

CHAPTER TWO

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 we explored in chapter 1. How may a community claim access to divinity and revelation in the face of *Weltbilder* 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 new sciences' implications for communities whose worlds involve narratives and characters such as a speaking God, scriptures, prophets, and theodicean teleology. Iqbal laments that the modern age, with its "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 how colonized subjects know, perform, and express their relationships with the world.²

For Iqbal, the institutional and discursive instruments of imperial modernity rob colonized subjects "of their religions, their morals, of their cultural traditions and their literatures."³ He summarizes the hazardous implications of modern thought under the label 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, spurred by the "race-idea," producing a political order 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,” by carving out an objective public order, unhampered by religious ideals.⁶

On its epistemological side, for Iqbal, as for other Muslim modernists, modern modes of knowing are most threatening in their silencing of Islam’s scriptural resources, incapacitating them from bearing rationality and truth. In Wensinck’s words, the “great difficulty” that confronts modern Islamic intellectual culture, and its institutions and actors, “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 for religious traditions such as Christianity and Islam: forsaking “antiquated notions” in order to save the “foundations” of these religions. As chapter 1 showed us, Sir Syed rescues Islamic discourse from the threats enumerated by Mehdi Ali through a particular model of knowing. In building commensurate relations between religion and modern thought, he negates the reliability of any earlier practice of knowing in scriptural and scientific discourse. For Sir Syed, contemporary Muslims need not be “shackled” by their institutional and intellectual history, except for the historical situation in which the Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet.

In contrast, when Iqbal thinks about the relationship between contemporary Muslims and their past, he 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 “revision of old institutions” is a “delicate” task, wherein the “responsibility of the reformer”⁹ is grave; reformist tendencies can err in conceiving stasis or “conservatism” as an oppositional force to avoid, rather than one to combine with “dynamism” in reform activities.¹⁰

As I noted in chapter 1, the representational dynamic in Sir Syed’s reformist hermeneutics is a prototypical illustration of intellectual responses to the perceived crises of modernity that Iqbal’s *Reconstruction* addresses. In a letter to one of his friends where he discusses the prospect of translating his “Reconstruction” lectures of 1929 from English into Urdu, Iqbal writes: “The audience (*mukhāṭib*) of these lectures consists of mostly those Muslims who are shaped by western philosophy and who desire that Islamic philosophy should be articulated (*bayān*) in the language of modern philosophy. [The book’s

intended audience is Muslims who desire that] if there are shortcomings in [Islamic philosophy], these shortcomings should be addressed. My work is mostly constructive (*ta'mīrī*)."¹¹

This chapter explores *The Reconstruction's* philosophical conception of religion, such that religion or religious claims are not reduced to "antiquated notions." It examines how Iqbal's conceptualization of religion is marked by the representationalist approaches he criticizes as well as by his attempts to correct them. My argument is divided in three sections. The first takes us through *The Reconstruction's* use of the categories of "knowledge," "experience," and "reality."¹² I show that Iqbal employs these categories to argue that "religion" names an environment where knowledge claims about the meaning of human experience are constructed, exchanged, and debated. I also offer a reading strategy for clarifying how these terms relate with each other in the text. The chapter's second section reveals how Iqbal's contextual approach to knowledge shapes his conception of religion and its relationship with science. In the third section I show how some of *The Reconstruction's* arguments about religion run afoul of its contextual approach to knowledge and become instead foundational, binary, and essentialist. This third section makes clear how *The Reconstruction* reiterates the epistemological practices that it criticizes.

The chapter argues two points. First, the concepts of knowledge, experience, reality, and religion operate inconsistently in *The Reconstruction*. Second, the confusing and inconsistent use of these terms in the text is a function of its representational and pragmatic voices.

I

The first chapter of *The Reconstruction* sets up a conceptual theatre that presents the categories of knowledge, experience, and reality in relation to claims about religion, philosophy, poetry, and science.¹³ The chapter title – "Knowledge and Religious Experience" – is not straightforward; a plain-sense reading could suggest, for instance, that Iqbal is going to make major distinctions between knowledge and experience in the first chapter of his book. And, furthermore, that "religion" or the "religious" is intimately tied with experience, while "knowledge" is both distinct from the "religious," yet in some indeterminate relation with it. The juxtaposition "and" does not clarify whether the relation between the two is antagonistic, harmonious, linear, co-determining, even antagonistic. The little clarity the title affords seems to suggest

at least two hypotheses: a distinction between knowledge and experience, and that the religious, whatever else it may be, pertains more directly to experience than to knowledge.

These musings on the chapter's heading are an analogue of the discussions between Iqbal and Nazir Niazi, the only translator of *The Reconstruction* whose work was conceived during Iqbal's lifetime.¹⁴ Niazi's project sprang out of numerous conversations and letters between the two. In his preface to his translation, Niazi comments that he himself initiated the project of an Urdu translation, to which the author agreed. Niazi did not imagine or desire to do the work himself, but the responsibility eventually fell on his shoulders, after Iqbal granted him permission. But Iqbal had first required Niazi to visit him in Lahore and produce "sample" translations, especially of the second chapter. Iqbal discussed the drafts with Niazi, corrected them, and standardized translations of the book's more technical conceptual language.¹⁵

Iqbal, who is one of the most significant Urdu and Persian poets of the twentieth century, suggested that Niazi translate the first chapter's title, "Knowledge and Religious Experience" as "*ilm bi-al-ḥavās aur 'ilm bi-al-vaḥī*" – knowledge through the senses (*ḥavās*) and knowledge through revelation (*vaḥī*).¹⁶ Iqbal's recommendation of '*ilm bi-al-vaḥī*' (knowledge through revelation) suggests that "religion" or the "religious" in *The Reconstruction* is not confined to "experience" or the "experiential" but also in some way includes "knowledge." His recommendation of '*ilm bi-al-ḥavās*' (knowledge through the senses) suggests that knowledge is related to some sort of source (senses, revelation) "through" which it emerges and to which it is linked. Iqbal's recommended translation for "Knowledge and Religious Experience" offers a glimpse of how *The Reconstruction* tries to articulate and relate the concepts of knowledge, experience, and reality. In the paragraphs below, I gather features the volume attributes to these concepts and clarify how the three are related to each other.

