'an have uncritically taken up such fantastic and unreal ideas of the *jāhilī* Arabs as the intended and real meaning of the Qur'an's usage of the word "jinn." See: Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Jinnoṉ Kī Ḥaqīqat," 172-73.

He deploys his second strategy in relation to the jinn in the Qur'an by drawing attention to the fact that the semantic field of the word "jinn" allows it to be read as a reference to something that is "hidden" or "concealed" and he offers evidence to show that this particular usage of the word jinn was prevalent at the time the Qur'an was revealed. He then argues that the real referents of the word jinn are "wild and unruly (*vaḥshī*) human beings who live in mountains, jungles and desolate (*vīrān*) areas, concealed and hidden away from cities."[73] When the Qur'an uses the expression jinn, it refers to a) the fanciful ideas that a particular group of people believed in or b) wild and uncivilized human beings, living in the outskirts of the settled populations in Arabia. In either case the Qur'an is not referring to any mysterious entities.[74]

He also uses the second strategy to interpret seemingly miraculous attributions to Jesus in the Qur'an. For instance, Sir Syed interprets part of Q 3:49 (…I [i.e. Jesus] will heal the blind and the leper and give life to the dead by God's Leave…) by noting that the wide-spread belief of the '*ulamā* about Jesus as a miracle-worker is a consequence of their uncritical acceptance of Jewish and Christian traditions of interpretation: "It is a chief habit of the *'ulamā* of Islam that they subject the meaning of the Qur'an to the traditions (*rivāyatoṉ*) of Jews and Christians and that is precisely why they have interpreted [the Qur'an] to mean that Jesus used to make blind people see and heal lepers and quicken the

[73] Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Jinnoṉ Kī Ḥaqīqat," 155.
[74] Sir Syed's interpretive scheme for reading the jinn mentioned in *sūrah* jinn is unique to this *sūrah*. He states that, "it was a habitual practice of the disbelievers (*kuffār*) in Mecca to furtively (*chup kar*) listen to the Prophet of God." Sūrah jinn is a narrative account of one of these occurrence wherein the Prophet's recital of the Qur'an was overheard by Meccans who were concealed (*poshīdah*) from his sight. The "jinn" in the *sūrah* refers to these concealed individuals (*nafar min al-jinn*), who converted to Islam because of the powerful influence of Muhammad's recitation. Sir Syed argues that the first fifteen verses of the *sūrah* corroborate his interpretation of the jinn as human beings since these verses indicate that the jinn held Christian, Jewish, and Polytheistic (*but parast*) beliefs. See: Sayyid Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Sūrah Jinn Kī Tafsīr," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 2 (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1965), 137–43.

dead."[75] This criticism should not be taken to mean that Sir Syed dismisses Christian and Jewish scriptures as unreliable and corrupt sources. To the contrary, he believes that those scriptures, in their current form, are loci of divine revelation. Consequently, Sir Syed argues that if the Gospels of Luke, Mark, and Matthew are read with a historical and critical lens (*tārīk̲h̲ānah taḥqīq*), then the attribution of miracles to Jesus appears to be a misreading of the New Testament.[76] Read in the light of the epistemological epoch that Sir Syed belongs to and ushers in, the errors of the commentators of Jewish and Christian scriptures are parallel to the errors of Muslim interpreters of the Qur'an. The Qur'an's (and the New Testament's) intended meaning in stating that Jesus healed lepers and the blind is that he restored people with physical disabilities from the margins of society and made them rightful members of the kingdom of God (*k̲h̲udā kī bādshāhat*). Jesus proclaimed that God's mercy (*k̲h̲ūdā kī raḥmat*) is accessible to all, irrespective of physical appearance and capacities and this constitutes "healing" the sick.[77] Similarly, when Q 3:49 mentions that Jesus gave life to the dead, it is a reference to how Jesus rescued people from spiritual death: "A human being's spiritual death

[75] Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Haẕrat 'Īsá Ke Mu'jizāt," 362.
[76] Ibid., 363-366.
[77] Ibid., 366.

is being a disbeliever. Jesus, by proclaiming God's oneness and establishing God's authority, was raising people from the death of disbelief (*kufr kī maut*)."[78]

Sir Syed's third strategy, wherein he offers an explanation, based on relatively stable hypotheses offered by the *'ulūm* or sciences of his time, of an apparently miraculous event is displayed in his reading of the miracles Moses performed at the Pharaoh's court. Sir Syed focuses on Q 7:107-8: "So he [Moses] cast his staff; and behold, it was a serpent manifest (*thu'bān mubīn*). And he drew forth his hand, and behold, it was white to the onlookers (*nāẓirīn*)." Sir Syed begins with a relatively stable hypothesis of the sciences of his time, namely, staffs do not suddenly turn into serpents, no matter how hard you strike them, and hands do not suddenly turn white. He then offers lexical evidence that indicates that no sudden transformation from staff-serpent or normal-hand to white-hand is necessitated by this verse. He argues that the verse states that Moses's hand "was white to the onlookers" and

[78] Ibid. Sir Syed argues that his "metaphorical" reading of the dead in this verse is fully warranted by the Qur'an, which uses death (*maut*) in a metaphorical sense as "spiritual death" in Q 27:80 and Q 35:22. See: Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, "Haẓrat 'Īsá Ke Mu'jizāt," 366-67. It is important to note Sir Syed's general position on his metaphorical, allegorical, or "non-literal" readings of the qur'anic text. He states that since his interpretive framework aims to understand the intentions of the qur'anic text, it should not be classified or understood as a form of *ta'vīl*, even when he relies on metaphorical and allegorical readings. If the Qur'an purposes to state a matter metaphorically, then a metaphoric reading of such a text is, in fact, a literal reading of the qur'anic text: "I hold that *ta'vīl* is *ta'vīl* when it is ascertained that the speaker intended such and such a particular meaning and finding this meaning unsound we adopt another meaning to render what is said valid. If the intended meaning of the speech is already that which in *ta'vīl* we determine, then that is not *ta'vīl* but the demonstration of the real meaning intended by the speaker. For example, if someone says: 'Zaid is a lion' and by the word 'lion' actually means that well-known animal and the word in the [literal sense] is not true of Zaid and contrary to what the speaker intended, if someone takes this word to mean 'brave,' this, in reality, is *ta'vīl*. But if the speaker himself meant 'brave' by the word 'lion,' then understanding it as 'brave' is not *ta'vīl*. Rather it is the exposition of the original meaning intended by the speaker. Similarly, when we accept a word of the Qur'an not in its basic sense, but in its metaphorical sense we do not call it *ta'vīl*, because according to our capability, we understand that God has used this word in this very metaphorical sense." See: Ahmad and Grunebaum, *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan 1857-1968*, 36. For the original, see: Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'ān Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 250–51. For an overview of the (oppositional) distinction between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*, please see: Claude Gilliot, "Exegesis of the Qur'an: Classical and Medieval," ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an (Brill, 2003), 100–101. Also see, Poonawala, I. "Taʾwīl." Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. University of Virginia Library. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/tawil-SIM_7457>

that the verse states that the staff Moses carried only manifestly (or visibly) became a serpent.[79] The exegetical question then becomes: how is that that a hand can appear white all of a sudden or how can a staff appear as a serpent? And he relies on the *'ulūm* of his time to explicate this situation:

> Every human being, whether prophets, or friends of God (*auliyā*) or ordinary human-beings, belonging to any religion – in fact, even animals – have a power of magnetism (*qūvat-i maqnātīsī*) which causes effects on the being itself [human or otherwise] and those around it…[80]

Human beings have the capacity to mesmerize people into seeing things that are not there and experiencing events that do not actually occur. The capacity to mesmerize other human-beings and to "effect their thoughts in such a way that strange (*'ajīb)* and inexplicable (*ġharīb*) things occur to them"[81] is a perfectly natural and explicable phenomenon. The practitioners of mesmerism have existed in the past and continue to exist in the present. The difference is that in the present a whole scientific discipline has developed that scrutinizes and studies this phenomenon: the scientific discipline of mesmerism (*mismarīẓm*). Sir Syed is referring to the science of mesmerism, named after Franz Anton Mesmer, an 18th century physician who laid the foundation of this discipline. Its purpose was to study, quantify, and make therapeutic use of magnetic capacities human-beings have through which they can

[79] Sayyid Aḥmad Ḵẖān, "Mūsá, Fir'aun Aur Banī Isrā'īl," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Pānīpatī, vol. 14, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1965), 153–225.
[80] Ibid., 158.
[81] Ibid.

affect the demeanor and states of consciousness of other human-beings.[82] Moses, then, was performing no extra-ordinary or supernatural feat and was making use of his mesmerizing capacities, capacities that are generic to the human species.[83]

All three strategies are employed by Sir Syed to show that the Qur'an's contents measure up to the representational capacities of the epistemological canons of Sir Syed's epoch. In fact, Sir Syed avers that his canons of interpretation, forged in the fire of an advanced episteme, free of the clutches of ancient practices of knowing (*qadīm ʿulūm*) have helped clarify to contemporary Muslims that Muhammad and the early Muslim community did not believe in jinn or jinn-like creatures and to the degree that the Qur'an appears to make such claims, it is only accurately representing the mistaken beliefs of the Arabs of the *Jāhilī* period. Similarly, Moses exercised a perfectly explicable human capacity of mesmerism. He may not have been aware of the complicated details of the science of mesmerism, but what he did was regular and patterned, and more crucially, the Qur'an represents the patterned and explicable character of the events that unfolded at the Pharaoh's court.

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[82] In one of his essays, Sir Syed writes about an evening where he personally witnessed the performance of mesmerism. It was during a three-day public event held in Benares. The event included academic lectures on the practice as well as practical demonstrations. During these demonstrations the professor who was conducting the event would mesmerize volunteers from the audience and make them perform various odd deeds. For more, see: Sayyid Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Mismarīẓm," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Pānīpatī, vol. 4, 16 vols. (Lahore: Majlis Taraqī-yi Adab, 1988), 288–99. For an account of the development and applications of the science contemporary to Sir Syed, see: James Esdaile, *Mesmerism in India and Its Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine* (Hartford: Silas Andrus and Son, 1851). For the complicated character of the practice of mesmerism within colonial medicine, see: Waltraud Ernst, "Colonial Psychiatry, Magic and Religion. The Case of Mesmerism in British India," *History of Psychiatry* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 57–71.

[83] In the essay "Mismarīẓm," Sir Syed explicitly links mesmerism with "*ʿilm al-Sīmīyā*." See: Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Mismarīẓm," 288. For an introduction to the various connotations and meanings of the term, see: MacDonald, D.B. and Fahd, T., "Sīmiyāʾ", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

Sir Syed, in the process of acting as "peace-maker" (*maṣāliḥat*) between religion and science,[84] generates what Ochs calls a "hermeneutics of war" between his constructed practice of *tafsīr*, E_2, and the inherited, "offending practice," E_1. Ochs formalizes what he calls a hermeneutics of war in the following terms:

> collecting examples of an offending practice (a, b, c . . . n);
>
> suggesting that this collection displays a class character that can be defined according to a finite set of propositions, or, in other words, reduced to a relatively simple propositional function [P = (a, b, c . . . n), where P = f (x)];
>
> promoting another practice (Q) as both the desirable alternative to the offending practice (P) and the desirable means of repairing P (or of repairing institutions that errantly pursue P);
>
> assuming that Q can also be defined according to a finite set of propositions (which therefore corresponds to another relatively simple propositional function [Q = (x, y, z . . . n), where Q = g (x)]);
>
> intentionally or unintentionally, therefore, presupposing that Q and P are logical contradictories—in other words, that both P and Q refer to a domain of possible practices (W), such that the domain is served by either P or Q (W = P∪Q), where P ≠ Q[85]

The class-character of the offending practice of *tafsīr* Sir Syed criticizes is that it is an inaccurate display of how the Qur'an was interpreted and received during Muhammad's life-

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[84] These are the terms in which Mehdi Ali describes Sir Syed's task in the letter-exchange I recounted earlier in the chapter. Mehdi Ali notes: "Please do not think that I am unaware of the need that compelled you to write your *tafsīr* or that I am unaware of the cacophonous war between religion and science (*'ilm*) being waged in our time. Or that I think that the attack that knowledge, in a new form, with newly forged weapons, is carrying out against religion is minor. Or that I think our existing books are sufficient [for responding to the attacks of science]. Probably very few people would be more desirous than me that religion ought to be protected against the attack of science…[I recognize that] you have entered this war with [the force of] enlightened knowledge against knowledge, and have tried to make peace with such an over-powering and great foe" (Aḥmad K̲h̲ān, "Qur'an Majīd Kī Tafsīr Ke Uṣūl," 217.)

[85] Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 6–7. He continues: **"**This is a mode of reparative argument that generates comparable sets of antagonistic postures regardless of the goal of one's argument. It makes secularists, religionists, rationalists, and irrationalists all partners to exclusivist and dogmatic politics and positivist epistemologies. They are positivist because Q is knowable by way of sets of clear and distinct propositions; they are exclusivist because Q ≠ P, which means we know that practices will be either Q or P, that Q is correct and that it excludes P" (Ochs, *Another Reformation*, 7).

time. Part of why it is inaccurate is that the offending practice rests on faulty foundations. The practice Sir Syed promotes is defined by class characteristics that are logical contradictories of the offending practice and he contends that this practice is able to address the seemingly intractable conflict between religion and science. Sir Syed's attempt to modify his contemporaries' interpretation of religion, scripture, and science in a bid to show that both religion and science are truth-bearing performs a version of the hermeneutics of war along the following lines:

> There appears to be intractable conflict between religious claims (R_1) and scientific claims (S_1)
>
> R_1 is a product of certain practices of interpretation E_1 in relation to the Qur'an (Q)
>
> S_1 is a product of another set of practices of interpretation (I_1) in relation to Nature (N)
>
> There is evidence that I_1 is not-errant
>
> The conflict between R_1 and S_1 coupled with the non-errant character of I_1 is grounds to hypothesize that E_1 is errant
>
> A new set of interpretive practices, E_2, have to be constructed to replace the errant practice E_1
>
> The practice E_2 in relation to Q leads to religious claims, R_2.
>
> The non-errant character of E_2 is displayed by the outcome that R_2 does not conflict with scientific claims S_1
>
> Since R_2 and S_1 are not in conflict with each other, E_2 and I_1 are reliable practices of interpretation
>
> This warrants the claim that interpretive relations with both N (nature) and Q (scripture) are truth-bearing.

Sir Syed recommends the enactment of this procedure in all future situations where tensions arise between the sciences concerned with interpreting nature and those concerned with interpreting scripture. In recommending this procedure, Sir Syed pictures the acquisition of

knowledge as a progressively more accurate means of representing the object of knowledge, propelled by increasingly more secure foundations on which knowledge claims rest. Interminable conflict between epistemological environments constituted by different foundations is a structural feature of knowledge acquisition.

The following chapter takes up Iqbal's account of the way representational norms deligimate religious claims, his transformation of such norms and, in the process, his re-performance of that which he criticizes.

Chapter 3: Knowledge, Experience, and Reality

The Reconstruction is deeply animated by the kinds of questions that course through the exchange between Mehdi Ali and Sir Syed. How may a community claim access to divinity and revelation in the face of weltbilds emerging out of Newtonian, Cartesian, Lockean, Humean, Darwinian, and Freudian inquiries into the nature of reality? Iqbal is just as wary as Mehdi Ali of the pronouncements of the new sciences and their implications on communities whose weltbilds are populated by narratives and characters such as prophetic figures, theodicean teleology, scriptural texts, speaking Gods and the like. Iqbal laments that the modern age that has ushered in the "tyranny of imperialism," is not just a political arrangement whereby western powers have subjugated and established their dominion over "weaker peoples"[1]; imperial modernity elementally transforms patterns of how colonized subjects know, perform, and express their relationships with the world.[2] For Iqbal, the institutional and discursive instruments of imperial modernity perpetrate a theft of sorts, "robbing [colonized subjects] of their religions, their morals, of their cultural traditions and their literatures."[3] Iqbal summarizes the potentially hazardous implications of modern thought under the title of "atheistic materialism," and judges its ethico-political and epistemic consequences to be "the greatest danger to modern humanity."[4] Politically, in Faisal Devji's analysis of Iqbal's critique of colonial modernity, "atheistic materialism" is generative of territorially bound nationalisms, motored by the "race-idea," productive of a political order

[1] Muhammad Iqbal, "New Year Message Broadcast from the Lahore Station of All-India Radion on 1st January, 1937," in *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, ed. Latif Ahmed Sherwani, 5th ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2009), 298.
[2] Cf. Tareen, "Narratives of Emancipation in Modern Islam."
[3] Iqbal, "New Year Message Broadcast from the Lahore Station of All-India Radion on 1st January, 1937," 298.
[4] Muhammad Iqbal, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Vahid (Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1964), 197.

that has "destroyed or at the very least enfeebled all ethical or idealistic imperatives in political life, making for an international regime of parochial and so continuously warring interests."[5] Such political life takes flight, in Iqbal's reckoning, on the wings of a "metaphysical dualism" that confines religion to subjectivity, to a "matter of private opinion," carving out an objective public order, unhampered by religious ideals.[6] On its epistemological side, for Iqbal, like other Muslim modernists, the most pronounced threat of the modes of knowing that characterize modern thought is their silencing of the scriptural resources of Islam, incapacitating them from bearing rationality and truth. In Wensinck's words, the "great difficulty" that confronts modern Islamic intellectual culture, and the institutions and actors that embody it, "is how to save the foundations of religion when many antiquated notions have to be given up."[7]

Sir Syed attempts to follow the path that Wensinck imagines is the way forward for religious traditions such as Christianity and Islam; forsaking "antiquated notions," and in the process saving the "foundations" of these religions. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sir Syed's techniques of rescuing Islamic discourse from the threats enumerated by Mehdi Ali perform a particular model of knowing. In building commensurate relations between religion and modern thought, Sir Syed negates the truth-functionality of any other practice of

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[5] Faisal Devji, "Illiberal Islam," in *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*, ed. Saurabh Dube (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), 234. Devji expresses Iqbal's ethico-political and epistemic critique of modernity in the following terms: "[For Iqbal] territorial belonging brought into being the dominance of property over all the relations of social life, such that all interests became interests of ownership. Indeed the nation-state could even be characterized as a mode of knowledge for which the world was composed entirely of things that had to be grasped proprietorially…Representation, then, whether epistemological or political, was the very model of discursive reason because it grasped both persons and objects as forms of property, to be weighed, counted, and worshipped not only in the practices of democracy, but also in those of knowledge as such…As far as the liberal order of the nation state was concerned, its unhappiness for Iqbal was made possible by the metaphysical division of society into public and private realms, with the ideal, the spiritual…being confined to a private life in which it could function only as ineffective moralism and mere ideal" (Faisal Devji, "Illiberal Islam," 239).

[6] Iqbal, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, 196–98.

[7] Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, 6.

knowing enacted historically by the producers of scriptural and scientific discourse within the Muslim community and human civilization more broadly. Apart from the original context in which the Qur'an was produced, Sir Syed disburdens any given epoch in which Muslims find themselves from the weight of the past. Referring to the construction of relational patterns, which require that a tradition of practice be conceived as a history of incommensurable ruptures, Iqbal notes:

> we should not forget that life is not change, pure and simple. It has within it elements of conservation also…life moves with the weight of its own past on its back…in any view of social change the value and function of the forces of conservatism cannot be lost sight of…no people can afford to reject their past entirely.[8]

The problem of the "revision of old institutions" is a "delicate" task wherein the "responsibility of the reformer"[9] is grave; reformist tendencies can err toward enacting transformations in ways that conceive stasis or "conservatism" as an oppositional force to be avoided, rather than one that needs to be synthesized with "dynamism" in the activities that seek to reform errors.[10]

As I mentioned in the first chapter, the representationalist tendency enacted in Sir Syed's reformist scriptural hermeneutics is a prototypical illustration of the kinds of intellectual responses to the perceived crises of modernity to which *The Reconstruction* is addressed. In his discussions with the Urdu translator of *The Reconstruction*, and his elder brother, Iqbal notes:

> the audience (*mukẖātib*) of these lectures are mostly those Muslims that are shaped by western philosophy and who desire that Islamic philosophy should be articulated (*bayān*) in the language of modern philosophy. [It is addressed to an audience that desires that] if there are short-comings [in Islamic philosophy], these shortcomings should be addressed. My work is mostly constructive (*ta'mīrī*).[11]

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[8] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 132.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Umar, *Kẖū ṭbāt-i Iqbāl: Na'e Tanāẓur Meṉ*, 10.

This chapter shall show how *The Reconstruction* articulates a philosophic conception of religion such that its claims are not reduced to "antiquated notions." My goal is to display the specific ways that Iqbal's conceptualization of religion is marked by the representationalist tendencies of approaches he is critical of as well as his attempts to transform them. The chapter is divided in three sections. The first section takes us through *The Reconstruction's* employment of the categories of "knowledge, "experience," and "reality" in an attempt to show that if these categories are handled non-reductively, they permit religion to be a productive environment for raising truth-bearing questions and answers. I show that Iqbal's treatment of these terms is fruitfully read as being triadic rather than dyadic. The second section displays the consequences of Iqbal's triadic approach to knowledge on his conception of religion and its relationship with science. The third section discusses how Iqbal re-iterates the kinds of epistemological practices he criticizes in *The Reconstruction*.

