

## Imagination and intuition in the poetic philosophies of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Muhammad Iqbal

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### INTRODUCTION

The Latin term for “inspiration”, *inspirare*, means “to breathe into”. To the Greeks, an inspired poet would go into ecstasy (*furor poeticus*) wherein he or she would assume the thoughts of the gods and goddesses that were literally breathed into his or her body. This notion of poetic inspiration became popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century poetry of the Romantics, principally because of the influence that Platonism had on the Christian theology that was subscribed to by both Oxford and Cambridge universities. In the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, it came to be combined with the Spinozian notion of pantheistic nature and German idealism’s reliance on subjectivity as a source of knowledge. This resulted in English Romanticism’s deification of both the creative imaginary powers of the poet as well as of Nature. In the Islamic tradition, the Sufistic vision of reality that envisages intuition as a “unity of existence” between the Creator and Creation (*wahdat al-wujud*) provides proof of the similar pervasive influence that Neoplatonism has had on Muslim philosophers and poets. Yet in the poems of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Pakistani poet Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) a new conception of artistic inspiration was forwarded.<sup>1</sup> The objective of this article is to explore the ways in which Muhammad Iqbal in his poems challenges the emphasis given by the Neoplatonic tradition to imagination as a source of poetic inspiration by turning to the powers of a guided form of intuition: the intuition of existence. *Intuition of Existence* (1990), the work of contemporary Malaysian-Muslim philosopher Muhammad Naquib al-‘Attas (1931–), which is informed by the earlier school of Islamic theology of Al-Junayd, is used in this paper to read Iqbal’s poetry in order to elaborate on his notion of “Allāh”, the name of “God” in Arabic, as a separate entity to the individual self as well as his idea that intimacy with the Divine could be established through experiencing this form of intuition.

### THE BIRTH OF THE ISLAMIC ROMANTIC

Readers could catch a glimpse of Iqbal’s fascination with the Romantics from a reference to a personal crisis the great Islamic philosopher Muhammad Iqbal experienced in Europe. An entry in his journal (which would later be published as *Stray Reflections*, 1961) while he was studying in Europe has a direct mention of the famous English Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850). It mentions the latter spe-

cifically as having saved him “from atheism in [his] student days” (Iqbal 2001, 36).

A tendency towards Romanticism was inborn in Iqbal as much as his early education had set the stage for its development. Exposure to Persian poets such as Sa‘di, Hāfiz and ‘Attar, whose poems had the Romantic strain and, later, a college education, had exposed Iqbal to the famous English Romantic poets, and his study of English literature made him an admirer of English Romanticism. From 1901 to 1902, Iqbal was to teach English literature along with philosophy and economics at Oriental College and Islamia College in Lahore. From 1902 to 1904, he worked as an assistant professor of English at the Government College, Lahore, and it was here that he showed in his teaching a remarkable passion for English literature and his affinity with its Romantic poets. Likewise, the poems he wrote during this period bore the strong imprint of Romanticism. Notable amongst these are “The Himalayas”, “The Cloud on the Mountain”, “The Aspiration”, “Man in the Company of Nature” and other poems (Malik 1988, 4). These poems attest to the importance of Nature for both the English Romantics and Iqbal. As the rest of this paper shows, however, Nature soon assumes a lesser significance to the more important role that imagination would play in depicting the intensity of Iqbal’s yearning to have intuitive knowledge of – and establish intimacy with – God, which is prevalent in his later poems.

#### THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN THE POETIC PHILOSOPHIES OF COLERIDGE AND IQBAL

While Wordsworth headed English Romanticism, it is to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) that all discussions on imagination must be directed as he was its major philosopher. According to Coleridge, imagination can be divided into two components: primary imagination and secondary imagination. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817) he writes:

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite of the eternal act of creation of the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. (304)

Distinguished from these two is the one that Coleridge considered to be the lowest and most common form of all:

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definitives. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space, and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word choice. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials made from the law of association. (304)

Clearly, the primary imagination that Coleridge’s writes about harks back to the Neoplatonic notion that the poet, as Creature-Creator, experiences moments of theophanic vision in which he or she sees the essence of God or “I am” reflected in His

creations. The fact that the poet is himself or herself created out of His essence, allows for his or her mind to act as a mirror that reflects God's presence in nature.<sup>2</sup> The idea that the creative poet takes on the almost divine role of God in His act of creativity is, however, not new and was well-circulated in preceding centuries, dating as far back as Julius Caesar Scaliger, who in his *Poetics* (1561) calls the poet *alter deus*.