The Reconstruction attributes various features to knowledge. Knowledge consists in "the establishment of connexions with the reality that confronts [the claimant]."¹⁷ It is a name for the various processes whereby an inquirer negotiates their environment.¹⁸ There are various "domains of human knowledge."¹⁹ Knowledge is "sense perception elaborated by understanding,"²⁰ but we cannot "assume, without criticism, that our knowledge of the external world through sense-perception is the type of all knowledge."²¹ "In all knowledge there is an element of passion,"²² yet, in any given sphere of knowledge production, an inquirer actively and critically attempts to

“eliminate all subjective elements.”²³ Human knowledge “always means discursive knowledge,”²⁴ and “the character of man’s knowledge is conceptual,”²⁵ but there are contexts where “thought is reduced to a minimum.”²⁶ Knowledge is a means of picturing and “capturing”²⁷ things as well as to “predict and control” them.²⁸ Knowledge may be conceptual, non-conceptual, a way to picture or capture reality or an instrument to master and manipulate it.²⁹ Broadly 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.³⁰

In order to signal the environment of a potential knowledge claim, Iqbal employs the concept of “experience.” There are different “aspects of human experience,”³¹ “regions of human experience,”³² various “levels of human experience,”³³ numerous “vista[s] of experience.”³⁴ The term “experience” also gestures towards the mediated character of knowledge. Experiences from all sorts of contexts, vistas, regions, and levels can yield “knowledge by interpretation.”³⁵ “For the purposes of knowledge,”³⁶ experiences are interpreted from variegated environments. The “data of experience” are the “subject” of different enterprises of knowing.³⁷ To know something (or someone) is to be related with it by means of some form of experience. Experience is “immediate” and is what is interpreted in order to form relationships with reality.³⁸

The term “reality” appears in *The Reconstruction* as the designation of what knowledge and experience refer to. Knowledge and experience are ways of “establishing connexions with the reality that confronts us.”³⁹ Reality invades,⁴⁰ confronts,⁴¹ and operates on⁴² inquirers in multifarious ways and is interpretable through different registers: “The total-Reality, which enters our awareness and appears on interpretation as an empirical fact, has other ways of invading our consciousness and offers further opportunities of interpretation.”⁴³ In specific disciplines of inquiry, knowledge and experience refer to “certain specific aspects of Reality only and exclude others.”⁴⁴

If both knowledge and experience name ways through which people form relationships with reality, how are they distinguishable? Experience, Iqbal tells us, supplies data, which, upon interpretation, generate knowledge of reality. “All experience is immediate”⁴⁵ and “yield[s] knowledge by interpretation.”⁴⁶ 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 unmediated access to reality. This is a claim that – as we saw in the previous paragraphs – the plain sense of *The Reconstruction* contests

on several occasions. Overall, *The Reconstruction* seems to be making the following set of claims about the relationship between knowledge, experience, and reality:

- Knowledge (K) is a concept that names a relationship, whose relata are knower and reality.
- The relationship knowledge, with reality, becomes possible for a knower through processes and methods of interpretation.
- Experience (E) names that which is interpreted in order to institute the relationship of knowledge between a knower and reality.
- Experience, then, is a relational concept, whose relata are knower and reality.
- Both knowledge and experience are relational concepts, whose relata are knower and reality. But compared with knowledge, experience is something “immediate.”

How can *The Reconstruction* claim 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 experience supplies data that “yield knowledge” *through* interpretation and also that experience is an *immediate* disclosure of reality as such. My attempts above to spell out the distinctions between knowledge, experience, and reality in *The Reconstruction* suggest that the text’s claims about the relationship between these concepts are somewhat confused. In order to resolve these confusions, we could clarify Iqbal’s articulation of knowledge, experience, and reality in the form of three two-part relations between:

- experience and reality, viz., experience as a direct, unmediated disclosure of reality
- knowledge and experience, viz., knowledge as an interpretive and mediated relation with experience
- knowledge and reality, viz., knowledge as a doubly removed relation with reality, with reality related directly with experience, and indirectly with knowledge, which is an interpretation of experience.

We might appear to have achieved a resolution, by reading Iqbal’s confusing claims about knowledge, experience, and reality as three two-part relations, but there are two glaring problems here. First, our resolution ends up creating the sort of sharp distinction between knowledge and

experience that Iqbal's proposed Urdu translation of "Knowledge and Religious Experience" looks to avoid. Second, our resolution also posits experience as a "window," through which the experiencer can peek at reality as it is, which runs counter to *The Reconstruction's* claim that experience "supplies data" that acquire meaning and reference only through interpretation and not before it. Our current way of relating knowledge, experience, and reality in *The Reconstruction* is linear. The movement from reality to experience to knowledge is rendered a layered removal, with experience being "direct," unlike knowledge, which names an interpretive relation that starts with experience.

I propose to clarify how the terms knowledge, experience, and reality function in *The Reconstruction* by handling them as three irreducible elements of a relation. Instead of postulating three two-part relations, I suggest that we read (1) experience, (2) what experience and knowledge are about, and (3) how experience and knowledge refer to reality as a display of *The Reconstruction's* three-part, contextual approach to knowledge. This would make sense of *The Reconstruction's* claim that both knowledge and experience co-refer to reality in processes of interpretation such that *both* are interpretive ways of engaging with reality and *neither* discloses reality in an unmediated, non-interpretive way.⁴⁷

As I read the categories of knowledge, experience, and reality as a three-part relation, I am going to illuminate and clarify my reading strategy in the light of analytical approaches developed and explicated by semioticians such as Charles Peirce,⁴⁸ Charles Morris,⁴⁹ Susan Petrelli,⁵⁰ Winfried Nöth,⁵¹ and John Deely,⁵² among numerous others. Contemporary scholars of religion make productive use of semiotic approaches to clarify a host of complex activities, including ritual performance, pragmatic dimensions of discourse, questions surrounding "transcendence," and comparative analyses of culture.⁵³ I'm using semiotic vocabulary to clarify my reading strategy because it allows one to handle interpretive relations as a three-part process.⁵⁴ The point, as I've stated above, is to make sense of Iqbal's confusing claims about the relationship between knowledge, experience, and reality.