Knowledge as a Triadic Relation

The inaugural lecture of *The Reconstruction*, "Knowledge and Religious Experience," sets up a conceptual theater in which the categories of knowledge, experience, and reality make their appearance in relation to claims about religion, philosophy, poetry, and science.[12] The title itself is not as straightforward as it may seem at first blush; a plain-sense reading of the phrase "Knowledge and Religious Experience" could suggest, for instance, that the succeeding tract may stake important distinctions between knowledge on the one hand and experience on the other. And, furthermore, that "religion" or the "religious" is a category that

[12] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 1. The text of *The Reconstruction* begins with the following volley of questions: "What is the character and general structure of the universe in which we live? Is there a permanent element in the constitution of this universe? How are we related to it? What place do we occupy in it, and what is the kind of conduct that befits the place we occupy? These questions are common to religion, philosophy and higher poetry" (Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 1).

is germane to or intimately tied with experience, while the category of "knowledge" is both distinct to the religious and is simultaneously in some indeterminate relation with it, which indeterminacy is indicated by the juxtaposive "and." The vague operator "and" does not display the form of relation that obtains between the two; whether, for instance, such relation is antagonistic, harmonious, linear, co-determining, etc. The little clarity the title affords, though, seems to suggest at least two hypotheses. First, that there is a distinction between knowledge and experience. Second, that the religious, whatever else it may be, pertains more directly to experience, perhaps even at the expense of pertaining to knowledge. These musings on the title of the first chapter are an analogue of the conversations, debates, and discussions between Iqbal and Nazir Niazi, the only translator of *The Reconstruction* into Urdu whose work was conceived during Iqbal's life time.[13] It sprang out of numerous face to face conversations between the two when Niazi visited Iqbal in Lahore as well as correspondence between the two.[14] During these discussions, appropriate translations of the title "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam," as well as the title of the first chapter, "Knowledge and Religious Experience," were important issues of concern.[15] In the preface to his translation of *The Reconstruction*, Niazi notes that it was at his initiative (*taḥrīk*) that the question of translating *The Reconstruction* was raised; he wrote letters to Iqbal to allow him to pursue the project of getting *The Reconstruction* translated into Urdu, to which Iqbal responded favorably. Initially, Niazi did not imagine or desire to translate the text himself and in the letters that the two exchanged Iqbal suggested Syed Abid Husain as a suitable

[13] Muhammad Iqbal, *Tashkīl-i Jadīd Ilāhiyāt-i Islāmiyah*, trans. Nazir Niazi, 5th ed. (Lahore: Bazm-i Iqbāl, 2000).Niazi notes in the preface to the translation that the work could not be published in Iqbal's life-time due to "personal difficulties" (*pareshānī aur g̱ham*). See: Nazir Niazi, "Muqaddamah," in *Tashkīl-i Jadīd Ilāhiyāt-i Islāmiyah*, 5th ed. (Lahore: Bazm-i Iqbāl, 2000), 10.
[14] Niazi, "Muqaddamah," 7-10.
[15] Ibid., 7-34.

candidate. Abid Husain, who was part of the philosophy faculty at Jamia Millia Islamia, and had translated texts of German and English philosophy into Urdu, politely declined the invitation, citing paucity of time as the main reason.[16] Consequently, the responsibility fell of Niazi's shoulders, after Iqbal permitted him to carry out the task of translating *The Reconstruction*. But not before requiring Niazi to visit him in Lahore and produce "sample" or "trial" translations of various parts of *The Reconstruction*, especially its second chapter. Niazi presented his translations to Iqbal, who discussed them with Niazi, corrected them where appropriate and standardized the translation of the more technical aspects of *The Reconstruction's* conceptual language.[17]

Iqbal, who is arguably one of the most significant Urdu and Persian poets of the 20th century, suggested that Niazi should translate the first chapter's title, "Knowledge and Religious Experience" as "'*ilm bi-al-havās aur 'ilm bi-al-vaḥī*" i.e. knowledge through *havās* (the senses) and knowledge through *vaḥī* (or revelation).[18] This recommendation strongly suggests that even though the plain-sense of the title of the first chapter (Knowledge and Religious Experience) is readable otherwise, the category "religion" or the "religious" in *The Reconstruction* is not exclusively confined to experience or the experiential but is also tied in some sense with "knowledge."

Conversations between Niazi and Iqbal about translating "religious experience" as "knowledge through revelation" offer a glimpse into how *The Reconstruction* tries to articulate and develop relations between the concepts of knowledge, experience, and reality.

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[16] Niazi, "Muqaddamah," 7.For a brief biographical sketch on Abid Husain, see Hasan, Mushirul, "Abid Husain", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. For his biography, see Sayyid 'Ābid Ḥusain, *Ḥayāt-i 'Ābid: K̲ẖvud Navisht-i Ḍākṭar 'Ābid Ḥusain*, ed. Ṣugẖrā Mahdī (Na'ī Dihlī: Maktabah-yi Jāmi'ah, 1984).
[17] Niazi, "Muqaddamah," 7-9.
[18] Iqbal, *Tashkīl-I Jadīd Ilāhiyāt-I Islāmiyah*, 291.

Iqbal fervently insists that when a knowledge-claim is offered by one to another for examination or approval, it should be conceived as developing out of "concrete experiences." Without contextualizing or specifying the concrete circumstances or experiences through which a knowledge claim acquires reference and meaning, knowledge can be described only in vague terms.[19] And in these vague terms, knowledge for Iqbal consists in "the establishment of connexions (sic) with the reality that confronts [the claimant of knowledge]".[20] It is a name for the various processes and methods through which a knower negotiates the environments with which it interact.[21] Knowledge may be conceptual, non-conceptual, a way of picturing or "capturing" reality, as well as an instrument for mastering and manipulating reality.[22] Vaguely considered, knowledge is a name for various and contradictory forms of relation that may obtain between an agent of knowledge and that which is known. I say agent here because the way *The Reconstruction* employs the concept of knowledge, it is not restricted to individual consciousness, after the fashion of the ego-cogito. The activities of bees, plants, individual human-beings, as well as communities of human-beings are the kinds of phenomena to which the concept of knowledge is applicable.[23] The specific forms through which a knower establishes relations between itself and its environment is displayed in the particular environment or context in which the relation between the knower and its environment obtains. In order to signal the environment-specificity of a potential knowledge-claim, Iqbal employs the concept of "experience." In this regard, the term experience plays several roles in *The Reconstruction*. It draws the attention

[19] Vague in Peirce's sense
[20] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 10.
[21] Ibid., 86.
[22] Ibid., 10-12, 86, 156-7.
[23] Ibid., 3, 100.

of the audience of a knowledge-claim to the environment in which the claim is issued; it is Iqbal's way of gesturing toward the mediated character of knowledge; experience is that which supplies data whose interpretation yields potential knowledge-claims. [24] To know something (or someone) is to be related with it by means of some form of experience. Experience is immediate and is that which is interpreted in order to form relationships with reality.

But if both experience and knowledge are relational categories, how are they distinguishable? One marker of distinction Iqbal himself draws is that experience should be thought of as supplying data, which, upon interpretation, yields knowledge of reality. And also that experience should be conceived of as "immediate," whereas knowledge is something that arises out of interpretation.[25] But if experience is what relates an experiencer with reality, claiming that it is immediate would seem to suggest that human-beings have some sort of un-mediated access to reality and this is a claim that the plain-sense of various passages in *The Reconstruction* contests.[26] How can the relationship between knowledge, experience, and reality be conceptualized such that:

1. Knowledge (K) is a relational concept, whose relata are knower and reality
2. The relationship knowledge, with reality, becomes possible for a knower through processes and methods of interpretation.
3. Experience (E) is that which is interpreted in order to institute the relationship of knowledge between a knower and reality

[24] Ibid., 14, 41.
[25] Ibid.
[26] E.g. "…things are not given in immediate experience as things already possessing definite contours, for immediate experience is a continuity without any distinctions in it" (Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 41).

4. Experience, then, is a relational concept, whose relata are knower and reality
5. Both knowledge and experience are relational concepts, whose relata are knower and reality. But compared with knowledge, experience is something "immediate"

The Reconstruction appears to be intractably inconsistent in claiming that knowledge and experience are distinct relational categories, while claiming that the relata of these categories are identical (knower and reality). It also seems to state that, on the one hand, experience supplies data for interpretation that yields knowledge and, on the other hand, that experience is an "immediate" disclosure of reality as such. It is as if attempts to spell out the distinctions *The Reconstruction* tries to articulate between knowledge, experience, and reality seem to generate hopelessly contradictory or confused claims. Our struggle to draw distinctions between knowledge, experience, and reality, while simultaneously drawing relationships between them is an illustration of what John E. Smith, relying on C. S. Peirce's triadic logics, calls the classic case of the tensions that arise between the concepts of "knowledge," "direct experience," and "reality," when we attempt to articulate three-part or triadic relations as if they were two-part or dyadic.[27] In order to resolve this interpretive conundrum, we could proceed to render Iqbal's articulation of the concepts of knowledge, experience, and reality clear in the form of three, two-part relations between:

1) Experience and Reality, viz., experience as a form of direct, in the sense of unmediated, disclosure of reality
2) Knowledge and Experience, viz., knowledge as an interpretive and mediated relation with experience

[27] John E. Smith, "The Tension Between Direct Experience and Argument in Religion," *Religious Studies* 17, no. 4 (1981): 487–497.

3) Knowledge and Reality, viz., knowledge as a doubly-removed relation with reality, wherein reality is directly related with experience, and indirectly with knowledge, which is an interpretation of experience.

Our resolution, sought by reading a confused claim as three, two-part relations, would create the sort of sharp distinction between knowledge and experience which Iqbal's Urdu translation of the first chapter of *The Reconstruction* seeks to avoid. It would also suggest that experience operates like a "window," allowing the experiencer to peek at reality as it is, which is counter to *The Reconstruction's* claim that experience "supplies data," which acquires meaning and reference through interpretation and not before it. Our current way of handling *The Reconstruction's* employment of knowledge, experience, and reality would confer a linear structure on these relational concepts. The movement from reality to experience to knowledge would be rendered a layered removal, with experience embodying a form of "directness" that knowledge lacks and knowledge naming an interpretive relation wherein experience plays a precursory or preliminary role. As John E. Smith notes, a two-part handling of a three-part relation creates sharply distinct identities for the actors involved in the relation to the point that within the philosophy of religion some have formalized "argumentation," a product of knowledge, in opposition to "experience," a product of ecstatic participation in reality.[28]

If, however, the relational terms experience, knowledge, and reality are handled as three irreducible elements of a "genuine" relation, as features of an interpretive or semiotic process, *The Reconstruction's* usage of these concepts appears consistent and not

[28] John E. Smith, "The Tension Between Direct Experience and Argument in Religion," 487-97. For Smith's own constructive position on the matter, see John E. Smith, *Experience and God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

contradictory or confused. Peirce's logical and semiotic tools – historically developed out of Peirce's own struggles with clarifying relational categories that appear confused or inconsistent when handled as dyads[29] – offers an avenue for observing if and how the contradictory or confused character of the concepts of experience, knowledge, and reality may be a product of reading Iqbal's performance of a three-part relation as a set of two-part relations. One of Peirce's elementary rules for displaying a triadic relation is to conceive the elements of the relation, not as primary and individual things whose interaction generates a derivate and composite relation, but as elements that are precisively abstracted[30] out of a process in which those elements participate and acquire meaning. Semiosis or processes of interpretation are offered by Peirce as paradigms of processes that involve relations whose relata acquire meaning and reference only as participants of those relations. The elements that Peirce abstracts from semiosis are not treated by him as "entities," but as formal concepts or patterns of relation that constitute the process of semiosis. Confining ourselves to relations that involve interpretation, and consequently, involve semiosis (or signs), Peirce abstracts three participants of such relations:

a. That which is subjected to interpretation. Peirce names this a "sign-vehicle"

b. Those habits or conditions with respect to which the sign-vehicle is interpreted, including the "conclusions" or results of the interpretive process. Peirce names this part of an interpretive process the "interpretant"

c. That about which an interpretive claim is made. Peirce names this the "object"[31]

[29] *CP* 3.456-478.
[30] *CP* 4.235.
[31] This is a simplified model of Peirce's semiotics adequate to the present analysis. For Peirce's more involved distinctions between various elements that constitute semiosis, see *CP* 2.243-331. For instance, Peirce establishes three trichotomies each for the sign-vehicle, object, and interpretant. He also draws various combinations through which these trichotomies interact within various forms of semiosis.

In *The Reconstruction's* case, this would entail handling knowledge, experience, and reality as concepts that are precisively abstracted from the ineluctably interpretive process of knowing, in which process they aid in the identification of specific patterns or rules of relation. As concepts or formal rules, the terms knowledge, experience, and reality, would not name "entities," but specific forms or patterns of relation that constitute knowing. None of these concepts would be more "elemental" or "foundational" than the other since they constitute the process of knowing by virtue of their relationship with each other. This is, of course, not to suggest that there are no distinctions between an "object," "sign-vehicle," and "interpretant," but to suggest that the distinctions that obtain between them specify a process (semiosis) in which each of the three (sign-vehicle, object, interpretant) are co-dependent participants. In the terms of Peirce's semiotic tools, experience would name that which is interpreted (sign-vehicle), knowledge would name those conditions with respect to which interpretation is carried out (interpretant), and reality would be that about which a claim is offered (object). Iqbal's claim that experience is "immediate" would, not, then, be read as a claim about how experience is "about reality" in a more direct way than knowledge is "about reality"; as an element of a semiotic or interpretive process, experience would only acquire aboutness and referentiality by becoming "subject to interpretation," and not in any non- or pre- interpretive sense. In fact, knowledge (interpretant), experience (sign-vehicle), and reality (object), in this style of reading, all acquire referentiality coevally. The concept of a sign-vehicle in Peirce and similarly experience in Iqbal shows that that which is interpreted (sign-vehicle, experience) is not specifiable and is not indicative of something (object, reality) prior to some activity of interpretation. Rather than assuming that an already-specified reality precedes the activity of knowing, on which knowing "builds" in the form of

an edifice or structure,[32] *The Reconstruction* avers that the environment in which a knower acts – and which acts on the knower – becomes specifiable and knowable in and through practices of knowing. As you can see, this is in contrast with Sir Syed, for whom the object of knowledge is absolved from the activities that seek to describe it. The contrast between Iqbal's approach here and Sir Syed becomes sharper in view of an essay by Iqbal where he reflects on the epistemic consequences of the theory of relativity:

> …is the thing known independent of the act of knowledge? Or, is the act of knowledge a constitutive element in the making of the object? Objective reality as understood by [pre-Einsteinian] Physical Science is entirely independent of the act of knowledge. Knowing does not make any difference to it. It is there whether one knows it or not. In studying its behavior the act of knowledge can be ignored. Thus, Physics ignored Metaphysics in the sense of a theory of knowledge in its onward march. But this attitude of Physical Science, though highly advantageous to itself, could not have been maintained for a long time. The act of knowledge is a fact among other facts of experience…Physics cannot afford to ignore [it]…Einstein…has taught us that the knower is intimately related to the object known, and that the act of knowledge is a constitutive element in the objective reality[33]

Iqbal is quick to guard against any expansively relativistic interpretations of relativity theory and, in *The Reconstruction*, writes against Wildon Carr's construction of a "Monadistic idealism" on the back of the philosophic consequences of relativity theory.[34] For Iqbal the reality with which a knower forms relationships certainly exceeds the knower but this reality becomes namable, specifiable, relatable, and interpretable in and through specific experiences and habits of knowing. John Deely provides a helpful way of avoiding overly idealistic readings of triadic interpretive approaches to knowledge. Following Peirce and Von Uexkull, Deely distinguishes between the semiotic environment in which an organism has its

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[32] As a "sign-vehicle," within a semiotic process, experience – which Iqbal claims, "suppl[ies] data for knowledge," is that which "yields knowledge," is "subject to interpretation" – is specifiable, truth-functional and object-referring in the process of knowing. See: Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 14, 40-42.

[33] Muhammad Iqbal, "Self in the Light of Relativity," in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Vahid (Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1964), 110–11.

[34] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 30-1

life,[35] and the "world of things" (*ens reale*) within which the semiotic environment has its life.[36] In these terms, Iqbal's triadic employment of the concepts of knowledge, experience, and reality entails that *ens reale* is accessed through the semiotic environment in which the act of knowing is conducted and not in any unmediated way. As I stated earlier, for *The Reconstruction*, independent of contextualizing the concrete experiences through which a knowledge claims acquires reference and meaning, knowledge can be described only in vague terms. The same obtains with the term reality; *The Reconstruction* conceives of that in relation to which processes of knowing are enacted vaguely, as an "environment," a "total-Reality" that "invades" the knower in multifarious ways.[37]

Religion in Triadic Terms

Iqbal's reflections on knowledge, experience, and reality are preparatory of a consistent and overarching refrain that animates *The Reconstruction*. Namely, that religion, whatever else it may be, is borne out of "concrete experience" and relates its practitioners with reality. Iqbal uses a whole host of terms in *The Reconstruction* to handle the context out of whose interpretation religion emerges, viz., religious experience, mystical experience, revelation, and *waḥī*. This plethora of terms could be read as a symptom of confusion in the text, the sort that can be rectified by offering a clear definition of what Iqbal means by these various terms. My approach here – as in the previous chapter in the face of Sir Syed's vague deployment of terms such as the laws of nature, nature, and creation – is to read it as

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[35] Umwelt and Lebenswelt

[36] John Deely, "From Semiosis to Semioethics: The Full Vista of the Action of Signs," *Σημειωτκή - Sign Systems Studies*, no. 2 (2008): 437–92. For Deely's extensive treatment of the distinctions between semiosic environments, *ens reale*, and *ens rationis*, please see: Deely, *New Beginnings* and John Deely, *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics: The Quasi-Error of the External World with a Dialogue between a "Semiotist" and a "Realist"* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2003).

[37] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 13, 41-2.

symptomatic of a formal commitment operative in *The Reconstruction*. I read this formal commitment with respect to religion or the religious as two-pronged.

First: religion or the religious names an interpretive (or semiotic) activity that involves specifiable forms of experience (sign-vehicles), specifiable interpretive methods (interpretants), and affords the possibility of establishing relationships with reality (objects). Religion or the religious emerges out of a specific or unique form of "knowledge-yielding" experience between a foundational figure – Prophets being the prototype for such figures – and reality. These experiences are amply attested to and interpreted in the "revealed and mystic literature of mankind"[38] and the paradigmatic cases of such experiences are Prophetic claims about revelatory relationships with God.[39] The various expressions *The Reconstruction* uses signals its conception of the variety of the historical occurrence of this form of relation.

Second: when an inquirer is confronted by a claim that purports to be an interpretation of revelatory experience, such an inquirer should avoid the error of imagining that the purportedly revelatory claim is epiphenomenal with respect to something more elemental, which the inquirer can describe more accurately than the claimant of revelation. It will simply not do to claim that that which claims to be revelation is truth-functional and finds meaning and value only with respect to some other domain of reference such as psychology, philosophy, history, or politics.[40] Such an approach toward interpreting religion is tantamount to treating a revelatory claim as an inferior datum[41] while privileging a historical, psychological, or political claim as a more accurate description of what the

[38] Ibid., 13.
[39] Ibid., 20, 99.
[40] Ibid., 1-22, passim.
[41] Ibid., 2-3.

revelatory claim is "actually about." Iqbal is seeking protection against a pernicious consequence of representationalism. Namely: imagining that the epistemic regime in which an inquirer operates lets him peer "behind" the terms in which the subject-matter of his inquiry is expressed and glimpse – unhampered by the obfuscations of his subject-matter – at what his subject matter is about.

This two-pronged formal commitment does not mean that Iqbal recommends some form of "fideism" as a necessary means of engaging with revelatory claims.[42] Instead, I read this two-pronged formal commitment as being offered to a habitus informed by a two-pronged conceptual error, which error, Iqbal avers, renders inquiries into religion both dangerous and dogmatic.

The first prong of the conceptual error is the assumption that human experience is of a generic character. It is the idea that some "normal level" of human experience is available to the species across the board.[43] It is the assumption that some uniform features of human experience form the bedrock out of which all possible knowledge claims emerge. Implicit in this error is the assumption that certain elemental features of human experience, accessible to any and all practices of knowing, are disclosive of reality as such. Semiotically, it is to assume that certain sign-vehicles are related with an object, such that they come equipped with some generically available information about the object. In order to distinguish between a) the capacity of a sign-vehicle to draw the attention of an inquirer to some aspect of her environment from b) its capacity to deliver some information about the environment, Peirce

[42] In fact, Iqbal says that when something that "claims to be the interpretation of a certain region of human experience, not accessible to [an inquirer], is placed before" him, such inquirers have the right to ask questions about the significance, meaning, and truth of claims that emerge out of contexts that are unavailable or inaccessible to them. See: Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 21-22.
[43] Ibid., 13, 143-5, Chapter 2 passim.

distinguishes between the indexical and iconic functions of sign-vehicles.[44] An index is a kind of sign-vehicle that is linked or connected with its object, irrespective of the attributions of some act or habit of interpretation. Peirce uses the example of weather-wanes and barometers to illustrate his point. Weather-wanes remain "existentially connected" with the direction of the wind, and the mercury in barometers expands and contracts according to the atmospheric pressure and in this capacity, both are "indexes" of the wind and the atmospheric pressure. The semiotic process through which an indexical relation becomes informative is analyzed by Peirce separately; he labels this process iconization.[45] That a barometer is read as indicating the air pressure or that a weather-wane is read as indicating the direction of the wind depends on some habit of engaging with the indexical relation between weather-wane and wind, barometer and pressure. Consider John Deely's more helpful example of a bone that is dug up in a garden one day. The indexical relations the bone may share with, say, a dinosaur that lived around 85 million years ago is displayed with respect to a habit of interpretation named "paleontologist" and not in any generic way. With respect to habits of interpretation named "gardener," or "child," the indexical relation that the bone has with the soil or some other aspect of its environment may become iconized instead.[46] Even the predication of "boneness" to the artifact dug up in the garden is the consequence of some habit of engagement in relation to it. Semiotically, then, the first prong of the error Iqbal is protecting against, is the tendency to conflate the indexical and iconic aspects of a sign-vehicle, thereby imagining that certain indexical relations are armed with

[44] *CP* 2.247-249, 254-264.
[45] *CP* 2.257.
[46] Deely, *New Beginnings*, 172–75.

already-formed images or icons, which the interpreting environment either gets or fails to get.[47]

The second prong of the conceptual error is the assumption that a single or some specifiable structures of analysis are appropriate to all possible experience. Iqbal notes that to assume that reality "invades the consciousness of man"[48] in the form of datum to which a single structure of analysis is appropriate is to engage in a kind of dogmatism. In semiotic terms, it is to assume that a specifiable habit of interpretation adequately furnishes a schematic or architectural ground for knowing as such. Hidden beneath this sort of grand claim is the likely over-generalization of categories of analysis that emerge out of a specific practice to all possible knowledge claims. The shape of this error in philosophic writings is exemplified by approaches akin to Kant's. Iqbal, though he praises Kant in *The Reconstruction*, notes that to assume with Kant or analogous to Kant that the architectonic of all possible knowledge is specifiable in the form of exhaustive or universal categories is to already assume that our object of analysis (religion) is subservient to some a priori philosophic framework which is adequate for all our conceptual needs.[49] In scientific texts, this error is displayed when the structures of analysis that are useful in some special science are assumed to exhaust the capacity of the objects of its inquiry to be iconized. Iqbal notes: "The concepts we use in the organization of knowledge are…sectional in character, and their application is relative to the level of experience to which they are applied."[50]

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[47] We saw in the previous chapter a particular version of this approach enacted by Sir Syed – where the *naẓm* of the Qur'an was available to its readers generically.
[48] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 33-4, 144-5.
[49] Ibid., 143-157.
[50] Ibid., 34.

