

Muhammad Iqbal's Prediction on the Modern Science: A Response to the Scientific Worldview

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, Ph.D.

Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah
of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS), International
Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

mumtazali@iiu.edu.my

Md Maruf Hasan

Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah
of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS), International
Islamic University Malaysia.

marufenglish021@gmail.com

Abstract

The inherent crisis of faith due to modern science was prevalent in Western literature during the time of Muhammad Iqbal. After conducting extensive research on Western philosophy, Muhammad Iqbal recognized its intrinsic contradictions and forewarned future Muslim generations. In the 21st century, we are witnessing the rise of New Atheism within Muslim societies. With the development of modern science, there is a growing inclination toward the scientific worldview. Muslim youth are not excluded since their education systems still lack the integration of Islamic knowledge. Muhammad Iqbal's philosophical thought on 'Khudi/Self' is extremely relevant and necessary for internalizing Islamic values and rebuilding confidence in the Islamic worldview among Muslim students. This research analyzes Iqbal's philosophical poem, *The Secrets of the Self*, to extract its core message for restoring Muslim students' conviction in the Quranic worldview. This article employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing content analysis to examine Iqbal's thoughts on the modern crisis arising from the dominance of science. The findings indicate that Iqbal unequivocally affirms the *Tawhidic* worldview ("There is no God except Allah") as the ultimate solution for humanity. This research suggests that Muslim students can adopt Muhammad Iqbal's *Tawhidic* paradigm as a response to the scientific worldview propagated by New Atheism.

Keywords: Islamic worldview, new atheism, scientific worldview, Iqbal, *Khudi*, Muslim youth, Muslim students

The scientific worldview affects the minds of contemporary youths worldwide in the 21st century. Haimila (2023, p. 10) states:

Scholars of nonreligion have noted that belief in science may function as a worldview, or a worldview belief, for individuals who do not believe in God (Coleman et al., 2019; Farias, 2013)...However, considering the widespread nature of science-based education and other authority of scientific institutions around the world (Qadir & Syväterä, 2021; Wellcome, 2018), it seems likely that also religious individuals rely on science in their beliefs and worldviews...much of prior work in the study of religion

has approached ‘belief in science’ as belief in the epistemological superiority of science that has been expected to exclude religious and other supernatural belief. Studies that have shed preliminary light on the importance of science for other worldview functions, such as a sense of meaning, have generally focused on non-theistic and/or nonreligious individuals, leaving open the question of whether finding science important for one’s answers to the ‘big questions’ extends to religious believers or not.

Muslim youths are also vulnerable to the scientific worldview when they are poorly educated with Islamic revealed knowledge (Hasan & Ali, 2024). Hasan and Ali (2021, p. 38) clarify science and the scientific worldview as such,

Scientific facts are one thing; the interpretation of those facts is another thing. With these two distinctions made, the difference between science and the scientific worldview becomes clearer. Science is the corpus of established scientific facts. The scientific worldview is interpreting scientific facts to mean that nothing else except scientific facts has any value, and then using this interpretation to restrict what life means.

Now imagine a Muslim student who is familiar with reading Western literature from the period after the scientific enlightenment in Europe. He reads modern American, European, British and Russian literature and now he reads books on New Atheism. He realizes that there is a nihilistic message about the human condition in this literature. For example, in Russian literature, the character Anna Karenina comes to realize that she is becoming inoperable as time passes, despite being described as the most beautiful woman in the world by her creator, Leo Tolstoy (Tolstoy et. al., 2013). Her suicide in the novel conveys that the universe is not permanent, and nothing matters in its course.

Now, affected by this type of nihilistic tendency, when this Muslim student faces reality in his day-to-day life, for instance, dealing with his sick mother, he realizes that his false consolation over the phone for his elderly sick mother will not work unless it is a mere talk therapy serving as a placebo effect. No divine magic will come to save his mother, and this Muslim student begins to interpret reality this way in his inner psychology because he is obsessed with and tainted by the scientific worldview. Yet, he tries to present a false optimism to his beloved, uneducated mother, who is hospitalized and about to die. He assumes that his elderly father might be thinking about how to manage money for the treatment—or maybe he is thinking that the old lady should pass away realistically. Afterall, who wants to live with a sick old beauty, as Karenina seemed to imply to her readers? Perhaps, who knows—that uneducated old father may realize and reflect on the fact that his time is also approaching, ready to vanish from the universe forever, just as Victor Hugo et al. (1961) portrayed in the character of Jean Valjean in his epic historical novel “*Les misérables*”. The world is harsh and merciless in the absence of emotional (chemical) game to this Muslim student.