Semioticians advise readers trying to work through a three-part, or "triadic" relation to conceive the elements or participants *not* as *primary* and self-sufficient things, whose interaction generates a *derivative* and composite relationship, but as the kinds of things that exist only *as elements of the relationship* – *relata* that are "cœval" with the relationship. Semiosis is a paradigm of processes that involve relations

whose relata acquire meaning and reference only within those relations. Rather than being already given, “pre-existing entities,” the relata (or elements) of semiosis are formal concepts or patterns of relation that constitute the process of semiosis. There are three broad relata or elements involved in this process:

- that which is interpreted (usually named a “sign” or a “sign-vehicle”)
- those habits or conditions with respect to which the sign-vehicle is interpreted, including the “conclusions” or results or “determinations” of the interpretive process (the “interpretant”)
- that about which an interpretive claim is made (the “object”)⁵⁵

How might this vocabulary help us grasp the otherwise confusing three-part relation between knowledge, experience, and reality in *The Reconstruction*? For starters, it would entail handling them all as concepts abstracted from the *interpretive process of knowing*. As concepts or formal rules, the terms “knowledge,” “experience,” and “reality” would name not “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 their relationship with each other constitutes the process of knowing. In terms of the basic semiotic distinctions I just drew, experience would name what is interpreted (sign-vehicle), knowledge would name those conditions, processes, and conclusions to which interpretation is carried out (interpretant), and reality would be that about which an interpretive claim is made (object).

All of this is consistent with Iqbal’s claims about experience, reality, and knowledge that I sampled above: experience yields knowledge about reality by way of interpretation. In this style of reading, none of the three terms would be more elemental or basic than the other: interpretive knowing does not occur *after* a fully specified experience happens in the face of an *already* specified reality. In this triadic way of reading, each element – knowledge, experience, and reality – becomes specifiable in *the act of knowing or interpreting*.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s masterful study of “scripture” helpfully illustrates what I mean.⁵⁶ Smith conceptualizes (1) a scriptural text, (2) a scripture-reading community, and (3) a scripturally accessible reality as *simultaneous* participants in the process of scriptural interpretation, none of which is more elemental, prior, or basic. Smith notes emphatically that no text is scriptural by itself; no community is scriptural

before it receives and interprets a text as scriptural; no transcendent reality is signified by a scriptural text before communal interpretation.⁵⁷ I'm suggesting that *The Reconstruction's* categories of knowledge, experience, and reality function in the same vein: no experience refers to reality by itself, no knowledge is possible without engagement with some "region" of experience, and no reality is signified by an experience prior to its interpretation.

This strategy also helps us make sense of Iqbal's claim that experience is "immediate" and that, simultaneously, "things are not given in immediate experience as . . . already possessing definite contours."⁵⁸ The "immediacy" of experience does not, then, mean that experience is "about reality" in a more direct way than knowledge is "about reality." In this style of reading, the immediacy of experience signals its *unspecifiability* in the absence of some process of interpretation rather than its *non-interpretive disclosure* of reality. As an element of the process of knowing, experience would acquire aboutness and referentiality only by becoming "subject to interpretation," and not in any non- or pre-interpretive sense. Knowledge (interpretant), experience (sign-vehicle), and reality (object) all acquire referentiality cœvally. They become meaningful simultaneously, and none is more "basic" than the other.

Thus there is no *already-specified* reality that *precedes* the activity of knowing, and on which knowing "builds" in the form of an edifice or structure. *The Reconstruction* proposes that a knower's environment becomes specifiable and knowable in and through practices of knowing. As you can see, this contrasts with Sir Syed, for whom the object of knowledge is absolved from the activities that specify it. The contrast between the two thinkers' approaches 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 behaviour 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 . . . 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.⁵⁹

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 theory's philosophical consequences.⁶⁰ 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 Jakob von Uexküll and others, Deely distinguishes between the interpretive environment in which an organism has its life and the broader world within which the *interpretive environment* has its life.⁶¹ In these terms, Iqbal's triad of knowledge, experience, and reality means that the knower accesses the broader world through the interpretive environment in which they conduct the act of knowing, and not in any unmediated way.

I've suggested in this section that we read "knowledge," "experience," and "reality" in *The Reconstruction* as irreducible elements of its three-part conception of the process of knowing. This reading strategy allows us to make sense of the volume's claim that both knowledge and experience "co-refer" to reality and that experience is both immediate and non-specific. My proposal helps us make sense of the book's claim that different "regions" and "vistas" of experience, engaged by different processes and methods, refer to different "aspects of reality." In the following section, I explore how Iqbal's three-part conception of knowing affects how *The Reconstruction* conceptualizes religion and its relationship with science.

II

Iqbal's reflections on knowledge, experience, and reality underlie a consistent and overarching refrain that animates *The Reconstruction*. Namely, religion, whatever else it may be, is born out of "concrete experience" and relates its practitioners with reality. The book uses a whole host of terms to elucidate the context whose interpretation generates religion, for example, revelation, religious experience, mystical

experience, and *wahī*. I read Iqbal's remarks about religious experience as indicating a two-pronged formal commitment about religion operative in *The Reconstruction*. First, religion names an epistemically fecund interpretive activity and, second, religion is not an epiphenomenon, beneath which something more basic and elemental is at play.

First: for Iqbal, religion or the religious names an interpretive (or semiotic) activity that involves specifiable forms of experience (sign-vehicles), applies specifiable interpretive methods (interpretants), and enables relationships with reality (objects). He notes that religion or the religious emerges out of a specific or unique form of "knowledge-yielding" experience between a foundational figure – Prophets being the prototype – and reality. These experiences are amply attested to and interpreted in the "revealed and mystic literature of mankind,"⁶² and their paradigms are Prophetic claims about revelatory relationships with God.⁶³ Iqbal observes: "Religion aims at reaching the real significance of a special variety of human experience."⁶⁴

Second: when an inquirer encounters a claim that purports to interpret religious or revelatory experience, such an inquirer should avoid imagining that claim as epiphenomenal vis-à-vis something more elemental, which the inquirer can describe more accurately than the claimant. It will simply not do to assert that a claim to revelation finds meaning and value only with respect to some other domain of reference, such as biology, history, philosophy, politics, or psychology.⁶⁵ Such an approach is tantamount to treating the claim as an inferior datum⁶⁶ while privileging a biological, historical, or psychological claim as a more accurate description of what the revelatory claim is "actually about." Iqbal notes that "religious beliefs and dogmas . . . are not interpretations of those data of experience which are the subject of the sciences of Nature . . . [Religion] 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."⁶⁷ Iqbal here is refuting a pernicious consequence of representationalism: imagining that an inquirer's epistemic regime lets them peer "behind" the terms expressing the subject matter of their inquiry and glimpse – unhampered by that matter's obfuscations – at what the subject matter is "really" about.