One way that the aforementioned formal errors are displayed in the epistemic environment in which Iqbal is staking his claims about religion is when it takes religion to be:

> …a pure fiction created by...mankind with a view to find a kind of fairyland... Religious beliefs and dogmas...are no more than merely primitive theories of Nature, whereby mankind has tried to redeem Reality from its elemental ugliness and to show it off as something nearer to the heart's desire than the facts of life would warrant.[51]

The Reconstruction argues that this epistemic environment accepts a certain form of human experience as "normal" and "fact" and "rejects other levels as mystical and emotional."[52] It disqualifies not just the contents of certain knowledge claims, but a priori disqualifies claims shaped in certain forms from being admitted as reasonable. Typically, in such an environment, human-experience is analyzed as composed out of sense-data, which are subjected to interpretation, to yield knowledge. Iqbal wants to contend that "there [is]…no reason" to presume, for all contexts of knowing, that human-experience is composed out of elemental "sense-impressions." This interpretation of the character of human experience may be a useful hypothesis in certain contexts of knowing – Iqbal names physics as such a context – but if it is offered as a general character of experience as such, it, a priori, disqualifies the possibility of certain knowledge-claims. In fact, Iqbal argues that if sense-impressions are posited as the ground for any and all knowledge-claims, biology and psychology cannot be sustained as practices of knowing.[53] Iqbal notes that even certain day-to-day, functional certainties disappear if the concept of sense-impressions is treated as an exhaustive way of capturing human experience; it becomes difficult to sustain the claim that in our "social intercourse" we are in the presence of and commerce with "other minds." The hypothesis that

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[51] Ibid., 20.
[52] Ibid., 13.
[53] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, Chapter 2, passim.

other human beings possess will, thought, desires, and hopes is not posited because human-beings possess some "sense-organ" that can perceive will, thought, desire, or other minds: "Our fellows are known to be real because they respond to our signals and thus constantly supply the necessary supplement to our own fragmentary meanings."[54] These "signals" or "responses," rather than "sense-impressions," fund hypotheses about other human-beings as desiring, hoping, thoughtful and willful beings. The second chapter of *The Reconstruction* begins with a sustained meditation on the consequences of generalizing the idea of sense-impression beyond its use in specific contexts of inquiry. Iqbal notes that if it is generalized, it tends to offer a world-picture that distributes the world in two. An external world, which is posited as the source of "sense-impressions," and an internal subject that receives and fashions these impressions into knowledge-claims about that external world. This world-picture tends to bend religion or religious claims into an inadequate shape; religion is a means of making claims about the external world and served the historical function of providing "primitive man" with "theories of Nature," which function is more adequately fulfilled in the present (or the modern) by interpretations of nature offered by various natural sciences. Religion and religious claims display to a contemporary investigator how human-beings in the "past" devised vocabularies, techniques and methods through which they sought to understand the world around them. In the present, the modern natural sciences perform the function of describing the world human-beings live in and these sciences are more adequate substitutes for "religious theories" about the world, which, in the wake of the

[54] Ibid., 15-16.

sciences, seem to rely on superstitious and fantastic claims about angels, prophets, scripture, the jinn, miracles, the day of judgment, eschaton etc.[55]

Another way that the aforementioned formal errors are displayed in the epistemic environment in which Iqbal is staking his claims about religion is that:

> religion [is not taken to] relate the human ego to any objective reality beyond himself; it is merely a kind of well-meaning biological device calculated to build barriers of an ethical nature round human society in order to protect the social fabric[56]

In this analysis religious claims are reducible to subjectivity and their import is the generation of different forms of social and political order. Whereas the adherents and practitioners of religion may imagine that religion names, for instance, an encounter between the Divine and the human, scientific inquiry discloses that religion is a name for structures of authority, control, and socialization. Religion becomes a form of narrative construction that is expressive of the subjective or internal desires, hopes, states of consciousness of the constructor of religious narratives. To a contemporary investigator, religion and religious claims display vocabularies, techniques, and methods human-beings employed in the past for describing themselves and social reality. This function is performed more adequately in the present by psychology, political theory, anthropology and other human sciences. Iqbal argues that inquiries into the psychological, political, or other dimensions of the context in which religion or religious experience occurs should not be conceived as substitutive:

> is it [im]possible to undo the spiritual value of the mystic state by specifying the organic conditions which appear to determine it…Psychologically speaking, all states, whether their content is religious or non-religious, are organically determined…The scientific form of mind is as much organically determined as the

[55] Iqbal also implies that this is one way in which modernity and tradition are conceived as contradictory by thinkers who rely on the natural sciences as the resource out of which weltbilds may be constructed. The present is "modern" because it is an improvement on the past or the "traditional" in terms of the human capacity to accurately picture the world.
[56] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 151.

religious…[57]

Both shapes conceive religious claims to be "reports," either expressive of the internal features of the claimant or some external feature of the environment of the claimant. These features (internal or external) are then assumed to be more accurately expressed by some more accurate, more scientific discipline of inquiry such as physics or psychology. In either case – whether religious claims are traceable to the mists of subjectivity or as historically significant but now superseded theories of nature – religion or the religious is an epiphenomenal something, traceable to more elemental things, which are disclosed by some discipline of inquiry. Inquiry into religion, then, becomes about going behind religious claims and "unveiling" the verities religious vocabulary imperfectly expresses.

Expressed more economically, the shape of the errors Iqbal is concerned about is:

> Some inquirer or context of inquiry (C_1) confronts someone or some other context of inquiry (C_2) which makes certain claims (A_2) about some object (R). Or, C_1 reads: C_2 says A_2 about R.
>
> One of the rules operative in C_1 is that any claim (A) about any object (R) has to obey the standards of knowing operative in C_1. Or: Any A about R should be according to C_1
>
> C_2 is not identical to C_1. This is evidence to suppose that A_2 misspeaks about R and requires revision.
>
> A_2, clarified and revised according to C_1, becomes A_1. Hence, A_2 about R, re-read properly is actually A_1 about R.
>
> C_2 clarified and revised, then, would become C_1

The polemical dimensions of shaping inquiries into religion according to the aforementioned criteria are captured well in Henry Elliot and Henry Tucker's words. In their educational report of 1857 they paint a vivid picture of what happens when a native of India becomes a

[57] Ibid., 18.

part of the educational apparatus of the Raj, of which Iqbal was fully a part, as a Professor of philosophy and Arabic in different colleges in the city of Lahore:

> The student enters the school premises, becomes acquainted with mathematical science, with astronomy and geometry. Naturally, he loses confidence in his own religion when he finds that it contains so many ridiculous and impossible explanations. Propositions of Euclid and Sir Isaac Newton confute the fables…of their religion…It is impossible, even if we wished it, to be absolutely neutral in dealing with the false religions of India; for they are so intimately blended with false science without contradicting the false sciences contained in their religious books…and so far proving their religions themselves to be false.[58]

Iqbal's intervention in this polemically charged epistemological environment is to propose that experience, the "subject-matter of interpretation," should be conceived as having various "levels" and "regions." And that various "levels" of experience should be conceived as arising out of various methods of investigation. Thus, Iqbal refers to experience at the level of matter, at the level of life, and at the level of consciousness, which form the subject-matter of physics, biology, and psychology, respectively.[59] In fact, the term experience rarely makes an appearance in *The Reconstruction* without some specification of its "region" or "level."[60] Religious experience is one such "level" or "region" of experience that is available for human interpretation and exploration:

> Religious beliefs and dogmas…are not interpretations of those data of experience which are the subject of the sciences of Nature. Religion is not physics or chemistry seeking an explanation of Nature in terms of causation; it really aims at interpreting a totally different region of human experience– religious experience– the data of which cannot be reduced to the data of any other science.[61]

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[58] Rizvi, "Between Hegel and Rumi: Iqbal's Contrapuntal Encounters with the Islamic Philosophical Traditions," 117.
[59] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 26.
[60] All this is consistent with the notion that the term experience functions as a semiotic category, mediating knowledge and reality; its "features" or "character" displays itself with respect to some form of investigation.
[61] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 20. Fn

I read these claims by Iqbal as his attempt to articulate some pattern of relation, C_3, such that claims that emerge in C_1 and C_2 do not remain at war with each other. Iqbal's intervention here is that a practice of inquiry, C_1, when it comes across the subject matter of its inquiry (i.e. religion) should conceive the subject matter *itself* as forms of inquiry, rather than merely a "subject" that passively awaits C_1 to dissect and display it. The conflict between religion and the new sciences can be mitigated by conceiving both sets of practices as inquiries whose habits of interpretation and subject-matter of interpretation are non-identical. Religion, then, names those human practices, habits, institutions etc. that find their source of legitimation in a specific form of human experience, which Iqbal calls "religious" or "mystical." Similarly, the various sciences name those human practices, institutions, forms of analyses that are concerned with the analysis of other forms of experience, such as "experience at the level of matter [physics], at the level of life [biology], and the level of mind [psychology]."[62] The various sciences, too, would enact war-like relations of the kind that seem to obtain between religion and the new sciences, if they fail to view each other as distinct contexts of interpretation, handling non-identical subject-matters. "The conflict between the two [i.e. religion and science] is due to the misapprehension that both interpret the same data of experience."[63] Both forms of inquiry – religious and scientific – seek excellence in their enactment. Interpreting human experience, and through such interpretation making potentially trustworthy and dependable claims about reality is as much a concern of religion as it is of science. Prophets, the communities they engage with, and the traditions of practice that emerge in the form of "religious communities," develop methods and techniques of interpreting the significance and meaning of religious experience. Iqbal's general argument is

[62] Ibid., 26
[63] Ibid., 20.

that Prophets, theologians, mystics, and jurists are just as concerned with "objectivity" in their "sphere of activity" as a scientist is in his sphere of activity.[64] Inquiries into the meaning of revelation are "genuine effort[s] to clarify human consciousness… [and are] as critical of [their] level of experience as Naturalism is of its own level."[65] Religious traditions are constituted by such practices of interpretation, examination, as well as emulation. Iqbal gives the illustration of a Sufi practitioner, who:

> …passes from experience to experience, not as a mere spectator, but as a critical sifter of experience who by the rules of a peculiar technique, suited to his sphere of inquiry, endeavors to eliminate all subjective elements, psychological or physiological, in the content of his experience with a view finally to reach what is absolutely objective.[66]

He likens the efforts of a *murīd* to the processes and performances that constitute any given practice of science: "The truth is that the religious and the scientific processes, though involving different methods, are identical in their final aim. Both aim at reaching the most real."[67]

Iqbal's efforts of making peace between religion and science employ a triadic conception of knowing. He re-describes both religion and science as different forms of interpretive activity. As I said earlier, *The Reconstruction* is concerned with articulating a rule of relation C_3 such that C_1 and C_2 may form non-antagonistic and dialogic relations; a rule of relation wherein an inquirer belonging to C_1, as she encounters some other practice

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[64] Ibid., 156.
[65] Ibid., 144.
[66] Ibid., 156. In fact, Iqbal argues, that the question of whether or not a claim relates its adherents and practitioners with reality or objectivity is more pressing in the "venture of religion" than science:

> Science can afford to ignore metaphysics altogether…In so far as the ultimate nature of Reality is concerned, nothing is at stake in the venture of science; in the religious venture the whole career of the ego as an assimilative personal center of life and experience is at stake. Conduct, which involves a decision of the ultimate fate of the agent cannot be based on illusions… the religious expert who seeks to discover his personal status in the constitution of things cannot, in view of the final aim of his struggle, be satisfied with what science may regard as a vital lie, a mere "as-if" to regulate thought and conduct (Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 146).

[67] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 155.

C_2, is prompted to transform its apparatus of examination in ways that avoid the various conceptual errors I have discussed in this chapter. As we just saw, a crucial element of C_3 is conceptualizing the subject matter of one's analysis as, itself, a form of inquiry. In the next section I shall show how Iqbal's own practice of conceptualizing religion, rather than performing C_3, generates a practice that transforms religion and the religious into the terms of his own discourse. Thereby re-iterating the epistemological errors he is critical of.

The Core of Religion

The representational tendency of *The Reconstruction's* conceptualization of religion begins to surface in the way it frames the fruits of its examination of mystical experience or the context of inquiry out of which religion emerges. After indicating to his audience that the paucity of time at his disposal does not permit him to "undertake an extensive inquiry"[68] into the richness, vividness, and degrees of mystic consciousness, Iqbal offers observations on the "main characteristics" of *waḥī* or mystic experience and lists five such characteristics.

The first point of note is essentially a summary of Iqbal's contention that religion emerges out of contexts of inquiry that are triadic and involve the concepts experience, knowledge, and reality. Mystic experience, like any other form of experience, is "immediate." As I have shown earlier, the use of the term immediate in relation to experience in *The Reconstruction* is its way of signaling that mystic experience is "subject to interpretation,"[69] like other "regions" or "levels" of human experience that yield knowledge of reality by way of their participation in interpretive processes: "As regions of normal experience are subject to interpretation…for our knowledge of the external world, so the

[68] Ibid., 14.
[69] Ibid.

region of mystic experience is subject to interpretation for our knowledge of God."[70] The second point of note is that mystic experience is characterized by "unanalysable wholeness." This is not to suggest that something eerie is at work. The "same Reality"[71] that operates on us in ordinary circumstances engages us in this particular experience; mystic experience is "perfectly natural." The crucial thing here is that whereas that same reality is normally engaged by us in ways that facilitate our practical needs and environment-specific concerns pertaining to day-to-day living, during the course of mystic experience we are "brought into contact with the total passage of reality in which all the diverse stimuli [that operate on us] merge into one another and form a single unanalysable unity in which the ordinary distinction of subject and object does not exist."[72] Iqbal takes the aid of an analogy to clarify this rather opaque claim. He says that if one takes an ordinary experience such as the experience of a table placed in front of us, it is analyzable as the selection of a finite data of experience that "fall into a certain order of space and time" out of the "innumerable data of experience" that operate on us, and the synthesis of this selection "into the single experience of the table."[73] Mystic experience is a "single unanalysable unity" in the sense that it is not amenable to the aforementioned form of analysis.[74] The third feature is that for one undergoing mystic experience, it "is a moment of intimate association with a Unique Other Self [i.e. God], transcending, encompassing, and momentarily suppressing the private personality of the subject of experience."[75] The fourth feature is that the interpretive fruits of mystic experience are not identical with the actuality of the experience. Whatever is

[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 15.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Semiotically, his claim is that mystic experience is a kind of sign-vehicle that suppresses its indexical content.
[75] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 15.

communicated by someone as a fruit of their mystic experience is the consequence of an interpretive process. These interpretive fruits in the "visible garment" of language should not be thought of as separate or distinct from the experience. Iqbal explicitly gestures towards "the old theological controversy about verbal revelation"[76] that pertains to the relationship between the linguistic content that constitutes revelation and the genesis of that content; whether the words of the Qur'an are themselves revealed or whether they are Muhammad's, whether God speaks Arabic, or whether He imprints revelation on the heart (*qalb*) of its recipient, who then articulates it in the form of words.[77] Iqbal hastily eschews questions of this sort and suggests that questions that seek to carve out elemental differences between the fruits of revelatory experience and the experience itself are bound to create questions whose resolution appears interminable. The unanalyzable wholeness of mystic experience is such that arguing over whether it is constituted by "feelings," "ideas" or "words" is unhelpful. "There is a sense in which the word is also revealed," says Iqbal.[78] The fifth feature is that mystic experience does not permanently dissociate the experiencer from ordinary life; the mystic state "fades away," and allows the experiencer to return to the every-day.[79]

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[76] Ibid., 18.

[77] Cf. Josef Van Ess, "Verbal Inspiration? Language and Revelation in Classical Islamic Theology," in *The Qur'an as Text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 177–94; Frank Griffel, "Muslim Philosophers' Rationalist Explanation of Muḥammad's Prophecy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 158–79; Yahya Michot, "Revelation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 180–96.

[78] Read in the light of my analysis of how the concepts of knowledge, experience, and reality function in *The Reconstruction*, Iqbal's point here is that approaches that seek to determine the logical and temporal priority of any one of the elements that constitute an interpretive process are likely to generate interminable debates. Re-expressed in Peirce's semiotic vocabulary, the argument here is that an approach that seeks to create some form of temporal or logical priority between the precisive abstractions of sign-vehicle, object, and interpretant are carrying out a problematic reification. Interpretants, sign-vehicles, objects do not name separate things that pre-exist the process of semiosis. Iqbal notes that "logical understanding create[s] its own difficulty" by imagining that the feelings, thoughts, or words or whatever else that constitutes the interpretive process of revelation is "mutually isolated" (Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 18).

[79] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 18.

The Reconstruction does not display the processes of inquiry through which it determines the features that constitute *waḥī* or religious experience. Scholars have noted that these features bear the marks of engagement with and borrowings from various sources. Iqbal's reading of William James and James Ward;[80] his extensive reflections on Rumi, Hallaj, and Ijī;[81] his involvement in the *qadriyyah* Sufi order;[82] his frequent correspondence with Syed Sulaiman Nadvi on the religious thought of Shibli, Shāh Walīullāh, and Ibn 'Arabī;[83] his claims that the words of his poetry are not his own, but "given to him" under the spell of inspiration, akin to mystic experience;[84] offer illuminating material for piecing together how *The Reconstruction* may have distilled the qualities of religious experience or *waḥī*. In my detection of hints of representationalism in Iqbal's discussion of the features of religious experience I am not primarily concerned with the relatively understated nature of its sources. What I want to draw our attention to is that *waḥī* is being used by Iqbal as a general concept at the core of and as "the final basis of all religion."[85] This is an implicit argument that concepts derived from Islamic intellectual history that may be adequate for studying the scriptural resources of Islam are generalizable for the study of any given religious phenomenon. More strongly stated, this is a recommendation for employing the concept of *waḥī* for studying the phenomena of religion in some sense irrespective of the categories that may be local to the traditions of inquiry and practice being reflected on. As we saw in the previous section, *The Reconstruction* is furiously critical of conceptual schemes that study religion by translating and refashioning the contexts of inquiry they encounter into their own

[80] Cf. Sharif, *About Iqbal and His Thought* and Enver, *The Metaphysics of Iqbal*.
[81] See Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, Reprint (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2003), 316–76.
[82] Iqbāl, *Zindah Rūd*, 86–87.
[83] S. M. H Burney, ed., *Kulliyat Makateeb-e-Iqbal*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1993), passim.
[84] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 162.
[85] Muhammad Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," in *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, ed. Latif Ahmed Sherwani, 5th ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2009), 99.

terms. The scholarship Iqbal is writing against imagines that religion is traceable to more elemental psychological, political, or even physical claims. Iqbal's adumbration of the features of *waḥī* seems to suggest that *these* are the terms in which religious claims – emerging from any given environment – should be re-expressed. The way *The Reconstruction* handles the concept of *waḥī* does not protect it from performing the kind of substitutive function that Iqbal imagines Freudian and Jungian inquiries into religion perform, as they re-express the traditions of practice they encounter in already determined conceptual vocabularies.