The influence that Neoplatonism had on Coleridge came through his beliefs in Christian theology and therefore existed together with his religious conviction. As Hedley comments, it was common for universities in England to accept Platonic influence on their religion (2000, 6). That Coleridge found no need to rationalize such theories is reflected in the comments that he makes against the Rationalist.

I more than fear the prevailing taste for books of Natural Theology, Physio-Theology, Demonstrations of God from Nature, Evidences of Christianity, and the like. Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it; rouse him if you can, to the self-knowledge of the need of it; and you may safely trust to its own Evidence. (405–406)

Yet Coleridge was generally aware that the non-rational nature of this poetic vision was deemed liable to expose the poet to accusations of madness. Hence, he situates reason as having the same powers accorded to active imagination and maintained that it is the absence of imagination that makes a poet liable to fits of fancies and not its presence. As Burwick argues, Coleridge was particularly concerned for all connections between poetic powers and enthusiasm, fanaticism, as well as impassioned excess, to be severed. He argued that it was the relative deficiency of “imaginative power [that] will render the mind liable to superstition and fanaticism” and not the excess of it (Burwick 1996, 36). Hence, poetic inspiration was viewed by Coleridge as chiefly coming from the internal source of the subjective mind of the poet rather than from an external source.

Rather than affirming the subjective powers of the poet, Coleridge, however, appears to desire a balance between the powers of imaginative reason and divine agency. The importance that German idealism and its emphasis on subjectivity as the individual's source of meaning-making had on Coleridge, Burwick points out, was reconciled in his philosophy with the notion of revelation and prophecy in Christianity (38). In a letter, he wrote that he could never accept a mind that was “always passive – a lazy Looker-on on an external world” (Coleridge to Mr. T. Poole, 26 March 1801). Hence, the poet also takes on an active role as he “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create” his primary imagination in the form of a poem.

Since the mind does not passively repeat external sensations, it also follows that Nature must also embody divine essence in order to produce the desired inspiration. “On Poesy and Art,” he states, “If the artist copies the mere nature, the *natura naturata*, what idle rivalry! (...) Believe me, you must muster the essence, the *natura naturans*, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man” (Coleridge 1907, 257). Inspiration, hence, is as much guided by its divine essence as the primary imagination that uncovers the inherent truth in the illusory vision of Nature. The individual artist, hence, came to be regarded as a participant in the absolute creativity of the “Infinite I AM”. This, as Burwick points out,

was regarded as a counter-argument to sceptics who wanted a rational and empirical basis for everything (1996, 41–42).

### IMAGINATION AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

A discourse on imagination by early Muslim philosophers offers an interesting contrast to those of the English Romantics. Many of them were clearly influenced by another and much older Western civilization: the Ancient Greeks. Consequently, the location of imagination in their works, notably in writings, particularly by al-Fārābī (872–950)<sup>3</sup> and questionably by Ibn Sina or Avicenna (c. 980–1037)<sup>4</sup>, corresponds to Aristotle’s concept of imagination, which sees it as aiding man’s reason yet independent from the five “external” senses (Aristotle 1994, 431).

The most famous Muslim philosopher associated with imagination, however, has to be Muhyī al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muhammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Hātīmī al-Tāī Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240). Like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sina, he also believed that imagination comes from sense perception, which is linked to images that the mind perceives (Ibn al-‘Arabī 1989, 122). In these images of God’s creations, one finds God revealing Himself by reconfiguring Himself through his Primordial Imagination and allowing human beings to view Himself through his or her Active Imagination:

The Creation is essentially the revelation of the Divine Being, first to himself, a luminescence occurring within Him; it is a theophany (*tajalli ilahi*) (...) The Creation is able to manifest itself as God’s essence because God has enabled it to do so through his Primordial Imagination... Human beings, on their part, are given the same powers of imagination, which is not the same as fantasy, that is called Active Imagination (*quwwat al-khayal*). (Corbin 1969, 185–187)