Iqbal's two-pronged formal commitment – religion is epistemically fecund and is not epiphenomenal – does not necessitate some form of "fideism" for engaging with revelatory claims. Instead, it responds to and corrects a two-pronged conceptual error, which, Iqbal avers,

renders inquiries into religion both dangerous and dogmatic: first, that human experience is of a generic character and, second, that a specifiable structure of analysis is appropriate for analyzing any and all possible experience.

The first prong assumes that some uniform features of human experience form the seedbed for all possible knowledge claims. Using religious experience as a flagship case, Iqbal argues that, despite the protestations of some of his contemporaries, one cannot “start with the assumption that all experience other than the normal level of experience is impossible.”⁶⁸ “The whole religious literature of the world, including the records of specialists’ personal experiences . . . is a standing testimony to [religious experience]. These experiences are perfectly natural, like our normal experiences.”⁶⁹

Even if we put aside seemingly “unusual” but “perfectly natural” religious experience, Iqbal notes that the experience that different natural sciences interpret is not *identical*. Biologists, physicists, and psychologists interpret different “data” or “regions” of experience, and the conflation of such data constitutes a grave intellectual error. Iqbal notes that any given discipline of inquiry has “a special set of facts to observe,”⁷⁰ irreducible to the kinds of phenomena that other disciplines handle. To assume that human experience has certain generic characteristics is to assume that a dimension of human experience discloses certain characteristics of reality as such, independent of the context or method or process of inquiry through which it is engaged. In semiotic terms, the first conceptual error consists in assuming that certain sign-vehicles are related with an object, such that they come equipped with some generically available information about the object, which the interpreting environment either grasps or fails to grasp.

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 states that to assume that reality “invades” our consciousness in the form of data accessible by a *single* structure of analysis is dogmatic.⁷¹ “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.”⁷² In semiotic terms, this second error is to assume that a specifiable habit of interpretation or set of methods adequately furnishes a schematic 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 philosophical writings

is exemplified by approaches akin to Kant's. Iqbal, although he praises Kant in *The Reconstruction*, notes that to assume with Kant or analogous to him that the architectonics of all possible knowledge is specifiable in the form of exhaustive or universal categories is to assume that our analysand (say, religion) is subservient to some a priori philosophical framework adequate for all our conceptual needs.⁷³

Both these conceptual errors – the assumptions that certain privileged experiences disclose the character of reality as such and that certain conceptual schemes exhaustively interpret experience – warp religion and religious claims into two inadequate shapes. The assumption that certain experiences or conceptual schemes are foundational and disclose the true essence of religion configures religion as either an outmoded way of making claims about the world or an outmoded way of organizing social life. These errors end up treating religion as epistemically barren and derivative of something more basic and elemental.

Iqbal describes epistemic environments that consider religion an obsolete way of talking about the world in the following terms: "Religion [is taken to be] a pure fiction created by . . . mankind with a view to find a kind of fairyland . . . [For such approaches] 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."⁷⁴ Such an epistemic environment accepts a certain form of human experience as "normal" and "fact" and "rejects its other levels as mystical and emotional."⁷⁵ It disqualifies not just the contents of certain knowledge claims, but a priori rejects certain forms of claims as unreasonable.

Typically, in such an environment, human experience is analyzed as composed out of sense data, which are subjected to interpretation, to yield knowledge. Iqbal rejects that, for all contexts of knowing, it is useful to assume that human experience is composed 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 as a generalization about experience as such, it a priori excludes certain knowledge claims. In fact, Iqbal argues, positing sense impressions as the ground for any and all knowledge claims disqualifies biology and psychology as practices of knowing.⁷⁶

Even some day-to-day, functional certainties disappear if sense impressions are treated as the only way to capture human experience.

For instance, it becomes difficult to sustain the claim that in our “social intercourse” we are in the presence of and commerce with “other minds.” We hypothesize that other human beings possess will, thought, desires, and hopes not because we possess some sense organ that can perceive those qualities. Instead, “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.”⁷⁷ These “signals” or “responses,” rather than sense impressions, fund hypotheses about other humans as wilful, thoughtful, desiring, hopeful beings.

Assuming that all possible experience is composed of sense impressions tends to bend religion or religious claims into an inadequate shape – a means of making claims about the external world that provided “primitive” human beings with “theories of Nature.” “Religion is not physics or chemistry, seeking an explanation of Nature,” Iqbal asserts.⁷⁸ If religious claims are treated as analyses of sense data, then they display to a contemporary investigator how human beings in the “past” devised vocabularies, techniques, and methods to explain and understand the world around them. In the present, the modern natural sciences perform the function of describing the world human beings live in and improve on “religious theories” about it, which, in the wake of the sciences, seem to rely on superstitious and fantastic claims about angels, prophets, scripture, miracles, the *jinn*, the day of judgment, eschaton, and so on.

Iqbal describes epistemic environments that take religion to be an antiquated way of organizing social life in the following terms: “The implication of these theories, on the whole, is that religion does not 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 . . . according to [such theories], Christianity has already fulfilled its biological mission.”⁷⁹

This analysis reduces religious claims 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 expresses the subjective or internal desires, hopes, states of consciousness of the constructors 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 and other human sciences. Iqbal argues that inquiries into the political, psychological, or other dimensions of the context of religion or religious experience are not *substitutive*: “[It is impossible] 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 religious.”⁸⁰

Both ways of seeing religious claims – either as primitive objectivity or as primitive subjectivity – conceive them as “reports” that express either some external feature of the claimant’s environment or some internal feature of the claimant, which some more accurate, more scientific discipline of inquiry such as physics or psychology can better express. In either case – whether religious claims are traceable to the mists of subjectivity or are historically significant but now superseded theories of nature – religion or the religious is an epiphenomenal something, traceable to more elemental things disclosed by some contemporary discipline of inquiry. Religion becomes a way of describing the physical world or a way of expressing and controlling psychological needs or desires. Inquiry into religion, then, becomes about going behind religious claims and “unveiling” the verities religious vocabulary imperfectly expresses.