This Muslim student also makes incorrect predictions and jeopardizes his judgment subjectively in his imaginative state, believing that elderly professors at universities are perhaps desperately trying to get some articles published to secure grants, ensuring their very last job for survival and to avoid feeling inoperable in society. These professors are perhaps scared that

their sons, daughters, and fellow humans might notice that they are gradually becoming irrelevant in their family and society. The student relates these scenarios to Russian literature, recalling when Anna Karenina realized that she was herself a hypocrite, spending her life seeking pleasure (an example of altruistic hypocrisy) rather than the romantic love that old traditional literature emphasized as the sincerest belief in human minds.

Now, imagine once again that this Muslim student is introduced to the books of New Atheism and tries to relate their ideas to his experiences. He understands that the scientific worldview exposes all the secrets that humans hide deep within themselves. Traditional values and morality are interpreted as nothing more than survival techniques for selfish genes, as Dawkins (1976) describes in his book *"The Selfish Gene"*. In this view, altruism is ultimately a form of selfishness, merely the most useful technique for species survival. Nobody inherently cares about the old and weak. So, how does society deal with those it deems worthless? Systematically discard them—that's how harsh society works. Then, this Muslim student also thinks that the religion that provides hope for his elderly, sick, and impoverished mother in the hospital is perhaps something she clings to out of necessity. Deep down, she rationally knows well that better treatment at an earlier stage could have given her a chance at a longer life. However, nobody was there for her—she stared blankly, seeking assistance, yet everyone around her made excuses about being busy. What a rationalistic excuse! Isn't it? The reality show of life is brutal and knows nothing but to maintain laws of nature (survival of the fittest).

It is only fully realized during virus outbreaks or when war breaks out, as Albert Camus (2020) illustrates in his novel *"The Plague"*. The above example of a deprived mother is artistically portrayed by Albert Camus (Camus et al., 2002) in his novel *"The Stranger"*, where he highlights the absurdity and meaninglessness of emotion in a world devoid of religious morality. This extended and fragmented narrative of a Muslim student's internal crisis serves an important purpose—it helps illustrate the deep-rooted problem with the Scientific Worldview in Muslim young minds in the 21st Century.

When Muslim youths become influenced by Western literature and the scientific worldview, one must ask: Is there any glimpse of light within the Islamic worldview? In other words, when a Muslim student is consumed by a materialistic interpretation of life's events, is there any way to break free from this mindset? This is where Muhammad Iqbal becomes highly significant. He sensed the impending crisis that would affect Muslim minds. Recognizing this existential threat, Iqbal dedicated himself to formulating a powerful intellectual response, defending Islamic spirituality against the dominance of the scientific worldview, as Ali and Hasan (2024) note:

Every individual is important in Islam. Everyone plays a vital role in the evolution of a prosperous Islamic state as observed in the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in Madina. Muhammad Iqbal emphasized the development of everyone by expressing his philosophical thoughts on *Khudi*/Self. He wished to empower Muslim ummah by focusing on the development of *Khudi*/Self (Ali & Hasan, 2022, p. 52-53).

A male bird realizes that his female mate and their in the nest are waiting for food. The male bird finds importance and meaning in collecting food. He becomes highly active, ensuring

the survival of his species in the long run, even without consciously realizing its future impact. Similarly, Muhammad Iqbal emphasizes the importance of the individual as a foundational element for building a strong nation/*Ummah*. Iqbal does realize that the power lies within the individual. Mystical teaching in Islam, in fact, focuses on the Self as illustrated in the masterpiece of Farid al-Din Attār (1954), “*The Conference of the Birds*”. Emerson (1841) explored self-reliance in his essay to inspire fellow Americans. Nietzsche introduced the *Übermensch* concept, advocating for a new morality in a Godless world. Iqbal demonstrates how to empower *Khudi* by developing his philosophical thought within an Islamic framework. While he was critical of certain aspects of Islamic mystical teachings as well as Western philosophical ideas, he developed his own distinctive approach to offer solutions for all of humanity. This research will argue this position by drawing on Iqbal’s work and providing textual evidence to support it.

This research will also demonstrate that Muhammad Iqbal derived motivation for all of humanity from organized religion which is Islam. According to Iqbal, Islam represents the last hope for humanity. Where should human beings turn in the absence of traditional religions? Western intellectuals lost their sense of destiny (Valchev, 2021). All organized religions came to be viewed as false. Therefore, Nietzsche attempted to create a new morality as a solution (Nietzsche & Hollingdale, 1969; Nietzsche, 2009).

During the modern period, there was a widespread spiritual crisis across the Western world. The Scientific Enlightenment contributed to this spiritual crisis among intellectuals. Iqbal studied in the West and recognized their intellectual crisis. As a result, he became deeply concerned about the Islamic world. During his time, the Third World was facing numerous difficulties, including colonization. The existential crisis experienced by Western intellectuals would have seemed like an elite issue compared to the pressing struggles of the Eastern world. However, Iqbal seems to smell the danger that might affect Muslim ummah in the future. His philosophical poem, “*The Secrets of the Self*” (1983), reflects his concern for the Muslim Ummah.