A far more pronounced display of Iqbal's representational approach to conceptualizing religion occurs in one of the essays that forms the "base-texts" out of which *The Reconstruction* emerges.[86] In an essay titled "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,"[87] Iqbal notes that the task of a "student of religion" is to determine the central "propositions" on which the structure of the entire religion depends.[88] After asserting that the central proposition that a) undergirds Buddhism is that "There is pain in nature," b) undergirds Christianity is that "there is sin in nature," c) undergirds Zoroastrianism is that "there is struggle in nature," Iqbal asks the following question: "What is the central ideal in Islam which determines the structure of the entire system?" And answers it thus: "The central proposition which regulates the structure of Islam…is that there is fear in nature, and the object of Islam is to free man from fear."[89] The ultimate purpose of Islam is to "free

[86] Khurram Shafique, Iqbal's most prolific contemporary intellectual historian and biographer argues, on the basis of manuscript research that is in the process of publication, that three essays (two lectures, one publication) by Iqbal are important base-texts of *The Reconstruction* (personal communication). These essays are: "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," "The Muslim Community – A Sociological Study," and "Political Thought in Islam." All three essays are published in Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*.
[87] Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal" in *Speeches Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, 97-117.
[88] Ibid., 98-99.
[89] Ibid., 101-102

humanity from superstition,"[90] from false sources of fear. As in Sir Syed's approach in the previous chapter, Iqbal, here, is concerned with arriving at an elemental something on which the object of his study – Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and religion more generally – rests. The object of "critical inquiry" is discovering this elemental something and then adequately describing it. And as in Sir Syed's approach, Iqbal's description of the basic proposition that undergirds Islam pits him in a competition governed by the law of excluded middle against other inquirers, whose claims about the central proposition that undergirds Islam are either identical with Iqbal's, commensurate with his claims, or in competition with them.

The Reconstruction enacts this form of competition by claiming that the "original core" of Islam has historically become overlain with a "Magian crust" and that Iqbal's purpose is to secure a vision of "Islam as emancipated from its Magian overlayings."[91] Iqbal's task, then, is recovering the original, anti-Magian, anti-classical spirit of Islam, which spirit, over the ages, has become veiled because of the forces Greek philosophy, Arab imperialism, and Persian mysticism.[92] Iqbal's recovery of the core of Islam pits it against other visions of what its core might be. In fact, religions, in general, are in competition with each other. Based, as they are, on different central propositions about the world. Is there, finally, pain in nature? Or sin, or fear? Just as Iqbal's identification of the core of Islam is, for him, a truer articulation of the spirit of Islam than rival articulations, Islam itself becomes the ideal form of religion. For instance, for Iqbal, Islam, by virtue of the propositions that structure it, is in a place of privilege in terms of its capacity to form relationships with the

[90] Ibid., 117.
[91] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 114-15.
[92] This is a constant refrain throughout *The Reconstruction*, perhaps exemplified most fully in Ch. 5, pp. 99-115.

new sciences. Iqbal claim that its "standpoint" is melioristic. And meliorism is "the ultimate presupposition and justification of all human effort at scientific discovery and social progress."[93] The central values of Islam, which Iqbal describes in *The Reconstruction* as freedom, equality, and solidarity, are also amenable to the modern age in ways that other religious traditions and the values that emerge from the central propositions that they are based on may not be. Iqbal notes:

> The essence of *Tawhid*, as a working idea, is equality, solidarity, and freedom…The pure brow of the principle of *Tawhid* has more or less an impress of heathenism, and the universal and impersonal character of the ethical ideals of Islam has been lost through a process of localization. The only alternative open to us, then, is to tear off from Islam the hard crust which has immobilized an essentially dynamic outlook on life, and to rediscover the original verities of freedom, equality, and solidarity with a view to rebuild our moral, social, and political ideals out of their original simplicity and universality.[94]

Iqbal's approach seems to displace the competition between the new sciences and religion and reintroduces it between various religious traditions by reading them as structures built on foundational assumptions. The house of Islam is securer than the houses of other religions because its foundational assumptions are truer. This way of conceiving religious traditions almost assumes the polemical tenor of approaches towards the study of religion that Iqbal is critical of:

> The history of religions conclusively shows that in ancient times religion was national as in the case of Egyptians, Greeks and Persians. Later on, it became racial as that of the Jews. Christianity taught that religion is an individual and private affair…It was Islam and Islam alone which, for the first time, gave the message to mankind that religion was neither national and racial, nor individual and private, but purely human and that its purpose was to unite and organize mankind despite all its natural distinctions.[95]

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[93] Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," 102.
[94] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 122-4.
[95] Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, 303.

Chapter 4: The Cosmos as Self

The previous chapter displayed how the concepts of knowledge, reality, and experience function in *The Reconstruction*. I showed that they are employed by Iqbal to argue that the norms and conditions with respect to which knowledge claims acquire validity and truth-functionality are not reducible to the norms of a finite and specifiable discourse such as physics, history, or biology. And that religion names those human practices, habits, and institutions that find their source of legitimation in a specific context, one that Iqbal variously terms *waḥī*, religious and mystical experience. Iqbal's claims were offered to an intellectual habitus that, in the process of inquiry, interpreted its subject matter according to terms that sought to peer behind religious claims in order to extract what they are truly about. I concluded by showing how Iqbal's own practice of conceptualizing *waḥī* as the core of religion re-performs important elements of the problematic practices of reasoning he criticizes in *The Reconstruction*.

In this chapter I conduct an analogous exercise with *The Reconstruction's* employment of the concept of khudi[1] in its conceptualization of religion and its relationship with science. My analysis is divided in three sections. In the first section I discuss the various functions the concept performs in *The Reconstruction* and then focus on its central function with respect to *The Reconstruction's* conceptualization of religion and its relationship with science. Namely, to offer a framework through which knowledge claims from various disciplines of inquiry can cohere. The second section delves into Iqbal's examination of physics, biology, and psychology as disciplines of inquiry that can be read as relating their

[1] The library of congress translates the word as both *k͟hudī* and *k͟hvudī*. Since the term has been rendered "khudi," without transliteration in various sources, including R.A. Nicholson's translation of Iqbal's poem, Asrar-i khudi, I shall follow this convenient convention.

practitioners with God. This section shows how Iqbal's second-order reflections on physics and biology are pragmatic whereas his examination of psychology displays representational tendencies. The third section shows that as Iqbal employs the concept of khudi in his discussion of the human self as unified and free, his arguments assume pragmatic forms.

Khudi as Cohering Concept

The concept of khudi, which Iqbal variously renders as self, selfhood, individuality, personality, ego in English deserves particular attention, not just in *The Reconstruction*, but throughout Iqbal's philosophic and poetic corpus. On various occasions Iqbal has described khudi as the most significant category of his philosophic and poetic corpus.[2] Two of his most celebrated Persian works are titled titled *Asrār-i khvudī* (The Secrets of the Self) and *Rumūz-i bekhvudī*[3] (The Mysteries of Selflessness) while several of his Urdu poems have the term in their titles.[4] In his Urdu preface to the first edition of the *Asrār*, Iqbal discusses the scope of his concerns in the *maṯnavī* in the following terms:

> This mysterious thing, which binds the dispersed and unbounded facets of human nature,[5] this self, or me, or I, which becomes visible in its activity and remains hidden in reality, which is creative of all observation but whose subtlety cannot bear the warm gaze of observation; what is this thing?[6]

In his English preface to R. A. Nicholson's translation of *Asrār*, Iqbal discusses individuality as a pervasive category, as an irreducible, "fundamental fact of the universe."[7] Thus, Iqbal has been widely described as the "philosopher of *khudi* (selfhood)."[8] Mustansir Mir,[9] Javed

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[2] See, for instance, Muhammad Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (Lahore: Farhan Publishers, 1977), xvi–xxxi.
[3] For Arberry's translation of *Rumūz-I bekhvudī*, see Muhammad Iqbal, *Mysteries of Selflessness*, trans. A. J Arberry (London: J. Murray, 1953).
[4] See Muḥammad Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl* (Lahore: 'Ilm o 'Irfān pablisharz, n.d.).
[5] The construction in Urdu is pointedly paradoxical.
[6] K̲h̲urram 'Alī Shafīq, *Iqbāl: Darmiyānī Daur* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2012), 127.
[7] Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, xvii.
[8] Mir, *Iqbal*, 31.
[9] Ibid.

Majeed,[10] Diagne,[11] ‘Abdul Mugẖnī,[12] Muhammad Rafiuddin,[13] Houben,[14] Bausani,[15] Aziz Ahmed,[16] Shakoor Ahsan,[17] Hafeez Malik,[18] amongst countless others have discussed the salience of the concept of khudi to Iqbal’s thought.[19] Shahab Ahmed’s discussion of the concept of selfhood in Iqbal succinctly captures the function of khudi in relation to questions about religion and modernity in Iqbal’s philosophic thought. He notes:

> … questions about the meaning and constitution of Self have been central to the discourses of Muslims from very early in history…this pre-occupation with questions of Self has arisen directly from the Muslim predicament of making meaning by engagement with the phenomenon of Revelation…A signal instance of the focus on the Self as locus for the Truth and Meaning of Islam (in some ways the historical culmination of this idea) comes with the (re-)mobilization by the philosopher, poet, and reformer, Muḥammad Iqbāl, of the millennium-old Persian/Urdu concepts of khwudī, literally, ‘Selfness,’ or ‘Self-hood,’ and bī-khwudī, literally: ‘without-Self-ness’ or Self-lessness,’ as the seminal concepts for the (self-)creation of a new twentieth-century species of Muslim capable of meeting the challenges of modernity.[20]

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[10] Javed Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, and Postcolonialism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009).
[11] Bachir Diagne Soulemane, “Achieving Humanity: Convergence between Henri Bergson and Muhammad Iqbal,” in *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought,* ed. Hillier, H.C. and Basit Koshul (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
[12] Abdul Mugẖnī, *Iqbāl Kā Naẓriyah-yi Ḵẖvudī* (Na’ī Dihlī: Maktabah-yi Jāmi‘ah, 1990).
[13] Mohammad Rafiuddin, “Iqbal’s Concept of the Self,” *Iqbal Review* 4, no. 3 (1963), http://allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct63/1.htm.
[14] J. J. Houben, “The Individual in Democracy and Iqbal’s Conception of Khudi,” in *Crescent and Green* (London: Cassell & Co., 1955), 142–61.
[15] Alessandro Bausani, “Iqbal: His Philosophy of Religion, and the West,” in *Crescent and Green* (London: Cassell & Co., 1955), 131–41.
[16] Aziz Ahmad, “Iqbal’s Political Theory,” in *Iqbal as a Thinker* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1944), 227–64.
[17] Shakoor Ahsan, “Iqbal’s Concept of Khudi,” *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 20, no. 4 (1983): 51–66.
[18] Hafeez Malik, “Iqbal’s Conception of Ego,” *The Muslim World* 60, no. 2 (April 1970): 160–69.
[19] Iqbal’s khudi has been mobilized many times in the English press in Pakistan as a polemical hook for arguing that Iqbal’s khudi is a means of rescuing the global Muslim ummah from the dogmatic tendencies of “professional clerics.” See, for instance, Syed Murtza Hussain, “Iqbal and the Doctrine of Khudi,” *Dawn*, April 21, 1972; K. A. Rashid, “Allama Iqbal and his Philosophy of Self,” *Dawn*, April 21, 1966; Ali Mian Kifait, “Iqbal’s Doctrine of Khudi,” *Pakistan Times*, January 18, 1963.
[20] Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 340. Shahab Ahmed continues: “Questions about whether and how a person can access the Truth of Revelation…about the authority of human reason as a means of knowing…about the validity of (altered states of) human consciousness as a means of knowing (i.e., debates over Sufism), about the constitution of human agency and responsibility (debates over predestination and freewill, or qaḍā’ and qadar), are all ultimately questions about the nature and constitution and experience and capacity of the individual Self relative to the Truth of Revelation…the Muslim predicament of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation is directly productive of a trajectory of Self-interrogation, Self-contemplation, Self-affirmation, Self-articulation, and Self-action as means to meaning in terms of Islam” (Ahmed, *What is Islam?,* 329-30)

Shahab Ahmed goes on to note that disciplines as wide-ranging as Sufism, *Kalām*, and *Falsafah* have elaborated and reflected on the concept of selfhood as these disciplines have attempted to discern the phenomenon of revelation and its relationship with Muhammad, God, God's creation, and historically extended Muslim communities.[21] My purpose in recounting Ahmed's emphasis on the salience of the concept of selfhood in understanding Islamic intellectual history is not to argue that Iqbal's employment of the concept is a re-iteration of an "Islamic" concern or theme.[22] What I wish to bring to our attention is that *The Reconstruction's* employment of the concept is pertinent to its concern of arguing that revelatory experience is a potentially trustworthy source of forming relationships with reality. As Ahmed argues, concepts involving selfhood, such as self-affirmation, self-articulation, self-contemplation, self-interrogation etc., are germane to questions about the meaning of revelation throughout Islamic intellectual history.[23] What is unique about Iqbal's employment of the concept is that he is offering it to an intellectual context that, he perceives, jeopardizes the epistemological possibility of revelatory or mystical experience by

[21] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 344-5, passim.
[22] For Shahab Ahmed, a blatantly and tragically understudied Islamic theme. Remedying this shortcoming in the field of Islamic studies is one of Ahmed's explicitly stated aims in *What is Islam?* E.g.: "I have been trying to impress upon the reader that, in a conceptualization of Islam as theoretical object and analytical category that maps meaningfully onto the human and historical phenomenon of Islam, the idea of the Self as constituted by Muslims must occupy a central constitutive place. Our conceptualization of Islam should be such that when we think of Islam, we should concomitantly think of the meaningful exploration of the *self* with its associated components of self-awareness, of personhood, of identity, of the individual, of the collective, of the personality, of self-action. This is not something that our received conceptual habits allow us easily to do. Our received habits of conceptualizing Islam as discourses of prescription rather than as discourses of exploration have considerably obstructed us from recognizing the place of discourses of the Self as central to and constitutive of human and historical Islam. Instead, these received conceptual habits continue to constrain us towards such representative misrepresentations as the following pre-emptively impoverishing conclusion of Gustave von Grunebaum's which, I suspect, is still shared by many: 'Islam is…not interested in the richest possible unfolding of man's potentialities, in that it never conceived of the forming of men as civilization's principal and most noble task'" (Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 341-2).
[23] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 329-31, passim.

reducing it to the terms of the natural and human sciences. As Ahmed notes, the concept is employed by Iqbal for the creation of "a new twentieth century species of Muslim capable of meeting the challenges of modernity."[24]

The Reconstruction offers khudi as a concept in the service of constructing an interpretive context in which *waḥī* is an admissible means of establishing relationships with reality. This is one of the central functions of the concept of ego or khudi in *The Reconstruction*; it is employed by Iqbal to elaborate an interpretive framework wherein knowledge-claims that emerge from different contexts of inquiry such as philosophy, theology, history, biology, and physics, could cohere. It is the vaguest concept employed in *The Reconstruction*, not bounded by any indexical restrictions and predicable of any and all phenomena that human-beings can potentially form relationships with.[25] By arguing that, in some sense, each and every phenomena that human-beings can potentially form relationships with is of the character of a self, *The Reconstruction* seeks to offer a world-view that is appropriate to a community and context of knowing that a) constructs and reposes trust in narratives involving Prophets, a speaking God, and texts that are received as containing God's speech and communication to Prophets and simultaneously b) engages with the methods, claims, and fruits of the natural and human sciences.

As I shall show in the following section, the concept of khudi is offered by Iqbal as an outcome of second-order reflection on different practices of knowing. Out of this practice of reflection, khudi emerges as a concept that, Iqbal contends, aids in the construction of

[24] Ibid., 340. Ahmed goes on to note: "Iqbāl…effectively sought to make of every Muslim a *muḥaqqiq*/self-realizer of Truth" (Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 340).
[25] Basit Bilal Koshul, "Muhammad Iqbal's Reconstruction of the Philosophical Argument for the Existence of God," in *Muhammad Iqbal: A Contemporary*, ed. Muhammad Suheyl Umar and Basit Bilal Koshul (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2008), 95–128.

relationships between disciplines of knowing that may otherwise delegitimize each other. It is offered as a corrective to the practice of abstracting concepts from a particular natural or human science and interpreting such concepts as affording a "systematic view" of reality as such.[26] In his examination of modern physics, biology, and psychology, Iqbal shows that the aforementioned abstractive practice is productive of world-views – such as atomistic materialism and mechanistic evolution – that preclude the possibility of revelatory claims as truth-bearing. More pressingly, the practice of i) exporting conceptual apparatuses from contexts in which their function is manipulating and controlling experimental phenomena, ii) employing them for constructing worldviews, iii) delegitimizes revelatory claims, thereby, precluding the possibility of reposing trust in claims about Muhammad as a prophet whose religious experience is embodied in the Qur'an. Iqbal substitutes this practice with his own practice of devising a coherent interpretive framework that can admit the practices of *tafsīr*, *kalām*, biology, physics, history etc. as knowledge-yielding and truth-functional. *The Reconstruction* achieves this coherence by arguing that the knowledge-claims of any and all practices of knowing can be conceived as interpretations of the activity of (the self of) God. The function of khudi, then, is to retrieve what Shahab Ahmed has described as one of the significant features of the "Sufi-philosophy amalgam" that was operative in pre-colonial Islamic intellectual history in the Balkans-to-Bengal complex. Viz., that, ultimately, God is the *ḥaqīqah* or Truth-reality that is signified in any given practice of knowing.[27]

The Reconstruction imagines that it needs to conduct the conceptual activity of cohering claims that emerge out of engagement with revelation with those that emerge out of other contexts of inquiry such as physics and biology because the institutions whose purpose

[26] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 33.
[27] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 363-7, 430-35.

is to guide the "evolution of religious experience"[28] in Muslim communities are not able to carry out this function in the context of colonial modernity. The *madrassah*, *k̲h̲ānqah*, the *ṯarīqah*, and other institutions whose historical function was forming Muslim subjects such that their whole past was a living operative factor in their present consciousness do not seem to be fulfilling their function in the present. The "institutions of Islam" whose purpose is to shape the character of the individuals that form the "social fabric" of the Muslim community have been upended by the educational apparatuses of the Raj.[29] For Iqbal, the audience of the lectures – young Muslim students of universities in Aligarh, Madras, and Hyderabad – are socialized in "habits of thought" that are epistemologically and spiritually broken.[30] The "purely secular education" of young Muslim university students configures an intellectual habitus wherein the intellectual resources of the Muslim community are at odds with and in competition with the intellectual heritage of the west. In the absence of a paideia that can successfully draw relationships between discourses such as *tafsīr* and *kalām* on the one hand and western philosophy and science on the other, the concept of khudi is Iqbal's way of offering a conceptual coherence as a partial substitute for institutions that can secure a coherent habitus. In describing the consequences of the absence of such a paideia and habitus, Iqbal notes:

> In the modern Muslim youngman we have produced a specimen of character whose intellectual life has absolutely no background of Muslim culture without which, in my opinion, he is only half a Muslim or even less than that provided his purely secular education has left his religious belief unshaken…He has been allowed, I am afraid, to assimilate western habits of thought to an alarming extent…our youngman…is deplorably ignorant of the life-history of his own community…Intellectually he is a slave to the west…[his] undivided devotion to an alien culture is a kind of imperceptible conversion to that culture, a conversion which may involve much more serious consequences than conversion to a new religion…Having been in close touch

[28] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, xlv.
[29] Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," 107–10.
[30] Iqbal, "The Muslim Community - A Sociological Study," 130–31.

> with the student-life of to-day for the last ten or twelve years, and teaching a subject closely related to religion…It has been my painful experience that the Muslim Student, ignorant of the social, ethical and political ideals that have dominated the mind of his community, is spiritually dead[31]

The concept of khudi is offered in the hope of mending what Iqbal perceives to be an intellectual crisis, characterized by a habitus that constructs rivalrous relationships between Islamic and western "habits of thought." Iqbal sets up the stage for introducing the concept of khudi in *The Reconstruction* by assuming the stand-point of the young Muslim students who are embroiled in such a habitus. He notes that when knowledge-claims are conveyed to such a student they have every right to interrogate the claims in question; knowledge-claims that are conveyed by one to an other are open to the interrogative or critical gaze of the other. All the more so if the context (or experience) out of which those claims have emerged is inaccessible to the other: "when a judgment which claims to be the interpretation of a certain region of human experience, not accessible to me, is placed before me for my assent, I am entitled to ask, what is the guarantee of its truth?"[32] Iqbal's more specific question is that if a mystic or a prophet claims that they have encountered God and that encounter has yielded certain judgments, how may someone who has not witnessed the encounter in question come to regard claims of revelatory experience as "knowledge-yielding" and "trustworthy." Even more specifically, Iqbal's question is what sorts of warrants, justificatory processes, and forms of reasoning can be performed to examine the trustworthiness of the Muslim community's beliefs in Muhammad's claims to revelatory experience and the Qur'an as record of God's speech to Muhammad. Especially given the fact that the revelatory experience in question is unavailable to young, inquisitive Muslims who, in Iqbal's

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 21.

judgment, have assimilated habits of thought that have in some respects "alienated" them from conceiving revelatory claims as trustworthy. In the absence of methods, techniques, and institutions that can cultivate habits of thought and practice that can cohere *waḥī*, physics, history, politics, biology etc., the need for conceptual coherence is "natural" and "justifiable."[33]

In the service of this aim, the second chapter of *The Reconstruction* illustrates methods that could be employed to lend credence to the claims that an individual offers as the fruits of *waḥī*. Iqbal describes the general shape of his "intellectual test" of the claims offered as fruits of religious experience in the following terms:

> the intellectual test [means] critical interpretation, without any presuppositions of human experience, generally with a view to discover whether our interpretation leads us ultimately to a reality of the same character as is revealed by religious experience.[34]

The plain sense of Iqbal's intellectual test could suggest that he is seeking some form of presuppositionless and non-contextual access to reality. However, if, as I argued in the previous chapter, Iqbal's employment of the categories of experience, reality, and knowledge is triadic rather than dyadic, then Iqbal's "test" does not promise some form of unmediated access to reality. It signals to *The Reconstruction's* listeners that the specific contexts of inquiry Iqbal will examine to "discover" the view of reality available through them will be interpreted by him without importing presuppositions that are external to those contexts of inquiry. Iqbal's intellectual test:

a) abstracts knowledge claims about reality from a context of inquiry (X) that *The Reconstruction's* listeners are skeptical of. *Kalām*, Sufism, qur'anic interpretation are prototypes of contexts of inquiry that Iqbal's listeners and students are skeptical of.