Because there is a recurrent process of creation in this world, there is an unceasing experience of theophanic imagination, that is, the notion of a succession of theophanies (*tajalliyat*). This imagination depends on the notion of continuous “veiling” and “unveiling” of God as the Creator-Creation (185–187). Regarding this matter, Corbin elaborates on Ibn al-‘Arabī’s notion of the imaginal nature of God:

The Creature-Creator, the Creator who does not produce His Creation outside of Him, but in a manner of speaking clothes Himself in its Appearance (and transparency) beneath which He manifests and reveals Himself, is referred to [by Ibn al-‘Arabī] by several other names, such as the “imagined God” that is, the God “manifested” by the Theophanic Imagination, (*al Haqq almutakhayyal*), the God “created in the faiths” (*al Haqq al-makhlāq fi-il itiqadat*). (187)

Ibn al-‘Arabī also believes that it is the theophanic imagination of the Creator that will be continuously renewed in the Creation at various times as the person is chosen to be His Perfect Image, and as a result of this inherently reflects the Creator (188). As for fictitious imagination, the closest Ibn al-‘Arabī ever arrives at it is when he says he regards it as “illusionary”, when it loses its transparency or ability to reveal the Creature-Creator (188). As a result, fictitious or misleading imagination is never really elaborated by Ibn al-‘Arabī, as the line that divides imagination from truth and reality continued to be a tenuous one for him.

Iqbal's interest in Persian philosophy, as attested by the topic of his PhD thesis, "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia: A Contribution to the History of Philosophy", meant that Iqbal was familiar with the works of these early Muslim philosophers, as Persian philosophers were very much informed by them (2001, 20). His opinions on the early Muslim philosophers, however, generally showed that he was unimpressed by their ideas, noting that they had borrowed piecemeal from translations of the works of the philosophers, notably Aristotle and Neoplatonism, and in many cases without having any knowledge of Greek (22). Yet his poetry and writings reflect much of the concern that those Muslim philosophers had on a number of metaphysical issues, including imagination. Regarding Ibn al-'Arabi's Active Imagination, he supports the idea that it could be used to experience a theophanic vision of Allāh. Yet he also regarded it as an important source of knowledge, as he mentions in "What Should be Done, O Nations of the East!":

People of the world lack reason and  
 imagination:  
 They are weavers of mat and know nothing  
 about satin.  
 What a beautiful verse a Persian poet has  
 sung,  
 Which sets the soul afire:  
 "To the ears of the people of the world, the  
 Wailing of the lover  
 is like the cry of the azan in the land of the  
 Franks."  
 (Iqbal 2014 [1936], 340)

For Iqbal, imagination is neither a mechanical process of organizing sense perception, as suggested by the early Muslim philosophers, nor a theophanic vision of the divine presence in creations. Instead, he was prone to discussing imagination in relation to the common man, rather than the Muslim prophet Muhammad (c. 570–632) who personifies, according to Ibn al-'Arabi, the "Perfect Man", or even mysticism, although he expresses deep respect for both in his poetry. Iqbal acknowledges that sometimes the ability to imagine appears like a burden because, as in Romanticism, it can result in encounters with seemingly unsolvable mysteries and unattainable desires. As he mentions in "The Unfaithful Lover", "Why then do I keep such a boundless imagination? / I am constantly struggling in the Longing's wilderness / I am the ocean's wave, I carry my destruction on my shoulder" (Iqbal 2014 [1924], 340). Nonetheless, he recognizes the inescapability of its presence from the Self, which he views as a creation, divinely gifted with creativity.

Instead of allowing himself to be immersed in his imagination, however, Iqbal transforms it to include the crucial role that intuitive knowledge has in this process of comprehending reality. For Iqbal, though he was highly influenced by the Romantics, always thought of truthful knowledge as "sense-perception elaborated by understanding" (2001 [1930], 12), with the latter inclusive of not only reason but all non-perceptual modes of knowledge, such as intuition.