In the 21st century, with the advent of New Atheism, it seems that Muslim societies need an education model based on integration or Islamization, as the root problem is faithlessness in Allah due to the rise of the scientific worldview. There is an ongoing physical genocide, as witnessed in Palestine at the hands of Israelis. On the other hand, it seems that a spiritual genocide is also imminent in the Muslim world due to the growing influence of the scientific worldview. At this critical juncture, epistemological integration is urgently needed from schools to universities in Muslim societies to properly educate Muslim youth.

Muhammad Iqbal negated all the ideologies and affirmed only the *Tawhidic* worldview as the best solution for humanity through his works (Niazi, 1977, p. 34; Iqbal, 1951). It goes without saying that Muhammad Iqbal was ahead of his time in terms of philosophical thought. His ideas can be instructive for developing an educational model in Muslim societies to counter New Atheism arising from the scientific worldview.

This paper explores, firstly, Iqbal’s critique of modern science. Then, his strategy for disenchantment of Plato’s ideal philosophy. Moreover, it examines Iqbal’s three stages for the

development of *Khudi*/Ego/Self in individuals as representatives of Islam. Finally, before the concluding remarks, the paper discusses Muhammad Iqbal's potential response to the Scientific Worldview.

Methodology and Limitations of the Research

This paper employs a qualitative methodology to understand how Iqbal's thought can be incorporated to counter the nihilistic tendency among Muslim students who may be influenced by modern Western literature and New Atheism. Library research is adopted, and content analysis is conducted on his philosophical poem, *The Secrets of the Self*, as the authors seek answers regarding the scientific worldview. The normative method has been used to defend the Islamic worldview.

A limitation of this research is that it relies on English translations of Iqbal's work. Additionally, secondary data from scientific literature is used. Works of Western scholarship are referenced to understand the scientific worldview and its potential impact on Muslim students within Muslim societies.

Iqbal's Critique of Modern Science

Like Rumi, light the candle
And burn Rum in the fire of Tabriz!
There is a beloved hidden within thine heart:
I will show him to thee,
if thou hast eyes to see. (Iqbal, 1920/1983, p. 29-30)

Even in the 21st century, when the majority of Muslim parents and teachers fail to understand the internal crisis of Muslim youths due to the influence of the scientific worldview, Muhammad Iqbal, as a poet and philosopher from the early 20th century, could fathom the nihilistic tendencies of future Muslim generations. Muhammad Iqbal is like a best friend and guardian to Muslim youths.

I have no need of the ear of To-day,
I am the voice of the poet of To-morrow.
My own age does not understand my deep meanings,
My Joseph is not for this market.
I despair of my old companions,
My Sinai burns for sake of the Moses who is coming.
Their sea is silent, like dew,
But my dew is storm-ridden, like the ocean.
My song is of another world than theirs:
This bell calls other travellers to take the road. (p. 3-4)

Iqbal ended his poem thus, hoping to hand over his message to the next generation of Muslim students:

I am as the tulip of the field,
In the midst of a company I am alone.

I beg of Thy grace a sympathising friend,
 And adept in the mysteries of my nature,
 A friend endowed with madness and wisdom,
 One that knoweth not the phantom of vain things,
 That I may confide my lament to his soul
 And see again my face in his heart.
 His image I will mould of mine own clay,
 I will be to him both idol and worshipper. (p.147-48)

Literature speaks to the heart of a nation. Muhammad Iqbal represented the crisis of future youth and provided solutions as a poet for all of humanity. He was not merely diagnosing the diseases of the heart; rather, he offered remedies through his philosophical thought. First, it is important to highlight Muhammad Iqbal's insights on modern science and its potential impact on Muslim youth who are deeply influenced by it. Iqbal states:

Modern science lacks this old wine in its cup,
 Its nights are not loud with passionate prayer. (p. 131)

...