[33] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, xlv-xlvi.
[34] Ibid., 21.

b) abstracts knowledge claims about reality from contexts of inquiry that *The Reconstruction's* listeners participate in or deem reliable (Y). Physics, mathematics, biology, and history are prototypes of contexts of inquiry that Iqbal's students participate in or deem reliable.

c) argues that if it is possible to interpret claims that emerge out of contexts X and Y such that they make "the same" or identical predicative judgments about the character of reality, then those who participate in inquiries into reality conducted in context Y have good reason to trust context X as a reliable context of inquiry.

In semiotic terms that I have employed in the previous chapters:

a) if certain practices of inquiry (K_1) are conducted in relation to an object (O_1) in a specific context of inquiry (X) and it is possible to interpret those practices as predicating a set of qualities (a_1, a_2, $a_{3...}$) to (O_1) and

b) if certain practices of inquiry (K_2) are conducted in relation to an object (O_2) in another context (Y) and it is possible to interpret those practices as predicating the same set of qualities (a_1, a_2, $a_{3...}$) to (O_2)

c) then those who participate in and trust the practices of inquiry in Y have some warrant for trusting the practices of inquiry in X. *The Reconstruction's* argument is that since K_1 and K_2 refer certain identical predicates to O_1 and O_2, this permits those who engage in K_2 (Iqbal's listeners) to modify their skepticism of K_1 and to entertain the hypothesis that O_1 and O_2 are in some form of relationship with each other.

This test or process of reasoning, *The Reconstruction* hopes, can counter a crisis inducing and "spiritually deadening" cognitive tendency (K_3) operative in the intellectual habitus of young Muslim university students in India. Viz., the tendency to characterize "western" (K_2) and "Islamic" (K_1) "habits of thought" as contradictory. The tendency K_3 predicates certain features to western practices of knowing (K_2) viz., reliable, truth-functional, modern, consistent, rational and the logical contradictories of those predicates (unreliable, non-truth-functional, traditional, inconsistent, irrational) to Islamic practices of knowing (K_1). More generally K_3 is the practice of:

I. predicating the character of reliability (R) to the norms, objects, and subject-matter (b_1, b_2, $b_{3...}$) that constitute a practice K_2

II. asserting that any other practice of knowing is R if its norms, objects, and subject-matter are describable as b_1, b_2, b_3. Otherwise that practice of knowing is unreliable.

III. concluding that if the norms, objects, and subject matter of K_1 and K_2 are not reducible to the same terms, to claim to belong to both K_1 and K_2 is to be cognitively dissonant.

Iqbal begins his intellectual test – of whether reality is of the "same character," when interpreted as it becomes available for interpretation through "religious experience" and when it is available through other forms of experience – by engaging in scriptural interpretation. This practice predicates a certain "character" to human experience. More specifically, Iqbal reads a particular scriptural verse of the Qur'an (57:3), which, in his reading, predicates a certain character to reality. According to the Qur'an, Iqbal states, human experience "within and without" is "symbolic" of God: "the Qur'an…regards [human] experience…as symbolic of a reality described by it, as '*the First and the Last, the Visible and the Invisible*.'"[35] This serves as a claim about reality (O_1) that is generated through a practice (scriptural interpretation) that Iqbal's listeners may be skeptical about. The next step, as I outlined earlier, is "testing" this claim by taking recourse to disciplines of inquiry into human experience that Iqbal's listeners trust. And then examining if claims from those disciplines of inquiry can be interpreted as predicating the same character to the forms of experience they interpret. Iqbal engages with physics, biology, and psychology to ultimately argue that it is possible to interpret the examination of human experience that these sciences conduct such that these sciences, in their own particular ways, signify the reality of God. In other words, Iqbal takes Q 57:3 to mean that that which revealed itself in the form of speech to Muhammad also reveals itself, in different ways, to those who conduct

[35] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 25-26. The emphasis is in the original. The full verse reads, "He [God] is the First (al-Awwal), and the Last (al-Ākhir), and the Outward (al- Ẓāhir), and the Inward (al-Bāṭin); and He is Knower of all things."

inquiries into various facets of human experience. The following section outlines how *The Reconstruction* substantiates this claim by engaging with experience at "the level of matter, the level of life, and the level of mind,"[36] or physics, biology, and psychology.

The New Sciences and the Reality of God

The Reconstruction'*s* philosophic reflection on physics enacts a two-pronged strategy. Its first prong consists in discussing how this particular experimental science can seem to necessitate positions or conclusions that preclude the possibility of revelatory claims. The second consists in marshalling some canon of criticism from within the discipline which renders the erstwhile necessary positions non-necessary over-generalizations of concepts employed by physicists. Iqbal begins by showing that "traditional," Newtonian physics proceeds on the assumption of a world of matter out there composed of elemental features, which interact with the observer or investigator through media such as perception and cognition. Matter in this view is the source of the "sense-data," which a physicist analyzes through mathematical tools in order to decipher the behavioral properties and laws that operate in and permeate matter. Iqbal notes that the hypothesis that "experience at the level of matter" – the field of observation of physics – is composed of independent self-subsisting things such as particles, laws, waves etc., which are the objective source of the (subjective) sense-impressions that comprise ordinary consciousness has contributed immensely to the development of Newtonian physics.[37] E.g. the hypothesis that what enters our eyes as we perceive the color blue is not something blue out there, but waves that oscillate at a certain measurable frequency and length, which are then subjectively perceived as the color blue by the human species; or that sound is subjectively perceived as being loud or soft or melodious

[36] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 26.
[37] Ibid., 28.

but objectively a mechanical vibration of air-particles; are illustrations of the kinds of hypotheses that are funded by the assumption that there is a "distinction between the thing and its [perceived] qualities."[38] The assumption that:

> When I say, 'The sky is blue,' it can only mean that the sky produces a blue sensation in my mind, and not that the color blue is a quality found in the sky. As mental states they are impressions, that is to say, they are effects produced in us. The cause of these effects is matter, or material things acting through our sense organs, nerves, and brain on our mind[39]

has allowed Newtonian physics to advance and grow at a remarkable pace. Philosophers and theologians may complain about the epistemological and ontological consequences of hypotheses that have allowed Newtonian physics to develop and grow. They may say, for instance, that the "bifurcation" of human experience into subjective mentality and objective materiality creates insuperable epistemological problems about how knowledge about the world becomes possible at all.[40] Or they may say that the assumption that the ultimate cause of human experience is some form of "pure materiality" is a reductive way to handle the variety of phenomena that constitute human experience.[41] But such lines of criticisms only hold weight *if* physical concepts are retired from the task of manipulating and controlling experimental phenomena and recruited to construct a "view" or picture of reality as such. Iqbal notes that no such move is warranted by the practice of the new sciences. The concepts and theories employed by science are trustworthy because of their capacity to "predict" and

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[38] Ibid., 26.
[39] Ibid.,
[40] In Iqbal's words, this bifurcation "between Nature and the observer of Nature…creates a gulf [which is then bridged] over by resorting to the doubtful hypothesis of an imperceptible something, occupying an absolute space like a thing in a receptacle and causing our sensation by some kind of impact" (Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 27).
[41] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 27-8, 42, 86, 147.

"control" the events of Nature. Their function is not to procure "a single systematic view of Reality."[42] He notes:

> Natural Science…if it is true to its own nature and function, [cannot] set up its theory as a complete view of Reality. The concepts we use in the organization of knowledge are…sectional in character, and their application is relative to the level of experience to which they are applied.[43]

So the philosopher and theologian need not be wary if physicists employ the concepts of material atoms or mechanical causality. Such postulation derives its truth-functionality from its capacity to precisely examine, control, and predict a certain class of phenomena. Besides, concepts in physics that postulate a "self-subsistent materiality" as the subject-matter of physics are becoming "unworkable"[44] in the resolution of the kinds of questions that now occupy physicists. *The Reconstruction* names Einstein and Heisenberg as the chief instigators of novel "domestic difficulties" in the conceptual apparatuses employed in the discipline. The bifurcation of human experience into mentality and materiality, with the latter being posited as the subject matter of physics may have troubled only philosophers and theologians in the past, but those difficulties were not pressing for the conduct of physics. After Einstein and Heisenberg, the epistemological and ontological problems physics may have safely and legitimately ignored in the past have become pertinent:

> The scientific view of Nature as pure materiality is associated with the Newtonian view of space as an absolute void in which things are situated. This attitude of science has, no doubt, ensured its speedy progress; but the bifurcation of a total experience into two opposite domains of mind and matter has today forced it [i.e. physics] in view of its own domestic difficulties, to consider the problems which, in the beginning of its career, it completely ignored.[45]

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[42] Ibid., 33.
[43] Ibid., 34.
[44] Ibid., 28.
[45] Ibid.

Relativity theory and Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle have displayed phenomena that are not handled and predicted well if the object of knowledge is conceived as independent materiality and the subject of knowledge is conceived as reflective mentality. "Einstein…has taught us that the knower is intimately related to the object known, and that the act of knowledge is a constitutive element in…objective reality."[46] The very concepts of space and time are now conceptualized by physicists as relative to the frames of reference in which physical measurements are carried out: "The criticism of the foundations of the mathematical sciences has fully disclosed that the hypothesis of a pure materiality, an enduring stuff situated in an absolute space, is unworkable."[47]

Iqbal relies on Bertrand Russell, Whitehead, and Haldane's reception of relativity theory to argue that the subject-matter of post-Newtonian physics or the specific experience physics interprets is more adequately conceptualized, "not as a persistent thing with varying states, but a system of inter-related events."[48] This is the key referential claim Iqbal abstracts from his analysis of physics. That about which physics makes claims is a system of events or a set of activities in which the observer participates as she attempts to predict and control the things she observes. Physics conceives its "level of experience" or sign-vehicles to be a set of inter-related events and activities, rather than substantial somethings that are located in the void of space and persist in time. After abstracting this claim, *The Reconstruction* moves on to analyzing experience "at the level of life," the subject-matter of biology.

The Reconstruction's philosophic reflections on biology also enact a two-pronged strategy. First, *The Reconstruction* shows that concepts that are useful in physics have been

[46] Iqbal, "Self in the Light of Relativity," 111.
[47] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 34.
[48] Ibid., 31.

employed in biology in ways that reduce the subject-matter of its analysis to an epiphenomenon. Second, *The Reconstruction* discusses the kinds of concepts that his contemporary philosophers of biology judge to be appropriate to the discipline. Iqbal begins his analysis of biology by noting that in its development as a post-Darwinian science, biology seemed to configure life – the subject-matter of its analysis – as an "epiphenomenon," undergirded by mechanistic processes. "All problems, it was believed, were really the problems of physics."[49] This entailed denying that "life" constituted an "independent activity," that required the development of "concepts of a different order of thought," appropriate to this level or form of activity.[50] It was assumed that the domain of reference of concepts such as causality and mechanism, which were effectively deployed in Newtonian mechanics, could, without modification, be extended to the study of biological phenomena:

> The discoveries of Newton in the sphere of matter and those of Darwin in the sphere of Natural History [seemed to] reveal a mechanism. All problems, it was believed, were really the problems of physics. Energy and atoms, with the properties self-existing in them, could explain everything including life…The concept of mechanism – a purely physical concept – claimed to be the all-embracing explanation of Nature.[51]

The Reconstruction goes on to note that since the "mode of behavior of living organisms" is different from those of an "externally worked machine," biologists take recourse to concepts such as "purpose," and "ends." These concepts, are more adequate for observing and investigating the "action of living organisms, [that are] initiated and planned in view of an end."[52] This is not to deny that concepts from physics may not have some applicability in examining life, but in the wake of discoveries about the development and growth of biological organisms, these concepts have relatively limited value in biology:

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[49] Ibid., 33.
[50] Ibid., 34.
[51] Ibid. 33.
[52] Ibid., 34.

> No doubt, there are aspects of the activity of a living organism which it shares with [non-organic phenomena]. In the observation of these aspects the concepts of physics and chemistry would be needed; but [in the wake of Darwin] the behavior of the organism is essentially a matter of inheritance and incapable of sufficient explanation in terms of molecular physics…In all the purposive processes of growth and adaptation to its environment, whether this adaptation is secured by the formation of fresh or the modification of old habits, [a living organism] possesses a career which is unthinkable in the case of a machine.[53]

Iqbal relies on Haldane, Driesch, and Wildon Carr as exponents of the philosophy of biology to argue that life is explicable in other than mechanistically causal terms. To assume that, as a phenomenon, it is a) posterior to inorganic matter and b) a display or consequence of certain mathematically describable laws seems to mystify rather than explicate the purposive, goal-driven, and "internally regulated," behavior of living organisms. Just as the expectations of post-Newtonian physicists with respect to matter are confounded if matter is conceived as self-subsisting materiality, the expectations of biologists with respect to the behavior of living organisms are confounded if they are conceptualized in reference to mechanical concepts. In light of the insight that the behavior of living organisms does not reduce to mechanical laws, and relying on Haldane, Driesch, and Carr, Iqbal ventures that:

> It would…seem that life is foundational and anterior to the routine of physical and chemical processes which must be regarded as a kind of fixed behavior formed during a long course of evolution.[54]

Iqbal does not mean to suggest that single-cell organisms "precede" the emergence of helium and oxygen in the universe. Only that whatever precedes the emergence and evolution of both mechanistic and organic phenomenon in the universe cannot be "adequately comprehended" in mechanistic terms alone. That out of which both simplicity and diversity, mechanism and organism, emerge and evolve cannot be understood exclusively through

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[53] Ibid., 34-35.
[54] Ibid., 36.

physical concepts. Iqbal concludes by noting that biology conceives life as purposive, goal-oriented activity and behavior. This is the key referential claim Iqbal abstracts from his analysis of biology. That about which biology makes claims is purposive, goal driven activity, which activity is not epiphenomenal with respect to some more elemental mechanical activity. Unlike its earlier "slavish imitation of physical science,"[55] contemporary biology is beginning to conceive its "level of experience" or sign-vehicles to be a unique set of phenomena permeated by goals, purposes and ends. After abstracting this claim, *The Reconstruction* moves on to analyzing experience "at the level of mind," the subject-matter of psychology.

The Reconstruction's discussion of psychology or "life at the level of mind and consciousness," is markedly different from the way it considers physics and biology as contexts of inquiring into human experience. For *The Reconstruction*, with the examination of mind or consciousness we enter a field of investigation that is "privileged" with respect to the field of observation of physics and biology.[56] I have shown in my analysis of Iqbal's reading of physics and biology that he is quick to point out that the concepts employed in these disciplines are sectional. They do not afford any "systematic view of reality," nor do these sciences grant some form of unmediated access to reality. As disciplined interpretive enterprises dealing with specific forms of experience, the claims of both sciences are offered with respect to some context or interpretant. This, in fact, was one of my arguments in the previous chapter. Viz., that the concepts of experience, knowledge, and reality function triadically in *The Reconstruction*. During its analysis of psychology, however, *The*

[55] Ibid., 86. That biology and psychology have not quite secured their independence as genuine sciences and continue to view physics as the model for how all science should operate is a remark Iqbal makes a few times in *The Reconstruction*.
[56] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 37.

Reconstruction abandons its triadic employment of the concept of experience. Additionally, it also abandons the cautions it offers against over-generalizing concepts from any given science and employing them for the sake of constructing weltbilds. Iqbal argues that the examination of human experience at the level of consciousness discloses something elemental, primal, and non-interpretive that the other sciences do not afford. In contrast to physics and biology, psychology allows us to be in "a position to study [a] privileged case of existence which is absolutely unquestionable."[57] Iqbal continues:

> Now my perception of things that confront me is superficial and external; but my perception of my own self is internal, intimate, and profound. It follows…that conscious experience is that privileged case of existence in which we are in absolute contact with Reality, and that an analysis of this privileged case is likely to throw a flood of light on the ultimate meaning of existence.[58]

Psychological analysis, since its subject-matter is consciousness itself, affords "absolute contact" with reality, unlocking, in the process, the "ultimate nature of existence."[59] When we fix our gaze on our own conscious experience, we discover that it is characterized by a "perpetual flow," a state of "flux." In "moments of profound meditation,"[60] we may be able to discover that the constant movement and flux of our conscious experience is not arbitrary, capricious and sense-less. Our conscious experience is organically connected with our past and purposive and goal-directed with respect to the future.[61] The passage of time or duration in our conscious experience is permeated by flux and purpose. Meditation on or focused observation of the purposeful dynamism that permeates conscious experience impresses an idea upon the self conducting such introspection. Not only am *I* a goal-driven, dynamic

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[57] Ibid., 37.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 38.
[61] Ibid., 43.

center of life and consciousness, but reality *itself* is of the character of a self. "A critical interpretation of the sequence of time as revealed in our selves" is productive of the idea that reality itself, is ultimately, an organically unified self, in which "thought, life, and purpose interpenetrate."[62] For *The Reconstruction* this is no ordinary idea. It is an intuitive insight, a "direct revelation of the ultimate nature of Reality."[63] It is this intuitionally grounded direct vision of reality that Iqbal abstracts from his analysis of experience at the level of consciousness. "Intuition [secured through psychological introspection] reveals life as a centralizing ego."[64]

Iqbal's examination of physics, biology, and psychology yields three abstractions of how these sciences conceive the objects of their examination:

i. Experience at the level of matter yields the claim that reality is a set of inter-related events and activities.

ii. Experience at the level of life yields the claim that reality is purposive, goal-driven activity

iii. Experience at the level of mind yields the claim that reality is a self

These claims combined yield the following judgment: reality is teleological activity, conducted by a self, an "all-embracing concrete self," or God. In *The Reconstruction's* own words, critical interpretation of human experience as a subject-matter of physics, biology, and psychology yields the claim that reality is an, "organic unity…in which thought, life, and purpose interpenetrate. We cannot conceive this unity except as the unity of a self – an all-embracing concrete self – the ultimate source of all individual life and thought."[65] Iqbal's intellectual test yields the following judgment:

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[62] Ibid., 44.
[63] Ibid., 49.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 44.

> …a comprehensive philosophical criticism of all the facts of experience…brings us to the conclusion that Ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life… the facts of experience justify the inference that the ultimate nature of Reality is spiritual, and *must* be conceived as an ego.[66]

Thus, Iqbal argues, that human experience at the level of matter, life, and mind, ultimately refers to God or the Ultimate Ego, Ultimate Reality, Ultimate Self, Absolute Ego. *The Reconstruction's* intellectual test hoped to evince that the character of reality as it is revealed through non-religious forms of experience is the same as it is revealed to religious experience. More precisely, *The Reconstruction* sought to show that reality as it is explored by physics, biology, and psychology, is of the same character, as it is explored by engagement with the Qur'an. Practices of reasoning (K_1) in relation to the Qur'an (and religious contexts more broadly) and in relation to matter, life, and mind (K_2) are trustworthy and reality referring, because that which they are about displays the "same" (a_1, a_2, a_3…) character. Iqbal's reading of Q 57:3 yielded the claim that: "the Qur'an…regards [human] experience…as symbolic of a reality described by it, as '*the First and the Last, the Visible and the Invisible*.'"[67] *The Reconstruction* avers that its examination of the subject-matter of physics, biology, and psychology warrants the claim that reality is a "rationally directed creative life." One that revealed itself in the form of speech to Muhammad, and also reveals itself, in different ways, to the various sciences. This intellectual test reinforces *The Reconstruction's* case for how religion or the religious, apart from whatever else it may be, is a form of inquiry. It also introduces Iqbal's complimentary case with respect to science: apart from whatever else it is, it is a form of intimacy with God. Religion is investigative, just as

[66] Ibid., 48-9. Emphasis mine.
[67] Ibid., 25-26.

science is worshipful. The practices, institutions, and habits that form both can belong to the same habitus:

> The view we have taken gives a fresh spiritual meaning to…science. The knowledge of Nature is knowledge of God's behavior. In our observation of Nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship.[68]

In concluding this section, I want to draw our attention to how in the process of analyzing conscious experience, as it coheres scriptural and scientific claims, *The Reconstruction* displays the foundational and propositional aspects of its representationalism. *The Reconstruction*, in battling materialism and mechanism, argues that these positions are a consequence of illegitimately assuming that the theoretical apparatus of any given practice of knowing yields a "view" of reality as such. But as Iqbal advocates that reality is of the character of a "centralizing ego," he takes psychological introspection as precisely the kind of activity that can afford a direct vision of reality. While critical of the over-extension of physical concepts beyond their domain of reference from specifiable experimental settings, *The Reconstruction* imagines psychology to be a form of investigation that yields a concept of this character. The examination of life at the level of consciousness yields a generic concept, an insight, available to any and all practices of knowing. I showed in the previous chapter that *The Reconstruction* is wary of the claim that certain experiences come armed with already-formed iconizations of the character of reality. This is precisely the procedure it employs as it argues that meditation or psychological introspection forces a necessary idea upon the meditating or introspective consciousness. Viz., that reality is of the character of a self. This insight is a first-hand, "direct revelation of the ultimate nature of Reality. [Reality]

[68] Ibid., 45.

must be conceived as an ego."[69] Since this is a direct vision of reality, it yields a universal concept, descriptive of reality, un-bounded by any constraints or practices of knowing:

> I have conceived the Ultimate Reality as an Ego; and I must add now that from the Ultimate Ego only egos proceed…The world, in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego…is an ego.[70]

Not atoms, not things, not space, not time, not laws, not but selfhood (or khudi) is the ultimate nature of reality.[71] *The Reconstruction* begins with a specific, contextual need of addressing a crisis-inducing intellectual tendency in the habitus of young Muslim university students in India (K_3). It promises to do so by offering a conceptual coherence to *this* habitus, a possible weltbild that would be appropriate to the needs of his audience. Iqbal ends up constructing the only rationally conceivable world, funded by an incorrigible, direct insight into the nature of reality. In the process he abandons the cautions he utters against materialistic and mechanistic worldviews and reiterates the conceptions of knowing he criticizes in *The Reconstruction.*

The next section shall show how – unlike *The Reconstruction's* grounding of khudi in intuitional terms as it employs the concept for the sake of cohering claims that emerge from *tafsīr*, *kalām*, biology, physics etc. – *The Reconstruction's* discussions of human khudi or selfhood employ pragmatic forms of reasoning.