At this point we can find various readings of Iqbal's concept of knowledge from

among his critics that are contradictory and which could lead to confusion. Hassan Riffat, for example, in “The Meaning and Role of Intuition in Iqbal’s Philosophy” (1984) argues that Iqbal saw that reality could be established in two ways, either by observation and sense perception or through direct association with this reality as it reveals itself to the internal self of the person, or intuition. This view is contradicted by Sayyid Muhammad al-Naqib al-‘Attas, who, in “Some Reflections on the Philosophical Aspect of Iqbal’s Thought” (1977), argues that there is no fundamental difference between reason and intuition in Iqbal’s philosophy and that his conceptualization of them locates them along the same hierarchy of knowledge, with one a step higher than the other. As he says, Islam uses only one term “‘aql” to denote both reason and intuition in the sense used by Iqbal. It seems that Al-‘Attas’s view is more plausible given the fact that it is fully supported by Iqbal himself, as he writes in his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam* (1930):

Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. *They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness.* The one fixes its gaze on the eternal, the other on the temporal aspect of Reality. The one is present enjoyment of the whole of Reality; the other aims at traversing the whole by slowly specifying and closing up the various regions of the whole for exclusive observation. Both are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. Both seek visions of the same Reality which reveals itself to them in accordance with their function in life. (2–3; italics added by A. M. R.)

This certainty of religious conviction, through both intellect and intuition, is conveyed by Iqbal in his poems with a disciplined application of imageries.

Through gaining intuitive knowledge of Allāh and, correspondingly, himself as the predetermined aims of his poetry, Iqbal’s use of imagination is notably more limited than those of the Romantics on two counts. First, imagination is not treated in Iqbal’s writing as something that strictly represents the poet’s external senses or his or her fanciful notions but is shaped by intertextual references or sets of metaphors. They represent ideas in Iqbal’s philosophy on man’s relationship to his Self, other men or God. Second, for Iqbal, the relations between these are meant to signal, for the most part, a human being’s effort to comprehend his or her existence and that of God. Yet in some of Iqbal’s earlier poems, readers sense that this leaves Iqbal’s narrator nowhere closer to comprehending these. This is when intuition becomes important as it assumes the highest level of knowledge in contrast with those assumed by intellect and imagination. This second aspect will be elaborated later in this paper.

As mentioned above, the imagery in Iqbal’s poetry is not strictly based on sense perception alone but originates from intertextual references. His poems contained modified sets of imagery that could be found in both traditional Persian and Romantic poetries. In making such allusions, Iqbal’s use of imagery in his poems is closer to the term “fancy”, as elaborated by Coleridge, which only requires a reconfiguration of existing ideas and images by putting them in fresh relationships to each other. Many of his poems, for example, make references to the Saki pouring wine into the inn guests’ glasses, a traditional motif in Persian poetry. Some other images, however, bear some resemblance to those employed by the Romantics. For example, tulips,

roses and the eagle in Iqbal's poems mirrored the daffodils and the albatross of the Romantics. These elements of Nature in Iqbal's poems, however, are not merely transformed to highlight their extraordinary aspects for the sake of imagination alone but are also known to symbolize certain religious concepts that can be used to describe the relationship of the Self to its Creator.

### INTUITION: YEARNING AND LOVE

Originating from the Latin word *intueri*, often translated as “to look inside” or “to contemplate”, the word “intuition” is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as “the ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning”. The contemporary emphasis on empirical observations and replicable scientific testing has resulted in such experiences being thought of as unjustifiable and generally considered to be emanations from the unconscious. Yet the notion that intuition could be studied empirically was so strong that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Coleridge himself felt the need for the poet to be someone who uses his or her reason to bring certainty to his or her primary imagination. It, however, had not always assumed these meanings since, in the works of René Descartes (1596–1650) and John Locke (1632–1704) it is used to signify the apprehension of indubitable, self-evident truths. Descartes explains how intuition is “not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, nor the misleading judgment that proceeds from the blundering constructions of imagination, but the pure intellectual cognizing so ready and so distinct that we are wholly freed from doubt about that which we thus intellectually apprehend” (1942, 297).