O trustee of the wisdom of the Quran,
 Find the lost unity again!
 We, who keep the gate of the citadel of Islam,
 Have become unbelievers by neglecting the watchword of Islam.
 The ancient Saki's bowl is shattered,
 The wine-party of the Hijaz is broken up.
 The Ka'ba is filled with our idols,
 Infidelity mocks at our Islam.
 Our Shaykh hath gambled Islam away for love of idols.
 And made a rosary of the zunnar.
 Our spiritual directors owe their rank to their white hair
 And are the laughing-stock of children in the street;
 Their hearts bear no impress of the Faith
 But house the idols of sensuality.
 Every long-haired fellow wears the garb of a dervish –
 Alas for these traffickers in religion!
 Day and night they are traveling about with disciples,
 Insensible to the great needs of Islam.
 Their eyes are without light, like the narcissus,
 Their breasts devoid of spiritual wealth.
 Preachers and Sufis, all worship worldliness alike;
 The prestige of the pure religion is ruined.
 Our preacher fixed his eyes on the pagoda
 And the mufti of the Faith sold his verdict.
 After this, O friends, what are we to do?
 Our guide turns his face towards the wine-house (p.132-133)

To understand Iqbal's deep philosophical message in the above verses, we need to examine a case study of a 17-year-old Muslim boy mentioned by Ibn Warraq in his book:

My hermeneutic quest was preempted by a khutbah I heard that summer. When the imam made reference to the hadith that said the prophet Adam was sixty cubits tall, with no hint of suppressed amusement, a profane voice descended upon me: "This is all fucking absurd." ... I never returned to that masjid or any masjid again. But indicative of why religion is so successful at persisting, despite my melancholy state, I still, incredibly, harbored hope that some heresy would save me from having to stare the universe straight in its nonface. (Warraq, 1995, p. 517-22)

This pessimistic tendency, influenced by the scientific worldview, is further reflected in the work of Salman Rushdie:

..."I have been warning your fellow-men," Dumsday confided, "against Mr. Darwin and his works...I spoke of my own country, of its young people. I see them lost, sir. The young people of America: I see them in their despair, turning to narcotics, even, for I'm a plain--speaking man, to premarital sexual relations. And I said this then and I say it now to you. If I believed my great-granddaddy was a chimpanzee, why, I'd be pretty depressed myself. (Rushdie, 1990, p. 55)

Not only humans, but the entire universe is believed to have evolved from nothing over approximately 13.7 billion years, with no necessity for divine (Allah's) intervention, as proponents of the scientific worldview argue (Krauss, 2012; Tyson, 2014). The fundamental difference between Muhammad Iqbal's time and the present is that while the core ideas existed, experimental data were not as abundant as they are today. However, Iqbal, as a Muslim philosopher, recognized the flaws in Western ideologies and foresaw the challenges that future Muslim societies would face—much like Nietzsche did in the West—as reflected in his poem, "*Secrets of the Self*" (Iqbal, 1983).

The point is that Islamophobic attitudes can develop among Muslim youths due to the influence of the scientific worldview. Science is not value-free, and without strong epistemological foundation, it is hard for Muslim youths to detect and identify the errors of modern science. Education systems in Muslim countries still lack an integrative model (Aljunied, 2022). This is a serious issue in our educational system. After all, how many Islamic schools and universities have been established in Muslim countries compared to the conventional secular education system? After the colonizers left the East, the syllabus in schools and universities continued to follow western narratives. The promise of modern science is devoid of divine intervention. Muhammad Iqbal was quite aware of modern science.

Nietzsche and Muhammad Iqbal witnessed the early development of modern science. The scientific worldview was still evolving, but with the advent of New Atheism, it is quite thought-provoking that the scientific worldview increasingly affirms atheism. It is no longer value-free or neutral. In the past, due to a lack of scientific evidence, scientists and Western scholars tended to accept agnosticism, as we can see from Darwin's autobiographical notes. In a letter to John Fordyce dated May 7, 1879, Darwin wrote:

In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God.— I think that generally (& more and more so as I grow older) but not always, that an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in the 21st century. All religions are increasingly reduced to literature and mere fairy tales. The scientific worldview appears to be emerging as the dominant worldview in the near future. This shift is occurring due to the secular education system as well as the influence of Hollywood culture (Hasan et. al., 2024). The ideological challenge facing Islam is very alarming. The education system within Muslim societies must undergo reform—there is no alternative. If New Atheism spreads through Muslim societies as it has in Western countries, it may have a devastating impact in the near future. This would be a form of spiritual genocide for Muslim youth.

Muhammad Iqbal issued a warning in the early 20th century when modern science was still in its developmental stage. Today, however, there is a notion of an "evolutionary universe from nothing" (Krauss, 2012). These narratives are devoid of any transcendental reality. In other words, the universe is said to have come into existence as a result of a quantum event out of nothing, without any external intervention. Popular science books are widely available across the globe. The narratives in these books are deeply embedded within the scientific worldview when discussing scientific concepts. A simple search on the internet, such as on Goodreads (2024), reveals well-known popular science books, encouraging readers to explore and engage with these perspectives.

The next section will shift the discussion to Iqbal's strategy for disenchanting Plato's ideal philosophy from Quranic worldview. This negation is crucial in properly affirming the Quranic perspective. Iqbal's approach presents a potential strategy to counter the dominant narratives of the scientific worldview.