Human Khudi

Scholars have noted various intellectual-genealogical sources of Iqbal's notion of human selfhood. As I mentioned earlier, Shahab Ahmed describes it as the "historical

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[69] Ibid., 49.
[70] Ibid., 57.
[71] All the "nots" in this sentence are world-views that, as I have shown earlier, *The Reconstruction* argues are generated by the over-extension of concepts from their rightful employment in specific practices of knowing.

culmination" of vibrant thematizations in Islamic intellectual history of the meaning of the human condition in relation to the Pretext, Context, and Text of God's revelation to Muhammad.[72] Sheila Mcdonough discusses how Iqbal's notion of khudi is a means of configuring "I-Thou," rather than "I-it" relations between human-beings and God.[73] Schimmel notes that Iqbal's khudi, like his thought in general, was a heroic attempt to breathe life into the "deteriorated" body of Islam in India, where life "was spent mostly in the blind acceptance of accustomed symbols."[74] Aziz Ahmad and 'Abdul Mug̲hnī allude to the Socratic bent of the concept. Aziz Ahmad notes that Iqbal uses the concept of khudi in a philosophical sense, "and means recognition of one's self."[75] 'Abdul Mug̲hnī in similar vein notes that khudi, for Iqbal, means recognizing one's self and one's limits.[76] Javed Majeed argues that Iqbal defines khudi against:

> The oppressive clichés of colonial ideologies in British India, for which Indians were members of groups defined by religion and cast, and not individuals in their own right…Iqbal's conception of selfhood is an attempt to reconstruct, on behalf of Indian Muslims in particular…a counter agency to the systematic negation of the humanity of the colonized subject by European colonialism.[77]

Mohammad Rafiuddin, one of the first directors of the *Iqbal Academy* in Pakistan elevates Iqbal's notion of khudi (and his thought more broadly) to world-historic proportions. The

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[72] Ahmed, *What is Islam?,* 340.
[73] Sheila McDonough, "Iqbal: His Metaphysical Ideas," in *Hundred Years of Iqbal Studies,* ed. Waheed Ishrat (Islamabad: Pakistan Academy of Letters, 2003), 403–13. McDonough notes that "Human purposes develop, in Iqbal's opinion, in inter-action with the one God who is best understood by the metaphor of a self-conscious self – the Ultimate Ego. The English expression 'I-Thou' relationship best characterizes this insight; the opposite is an 'I-it' relationship in which the human is a person but everything else has the status of object to be manipulated according to the needs and wishes of the human person" (McDonough, "Iqbal: His Metaphysical Ideas," 409).
[74] Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, 74. Schimmel notes that the "task for Iqbal, and his fellow reformers, was to come to a re-interpretation of the traditional symbols, so that the outworn forms were filled again with life" (Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, 74).
[75] Ahmad, "Iqbal's Political Theory," 238.
[76] Mug̲hnī, *Iqbāl Kā Naẓriyah-yi K̲h̲vudī,* 14.
[77] Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, and Postcolonialism*, 23. Majeed notes this as one of two contexts that mark Iqbal's concept of selfhood, the other one being "notions of selfhood in circulation in Islamic artistic and philosophic culture." For Majeed's rendition of this context see: Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal*, 20-2.

idea of the self is the crowning concept in thought of Iqbal, the "intellectual king" of "a future world state which will endure forever."[78] This section's claims are more modest than tracing the rich and complex historical currents out of which Iqbal's concept of human selfhood emerges or speculating its future possibilities. My primary concern is displaying how *The Reconstruction's* arguments for predicates, qualities, or features of the human self assume pragmatic forms. And I shall pay attention to the shape of Iqbal's arguments for the human self as unified and free.

Iqbal begins his articulation of human khudi by expressing admiration as well as criticism of the exploration of human selfhood in Islamic intellectual history.[79] He especially praises the anthropological concepts and insights of "Devotional Sufism" and the role they have played in shaping and guiding religious experience in Islam's history.[80] But the concepts of selfhood developed in the history of Islamic thought may not be "of any help" to those Muslims – like the audience of *The Reconstruction* – who "possess a different intellectual background"[81] than the one operative in pre-colonial Islamic history. *The Reconstruction* is concerned with articulating a notion of selfhood that admits and nurtures the possibility of religious experience for modern Muslim subjects, whose experiences and intellectual habitus have been shaped through the pedagogic institutions of imperial modernity.[82] In a letter to Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan – who served as a Vice-chancellor

[78] Rafiuddin, "Iqbal's Concept of the Self." Rafiuddin passionately continues, "[This world state shall bring] to man all the blessings of permanent peace and unity and enabling him to achieve that highest progress-material, mental, moral and spiritual of which the promise resides in the potentialities of their nature."
[79] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 76-9.
[80] Ibid., 77-8, 87-8.
[81] Ibid., 78.
[82] Cf. Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2007) and Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, eds., *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1–39.

of Aligarh Muslim University – that discusses syllabi for philosophy, theology, history, *tafsīr* that may be appropriate to the needs of Muslim students at the university, Iqbal notes:

> the spiritual needs of a community change with the expansion of that community's outlook on life. The change in the position of the individual, his intellectual liberation and infinite advance in natural sciences have entirely change the substance of modern life so that the kind of scholasticism or theological thought which satisfied a Muslim the Middle Ages would not satisfy him today.[83]

In Shahab Ahmed's words, Iqbal's development of the concept of khudi is in the service of the "(self-)creation of a new twentieth-century species of Muslim capable of meeting the challenges of modernity." [84] The most emblematic of which, for Iqbal, is the challenge of configuring an intellectual habitus in which religion and science can cohere. Iqbal's discussions of human khudi, like his discussions of the concept of khudi more generally, are offered, and are truth-functional, with respect to this concern.[85] With respect to its arguments for positing the human self as free and unified, *The Reconstruction* is critical of directions of inquiry that:

a) create a fundamental or ontological disunity between something called mind and another something called body[86]

b) describe the reality of human selfhood as an epiphenomenon reducible to other, more basic or fundamental processes[87]

In Iqbal's judgment, the aforementioned tendencies conceptualize the human self as composed of divided, disparate, and (intractably) discontinuous elements. Such conceptual division tends to sow intractable divisions between the various activities that such a self can participate and engage in. *The Reconstruction* suggests that conflicts between religion and

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[83] Letters of Iqbal, B. A. Dar, Iqbal Academy Pakistan. Lahore. 3rd edition. 2015. P. 153.
[84] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 340.
[85] Cf. Ebrahim Moosa, "The Human Person in Iqbal's Thought," in *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*, ed. Hillier, H.C. and Basit Koshul (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 12–32.
[86] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 83-5
[87] Ibid., 86.

science are partly a by-product of anthropologies that preclude relationships between these practices of inquiry. It takes Cartesianism to be a prototypical illustration of a) and frames its central concern in the following way: "Are the soul [which is a term Iqbal uses interchangeably with the word 'human-ego'] and its organism two things…independent of each other, though somehow mysteriously united?"[88] *The Reconstruction* argues that such inquiries build on the presupposition that human experience and cognition is a product of the interaction of two specific and identifiable entities, namely, mind and matter. The interaction between the two gives rise to a third entity, which we may call cognition, or experience. Iqbal's critique of this position is that it rests on a dichotomy that is presupposed, without warrant, and the human self is then derived out of this presupposed state of affairs. Similarly, *The Reconstruction* sees b) as a consequence of mechanistic trends in modern biology and psychology. He frames the central issue at play in b) in the following terms: If the human-self emerges out of what we call nature, after "millions of years" of evolution, how can we understand the relationship of this self with the environment out of which it emerges? *The Reconstruction* is critical of resolutions to such questions that seek to uncover some sort of mechanism through which human-consciousness may be described as an epiphenomenal effect of more basic and fundamental causes. Iqbal notes:

> the controversy between the advocates of Mechanism and Freedom arises from a wrong view of intelligent action which modern psychology, unmindful of its own independence as a science…was bound to take on account of its slavish imitation of physical sciences. The view that ego-activity [or human activity] is a succession of thoughts and ideas, ultimately resolvable to units of sensations is only another form of atomic materialism…Such a view could not but raise a strong presumption in favor of a mechanistic interpretation of consciousness…The truth is that the causal chain wherein we try to find a place for the ego is itself an artificial construction of the ego for its own purposes. The ego is called upon to live in a complex environment, and he cannot maintain his life in it without reducing it to a system which would give him some kind of assurance as to the behavior of things around him. The view of his

[88] Ibid., 83.

> environment as a system of cause and effect is thus an indispensable instrument of the ego…[89]

Iqbal attempts to remedy the problems posed by the aforementioned conceptions of selfhood by introducing the categories of activity, events, and habits in place of categories such as entity, mechanism, or atom. He argues that the categories of event, activity, and habits aid in resolving interminable problems about questions of freedom, determinism, unity, and disunity as they pertain to conceptualizing human selfhood: "We have seen [during Iqbal's intellectual test] that the body is not a thing situated in an absolute void; it is a system of events or acts. The system of experiences we call soul or ego is also a system of acts."[90] So conceived, the question of the relation between mind and body, rather than one of resolving how two ontologically separate entities come into relation with each other, is transformed into a question of how various kinds of activities cohere in the form of a self:

> The body is accumulated action or habit of the soul [or the human self]; and as such undetachable from it…what then is matter? A colony of egos of a low order out of which emerges the ego of a higher order, when their association and interaction reach a certain degree of coordination.[91]

The unity that belongs to such a self, *The Reconstruction* claims, is not a "given" that philosophic reflection is supposed to describe. It is a fragile accomplishment, which is displayed in the activity of that which is named a self: "my real personality is not a thing; it is an act. My experience is only a series of acts, mutually referring to one another, and held together by the unity of a directive purpose."[92] Iqbal's approach here consists in offering an observation about human activity, namely, that it is or can potentially be governed by "directive purpose." Such directive purpose lends unity or coherence to what we call the

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[89] Ibid., 86.
[90] Ibid., 84.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 82-3

human self. This observation is not a propositional, non-vague, demonstrative argument for the unity of the human self. Instead, *The Reconstruction* offers unity as a possibility or an abduction about certain kinds of behaviors observable in the activities of a human self. The observation of such unity does not preclude the possibility that disunity may also be observable in the activities of human beings. Iqbal's procedure, then, for predicating unity to the human self is the following: If certain kinds of behaviors (d_1, d_2, d_3…) are observable in the activities of human beings, then we have warrant to hold that the human self is unified or unifiable. The observation of contradictory forms of behavior ($\sim d_1$, $\sim d_2$, $\sim d_3$…) is not precluded in this form of argument. This procedure of predicating unity to the human self is abductive and probabilistic, rather than necessary and foundational. As a clarification and amplification of what I mean, consider Peirce's (far simpler) predication of "hardness" to diamonds in his development of pragmatic ways of predicating concepts to things. Peirce argues that pragmatic inquiry expresses the meaning of a concept in the form of conditional statements that hypothesize the occurrence of certain behaviors in the course of observation.[93] Predicating hardness to diamonds would entail collecting conditional, hypothetical claims about what would happen, if diamonds were observed under certain experimental situations:

1. If diamonds are hard, then diamonds cannot be scratched by glass
2. If diamonds are hard, then diamonds will not melt at temperatures below 1500 K
3. If diamonds are hard, then diamonds will make a human-being bleed if he is struck with one...

What I want to draw our attention to is that each of these claims is a hypothesis about a possible and probable occurrence. It may be the case that someone strikes a diamond with a particular glass and a fixed measure of force a 100 times and out of those 100, 90

[93] *CP* 5.411-27, 464-68.

occurrences do not produce a scratch on the surface of the diamond and 10 occurrences result in a scratched surface. In similar, less technical vein, *The Reconstruction's* predication of unity to the human self is a hypothesis that admits disunity as an observable behavior in the human self. In trying to address Cartesian-like anthropologies that posit fundamental disunities between the elements that comprise the human self (e.g. mind/body), *The Reconstruction* does *not* offer the logical contradictory of the object of its critique as a true description of human selfhood. This same form of predication is at work when Iqbal discusses the human self as free:

> My whole reality lies in my directive attitude. You cannot perceive me like a thing in space, or a set of experiences in temporal order; you must interpret, understand, and appreciate me in my judgments, in my will-attitudes, aims, and aspirations…It is this sense of striving in the experience of purposive action and the success which I actually achieve in reaching my "ends" that convinces me of my efficiency as a personal cause.[94]

Just as in the previous case, Iqbal's attribution of freedom to the human-self is offered as a possibility of how human-beings orient their behaviors, desires, and judgments in relation to their environment. Freedom is *The Reconstruction's* name for the following set of phenomena: human beings have the capacity to envision future possibilities, which, in light of purposive action, may actually come about. This form of argument does not exclude the contradictory of freedom as a possibility.[95]

But if the consequences of both unity and disunity, freedom and determinacy are observable in the activity of human beings, then what is at stake in *The Reconstruction's* predication of unity and freedom to human khudi? I read *The Reconstruction's* emphasis on unity (over disunity) and freedom (over determinacy) as predicates of human khudi in the

[94] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 83.
[95] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 87.

service of addressing the over-emphasis of Cartersian-like and mechanistic anthropologies on disunity and determinacy. *The Reconstruction* makes an abductive and probabilistic case for unity and freedom as predicates of human khudi in an environment that makes necessary and propositional claims about the human self as un-unified and determined. Stated counter-factually, if *The Reconstruction* was addressed to an environment that sought to argue that the human self is perfectly unified (to the exclusion of being un-unified) and perfectly free (to the exclusion of being determined), it would have emphasized disunity and determinacy as observable features in human selfhood. My point is that *The Reconstruction's* procedure of predicating features to human khudi – in actuality and the entirely hypothetical scenario I just described – counter-acts the tendency to make non-vague (or binary) descriptive claims about human selfhood.

The Reconstruction's procedure for predicating features to human selfhood modifies the rules with respect to which Cartesian-like or modern biological-psychological approaches predicate features to human selfhood. The latter approaches are non-vague and issue non-contextual claims about the genealogical or metaphysical elements that compose the human subject. Iqbal's claims refer to and seek to transform the interpretant or the habits of predicating claims about human selfhood operative in his context. In that sense, Iqbal's predication of unity or freedom to the human subject acquires truth-value with respect to its capacity to transform the rules of predication of the practices he critiques. Stated differently, Iqbal re-reads or corrects the domain of reference of claims about unity-disunity, freedom-determinacy. Such predicates, Iqbal's procedure of predication argues, are abductions that (ought to) emerge from practices of observation of activities conducted by the object of investigation. Just as the expectations of those who observe physical phenomena are

confounded if they approach them as self-subsistent entities; those of biologists are confounded if they approach life as reducible to the terms of molecular physics; the expectations of those who observe human behavior (psychologists, philosophers, anthropologists etc.) shall be confounded if they approach it using non-vague and propositional tools. Iqbal's usage of the concepts of habit, event, and activity rather than atom, mechanism, and entity serves the construction of a vague approach to human selfhood.

The Reconstruction's practice of altering the rules with respect to which features are predicated to an object of analysis is not exclusive to its reflections on human khudi; one of the significant areas where *The Reconstruction* tries to alter habits of predication is when the object of analysis is Islam's scriptural resources. More specifically, *The Reconstruction* is concerned with the kinds of epistemic assumptions that tend to delegitimate the Qur'an's capacity to be truth bearing and how those assumptions may be altered. The following chapter teases out the philosophic drama at play as Iqbal tries to alter the polemical dimensions of philosophic conceptions that delegitimate the Qur'an. I shall show that as he wages this struggle, he re-iterates the positions he criticizes by assuming a combative and polemical stance. And, simultaneously, performs conceptual maneuvers that seek to transform, and not merely oppose and contradict, that which they criticize.

Chapter 5: How Does Revelation Acquire Meaning?

In the previous chapter I argued that the concept of khudi occupies several roles in *The Reconstruction*. I stated initially that its pragmatic function is to cohere an antagonistic tendency in the intellectual habitus of Iqbal's students, namely, the tendency to imagine that the intellectual resources of Muslim culture are at odds with the intellectual heritage of the west. By describing knowledge as a means of establishing relationships with God's self – irrespective of the context in which that knowledge is obtained – Iqbal hoped to argue that investigation of empirical experience and investigation of scriptural texts were commensurate activities. The features that the Quran predicates of reality and the features that physics, biology, and psychology – embodiments of various "regions" or "levels" of human experience – predicate of reality are identical with or at any rate commensurate with each other. And this reality is best understood as "a rationally directed creative life"[1] or a self in which "thought, life, and purpose interpenetrate to form…the organic unity of a self – an all-embracing concrete self – the ultimate source of all individual life and thought."[2] This concrete self is the ultimate referent signified through the knowledge claims that emerge from various experiential contexts. Science is akin to worship, Iqbal argued, and religion is akin to patient and systematic empirical investigation of reality. Iqbal's "intellectual test" of making revelatory experience a potentially trustworthy context of inquiring into reality consisted in interpreting the predicative claims that the Qur'an makes about reality and that physics, biology, and psychology make about reality and showing that the predicative claims that emerge from these various contexts are identical or coherent with each other. This

[1] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 48.
[2] Ibid., 44.

procedure, Iqbal argued, was sufficient warrant for convincing someone who is skeptical of the capacity of revelation to yield knowledge-claims to entertain the possibility that revelatory claims could be truth-bearing.

This chapter will trace Iqbal's argumentation as he proceeds from the task of rendering revelatory experience as possibly reliable and trustworthy to showing how revelatory experience may acquire significance, referentiality, and truth-functionality. His more particular concern is displaying how the Qur'an (or what Iqbal calls Muhammad's revelatory experience) may acquire truth-functionality, significance, and may function as a potentially formative and authoritative feature of the intellectual universe of *The Reconstruction's* audience. I analyze Iqbal's case through two avenues. The first consists in examining Iqbal's practice of predicating features to Islam and Muslim culture. My analysis in this section is analogous to my analysis of Iqbal's predication of features to human khudi in the previous chapter and it is readable as an analysis of how Iqbal predicates features to the khudi or self of Islam. I shall show that *The Reconstruction's* predication of features to Islam takes three broad forms. He offers his claims as binary, combative descriptions of the "spirit of Islam," in competition with other descriptions about Islam being offered in his context; as non-binary, vague formulations that admit contradiction;[3] and, finally, his claims are offered as attempts to transform the rules of predicating features to Islam operative in his context.[4] In the second section, I examine *The Reconstruction's* scriptural hermeneutics. I show that Iqbal tends to read scriptural claims as descriptive propositions, whose meaning is secured by their correspondence to the states of affairs or things that they are about and, secondly, he reads them triadically, as claims whose meanings are displayed with respect to

[3] Vague as in Peirce's sense, discussed in the first chapter. Also see *CP* 5.505.
[4] This third form is the same as the one Iqbal pursues in his predication of features to human khudi.

some habit of interpretation. My chief concern, in keeping with the central concern of this study, is displaying how Iqbal's attempt to argue his case viz., the meaningfulness of prophetic revelation, both through predicating features to Islam, and the performance of scriptural interpretation, is informed by representational and pragmatic tendencies.

Conceptualizing Islam

Iqbal begins his discussion of the "ruling concepts of Muslim culture" by reminding his audience of the intellectual test he performed in relation to the possibility of *waḥī* or religious experience in the second, third, and fourth chapters of *The Reconstruction*. He enacts this reminder by performing a brief version of his intellectual test.[5] He says that:

> the way in which the word *Wahy*…is used in the Qur'an, shows that the Qur'an regards it as a universal property of life...the plant growing freely in space, the animal developing a new organ to suit a new environment, and a human being receiving light from the inner depths of life, are all cases of [*waḥī*] varying in character according to the needs of the recipient, or the needs of the species to which the recipient belongs.[6]

The Reconstruction sets up the stage of arguing the meaningfulness of scripture or prophetic revelation by reiterating and re-performing a criterion that he brought to bear on that which claims to be a consequence of prophetic revelation. In semiotic terms, Iqbal argues:

> If it is possible to interpret (I_1) verses of the Qur'an containing the sign-vehicle *waḥī* (S_1) such that the sign-vehicle refers certain predicates (a_1, a_2, a_3) to reality (O_1)
>
> And it is possible to interpret (I_2) elements of the "every day"[7] experience of *The Reconstruction's* readers (S_2) such that the activity of interpreting S_2 refers identical predicates (a_1, a_2, a_3) to reality (O_2)
>
> Then there is some warrant for those who participate in I_2 to imagine that it is reasonable that S_1 is reality referring.

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[5] My discussion of Iqbal's usage of the term experience is pertinent to my discussion in this section. As I argued earlier, Iqbal uses the term experience to refer to that which is subjected to interpretation, in a process of interpretation that I described semiotically, using Peirce's vocabulary of sign, object, interpretant.
[6] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 100.
[7] Peirce's technical term for reflective judgments about phenomena that do not require the use of "special" instruments (microscopes, telescopes etc.) for observation is "cenoscopy." See *CP* 1.239-241.