Intuition from the Islamic perspective takes on a slightly different meaning as it has a strong connection to both intellect and revelations from Allāh, especially regarding the existence of both Himself and His creations. This link appears within the context of the undisputable knowledge brought about by revelations from Allāh. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The intellect is seen only in light of its ability to elucidate the verities of revelation. It is revelation that is the basic means of the attainment of the truth, and it is also revelation that illuminates the intellect and enables it to function properly” (2006, 95–96). Seen from this perspective, Nasr's analysis on intellect or rather “intuition” is, however, too narrow because of its focus on prophetic revelation. His reading is also far too simplified in order to allow for a better understanding of the process of intuition itself as viewed by Muslim philosophers. Only by replacing the Western epistemology on intuition with an Islamic one would the process be better elaborated. The works of the contemporary philosopher Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1931–) is so far the most commendable on this subject, both for offering an alternative discourse to the Western understanding of Islamic philosophy and also for elaborations of what was previously thought of as incommunicable by many Muslim theologians and philosophers themselves.

Informed by the school of al-Junayd, al-Attas' *The Intuition of Existence* (1990) provides the most comprehensive theoretical framework needed to explain the process of intuition, especially regarding divine existence. In this work, he mentions a concept of intuition that is a synthesis from the works of many prominent

theologians within the school of al-Junayd, most prominently Ibn al-‘Arabi, who was the first to formulate an integrated metaphysics of intuition of existence, though he used the term Active Imagination as elaborated in the abovementioned discussion on imagination as he perceives it, and Sadr ad-Dīn Muhammad Shīrāzī, or Mulla Sadrā (c. 1571/2–1640), who was the first to express the philosophy for the transcendent unity of existence.<sup>5</sup> The importance of al-‘Attas’s work for this study lies in the fact that it elucidates clearly what Iqbal was trying to convey in his poetry, including asserting the importance of intuition in a person’s worldview. He also exposes along the way many misleading understandings of Iqbal’s concept of intuition.

Intuition of existence, according to al-‘Attas, is a process that engages man at both his physical and spiritual levels. It begins with man who comprehends that this world is composed of many separate diverse and variegated forms that appear to possess their own individual reality or essence. For the intellectual and religious man by the gift of Allāh, according to al-‘Attas, this experience of separateness could be transcended as well as returned to later, during which time the world is inevitably viewed as different before the experience. During this period of transcending the phenomenal world, the subject’s subjective consciousness has “passed away” or experienced *fanā*. Yet as al-‘Attas mentions, this

does not necessarily entail – at least in the initial stage– the annulment of awareness in the subject of the distinction between his self as the seer and the object as the seen; the subject here is still aware of his self in being able to distinguish the seeing subject and the object seen (...) Were it not for the subject’s continued awareness of his self at this stage of *fanā*, then such experiences would not result in the attainment of certain knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) of the true nature of things as he reflects and contemplates upon it later. (1990, 10–11)

At this stage of passing away (*fanā*), the passing away of the forms will then be followed by a “gathering together” or (*jam*) of the same forms. At the same time, Allāh also reveals an aspect of himself<sup>6</sup> (*tajalli*) through one of his names (*asmā*) or attributes (*sifāt*) during this period of unveiling (*kashf*) (11). If this experience of *fanā* ceases as a result of man’s inability to withstand it, he will regain his phenomenal consciousness (12). His reflections of what he has undergone, without any guidance from Allāh, will convince him that the world is sheer illusion (13). Yet those who are guided by Allāh will become aware of their incomplete vision of Reality and Truth, which they had witnessed during the state of “unveiling” (*kashf*). This will lead them to witness the “oneness aspect of reality (...), in harmony with the reality of their experience with Unity, (...) [which will lead them to] confirm the truth of religion as brought by the Holy Prophet (...) and acknowledge in themselves the religious distinction between ‘Lord’ (*Ar-rabb*) and ‘servant’ (*‘abd*) (...) and act in accordance with the requirements” (13–14). In addition, they will also realize their highly agitating state of “poverty” (*faqr*) or a condition of being in “utter want” because in their state of *fanā* they had witnessed the complete annulment of all phenomena that leaves only the aspect of God in existence. This leaves them with a feeling of utter dependence on God for their existence and consciousness of Allāh (14–15).