Muhammad Iqbal's strategy for disenchantment of Plato's ideal philosophy from Islamic literature

In the introductory notes of English Translation, Nicholson (1920/1983) refers to Iqbal's philosophical basis for the poem, '*The Secrets of the Self*'. Iqbal states in his notes,

My criticism of Plato is directed against those philosophical systems which hold up death rather than life as their ideal—systems which ignore the greatest obstruction to life, namely, matter, and teach us to run away from it instead of absorbing it. (p. xxii)

Later in the poem, Iqbal remarks on Plato and his influence on Islamic mystical literature: "To the effect that Plato, whose thought has deeply influenced the mysticism and literature of Islam, followed the sheep's doctrine, and that we must be on our guard against his theories"(p. 56) .

Iqbal read the works of Nietzsche, and he saw how Nietzsche destroyed all idealistic philosophy from Socrates to Schopenhauer. Hence, Iqbal's critique of Plato and Islamic mysticism was quite relevant for safeguarding the Islamic worldview. Sufism was also influenced by Neoplatonist thought, and Iqbal identified the problem with philosophical Sufism as well as earlier Muslim philosophy. Even in the West, after Nietzsche, all idealistic

philosophical thought was under scrutiny, and modern science was seen as something unique. In Western literature, there was a shift from romanticism to realism as a consequence. Therefore, Iqbal made a general appeal to the whole Muslim Ummah to return to the Quran and the original teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions. Iqbal criticized Plato's ideal philosophy as follows:

The thought of Plato regarded loss as profit,
His philosophy declared that being is not-being.
His nature drowsed and created a dream
His mind's eye created a mirage.
Since he was without any taste for action,
His soul was enraptured by the nonexistent.
He disbelieved in the material universe
And became the creator of invisible Ideas. (p. 58)

Now it is important to note that Muhammad (pbuh) practically established an Islamic society based on Islamic spirituality which was lacking in Plato's philosophy. Even for Nietzsche's ideas we have witnessed the lack of practicality. The new morality that Nietzsche has sketched not effective and practical like Muhammad(pbuh).

After all, if God is dead, what is the point of following new morality of Nietzsche? Iqbal realized the problem with Nietzsche's new morality. Even Muhammad Iqbal would have no authority in his philosophy if Nietzsche's premise—"God is dead"—was accepted. This is the fundamental problem and crisis of modern philosophy. Hence, putting philosophy into practice within organized religion would be the best strategy. Muhammad Iqbal did exactly that to introduce his philosophy of Self/*Khudi*. Muhammad Iqbal had a practical example from Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) biography. The Prophet (pbuh) taught morality and practiced it himself. The Quran states, "And I am commanded to be the first of those who submit 'to His Will'" (The Qur'an 39:12). "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often" (The Qur'an, 33:21).

Hence, it is evident that Iqbal's philosophical thought on individual development is more effective and practical due to its association with the *Quranic* worldview. The next section will deal with Iqbal's three stages for the development of *Khudi*/Self/Ego for individuals to symbolize Islam.

Muhammad Iqbal's Three Stages for the Development of *Khudi*/Ego/Self for Individuals to Represent Islam

Nietzsche gave three stages of development for individuals: the camel, the lion, and the child. These stages fall under his new morality for individual development since he completely negates traditional moralities. However, it is clear that Muhammad Iqbal disagrees with Nietzsche's morality; instead, he derives his framework from Islam and proposes his own solution for individuals—one that will ultimately serve and save all of humanity. Muhammad Iqbal remains rooted within organized religion. This is the real beauty of Iqbal's philosophy.

Iqbal (1920) wrote in a subtitle of his poem, '*The Secrets of the Self*', "Showing that the education of the self has three stages: obedience, self-control, and divine vicegerency" (p.72).

Iqbal uses the example of a camel in the desert to illustrate the virtue of obedience coupled with patience. He urges Muslim youth to obey Islamic rulings:

"Service and toil are traits of the camel,
Patience and perseverance are ways of the camel" (p. 72)

Then, Iqbal emphasizes to future Muslim youth the importance of law and encourages them to embrace and obey the Islamic framework as practiced by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Iqbal states:

"Drops of water become a sea by the law of union,
And grains of sand become a Sahara.
Since Law makes everything strong within,
Why dost thou neglect this source of strength?
O thou that art emancipated from the old Custom,
Adorn thy feet once more with the same fine silver chain!
Do not complain of the hardness of the Law,
Do not transgress the statutes of Muhammad"(p.74-75)

Then, the second stage is self-control. For Muhammad Iqbal, obeying the law is not enough. He again uses the example of a camel:

"Thy soul cares only for itself, like the camel
It is self-conceited, self-governed, and self-willed." (p.75)

Once the first and second stages are achieved, then comes the final stage—becoming vicegerent of Allah to build the nation. Iqbal describes how an individual can act as a divine vicegerent:

"If thou canst rule thy camel, thou wilt rule the world
And wear on thine head the crown of Solomon.
Thou wilt be the glory of the world whilst the world lasts,
And thou wilt reign in the kingdom incorruptible.
'Tis sweet to be God's vicegerent in the world
And exercise sway over the elements.
God's vicegerent is as the soul of the universe,
His being is the shadow of the Greatest Name.
He knows the mysteries of part and whole,
He executes the command of Allah in the World"(p. 79-80)

Iqbal's intellectual defense of the Islamic worldview is astounding. He upholds Islamic values and principles in a uniquely profound way through his philosophical works. Iqbal is like a bridge between the orphan boy of Makkah (pbuh) and the future Muslim Ummah. He brilliantly represents Islam by challenging all the ideologies and worldviews of the world. Iqbal is truly revolutionary in that sense. If his philosophy is carefully analyzed, it becomes evident

that his three stages (obedience, self-control, and divine vicegerency) of development for *Khudi*/Self are deeply rooted in the *Tawhidic* worldview.

The beauty of Iqbal's philosophy is that he strives to remain aligned with the core message of Islam, just as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions did. A famous hadith illustrates this,

Rabi'a b. Ka'b said: I was with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) one night and I brought him water and what he required. He said to me: Ask (anything you like). I said: I ask your company in Paradise. He (the Holy Prophet) said: Or anything else besides it? I said: That is all (what I require). He said: Then help me to achieve this for you by devoting yourself often to prostration. (Sahih Muslim: 489)

Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions emphasized Allah's right as the sole Master. In this context, Muhammad Iqbal's first and second stages of self-development discuss the principles of obedience and self-control. Through these two concepts, Iqbal refers to individuals who firmly adhere to Quranic teaching. This represents a remarkable Islamic framework developed by a Muslim philosopher and poet in the early 20th century. It demonstrates that, despite the strong foundations of the scientific worldview, the Islamic worldview also possesses a firm intellectual basis—one that can be challenged, tested, accepted, and implemented for all of humanity (Ali & Hasan, 2022). In this regard, Muhammad Iqbal had the upper hand over both idealist and materialist philosophers.

Iqbal adopted a synthetic approach similar to Kant's, but in a way that surpasses Plato, Kant, and Nietzsche—all of whom ultimately failed in comparison to Muhammad Iqbal's unique perspective. For example, Plato's concept of the world of Forms is comparable to mystic literature but lacks any empirical evidence. Moreover, Plato's ideal state remained a mere theoretical construct. As for Kant, he successfully synthesized Christian ethics with philosophy, yet due to contradictions between the Bible and science, skepticism persisted—especially after Darwin's evolutionary perspective emerged in scientific literature. Then came Nietzsche, who overthrew all ideal and religious morality in the wake of Darwin, proposing his new morality. However, he himself realized that if God is truly dead, his morality ultimately leads to nihilism. It is akin to having planetary systems without the Sun. Iqbal, too, could have abandoned religious morality and devised his own moral framework, detached from organized religion. Had he done so, the result would have been similar to Nietzschean philosophy. Yet, Iqbal did not make this mistake. Instead, he utilized the Islamic moral framework and remained firmly within the Islamic worldview while developing his philosophical framework for future Muslim generations. This is precisely what gives Muhammad Iqbal his unique position as a Muslim philosopher.

Now, the question is very simple: Why is this unique in the first place? Because Muhammad (pbuh) was both spiritually and practically capable of leading the whole of humanity. No philosopher—or even prophet—was as successful as Muhammad (pbuh). Iqbal, too, would have fallen into the category of failed philosophers like Plato, Kant, and Nietzsche had he strayed from the Quranic worldview. Even pragmatist philosophy fails to satisfy humanity because it offers only fake optimism (Waller, 2003), which one eventually comes to

realize. It is like a handsome young man, an artist and a lover, who passionately and desperately tells his beloved, "I love you so much," only to later realize he was lying to himself all along. The proposal's setting and artistic expression may have been perfect, but sincerity was missing. No one may be able to pinpoint the flaw, but the young man does realize his emptiness. Similarly, pessimism remains in a Godless world, regardless of the philosophical framework one formulates. Huxley (2010) made this very point in his philosophical novel *Brave New World*, which explores utopian ideals and their inherent shortcomings. Only the glorious Quran can exclusively and inherently fill this void for all of humanity.

Muhammad Iqbal was the first major philosopher of the Muslim world in the 20th century to recognize the beauty of Quranic teachings as a solution to modern ideologies. He not only appreciated but actively incorporated the Islamic worldview into his philosophical literature. Whether humanity accepts it or not, there remains no alternative to the solution brought forth by the orphan boy of Makkah—Muhammad (pbuh)—for all of humanity. Islam alone holds the ultimate solution. This is the fundamental message that Muhammad Iqbal delivered to the West. As Iqbal said, "It is Islam and exclusively Islam" (Niazi, 1977, p.34).