I’m going to express formally the shape of the errors in conceptualizing religion that disturb Iqbal to provide a handy summary. It will also help us see more clearly, in the next section, how Iqbal re-enacts the epistemological errors he criticizes:

- Some inquirer or context of inquiry (C_1) confronts someone or some other context of inquiry (C_2) that makes certain claims (A_2) about some object (R). Or C_1 reads: C_2 says A_2 about R .
- In C_1 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 is a misstatement about R and requires revision.
- A_2 , clarified and revised according to C_1 , becomes claim 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 .

Iqbal is critical of regimes of knowing (C_1) that, as they come across claims (A_2) issued from some other context (C_2), cannot help but assimilate those claims into their own norms, terms, and conventions, thereby re-reading A_2 as A_1 . The polemical dimensions of so reshaping inquiries into religion are captured well by Revs. Henry Elliot and Henry Tucker's remarks in 1858 on how nineteenth-century colonial educational institutions shape Indian students:

He [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 that we cannot teach the simplest lessons . . . without contradicting the false sciences contained in their religious books [thereby] proving their religions themselves to be false.⁸¹

Iqbal intervenes in this polemically charged epistemological environment to propose seeing experience, the "subject-matter of interpretation," as having various "levels" and "regions" that are interpreted by different methods of investigation. Thus he refers to experience at the levels variously of "matter," of "life," and of "consciousness," which form the subject matter of physics, biology, and psychology, respectively.⁸²

In fact, the term "experience" rarely appears in *The Reconstruction* without some specification of its "region" or "level."⁸³ Religious experience is one such "level" or "region" 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."⁸⁴

I read these claims by Iqbal as his attempt to articulate some pattern of relation, C_3 , that makes peace between claims that emerge in C_1 and C_2 . He suggests that any practice of inquiry, C_1 , when it comes across claims (A_2) from another context (C_2), *should treat such claims and contexts as forms of inquiry* rather than merely as "subject-matter" that

passively awaits C_1 to dissect and display it. One can ease the conflict between religion and science by conceiving the two sets of practices as inquiries with different habits and subject matters of interpretation. Thus religion names those human practices, habits, and institutions that interpret and analyze 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 deal with other forms of experience, at, for instance, “the level of matter [physics], the level of life [biology], and the level of mind and consciousness [psychology].”⁸⁵

The various sciences, too, would be at war like religion and science, if they failed to view each other as distinct contexts of interpretation, handling non-identical subject matters. “Their conflict [i.e., religion and science] is due to the misapprehension that both interpret the same data of experience.”⁸⁶ Both seek excellence in their enactment. Interpreting human experience, and thereby making potentially trustworthy and dependable claims about reality, are concerns as much of religion as 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 religious experience. Iqbal’s general argument is that prophets, theologians, mystics, and jurists are just as concerned with “objectivity” in their sphere of activity as scientists are in theirs.⁸⁷ 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.”⁸⁸ Religious traditions are constituted by such practices of interpretation, examination, and 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, endeavours to eliminate all subjective elements, psychological or physiological, in the content of his experience with a view finally to reach what is absolutely objective.”⁸⁹ Iqbal likens the efforts of a Sufi practitioner 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.”⁹⁰

Iqbal’s efforts at making peace between religion and science employ a triadic or contextual conception of knowing. He re-describes the

two as different forms of interpretive activity. As I said above, *The Reconstruction* seeks to articulate a rule of relation C_3 such that claims from C_2 are not assimilated into the norms, terms, and conventions of C_1 . In the next section I 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.

III

The Reconstruction's conceptualization of religion becomes representational as Iqbal examines mystical experience. After indicating that lack of time prevents a detailed discussion,⁹¹ he attributes five "main characteristics" to mystical experience.

First, mystical experience yields knowledge by interpretation. It, like any other form of human experience, is "immediate" – hence, as we have seen above, "subject to interpretation,"⁹² like other "regions" or "levels" of human experience that yield knowledge of reality via interpretive processes: "As regions of normal experience are subject to interpretation . . . for our knowledge of the external world, so the region of mystic experience is subject to interpretation for our knowledge of God."⁹³

Second, mystical experience displays "unanalysable wholeness." This is not to suggest something eerie: the "same Reality"⁹⁴ that operates on us in ordinary circumstances engages us here too – mystical experience is "perfectly natural." But whereas we normally engage with that same reality in ways that facilitate our everyday practical needs and environment-specific concerns, mystical experience takes us "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 unanalyzable unity in which the ordinary distinction of subject and object does not exist."⁹⁵ Iqbal offers an analogy: we can analyze the ordinary experience of seeing a table placed in front of us as, first, the selection of a finite datum of experience that "fall[s] into a certain order of space and time" out of the "innumerable data of experience" that operate on us, and, second, the synthesis of this selection "into the single experience of the table."⁹⁶ Mystical experience is, in contrast, a "single *unanalysable* unity."⁹⁷

Third, mystical experience "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.”⁹⁸

Fourth, its interpretive fruits are not identical with its actuality. Undergoing a mystical experience is not the same as talking about it: “The interpretation which the mystic or the prophet puts on the content of his religious consciousness can be conveyed to others in the form of propositions, but the content itself cannot be so transmitted.”⁹⁹ Iqbal explicitly gestures towards “the old theological controversy about verbal revelation”¹⁰⁰ – about how the words that constitute revelation relate to their genesis: whether the words of the Qur’an are themselves revealed or are Muhammad’s, whether God speaks Arabic or imprints revelation on the heart of its recipient, who then articulates it.¹⁰¹ Iqbal rejects distinctions between revelatory experience and its fruits. Its unanalyzable wholeness renders unhelpful arguments over whether it is constituted by “feelings,” “ideas,” or “words.” “There is a sense in which the word is also revealed,” says Iqbal.¹⁰²

Fifth, mystical experience is fleeting: it does not permanently dissociate the experiencer from ordinary life; the mystical state “fades away,” and allows the person to return to the everyday.¹⁰³

The Reconstruction does not explain how Iqbal reached this understanding of mystical experience, religious experience, or *wahī*. Scholars have noted that the features Iqbal attributes to mystic experience bear the marks of engagement with and borrowings from various sources: Iqbal’s reading of William James and James Ward;¹⁰⁴ his reflections on Rumi and Ḥallāj;¹⁰⁵ his involvement in the *qādiriyyah* Sufi order;¹⁰⁶ and his claims that the words of his poetry are given to him under the spell of inspiration, akin to mystical experience.¹⁰⁷ All these sources offer illuminating material for piecing together how *The Reconstruction* distills the qualities of mystical experience.