Many of Iqbal’s poems suggest that this was the version of intuition which he had in mind as he wrote them.<sup>7</sup> The main and pervading message of Iqbal’s poems seems

to be the narrator's agitating quest to gain knowledge and closeness to Allāh. While attempts at seeing an "unveiled" Allāh in his early poetry prove futile, as the above lines from "Solitude" suggest, only towards the later collections of poetry does Iqbal describe intuitive experiences with Allāh. These momentary moments of intimacy are described most aptly as dew in a poem titled "The Unfaithful Lover": "Cup-bearer's bounty is like dew, heart's capacity demands oceans, I am always thirsty" (Iqbal 2014 [1924], 166). Like the person who has experienced intuitive closeness to Allāh, Iqbal's narrator has had a momentary viewing of an "unveiled" Creator (*tajalli*) who, in turn, has revealed one of His attributes. As Iqbal describes this experience, "Coming by the path of seeing / Thou didst pass into my mind / But so sudden was Thy passing / In that hour my eyes were blind" (1948 [1927], 48). This intuitive insight, is, however, too momentary and too little to fully satisfy a poet in agitation – "A brief epiphany / Consoleth not the passionate eye" (30) – because of his utter dependence on Allāh. Hence, it is back to these moments of temporary closeness that the narrator returns to frequently in his poems. Lines from one poem illustrate Iqbal's narrator's intuitive experience:

Mind, that is ever questing,  
 And finding, without resting,  
 Fired by the joy of viewing  
 Was vision still pursuing.  
 Seek thou pure revelation  
 Past sun and moon's low station,  
 For all things here reported  
 By vision are distorted.  
 (59–60)

Lacking trust in his own perception of this world as the foundation of knowledge, Iqbal's narrator continues to relate his constant yearning for an almost unattainable desire for certainty that can only be obtained in rare moments of intuition. Here, it can be said that the narrator resembles the figure of the Romantic hero, whose character assumes heroic proportions because of his ever-present yearning and longing for, in this case, the almost unattainable.

While the Romantic sense of longing takes its victim to the realm of imagination, Iqbal's narrator never considers his as requiring a disavowal of worldly life. Even in its momentary attainment, his narrator is constantly aware of his earthly existence and separation from his Creator.<sup>8</sup> Hence, intuition in Iqbal's vision is clearly devoid of the Sufistic vision of reality that envisages intuition as a mystical immersion of the Creation with the Creator (*wahdat al-wujud*) in a condition of pure ecstasy. Resembling the description of intuition in al-'Attas's writing, the narrator of Iqbal's poem, on the other hand, insists that he remains separate from his Creator. Accordingly, *Ar-rabb*, as he sees Allāh, reveals Himself to him through His many attributes. From the words of this *Ar-rabb*, man, Iqbal argues, recognizes his complete dependence on Him. It is a condition he describes as *faqr* because of his lowly state that constantly emphasizes his dependence on the *Ar-rabb*, as the words of Iqbal's narrator describes his encounter with him, "Desolate with Joy am I / That recognizing me / In reproach. He

whispered sly / “Poor, homeless, vagrant, see!” (59). Even though he is in a position of submission to the Almighty, Iqbal’s narrator sees his involvement in life and his partaking of responsibilities in this world as part and parcel of his subjection to Him. Iqbal, according to L. S. May, “does not negate life and its values, which the mystics generally do; he affirms them and gives them positive meaning (...) Idealism, by its very nature, contains a mystical essence; but in Iqbal’s system, it is interwoven with a more realistic approach to life” (1987, 17). “Complaints”, “Answers to complaints” and “What should be Done, O Nations of the East” are among his many poems that attest to his involvement with matters involving worldly life. Correspondingly, the Romantic view of an unbridgeable gap between the imaginative Self and the world does not exist for the poet. The question then remains, “What, then, is the function of the poet’s constant and unfulfilled desire to seek intuitive closeness and knowledge to Iqbal if he could find all the answers in this earthly world?”