It is clear that when Muhammad (peace be upon him) stood alone on top of the mountain on behalf of Allah, declaring His oneness, the majority of the people in Makkah rejected Islam. The agenda of Islamization has remained unchanged, but the context has evolved. In Makkah, idols were worshipped instead of Allah. Today, the situation has shifted: the scientific worldview denies the very premise of God's existence. New atheists, such as Dawkins (2008), have attacked all world religions in his controversial book *The God Delusion*. Furthermore, modern scientific literature is deliberately structured in a way that leaves students with no apparent exit route from the scientific worldview.

The Quranic verses mention the universe as a means to encourage understanding, reflection, and remembrance of the mercy and power of Allah (SWT). However, the scientific worldview attempts to negate all gods, including Allah (SWT), from its interpretation of the universe. Allah (SWT) mentions in the Glorious Quran:

Had We sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have certainly seen it humbled and torn apart in awe of Allah. We set forth such comparisons for people, 'so' perhaps they may reflect. He is Allah—there is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him: Knower of the seen and unseen. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. He is Allah—there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher 'of all', the Almighty, the Supreme in Might,¹ the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him 'in worship'! He is Allah: the Creator, the Inventor, the Shaper. He 'alone' has the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth 'constantly' glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise. (Al-Quran 59:21-24)

At this juncture, Muhammad Iqbal's philosophical explanation of negation and affirmation in *Tawhid* can help each individual Muslim to reflect seriously on the message of Muhammad (pbuh). Islam urges Muslims to continuously think and reflect both on themselves and on the universe. A conclusion that denies the existence of Allah is certainly flawed. The

Quran repeatedly reminds us of this simple message. It clearly conveys Allah's message and presents each individual with the choice to accept or reject it. There is no compulsion in the *Deen* of Islam. The truth lies within the Islamic worldview; however, it is up to the individual whether they accept or reject it. Muhammad Iqbal's three stages of *Khudi* (Selfhood/Ego) development offer a path for each individual Muslim. There is no compulsion in following this path, but a Muslim who actively applies these three stages can serve Islam and the *Ummah*, just as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions did in the past. Even in the 21st century, we are free to believe whatever we choose. However, as individual Muslims, we each hold a responsibility toward Allah (SWT). Muhammad Iqbal reminds and urges Muslims to act according to the Quranic worldview.

Moreover, Niazi quotes Iqbal to show how Iqbal's philosophical thought can also help individual Muslims break free from Western colonization. Western imperialism occupied Muslim lands during Iqbal's time. Niazi quotes Iqbal: "Whatever grows in your own field, O free man! Sell that, wear that and eat that" (Niazi, 1977, p. 23). Iqbal's approach to self-reliance was to bring back the glory and teachings of the Quran. Niazi described Iqbal as "a revolutionary thinker of the Third World" (p. 14). He also quoted Iqbal on the Palestine issue: "I know that the fire whose heat the world cannot forgo even today is hidden within thy Self. Thy remedy is available neither in Geneva nor in London; for the life -vein of the West is in the clutches of the Jew. I have learnt that deliverance of nations from slavery is the fruit of the nourishment of their Ego and their cherishing for Self-Expression" (p. 18).

Hence, Iqbal not only critiques modern ideologies, but his philosophy of *Khudi*/Self also empowers individuals to fight against all forms of physical and spiritual enemies of Islam. Having covered the above discussion, the next section will explore Muhammad Iqbal's potential response to the scientific worldview.

Muhammad Iqbal's Potential Response to the Scientific Worldview

In this last section, it is necessary to understand and relate Muhammad Iqbal's potential response to the Scientific Worldview. There is a conflicting, dangerous, and nihilistic message within the scientific worldview in contrast to the Islamic worldview. First, regarding the fossil record in explaining the evolution of species, Bryson makes a remarkable yet pessimistic comment from the scientific worldview. Bryson (2003, p. 322) states:

Fossils are in every sense vanishingly rare. Most of what has lived on Earth has left behind no record at all. It has been estimated that less than one species in ten thousand has made it into fossil record...However, if you accept the common estimate that the Earth has produced 30 billion species of creature in its time...that there are 250,000 species of creature in the fossil record, that reduces the proportion to just one in 120,000. Either way, what we possess is the merest sampling of all the life that Earth has spawned.