As I discuss the representational qualities of Iqbal’s reflections on mystical experience, I do not concentrate on its elusive sources, even though, as Nicholas Adams suggests, their opacity renders his discussions in *The Reconstruction* rather assertorial.¹⁰⁸ Where Iqbal makes a claim about, let us say, mystical experience, without indicating its sources, he makes his claims non-contextual and especially hospitable to over-general and binary readings.

I concentrate instead on a more precise marker of Iqbal’s representational voice: Iqbal uses the terms mystic experience, religious experience, or *wahī* as a general concept that defines the “core” of religion. This move implies that concepts derived from Islamic intellectual

history that may be adequate for studying Islam's scriptural resources are applicable to the study of any given religious tradition.

As we saw in the previous section, *The Reconstruction* is furiously critical of any conceptual schemes (C_1) that study religion by translating and refashioning religious claims into a priori "moulds." The scholarship Iqbal is writing against traces religion back to more elemental psychological, political, or even physical claims. Iqbal's depiction of mystical experience seems to suggest that *its features* are the terms in which religious claims – emerging from any given environment – should be re-expressed. The way *The Reconstruction* handles the concept of mystical experience does not prevent its 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 their own pre-determined conceptual vocabularies. For example, Iqbal notes that religious experience involves a moment of intimate association with God. This particular scheme (C_1), employed for examining religious traditions that do not feature God, would reductively "bend" religious claims from those traditions in the kinds of awkward shapes of which, as we saw above, Iqbal is quite critical and wary.

Iqbal's representational approach emerges again when he divides religious life into three periods: "faith," "thought," and "discovery." Religion begins with "perfect submission" to certain rules and laws, is followed by a "rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority," and culminates in mysticism, where a religious individual discovers "the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness."¹⁰⁹ Iqbal offers a conceptual framework – quite akin to the a priori schemes he criticizes elsewhere in *The Reconstruction* – for understanding the history of any religion as a developmental or evolutionary process through successively "law," "metaphysics," and "mysticism." He generalizes categories from the Islamic intellectual tradition, organizes them in a developmental mould, and proposes pouring into it the history of any religious tradition.

Some of Iqbal's reflections on the relationship between religion and science bear the marks of representational approaches he criticizes. We saw in the first section that Iqbal rejects the notion that human beings have some sort of unmediated access to reality. Our claims about reality are mediated by different "regions" of experience. Religion, in this key, interprets "religious experience," just as physics

interprets “experience at the level of matter.” Yet there are instances in *The Reconstruction* where Iqbal declares that religion offers a more direct and foundational access to reality than other enterprises of knowing: “Science does not care whether its electron is a real entity or not. It may be a mere symbol, a mere convention. Religion, which is essentially a mode of actual living, is the only serious way of handling Reality.”¹¹⁰ And, elsewhere: “Nature as a subject of science is a highly artificial affair . . . Religion [in contrast] demands the whole of reality.”¹¹¹ Religion offers the possibility of “direct contact”¹¹² with reality, whereas science explores reality only “indirectly.”¹¹³

While Iqbal’s contemporaries argue that religious claims are epistemically empty or epiphenomenal, he articulates a three-part conception of knowing and names religion as *one* avenue or context of inquiry. He then violates this rule and does what he accuses his contemporaries of. If they claim that scientific investigation is privileged vis-à-vis other modes of knowing, he claims that religious contexts have a privileged access to reality and scientific ones are “artificial” and “partial” in comparison.

A far more pronounced instance of Iqbal’s representational approach to religion occurs in one of the “base-texts” for *The Reconstruction*.¹¹⁴ In his “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,”¹¹⁵ 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.¹¹⁶ For Iqbal, the central proposition that undergirds Buddhism is that “there is pain in nature.”¹¹⁷ For Christianity, “there is sin in nature,”¹¹⁸ and for Zoroastrianism “there is struggle in nature.”¹¹⁹ Iqbal then asks: “What is the central ideal in Islam which determines the structure of the entire system?”¹²⁰ And he answers: “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.”¹²¹ Islam’s ultimate purpose is “freeing humanity from superstition,”¹²² from false sources of fear.

Notice that Iqbal’s claims about these religions are two-part, over-general formulations that omit the processes and methods whence they emerge. More important, however, as in Sir Syed’s approach in chapter 1 above, Iqbal here seeks an elemental something on which the object of his study – Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and religion more generally – rests. “There is fear in nature, and the object of Islam is to free man from fear,” is offered by Iqbal as a foundational claim, on

which the “structure of Islam” rests. As in Sir Syed’s approach, Iqbal’s foundational formula pits him in a competition governed by the law of excluded middle against other inquirers, whose claims about Islam’s central proposition are identical to or in competition with Iqbal’s.

The Reconstruction enacts this kind of competition by claiming that Islam’s “original core” has historically become overlain with a “Magian crust” and Iqbal seeks a vision of “Islam as emancipated from its Magian overlayings.”¹²³ His task then is to recover Islam’s original, anti-Magian spirit, veiled over the ages by Greek philosophy, Arab imperialism, and Persian mysticism.¹²⁴ His recovery of Islam’s core pits it in binary competition against other such visions.