As I discussed in chapter 3, Iqbal is writing in a context where habits of predication with respect to religion refer it to either subjectivity or primitive forms of objectivity. I argued in chapter 4 that the *The Reconstruction* perceives such habits of predication – embodied in the educational apparatuses of the Raj – as productive of a crisis-inducing tendency in the young Muslims, whose intellectual and cognitive universes are being formed through the educational institutions of the Raj such as missionary schools and universities. Such students are being trained in habits of thought that make ideas such as revelation, prophecy, and God inconceivable, that frame the intellectual heritage of Islam and the west as competing, and delegitimate commensurate relationships between religion and science. There is ample evidence to suggest that Iqbal not only speaks as a university professor and functionary of the educational, political, and legal apparatuses of the British Empire, but also as a student who battled with the potentially alienating and "de-muslimizing"[8] consequences of the educational institutions set up by the Raj. Iqbal attended the Scottish Mission school in Sialkot, where he was enrolled because Mir Hasan, one of his teachers and a "card-carrying member" of the Aligarh movement, convinced Iqbal's father to enroll him in an English school rather than a madrassah.[9] Iqbal also speaks as a graduate of the Government College in Lahore and later on at Cambridge and in Munich. Iqbal's reflections on his time at these institutions displays his sense of how they are conducive to the systematic negation and marginalization of the traditions of thought and practice of the colonized, while elevating the traditions of thought and practice that constitute the Raj. Iqbal's personal encounter with habits of predication that delegitimated his pre-colonial heritage, while valorizing colonial

[8] See Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," pp. 107-110 and Iqbal, "The Muslim Community - A Sociological Study," 130–33.
[9] Iqbāl, *Zindah Rūd*, 82–85.

forms of thought and practice is captured remarkably in an incident that Javed Iqbal recounts in his biography of Iqbal. During one of his summer breaks (*taʿṭīlāt*) in England, Iqbal went with one of his Scottish friends to his home-town in Scotland. A few days into his stay, Iqbal found out that missionaries who had recently returned from India were scheduled to give a public lecture on their activities there. Iqbal and his friend went to the event, which had attracted a huge crowd, and heard the following from the lecturers:

> There are 30 million people (*insān*) in India, but it wouldn't be quite accurate (*jā'iz*) to refer to them as people. In their habits, attributes, and customs they are considerably inferior (*bahut past*) to humans and a little better (*kuch ūpar*) than animals. We have, even after years of struggle, only barely introduced these animal-like (*ḥevān numā*) humans to civilization (*tahz̲īb*).[10]

After the lecture Iqbal was moved to give a lengthy and scorching twenty-five minute speech, denouncing the way the missionaries chose to conceptualize, understand, and relate with Indians.[11] "Look at my face, my skin, my clothes, my comportment," said Iqbal, as if to recover his humanity, "and you can estimate for yourself the degree to which what the missionaries just said about Indians is accurate."[12] The missionaries' habits of predication, which delegitimate that which they seek to understand, are a display of sort of habits of predication *The Reconstruction* perceives to be operative as colonial pedagogic institutions and scholars seek to understand Islam, Muhammad, and the Qur'an. In his most fervent and fiery criticism of habits of predication that delegitimate Muhammad's revelatory claims as

[10] Ibid., 142–43.
[11] Ibid., 143.
[12] Ibid., 143.

truth-bearing, Iqbal alludes to the work of scholars such as D. B. MacDonald,[13] Margoliouth,[14] and Nicholson,[15] and notes:

> Muhammad, we are told, was a psychopath. Well, if a psychopath has the power to give a fresh direction to the course of human history, it is a point of the highest psychological interest to search his original experience which has turned slaves into leaders of men, and has inspired the conduct and shaped the career of whole races of mankind. Judging from the various types of activity that emanated from the movement initiated by the Prophet of Islam, his spiritual tension and the kind of behavior which issued from it, cannot be regarded as a response to a mere fantasy inside his brain.[16]

This is a retort to claims such as MacDonald's, who, in his analysis of traditions that record Muhammad's religious experiences, notes:

> What is certain is the existence of some pathological condition in Muhammad, resulting in trances, and it is not at all impossible that Sprenger's judgment…that it was some form of hysteria under which he suffered, may be correct. A more detailed examination in the light of the recent investigations of nervous diseases through hypnotism might reach more sure results.[17]

As I will discuss later on in the chapter, one of *The Reconstruction's* reaction to such polemical claims is to launch an (equally high-pitched) counter-polemic. But, for now, what I want to focus our attention on, is that in such an environment, Iqbal suggests that the rationality and truth-functionality of revelatory claims by Prophets may be examined more fruitfully by "examining the cultural world that [springs out of a prophet's] message."[18] In an environment where the defining consequence of genetic inquiries into revelatory claims is the discreditation of such claims as fantastic and a form of "nervous disease," *The*

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[13] D. B. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1909), 45–46.
[14] D. S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 44–48.
[15] R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 147–48.
[16] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 150.
[17] MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, 46.
[18] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 99.

Reconstruction suggests that prophetic claims ought to be evaluated pragmatically,[19] by way of attention to the consequences of what claims to be prophetic revelation. This style of understanding and engaging with prophetic claims is strikingly similar to Iqbal's recommendations to one of his readers, Saliḥ Muḥammad, who sought to write a commentary (*tashrīḥ*) on Iqbal's *Payām-i Mashriq*.[20] In a letter to Salīḥ Muḥammad that discussed his proposed commentary, Iqbal offers the following recommendation:

> [My recommendation is that] you should not consult me [in the process of writing your commentary]. You should try to candidly and clearly (*ṣāf aur vaẓiḥ*) express the way my couplets affect your soul. Inquiring after the author's intentions is entirely unnecessary, and, in fact, detrimental…the same couplet affects different hearts differently. In fact [it affects the same heart] differently on different occasions…If a couplet produces different effects on different souls, it is evidence (*dalīl*) of the power and life of the couplet.[21]

To judge the truth-functionality or the "power and life" of prophetic revelation is to engage in an inquiry into the "various types of activity" that "emanate" in relation to one who is perceived as receiving prophetic revelation:

> The prophet's [religious experience] is creative…the desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world-force is supreme in the prophet. Thus his return [from *waḥī*] amounts to a kind of pragmatic test of the value of his religious experience…[a] way of judging the value of a prophet's religious experience, therefore, would be to examine…the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his message.[22]

This conceptual move – that of paying attention to the consequences rather than the genesis of what purports to be revelatory – is one of *The Reconstruction's* attempts to transform the conceptual rules of predicating features to Islam, Muhammad, and the Qur'an operative in his context. As I stated in the first few pages of this chapter, Iqbal's predicative practice takes

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[19] Ibid., 99.
[20] Muhammad Iqbal, *Payām-i Mashriq*, 10th ed. (Lahaur: Shaiḵẖ Gẖulām 'Alī End Sanz, 1963).
[21] Burney, *Kulliyat Makateeb-e-Iqbal*, 3:119.
[22] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 99.

three forms – that of transforming the rules of predication operative in his context; that of combative, binary descriptions; that of vague claims about Islam. Before taking up additional evidence from *The Reconstruction* of each of these tendencies I want to illustrate three corresponding forms of reading that these three styles of predication have elicited in *The Reconstruction's* interpreters. I shall illustrate these forms of reading through Tayob (A), Diagne (B), and Majeed (C).

Tayob notes that, like other modernists, Iqbal's attempt to capture the "spirit" or "essence" of Islam is a "desperate" attempt to "save Muslims from the doubts and critique that came with modernity."[23] He notes that Muslim Modernists':

> considered reflection on the essence of religion…provided them with an apparently permanent core at the heart of Islam. And they argued that this core was clearly present from the beginning of Islam...they [posit] religion and Islam as stable centers in a bewildering and fast-changing world.[24]

In this reading, Iqbal's practice of predication consists of isolating something elemental and incorrigible from the vast expanse of Islamic history and positing it as the "permanent core" of Islam. Tayob reads Iqbal's practice of excavating an "extra-historical" core of Islam in the service of accessing something that can provide a stable, self-consistent essence to Islam which would otherwise succumb to the "ravages of modernity."[25] The function of this essence is heroic and it not only performs the task of protecting the integrity of Islam in the face of modernity's political, epistemological, and moral crises, but, by extension, the

[23] Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 44.
[24] Ibid., 35.
[25] Ibid., 35, 47.

potential crises that any given epoch may present in the future. In this reading, then, *The Reconstruction* attributes self-consistent, foundational, and a-historical predicates to Islam.[26]

Diagne, on the other hand, argues that Iqbal's attribution of predicates to Islam is vague.[27] *The Reconstruction's* attempt to articulate the spirit of Islam is not meant to secure a stable, a-historical essence. Iqbal's style of predication emphasize movement, fidelity, permanence, change, dynamism and conservatism as features that constitute Islam. Diagne notes that Iqbal articulates an "ethos of Islam," characterized by "a process of continuous creation, of permanent innovation and emergence, which prevent the intention of religion becoming imprisoned within reasonings…claiming a 'final character.'"[28] For Diagne, Iqbal conceptualizes Islam in multifarious and contradictory ways or what Shahab Ahmed calls "coherent contradictions."[29] In this reading, then, *The Reconstruction* attributes predicates to the object of its analysis (i.e. Islam) without obeying the principle of non-contradiction. Rather than attributing general, global, and timeless predicates to it, *The Reconstruction* attributes vague predicates to the object, which may become clear if the object is approached with respect to some more finite and definite method of inquiry. But without the specification of such a context, this style of predication avers that only vague characteristics are attributable to the "spirit" or "soul" of Islam.

Majeed argues that *The Reconstruction's* predication of features to Islam are not about the object of inquiry (i.e. Islam), but referential with respect to the habits and methods through which the object is approached. In semiotic terms, for Majeed, Iqbal's practice of

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[26] Tayob notes that the stable and permanent predicates that Iqbal and other modernists sought to attribute to Islam were conceptualized by them as visible and operative throughout Islam's history and became available through Muhammad's revelatory experience.
[27] Vague in Peirce's sense, discussed in the first chapter. Also see *CP* 5.505.
[28] Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Islam and Open Society: Fidelity and Movement in the Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal*, trans. Melissa Mcmahon (Dakar: Codesria, 2010), 54–55, passim.
[29] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 405-541.

predicating features to Islam refers to, and seeks to amend, the interpretant with respect to which Islam is approached as an object of inquiry in the context of colonial modernity. In this reading, then, the "aboutness" and "referentiality" of what *The Reconstruction* has to say about Islam is disclosed in the way that it affects or suggests transformations to the habits with respect to which Islam is constituted as an object of inquiry.[30]

There is ample evidence in *The Reconstruction* to warrant each of these styles of reading Iqbal's habit of predicating features to Islam. (A) finds warrant in *The Reconstruction's* discussions on the "finality of the institution of prophethood,"[31] in Islam and its arguments for how "the spirit of Muslim culture [is such that] for purposes of knowledge, it fixes its gaze on the concrete, the finite."[32] The basic consequence of the idea of the finality of prophethood, Iqbal argues, is that, "mystic experience…however unusual or abnormal, must now be regarded by a Muslim as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience."[33] For Iqbal, the epistemological consequence of this idea is that it opens up all avenues of human experience as potential sources of knowledge. Iqbal notes that just as the proclamation that there is god but God divests "the forces of Nature with that Divine character with which earlier cultures had clothed them,"[34] the "function" of the idea of the finality of prophethood is to divest all facets of "inner experience" of super-natural authority:

> The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man.[35]

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[30] Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, and Postcolonialism*, 116–33.
[31] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 100.
[32] Ibid., 104.
[33] Ibid., 101.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

Concomitant to this idea of finality is the idea of what Iqbal calls the "the birth of the inductive intellect."[36] His basic claim is that Muslim intellectual culture, which developed out of sustained contact, reflection, and appropriation of Greek intellectual traditions, fully came into "its own" through a slow process of "revolting" against significant elements of Greek and Aristotelean philosophy.[37] Iqbal argues that for Greek philosophy, broadly speaking, knowledge acquisition is a process and that "elevates" the seeker of knowledge from the observable to the theoretical. Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Greek logic, the development of Asharite atomism and occasionalism, al-Khwārazmī's understanding of number as "pure relation" rather than pure magnitude, are all illustrations Iqbal employs to argue that classical and medieval Muslim intellectual culture embodied logics of inquiry that were anti-classical. [38] Iqbal's contention is that the notion that "reality" is revealed or accessible only by means of "the concrete" is one of the ruling or central ideas of classical and medieval Islamic intellectual culture:

> [the] important thing to note about the spirit of Muslim culture…is that, for purposes of knowledge, it fixes its gaze on the concrete, the finite…Knowledge must begin with the concrete. It is the intellectual capture and power over the concrete that makes it possible for the intellect of man to pass beyond the concrete.[39]

Iqbal's argument here is that the various sciences *('ulūm*) of classical and medieval Islam were built on ontologies or metaphysical conceptions that revolted against the ruling concepts of eternal fixity and proportion. Echoing pragmatic critiques of Greek philosophy, especially as they are articulated in Dewey's *Quest for Certainty,* Iqbal argues that Greek philosophy is built on a cosmological or metaphysical outlook that cherishes speculation,

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 102-14
[38] These claims are sprinkled throughout the text of *The Reconstruction*. They are presented most systematically in Ch. 5, pp. 99-115.
[39] Ibid., 104-5.

immutable certainty, and a fixed universe. These ideas are negotiated and transformed in the institutions and activities that comprise intellectual discourse in classical and medieval Islamicate civilization. Iqbal's genealogical claim in this instance is that reflection on the Qur'an, which he takes to be a salient feature of Islamic intellectual culture, generates tendencies or currents of reflection that are at variance with the epistemological ideal of immutable certainty, and the cosmological ideal of a fixed universe:

> The ideal of the Greeks…was proportion, not infinity…In the history of Muslim culture, on the other hand, we find that both in the realms of pure intellect and religious psychology, by which term I mean higher Sufism, the ideal revealed is the possession and enjoyment of the Infinite.[40]

In his analysis of the idea of the finality of Prophethood in Islam, and his claim that Islamic intellectual culture is anti-classical, as Tayob rightly notes, Iqbal seeks some criterion with respect to which he can distinguish "authentically" Islamic ideas from those ideas that do not constitute genuine Islam. So, for instance, approaches to religious experience within Islamic intellectual history that valorize its ineffability and mystery are rejected by Iqbal as un-Islamic, as "neo-Platonic mysticism."[41] Insofar as Muslim intellectuals build on, rather than criticize and amend Greek philosophic assumptions, for Iqbal, they betray the Qur'an's anti-classical spirit and obfuscate its message.[42] This tendency of predication is displayed even more clearly when Iqbal offers general assertions about the nature of the Qur'an and Islam. For instance, when Iqbal says that there is no such thing as slavery in Islam;[43] that all the wars fought by the Prophet during his life-time were a form of defensive jihad;[44] that "Islam

[40] Ibid., 105.
[41] Ibid., 72.
[42] Ibid., 2-3.
[43] Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," 106.
[44] Ibid., 111.

is a religion of peace."[45] (A) is legitimated by tendencies in *The Reconstruction* to offer counter-polemical, descriptive predicates about the Qur'an or Islam against the kinds of colonial scholarship on Muhammad, Islam, and the Qur'an illustrated earlier through MacDonald, Margoliouth, and Nicholson. If the fruits of colonial scholarship on Islam are that it is a violent and blood thirsty religion that can never be loyal to the crown; that its intellectual and moral values are at odds with modernity; that Islamic intellectual culture is essentially derivative of Greek intellectual traditions; that it is irrational and mythic; (A) handles such inquiries by positing the logical contradictories of the aforementioned claims as true to the spirit of Islam. (A) is the tendency in *The Reconstruction* to respond to the epistemic challenges of colonial modernity by generating a counter-polemic. Insofar as *The Reconstruction* perceives that its task is to offer binary claims that belie colonial depictions of the Qur'an, Muhammad, and Islam, it predicates features to Islam that are contradictories of the features that such scholarship attributes to it.

(B) or Diagne's reading of *The Reconstruction* finds warrants in Iqbal's claims about how Islamic intellectual culture – and history more broadly – should be conceptualized and handled as embodying plural and contradictory tendencies. It finds warrant in Iqbal's claims that one of the chief problems in appreciating Islam is discovering how Islam reconciles the opposite values of permanence and change.[46] Iqbal's pronouncements about *tawḥīd* as the synthetic activity of reconciling apparently contradictory predicates;[47] his insistence on conceiving dynamism and stasis as complementary processes at work in the history of Islamic thought;[48] his suggestion that Islam – whatever it is, should be conceptualized as

[45] Ibid., 114.
[46] Ibid., 117.
[47] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 117.
[48] Ibid., 132.

processual, and not something that fully manifested itself at a point in history and is now passively re-iterated by later generations of Muslims[49] are the sort of claims that warrant Diagne's argument that *The Reconstruction* seeks to conceptualize Islam in ways that display its variegated and multifaceted character.

(C) finds warrants in the sort of claims I have advanced earlier on in this section, where I argued that *The Reconstruction* seeks to amend habits of predication that discredit the subject-matter of its inquiry.[50] Javed Majeed, in similar vein, argues that *The Reconstruction's* predication of features to Islam are not about the object of inquiry, but referential with respect to the habits and methods through which Islam is approached as an object of analysis. They are offered as ways of altering the manner in which the object of inquiry is constructed. Majeed argues that *The Reconstruction* challenges narratives and methods of inquiry that construct "Europe" and "Islam" in oppositional terms. Iqbal's strategies of "de-temporalizing" the history of thought and discussing thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Ijī, Rūmī, Darwin, Ibn Miskawaih as if they were debating each other around a table, disrupt forms of linear chronology that constrain conceptions only to the contexts of their production. *The Reconstruction's* project entails arguing for rules of inquiry that conceive Islam as "in the making," and a "living force," rather than something that is fully-formed, awaiting inquirers to unveil its character.[51] For Majeed, Iqbal envisions his project as articulating the "hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam,"[52] and in this process, Iqbal is engaged in a creative act, one that seeks to contribute to and add to the rationality and

[49] Ibid., 113, 132, 134, 142.
[50] See pp. 123-7 earlier on in this chapter where I have argued that *The Reconstruction* urges that focusing attention on the consequences rather than the genesis of what purports to be revelatory is a more fruitful way of predicating features to Islam, Muhammad, and the Qur'an.
[51] Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, and Postcolonialism*, 120–22.
[52] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 142.

significance of Islam and the Qur'an, and not just observe and record it. In Majeed's reading, then, Iqbal's habits of predicating features to Islam are truth-functional with respect to their capacity to draw productive and commensurate relationships between European and pre-colonial Islamic discourses.[53]

All three lines of inquiry predicate dissimilar characters to Iqbal's articulation of the "soul of Islam." (A) suggests that Iqbal sought consistency, stability, and permanence in the face of a polemically charged, chaotically progressive, and bewildering modernity. (B) suggests that Iqbal conceptualized Islam in vague terms. (C) suggests that Iqbal's primary concern is transforming habits of investigation into Islam rather than securing a conception of what it is. By suggesting that these three lines of inquiry into *The Reconstruction* are legitimated by its plain sense, I want to highlight that its plain sense is, in fact, ambiguous. As I have shown, each of these three rules of reading (i.e. A, B, C) are warrantable by *The Reconstruction*. This is evidence that if any of these rules is applied exclusively to *The Reconstruction*, it will tend to over-generalize its conclusions beyond its domain of reference. How may *The Reconstruction's* ambiguities on this question be resolved? As you will recall, the impasse we seem to have reached is similar to the impasse we reached in the third chapter when we tried to understand *The Reconstruction's* usage of the concepts knowledge, experience, and reality. Back then I suggested that a semiotic and triadic rule of reading allowed a criterion with respect to which *The Reconstruction's* claims about knowledge, experience, and reality could appear consistent and unambiguous. In this particular instance, I am afraid that a triadic rule of reading does not resolve the ambiguities that seem to permeate Iqbal's practice of predicating features to Islam. This is because Iqbal's practice of

[53] Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, and Postcolonialism*, 120–22.

predicating features to Islam is a clear instance where the confusion and tension between *The Reconstruction's* representational and pragmatic tendencies is loudly at display. Hence, I suggest that it cannot be resolved by referring it to either one of those tendencies. Instead, it is "resolved" if we refer the confusion between (A), (B), and (C) to the confusion between *The Reconstruction's* representationalism and pragmatism. In this reading, (A) is a display of Iqbal's tendency to conceptualize knowledge as non-vague, propositional, as an unearthing of the "core" of the object of its analysis, and as foundationally justified. (B) and (C) are displays of the pragmatic tendencies of *The Reconstruction*. (B) is a display of its tendency to admit vague knowledge claims in certain contexts of inquiry. Any broad inquiry into "What is Islam?" (B) argues, ought to be handled by a conceptual apparatus that admits vagueness and not just generality.[54] (C) is a display of *The Reconstruction's* tendency to make knowledge claims that require their addressees to amend some habit of inquiry. As we saw in the previous chapter, (C) is also at display in the way *The Reconstruction* predicates features to human khudi. In Peirce's terms, (C) is a way of handling the object of one's inquiry as a "symbol." Ochs notes that, for Peirce:

> a symbol displays its meaning only to a particular interpretant, but it is not fully subject to the interpreter's attributions. Instead, a symbol influences the way its interpretant attributes meaning to it. The symbol therefore engages its interpretant in a dialogue, the product of which is meaning…the symbol engages its interpreter in some practice, or what we may call a tradition of meaning. Transferring agency to the interpreter, the symbol also grants the interpreter some freedom to transform the way in which that meaning will be retransmitted.[55]

[54] See *CP* 5.505-6 for the distinction between vagueness and generality.
[55] Ochs, "Reparative Reasoning: From Peirce's Pragmatism to Augustine's Scriptural Hermeneutics," 191. Cf. Peter Ochs, "An Introduction to Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation," in *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation*, ed. Peter Ochs (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 40.