According to the scientific worldview, human life and existence in this universe are very insignificant, and probably in a million years' time, humans will go extinct like millions of species that have already gone extinct. Krauss (2017, p. 304) states:

Our primitive ancestors survived in large part because they recognized that nature could be hostile and violent, even as it was remarkable. The progress of science has made it clear just how violent and hostile the universe can be for life. But recognizing this does not make the universe less amazing. Such a universe has ample room for awe, wonder and excitement. If anything, recognition of these facts gives us greater reason to celebrate our origins, and our survival. To argue that, in a universe in which there seems to be no purpose, our existence is itself without meaning or value is unparalleled solipsism, as it suggests that without us the universe is worthless. The greatest gift that science can give us is to allow us to overcome our need to be center of existence even as we learn to appreciate the wonder of the accident we are privileged to witness.

This is the positive existential crisis of all humanity according to the scientific worldview, as emphasized by Krauss.

However, the Quran speaks otherwise. Allah mentions in the Quran:

There is no activity you may be engaged in 'O Prophet' or portion of the Quran you may be reciting, nor any deed you 'all' may be doing except that We are a Witness over you while doing it. Not 'even' an atom's weight is hidden from your Lord on earth or in heaven; nor anything smaller or larger than that but is 'written' in a perfect Record. (The Quran, 10:61)

Islam is very clear about our existence, the meaning of life, divine records, and accountability. Allah is Absolute, and He is aware of everything. No doubt, we humans have a very limited understanding of our universe. The estimated visible matter in our universe is around 5%, while the rest is made up of dark energy and dark matter, as scientists claim. Our universe is vast—far beyond our observable universe. All the combined knowledge that human beings have acquired so far is insignificant in comparison to the vastness of reality. We make mistakes time and again and keep on investigating. That is how we humans progress.

Islam encourages seeking knowledge, as we learn from the Quran and Prophetic teaching, but the worldview that New Atheism tries to propagate through science is fundamentally opposed to the Islamic worldview. In response to this, Muhammad Iqbal affirms only Allah and the Islamic worldview as a means of individual empowerment. There are no gods but Allah. This simple and unique message can tie up all of humanity and bring peace to the world. Niazi (1977, p. 34) quoted:

In reply to professor Nicholson, Iqbal said: "I have looked through social system of all the world, through the principles of all the nations of the world and through the educational systems of the world with an eye of critical appreciation and arrived at the decision that if ever there is a social order which fulfils the needs of *La* and *Illā* both, which meets the demands of the stomach and soul both, it is Islam and exclusively Islam".

The existential crisis that Muslim youth may face due to the influence of the scientific worldview is one that Iqbal addressed through his philosophy. In the 20th century, New

Atheism did not exist, but we can derive a potential response from Iqbal's philosophical thought that encourages adherence to the Islamic worldview.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi*/Ego/Self is a unique approach for both individual and societal development. By focusing on the grassroots level like *Khudi*, Muhammad Iqbal actually aimed at national success and development. If Muslims are weak at the individual level, it is difficult to build a nation and fight against external enemies. Due to the influence of modern ideologies, Quranic texts are being misinterpreted. LGBTQ+, feminist, and other reinterpretations of the Quran are becoming prominent within Muslim societies. In this regard, Iqbal criticized the historical philosophical influences on Quranic interpretation.

Iqbal highlighted how Plato's thought corrupted Islamic teachings, and he therefore urged the Muslim Ummah to return to the Quranic understanding and interpretation practiced by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions within the Islamic state. In other words, it is inevitable that various types of interpretations will arise due to the influence of new knowledge in each century; however, not all interpretations align with the real objective of Quranic teaching. For instance, the *Tawhidic* worldview is affirmed in the Quran, and the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions revolved around it. However, in contemporary times, we observe feminist interpretations of the Quran that aim to serve the purpose and interest of women. Similarly, LGBTQ+ advocates also use Quranic interpretation to justify their stance. Muhammad Iqbal's critique of the Platonic influence on Islamic mysticism and literature demonstrates how he possessed an advanced philosophical understanding of the Quranic message. His approach to *Khudi*/Self shows how Muhammad Iqbal was both critical and practical in eliminating impractical jargon to uphold the authentic Islamic teaching that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught to his companions.

By examining Muhammad Iqbal's philosophical thought on modern science, this research addresses the scientific worldview. This research finds that Muhammad Iqbal suggests that the Quranic worldview is the only solution for all of humanity in response to both present and future ideologies and worldviews that may affect Muslim and non-Muslim societies alike.

This research concludes with the following recommendations:

1. The Muslim education model must be reformed based on an Islamic epistemological framework.
2. Instead of blind adherence, Muslim youth should be empowered with critical thinking skills.
3. A culture of debate should be cultivated in Muslim academia.
4. Freedom of expression should be prioritized within educational institutions in Muslim countries.
5. Governments of Muslim countries should advocate an integrative framework for higher educational institutions.

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