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 Islam’s core is for him truer than rival articulations, Islam itself becomes the ideal form of religion, in competition with other religions. For instance, he sees Islam, by virtue of the propositions that structure it, as best able to relate to modern science. Christianity is not quite so fortunate.¹²⁵ Iqbal claims that Islam’s “standpoint” is melioristic. And meliorism is “the ultimate presupposition and justification of all human effort at scientific discovery and social progress.”¹²⁶ Islam’s central values, which *The Reconstruction* identifies as freedom, equality, and solidarity, are also amenable to the modern age in ways that other religious traditions and their values may not be. Iqbal notes that in Islam the “essence of *Tawhid* [the oneness of God], as a working idea, is equality, solidarity, and freedom,”¹²⁷ but:

The pure brow of the principle of *Tawhid* has received 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.¹²⁸

Iqbal’s approach displaces the competition between science 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 basic principles are truer. This way of conceiving religious traditions almost assumes the polemical tenor of approaches towards the study of religion that Iqbal criticizes. In a newspaper article where Iqbal thematizes the relationship between Islam and nationalism, he writes: "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 organise mankind despite all its natural distinctions."¹²⁹

Iqbal's over-general conceptual vocabulary for handling mystical experience, combined with his reading of religions as systems, each grounded on a basic proposition, leads him to hermeneutical war on multiple fronts: between his identification of the "core" of religion and other accounts that may posit rival "kernels" of religion; between his identification of each religion's basic proposition and rivals' arguments; and, finally, between various "religious systems," each standing on its own "basic facts." On each front, Iqbal's representational voice commits him to descriptive, foundational, binary, and essentialist claims. *Wahī* emerges as the proper way to talk about religion; freedom, equality, and liberty emerge as Islam's "basic values"; the history of Islam becomes the history of a Persian and Magian crust forming over an original Arab core; and Islam emerges as a victorious combatant, in its war against more "national," more "individuated," less adequate "religious systems."

Before I move on to another set of themes in the next chapter, I would like to give my readers an outline of the interplay between Iqbal's representational and pragmatic voices in relation to the themes of this chapter. My purpose is, first, to offer a clear picture of the epistemological practices Iqbal criticizes, corrects, and repeats vis-à-vis knowledge, experience, and reality and, second, to show how these concepts affect his conception of religion, science, and their interrelation.

Iqbal *criticizes* epistemological approaches that imagine religion is an epiphenomenon and that religious claims are primarily descriptions, either of the physical world or of the needs and desires of religious

subjects. Such approaches conceive religion as a set of descriptive reports and presuppose that other disciplines of knowing such as physics and psychology carry out the primary function of religious claims (describing the world or describing human desires and needs) more accurately. Physics and psychology can look “behind” religious claims and uncover their “essence,” which religious claims describe in imperfect ways. Iqbal traces these approaches to religion to two epistemic assumptions: that either a set of conceptual schemes (e.g., psychology, physics) or a set of experiences (e.g., sense experience) form a privileged, foundational mould for shaping any subject matter of analysis.

Iqbal *corrects* such approaches with a three-part, contextual conception of knowledge, wherein experience does not have a generically specifiable character but acquires its features in the process of interpretation. Conceptual schemes, similarly, are relative to their context or subject matter of analysis. Knowledge claims are not foundationally justified descriptions but interpretive ways of forming various relationships with reality. Religion names those human practices, habits, institutions, and forms of analyses covering a specific form of human experience, which Iqbal calls “religious” or “mystical.” Similarly, the various sciences name those human practices, institutions, and forms of analyses that relate to other, non-identical dimensions of human experience.

Iqbal *repeats* the epistemological errors he criticizes when he proposes variously that the concept of mystical experience or revelation is well-suited for understanding any religious tradition; that every religion rests on a “central proposition,” which an inquirer seeks to describe; that Iqbal’s task is to uncover Islam’s “essence,” beneath its Magian crust; and that religious experience gives better, more “direct contact” with reality than other explorations of human experience.

Iqbal most effectively repairs representational tendencies when he applies a three-part contextual framework to correct foundationalist and essentialist conceptions of knowledge. He corrects frameworks that take certain experiences or conceptual schemes to be epistemically privileged and exhaustive by arguing that we ought to see experiences and conceptual schemes as having various “levels” and “regions.” His repair falters, for instance, in his articulation of the shape of revelatory experience or in his exhaustive and privileged explanation of the core of Islam. His “advice” on how to relate knowledge, experience, and reality is reparative, but his own work on revelatory experience or the

history of Islam repeats the mistakes he attacks. In the next chapter, we see that Iqbal pragmatically corrects descriptive, foundationalist, and essentialist ways of thinking about physics and biology but ignores his own corrections in relation to psychology.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Iqbal, "New Year Message," 298.
- 2 Cf. Tareen, "Narratives of Emancipation in Modern Islam."
- 3 Iqbal, "New Year Message," 298.
- 4 Iqbal, "Presidential Address 1932," 31.
- 5 Devji, "Illiberal Islam," 238. Devji expresses Iqbal's ethico-political and epistemic critique of modernity: "[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 by 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" (ibid., 239).
- 6 Iqbal, "Presidential Address 1930," 3–10; Iqbal, "Presidential Address 1932," 30–2.
- 7 Iqbal, "Presidential Address 1930," 6.
- 8 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 132.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Umar, *Khutbāt-i Iqbāl*, 10.
- 12 As readers discover in the next section, *The Reconstruction* does not describe these terms clearly at one place in the text. The first section of this chapter analyzes how these terms function in *The Reconstruction* by inspecting their various appearances in the text.
- 13 Ibid., 1. Chapter 1 of *The Reconstruction* begins with a 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" (ibid.).
- 14 Iqbal, *Tashkīl-i Jadīd Ilāhiyāt-i Islāmiyah* (the title of Niazi's translation of Iqbal's *Reconstruction*).
- 15 Niazi, "Muqaddamah," 7–10.
- 16 Iqbal, *Tashkīl-i Jadīd Ilāhiyāt-i Islāmiyah*, 291.

- 17 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 10.
- 18 Ibid., 86.
- 19 Ibid., xlv.
- 20 Ibid., 10.
- 21 Ibid., 15.
- 22 Ibid., 21.
- 23 Ibid., 156.
- 24 Ibid., 62.
- 25 Ibid., 10–11.
- 26 Ibid., 15.
- 27 Ibid., 10.
- 28 Ibid., 33.
- 29 Ibid., 10–12, 86, 156–7.
- 30 I say “agent” here because *The Reconstruction* employs the concept of knowledge not just for individual consciousness, after the fashion of the ego-cogito, but also for activities of, for example, bees, plants, as well as human communities. Ibid., 3, 100.
- 31 Ibid., 12.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., 14.
- 34 Ibid., 13.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., 18.
- 37 Ibid., 20.
- 38 Ibid., 14.
- 39 Ibid., 12.
- 40 Ibid., 147.
- 41 Ibid., 10.
- 42 Ibid., 15.
- 43 Ibid., 13.
- 44 Ibid., 90.
- 45 Ibid., 14.
- 46 Ibid., 13.
- 47 We see in the third section of this chapter that *The Reconstruction* violates its three-part contextual conception of knowledge.
- 48 CP, vol. 2, paras. 227–308.
- 49 Morris, “Foundations of the Theory of Signs.”
- 50 Petrilli and Ponzio, *Semiotics Unbounded*.
- 51 Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*.
- 52 Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*.