The predication of features to Islam is a site where *The Reconstruction's* representational and pragmatic tendencies of knowing are at work and clash with each other in the most cacophonous way. In discussing the soul of Islam, *The Reconstruction* seems to haphazardly juggle polemics, apologetics, history, philosophic critique, and epistemological construction. My basic claim with respect to Iqbal's practices of predicating features to Islam is that its pragmatic aspect is displayed as Iqbal argues that inquiries about Islam should a) pay attention to the reception history of the discourses that constitute Islam, b) employ vague tools that admit conceptual contradiction. Its representationalist aspects are evidenced when Iqbal conceptualizes Islam as the logical contradictory of colonial inquiries into Islam and argues that true Islam is opposed to slavery, is peaceful, is overlain with a Magian crust that needs to be discarded, and that it is a revolt against Greek intellectual culture.

The Reconstruction's Scriptural Hermeneutics

Iqbal has described his thought as a consequence of reflection on the qur'anic text[56] and also intended to write an explicative and introductory text on the Qur'an before his prolonged ailment and eventual death.[57] In fact, the relationship between Iqbal's corpus and the Qur'an constitutes a veritable sub-field of inquiry within the field of "Iqbal Studies." Opinions on the matter veer between the heroic, dismissive, and critical-constructive appraisals of Iqbal's corpus more generally.[58] The purpose of this section is to selectively

[56] Ahmed Afzaal, "Iqbal's Approach to the Qur'an," in *Muhammad Iqbal: A Contemporary*, ed. Muhammad Suheyl Umar and Basit Bilal Koshul (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2008), 7–26.
[57] Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, 223.
[58] See, for instance, Ghulām Muṣṭafá Khān, *Iqbāl Aur Qur'ān*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1988); Muhammad Munawwar, *Iqbal and Quranic Wisdom* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1981); Muhammad Munawwar, "Iqbal and the World of the Quran," *Iqbal Review* 25, no. 1 (1984): 77–101; Muhammad Munawwar, "Iqbal on Qur'anic Concept of History," *Iqbal Review* 20, no. 3 (1979): 11–30; Muhammad Ahangar, "Iqbal and Qur'an: A Legal Perspective," *Iqbal Review* 35, no. 3 (1994): 1–22; Khawaja Abdul Rashid, *Iqbal, Quran and the Western World* (Lahore: Progressive Books, 1978); Mohammad Ahmed Shamsi, "Iqbal and the Quran," *Iqbal Review* 22, no. 3 (1981): 19–32.

illustrate how Iqbal's practice of interpreting scriptural verses as he tries to draw commensurate relationships between scripture, religion, and science, display both representational and pragmatic tendencies of knowing.

Iqbal's representational tendency is displayed most thoroughly in his remarks on Q 24:35 or the light verse.[59] The part of the verse that Iqbal is interested in is "God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth." The general lesson of his interpretation is that the findings of modern physicists about the behavior of light-waves or photons undermine certain interpretations of the word light (*nūr*) and legitimize others:

> 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 absolute 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.[60]

As Iqbal interprets this verse, he makes four significant semiotic moves. First, he imagines that the verse is interpretable as a descriptive proposition that corresponds to an object or state of affairs in the world. This constitutes its primary function, as well as the avenue through which it acquires truth-functionality. An interpretation of the verse is true to the degree that it is able to faithfully describe that which the verse is about. Second, Iqbal assumes that the interpretive activities of other readers of the Qur'an in general and this verse in particular are identical to his own practice. In other words, Iqbal assumes that to qualify as a reader of this verse, one has to assume the semiotic stand-point he has taken. That is, one has to assume that other readers, like Iqbal, are attempting to accurately describe that which

[59] The sheer volume of reflection this verse has generated throughout classical and Islamic medieval intellectual history is breath-taking. For a glimpse of the forms of interpretation it has elicited, please see: Gerhard Böwering, "The Light Verse: Qurʾānic Text and Sūfī Interpretation," *Oriens* 36 (2001): 113–44.
[60] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 51. Emphasis mine.

the verse is about. So, for instance, LR Farnell[61] and Khvājā Mīr Dard,[62] who read this verse to mean that God is omniscient, and Ṭabarī,[63] who reads this verse to mean that God is a guide for all who inhabit the heavens and the earth, are trying to figure out what this verse seeks to describe. In order to resolve which of these competing propositions – God as omnipresent, God as guide, and God as absolute – is the accurate representation of the object of the verse, Iqbal turns his attention to modern physics. Third, Iqbal interprets the activities of modern physicists in the same way that he interpreted the activity of the readers of the Qur'an. He describes the experimental activities of physicists in the form of a propositional claim, namely: "Light is the only absolute in the universe." Notice how this move is in tension with the claims that *The Reconstruction* makes about concepts employed by the various sciences. I showed how Iqbal argued that the function of concepts employed by physics and biology is to aid the practitioners of these sciences in regulating their expectations with respect to the phenomena they observe. In violation of his own cautions against hastily abstracting claims from the various sciences to deliver descriptions of reality, Iqbal takes the claims of physicists with respect to the velocity of light as descriptive of already given states of affairs. Fourth: The claim that "light is the only absolute in the universe," aids Iqbal in seeing that the verse "God is the light of the heavens and the earth," represents the fact that "God is the only absolute in the universe." It also aids him in discarding erroneous interpretations of the verse that read it as a description of God's omniscience etc.

[61] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 51.
[62] Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, 100.
[63] *The Study Quran*, 878.

Allied with the claims of relativity physics about light, Iqbal is able to identify the true referents of the qur'anic verse, whereas exegetes who read the Qur'an in the past, unaware of the claims of relativity physics about the behavior of light got it wrong when they read the light verse as a description of God's omnipresence or God's function as a guide for all of creation. This propositional tendency is also at display when Iqbal interprets Q 40:60 "And your Lord says: call me and I respond to your call" as a proposition that, he argues, is identical with Josiah Royce's account of the reality of other minds.[64] What I want to draw our attention to is that Iqbal's propositional hermeneutical tendency is very similar to Sir Syed's hermeneutical procedure of drawing commensurabilities between scientific and religious claims. Sir Syed's procedure of drawing commensurabilities consisted in expanding the semantic possibilities of the qur'anic text, and, thereafter choosing a reading that was warrantable, both in light of the claims of the new sciences, while being available to the Qur'an's original readers. For Iqbal's representational side, Sir Syed's second criteria seems to have been dropped; in the case of the light verse, Iqbal's warrant only seems to be available to post-Einsteinian contemporary readers. This difference only exacerbates the way Iqbal's representational tendency of interpreting the Qur'an (like Sir Syed's) in his attempt to establish commensurate relationships between scriptural and scientific claims, involves him in interminable conflicts and debates with other readers of the Qur'an.

The Reconstruction's pragmatic tendency of interpreting scriptural claims is at display when Iqbal notes that the objects of the verses of the Qur'an are not displayed generically, but with respect to context-specific interpretations of the Qur'an. He offers this claim in two forms. According to the first form (I), Iqbal notes that the verses of the Qur'an

[64] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 15-16.

require their readers to generate certain habits of inquiry in response to reading them, which habits of inquiry are the "objects" of the verses of the Qur'an. According to the second form (II), Iqbal argues that the object of a verse emerges as a consequence of inquiring into the Qur'an according to specific methods and rules of reading.

Form I is displayed most clearly in his reading of Q 49:6. The part of the verse he is interested in is, "O you who believe! If an iniquitous person comes to you with tidings, then be discerning." Iqbal notes that the activity of reading this verse led its readers to modify their conduct with respect to what constitutes trustworthiness. He notes that this verse is partly what led its readers to generate methods or habits of historical-criticism in relation to the collection of Prophetic traditions. The verse does not correspond to a state of affairs, it demands and requires its readers to act a certain way in the world as a consequence of having read it. More specifically, this verse, Iqbal contends, is one of the sources that informs the way in which collectors of Prophetic traditions developed their science of critically analyzing prophetic reports.[65] Iqbal is not naively claiming that this verse contains "clear" and non-vague directives or blue-prints in accordance with which its readers can develop the science of hadith criticism. The claim seems to be, instead, that the verse acts as a possible imperative to develop and generate such methods of inquiry. The general form of I is that one who is interested in observing and investigating that which the Qur'an is about, should conduct inquiries (historical, theological, lexical, ethnographic etc.) into how the text shapes and configures the life of its readers. The multiple, historically and contemporaneously evolving ways that the Qur'an continues to form and shape the lives of its readers creates and delivers the objects that it is about.

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[65] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 111-12.

Form II displays itself most clearly when Iqbal reads those verses of the Qur'an that describe the movement or passage of "time" as a sign of God. E.g. Q 10:6 "Surely in the variation of the night and the day and whatsoever God has created in the heavens and on the earth are signs for a people who are reverent." Iqbal's representational approach would mean reading such a verse in order to yield sets of propositions that correspond to a state of affairs in the world. The claims of modern philosophy and science, then, would aid Iqbal in accurately describing those state of affairs. As an illustration, Iqbal could say that a verse that states that "the alternation of the day and night is sign of God" is a description of the fact that "God is the source of life on earth," based on modern ecology's finding that life would be impossible on earth, if it were not for the consistent and recurrent behavior of the sun and the moon in relation to the earth. Instead, his comments about this verse suggest that Iqbal is sensitive to the notion that its "meaning" is inextricably linked with and a product of the various methods of investigation through which it is engaged. Iqbal notes that "the alternation of the day and night is a sign of God," for mystics such as Ibn 'Arabī acts as a means of establishing practices of *dhikr*.[66] Iqbal hypothesizes that the activity of reading this verse is, partly why, certain mystical traditions "meditate" on the word time or "*dahr*" as a means of establishing intimacy with God.[67] For an Asharite theologian, the same verse guides the way in which she reasons about the nature of time and its relationship with creation.[68] For a theological historian such as Ibn Khaldūn, this verse, and others like it, urge him to hypothesize about the significance of "patterns" that repeat themselves in the movement of history.[69] Again, at the risk of sounding pedantic, *The Reconstruction* is not arguing that this verse of the Qur'an

[66] Ibid., 58-9.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 59.
[69] Ibid., 112-13.

is a clear blue-print for Ibn Khaldūn's account of history as a multi-layered dialectical movement. Instead, Form II says that one who is interested in the meaning of a qur'anic verse, should direct her attention to the ways in which it guides and shapes the inquiries of those who read it and the processes that one observes, and becomes implicated in, deliver its meaning. This form involves four semiotic moves. First: Iqbal works with the assumption that the objects of verses of the Qur'an display themselves through context and inquiry-specific engagement with them. Second: In offering his own reading of verses that state that the alternation of night and day is a sign of God, Iqbal specifies the purpose and context with respect to which he is engaged in interpreting such verses. He reads them, he tells us, in order to resolve questions and problems about attributing the predicate of "eternity" to God. And his basic interest is in dispelling the notion that predicating "Eternity" to God makes time "unreal" in relation to God. He reads this verse as a resource for arguing that God's life, though eternal, contains within it elements of movement and alternation. [70] Third: In turning his attention to other readers of the same verses, Iqbal looks to specify the contexts of inquiry out of which the readings of those other readers emerge and the ends and purposes they are meant to serve. Fourth: This multiplicity of inquiry and purpose-specific interpretations is not viewed by Iqbal as a necessary source of conflict or opposition. Ibn Khaldūn, Iqbal, al-Rāzi and other readers of this verse are not locked in an interminable conflict to represent the true referents of a qur'anic verse. Instead, a qur'anic verse acts as a resource that can give rise to and participate in a variety of inquiry and purpose specific processes of interpretation.

In summation, Form I argues that one who is interested in conceptualizing the truth-functionality of purportedly revelatory texts and observing that which they are about, should

[70] Ibid., 58-62.

conduct inquiries into how such claims shape and configure the lives of their readers. The discoveries of such processes of inquiry yield the things or objects with respect to which the texts in question are truth-functional. Form II argues that one who desire to investigate the aboutness of revelatory or scriptural claims should focus analytic attention to the ways that those who read such claims impute aboutness to those claims in various investigative processes. Both forms build commensurabilities between the new sciences and the scriptural resources of Islam by re-asserting and offering a particular illustration of Iqbal's general claim about religion throughout *The Reconstruction*. Namely, religion names practices of inquiry concerned with a specific form of experience (i.e. *waḥī*), just as the various sciences interpret other forms of experience at the level of matter, life, and mind.[71] Form I and II, explored in this section, and tendencies (B) and (C) explored in the previous section complement each other as they enact an approach to the scriptural resources of Islam that shift an inquirer's attention to the way those resources participate in interpretive processes.[72]

In closing this chapter, and as I head toward the concluding pages of this project as a whole, I want to draw our attention to my claims in chapter 1 about the unsettled relationship between *The Reconstruction's* representational and pragmatic sides. Borrowing Nicholas Adams' locution for Iqbal as a reparative reasoner, I have contended that the unsettled

[71] See chapter 3: Knowledge, Experience, and Reality.

[72] The implications of Forms I, II, (B), and (C) bear a striking resemblance to Shahab Ahmed's recent proposals for how Islam ought to be conceptualized. In the closing section of his magnum opus, Ahmed notes: "Conceptualizing Islam as meaning-making for the Self in terms of Pre-text, Text, and Con-Text of Revelation cultivates in us the cognitive and analytical habit of looking for Islam in discursive and paraxial diffusion: in the full range of thought and action by which Muslims engage with sources of Revelation and with the Con-Textual language of its meanings. It enables us to detect and recognize Islam not just in the usual places where our received cognitive and analytical habits lead us, but where it is actually present in discourse and praxis as means and meanings…To do otherwise is to impoverish and distort the *meaning* of those acts and statements – which are rendered less meaningful than they actually are precisely in the measure that it is Islam, the hermeneutical engagement, which gives them meaning – and is, thus, to impoverish and distort the meaning of Islam" (Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 544-5).

relationship between *The Reconstruction's* representational and pragmatic conceptions of knowing ought to be understood as one of repair. In *The Reconstruction's* attempts to articulate a rationality that is appropriate to religion, scripture, and science, its pragmatic side is an attempted modification of its representational side.[73] As a prelude to my discussion on the issue in the following chapter, I want to conclude with four cautions, lessons, or modifications that the pragmatic side of *The Reconstruction's* scriptural hermeneutics offers to its representational side:

1) *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic side cautions its representational side against producing non-contextual descriptions of the world as the referents of the verses of the Qur'an. It urges that referential claims, when offered as objects of the verses of the Qur'an, should be linked, inextricably, with the practices of inquiry out of which such claims emerge.
2) A recommendation to those who appear to be locked in disagreements with each other about the referential function of the Qur'an to frame their claims, not as propositions, but as inquiry and context specific consequences of their activity of reading the Qur'an. In other words, Iqbal invites warring readers to debate and share, not just claims, but the methodological or investigative contexts out which their claims are being made, thereby, articulating their disagreements and differences more precisely.
3) *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic side suggests to its representational side that difference is neither a necessary mark of, nor a necessary cause for irreconcilable opposition between interpretive claims, since interpreters are not involved in the

[73] See section titled "*The Reconstruction's* pragmatism" in Chapter 1.

process of producing mutually exclusive descriptions of a given state of affairs in the world.

4) Finally, as Iqbal's representational side attempts to draw relationships between the verses of the Qur'an and the claims of relativity physics or Royce's pragmatism, Iqbal's pragmatic side cautions against abstracting any individual claim from a given science and putting it into relationship with an abstracted claim about the "meaning" of a qur'anic verse. Instead, Iqbal's pragmatic side seems to suggest that if relationships between disciplines of inquiry such as physics, *tafsīr*, and *kalām* are possible, their most likely source lies in examining and comparing the methods and patterns of inquiry and reasoning being put into practice by physicists, exegetes, and theologians.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

> If my present attitude is self-contradictory, then, well, only a living and thinking man has the privilege of contradicting himself. Only stones do not contradict themselves, as Emerson says.[1]

The primary task of this project is the diagnosis and explication of the ambiguities and contradictions that permeate *The Reconstruction's* project of articulating a rationality appropriate to religion, science, and scripture. Stated succinctly, during the course of this project:

> I have collected the set (X) of *The Reconstruction's* theses (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4…) about relationships between religion, scripture, and science.[2]
>
> I have detected, and trusted secondary scholarship that has detected, that *The Reconstruction's* theses about relationships between religion, scripture, and science are marked by confusion (c).[3]
>
> With a view to understand what might generate the confusions of *The Reconstruction*, I have abduced that its confusions are a consequence of the operation of two epistemological tendencies in *The Reconstruction*, viz., pragmatism (p) and representationalism (r).
>
> Based on that abduction, I have hypothesized that the set of claims (X) are isolatable into two sub-sets (X_1, X_2), such that each subset is defined by a consistent epistemological tendency, and that neither set of claims is characterized by confusion (c).[4]

But why rehearse, in technical detail, the drama of the conceptions of knowing with which *The Reconstruction* wrestles? What is at stake in explicating and clarifying the leading tendencies

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[1] Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, 206. These are the terms in which Iqbal defended himself against the charge of inconsistency with respect to his philosophic positions on the theological output of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad. For the complexity of Iqbal's relationship with the Aḥmadiyya see, Khan, *Muslim Becoming*, 91–119. Also see, Cantwell Smith, Wilfred, "Aḥmadiyya", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0028>

[2] $X = \{x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4\ldots\}$

[3] $\{x \in X : c(x)\}$

[4] $\{x \in X_1 : p(x), \text{where } p(x) \neq c(x)\}$ and $\{x \in X_2 : r(x), \text{where } r(x) \neq c(x)\}$
The confusion is resolved by hypothesizing that the class of claims X subdivides into two classes (X_1, X_2), defined by distinct epistemological patterns p and r. Re-defining X as composed of X_1 and X_2 rids the set of *The Reconstruction's* theses of its earlier confusion.

that inform *The Reconstruction's* theses about religion, scripture, science, and their possible inter-relations? I want to bring my project to a close by offering a series of increasingly less precise and more ambitious reflections on the possibilities that this project may serve and nourish:

First, and primarily, my arguments are offered to the community of *The Reconstruction's* readers perplexed by the ambiguities of its arguments for a rationality appropriate to religion, scripture, and science.

Second: by displaying the intricacies of the way Iqbal's representational and pragmatic sides operate and tend to clash with each other, I do not mean to lament that he should have known better! For a thinker who is utterly confounded by how young Muslims can be both modern and Muslim;[5] a thinker operating in an environment where he perceives that his very humanity is put into question,[6] where his "beloved Prophet," one whose "exalted name"[7] he cannot utter without "a thrill of emotion [passing] through the very fibre of [his] soul,"[8] is being described as a "psychopath";[9] it would be highly suspect if his thought did not bear the markings and wounds of his struggles.[10] Iqbal's representational side is an indexical symptom of his involvement in a crisis-ridden context of inquiry. His reiteration of the epistemological tendencies he seeks to transform is an *enabling* condition; it is the most direct and easily identifiable locus to which his pragmatic side can speak and potentially repair. Stated differently, if *The Reconstruction's* pragmatism has hopes of being possibly transformative in relation to the

[5] Iqbal, "The Muslim Community - A Sociological Study," 118-37.
[6] recall the missionaries Iqbal spent an evening with in Scotland
[7] Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," 117.
[8] Ibid. For the various facets of Iqbal's devotional relationship with Muhammad, see:Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, 148–71.
[9] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 150.
[10] It could perhaps even count as some proof of the disingenuousness of his claims about being embroiled in a crisis-ridden context.

problematic contexts it is embroiled in, that hope is lent credence if it is reparative in relation to its own performance of the elements of its context it seeks to transform. I have attempted to show that the two epistemic sides of *The Reconstruction* are not flat denials of each other. *The Reconstruction's* pragmatism contains contextualized features of its representationalism.

Third: I want to suggest that *The Reconstruction's* pragmatic side is a significant logical achievement. For Muslim modernists, and those who share similar concerns, Iqbal's pragmatism diagrams a logic – call it a habit or a pattern – that negotiates difference in relation while avoiding a significant error that representationalist approaches re-iterate. Namely, the tendency to build relations within a specific domain of reference only by relocating the form of that conflict to some other domain of reference. The clearest examples of this error that I have discussed are Sir Syed's construction of E_2, that sunders his exegetical practice from the *tafsīr* tradition, Iqbal's discussion of the features of *waḥī* that pit religious traditions in interminable conflict with each other, Iqbal's tendency (A) of predicating features to Islam that generates a counter-polemic against colonial scholarship, and Iqbal's representational scriptural hermeneutics that places his interpretive claims at war with other readers. Iqbal's pragmatic side is a tool for those whose cognitive, moral, and spiritual universes appear broken to them to monitor the potential excesses and over-generalizations of their attempts to repair those universes.

Lastly, I want to suggest that contemporary readers of *The Reconstruction*, who approach it as a source of guidance for resolving forms of crises analogous to the ones that *The Reconstruction* attempts to address, should direct their attention to the transformation and movement from representationalism to pragmatism. To enact or imitate the reparative possibilities of *The Reconstruction's* pragmatism in a crisis-ridden context of inquiry is to

imitate, in some way, this transformation. Rather than abstracting the pragmatic dimension of *The Reconstruction* in the form of descriptive propositions and imagining that those propositions somehow accurately mirror how relationships must be constructed in any divided context of inquiry.

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