- 53 Yelle, “Semiotics.”
- 54 Cf. Sebeok, *A Sign Is Just a Sign*, 13, 83; Deely, “Semiotics ‘Today’” 48, 92, *passim*; CP, vol. 3, paras. 456–78.
- 55 This simplified model of semiotic analysis is adequate for our present purposes. For more involved distinctions between elements of semiosis and numerous other models, see Morris, “Foundations of the Theory of Signs”; Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*; CP, vol. 2, paras. 243–331; Sebeok, *Signs*.
- 56 Smith, *What Is Scripture?*
- 57 Ibid., 1–21.
- 58 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 41
- 59 Iqbal, “Self in the Light of Relativity,” 110–11.
- 60 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 30–1
- 61 Cf. Deely, “From Semiosis to Semioethics.” For Deely’s technical treatment of the distinctions I just named, see his *New Beginnings* and *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics*.
- 62 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 13.
- 63 Ibid., 20, 99.
- 64 Ibid., 20.
- 65 Ibid., 1–22 *passim*.
- 66 Ibid., 2–3.
- 67 Ibid., 20.
- 68 Ibid., 144.
- 69 Ibid., 149–50.
- 70 Ibid., 86.
- 71 Ibid., 33–4, 144–5.
- 72 Ibid., 34.
- 73 Ibid., 143–57.
- 74 Ibid., 20.
- 75 Ibid., 13.
- 76 Ibid., chapter 2 *passim*.
- 77 Ibid., 15.
- 78 Ibid., 20.
- 79 Ibid., 151.
- 80 Ibid., 18.
- 81 Quoted in Rizvi, “Between Hegel and Rumi,” 117.
- 82 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 26.
- 83 All this is consistent with the notion that the term “experience” functions as a sign-vehicle, mediating knowledge and reality; its “features” or “character” displays itself with respect to some form of investigation.
- 84 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 20.

- 85 Ibid., 26
- 86 Ibid., 20.
- 87 Ibid., 156.
- 88 Ibid., 144.
- 89 Ibid., 156.
- 90 Ibid., 155.
- 91 Ibid., 14.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid., 15.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Ibid (emphasis mine).
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Ibid., 16
- 100 Ibid., 18.
- 101 This is a particularly vexing debate in Islamic theology. Cf. Van Ess, “Verbal Inspiration?”; Griffel, “Muslim Philosophers’ Rationalist Explanation of Muḥammad’s Prophecy”; Michot, “Revelation.”
- 102 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 18.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Cf. Sharif, *About Iqbal and His Thought*, and Enver, *The Metaphysics of Iqbal*.
- 105 See Schimmel, *Gabriel’s Wing*, 316–76.
- 106 Javed Iqbal, *Zindah Rūd*, 86–7.
- 107 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 162.
- 108 Cf. Adams, “Iqbal and the Western Philosophers.” Adams makes this case in relation to Iqbal’s use of western philosophy, but it is a more general feature of *The Reconstruction*, especially vis-à-vis mystical experience.
- 109 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 143.
- 110 Ibid., 145.
- 111 Ibid., 34.
- 112 Ibid., 143.
- 113 Ibid., 12, 155.
- 114 According to Khurram Ali Shafique (personal communication), Iqbal’s most prolific intellectual historian and biographer, three essays (two lectures, one publication) by Iqbal are important base-texts of *The Reconstruction* as well as his philosophical thought more broadly: “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” “The Muslim Community – A Sociological Study,” and “Political Thought in Islam.”
- 115 Iqbal, “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” 97–117.
- 116 Ibid., 98–102.

- 117 Ibid., 101.
 118 Ibid.
 119 Ibid.
 120 Ibid.
 121 Ibid., 102. Iqbal's more detailed rendition of these propositions is as follows:
 "(1) There is pain in nature and man regarded as an individual is evil (Buddhism). (2) There is sin in nature and the taint of sin is fatal to man (Christianity). (3) There is struggle in nature; man is a mixture of struggling forces and is free to range himself on the side of the powers of good which will eventually prevail (Zoroastrianism)" (ibid., 101).
 122 Ibid., 117.
 123 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 114.
 124 This is a constant refrain throughout ibid., perhaps exemplified most fully in chapter 5, 99–115.
 125 Ibid., 7–8.
 126 Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," 102.
 127 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 122.
 128 Ibid., 124. Iqbal attributes these views to Said Halim Pasha and, echoing his agreement, observes that they are "in tune with the spirit of Islam" (Ibid.). Also see Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, 242–4.
 129 Iqbal, "Statement on Islam and Nationalism," 302–3. This is an English translation of a newspaper article published in Urdu. For the original, see Iqbal, "Jughrāfiyā'ī Ḥudūd Aur Musalmān."

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 For Arberry's translation, see Iqbal, *Mysteries of Selflessness*.
- 2 See Iqbal, *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl*.
- 3 The construction in Urdu is pointedly paradoxical.
- 4 Shafique, *Iqbāl: Darmiyānī Daur*, 127.
- 5 Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, xvii.
- 6 Mir, *Iqbal*, 31.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal*.
- 9 See, for instance, Diagne, "Achieving Humanity."
- 10 Rafiuddin, "Iqbal's Idea of the Self."
- 11 Houben, "The Individual in Democracy and Iqbal's Conception of Khudi."
- 12 Bausani, "Iqbal."
- 13 Ahmad, "Sources of Iqbal's Idea of the Perfect Man."
- 14 Hassan, "Iqbal's 'Khudi'."

God, Science, and Self

Muhammad Iqbal's Reconstruction of Religious Thought

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