The answer to such a question seems to rest within the idealism that divine love represents for the poet. This love is born out of man’s separation from Allāh. Having witnessed the partial unveiling of Allāh and later separated from His sight during his intuitive moments, the poet’s heart emanates with love and, hence, is filled with a strong desire for more sights of the Beloved. Love then becomes the ultimate culmination of Iqbal’s search for the knowledge of Reality, in general, and Allāh, in particular. Needless to say, the role of love in discussions on intuition in Iqbal’s poems is understudied and sometimes rejected all together. Muhammad Suhely Umar, in his paper “Significance of Iqbal’s Wisdom Poetry” (2002), offers a discussion on intuition that erases its emotive as well as divine aspects, reducing it to the level of Aristotelian logical arrangements of representational images that the early Muslim philosophers mentioned above had popularized. As Muhammad Suhely argues:

Contemplative or higher poetry is the response of the Intellect, i.e. born of intellection. The reason Iqbal’s poetry has to be considered as contemplative or higher poetry is, precisely, that the response is born out of his intellect. His life is, as if, in the realm of intelligible and his faculties entertain their imprint, the ideas, in the way ordinary people receive the effects and impressions of events and sense data. (129)

Such a reading of Iqbal’s poetry, however, is clearly dismissive of the many instances in his poetry wherein he places divine love above everything else, including intellect. It is also inevitably linked to lines that relate the importance of seeking intuitive knowledge of the Creator in man’s life. As readers read:

The custom of Love is abandonment of all  
 Abandon temple, mosque, and church also  
 This is not business, this is ‘*ibadat* of God!  
 O ignorant one, abandon the longing for  
 reward also  
 It is good to guard Intuition with Intellect  
 But sometimes you should let it go alone also  
 What life is that which is dependent on  
 others?  
 (Iqbal 2014 [1924], 160–61)

The key towards understanding Iqbal's version of intuition, hence, is the primary importance that he accords to love for one's Creator. Jamila Khatoon, in *The Place of God, Man and Universe in The Philosophic System of Iqbal* (1963) provides an exposition of Iqbal's philosophy on this matter, mentioning amongst others that, "[i]ntuition, heart or love gives the direct perspective of the Ultimate Divine Reality, and reveals in its fullness, and completeness" (37). Yet she offers a precautionary advice for those who expect that this would lead to a direct vision of Allāh. "It can serve as a light and a guide in this temporal existence, but it cannot lead to a vision of the Ultimate Supra-sensible and Ultra-rational Spiritual-Reality which stands above the differentiations and distinctions, all plurality and multiplicity" (37). Here Khatoon seems to have overlooked the fact that Iqbal's poems themselves are littered with references to intuitive viewings and meetings with Allāh. These, however, comes in the form of man's creative use of imageries, especially those from Nature, to connect himself and understand his relationship to Allāh. Nature, however, cannot be regarded as providing a direct vision of Allāh. It only acts as manifestations of His divine and expandable creativity; as Iqbal argues, "The knowledge of Nature is the knowledge of God's behaviour. In our observation of Nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship" (1930, 57). Intuition, hence, should originate from a desire to use Nature imagery to articulate a person's desire for intimacy with Allāh. Yet a person's intuitive knowledge alone should not be the final result of this certainty of the Absolute Ego. In fact it is divine love that is the final goal of intuition, as Iqbal mentions, "I have no tale to tell except the tale of love; / I do not care if men approve or disapprove / Of learning's light I do not have the slightest need; / And all I have to do is burn and melt and bleed" (2014 [1923], 93). The narrator's emotional investment in his intuitive experiences in Iqbal's poems, however, should not be regarded as a significant criterion in our aesthetic judgment of his works. Rather, as Muhammad Kamal Hassan mentions, it should be viewed within the context of the narrator's complete submission as an *'abd* or slave to Allāh, his *Ar-rabb*. "The concept of beauty should not be judged based on whether it compliments one's emotions or aesthetic sensibilities, which is subjective, that is personal to the individual. The beauty of form and content should only result from submission, with an objective that is satisfactory to Allāh" (Muhammad Kamal 1982, 23; translation by A. M. R.).

## CONCLUSION

Imagination and intuition were both important sources of inspiration for the English Romantics and the Pakistani poet Iqbal respectively. While the Neoplatonism strand in Christian theology along with Spinozan pantheism played a major role in shaping Coleridge's poetic philosophy as imagination, a form of intuition, the intuition of existence, as explicated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and informed by the Islamic school of al-Junayd, could be used to understand Iqbal's notion of poetic inspiration. Though Iqbal challenges the emphasis given by the Neoplatonic tradition to imagination, there is an unmistakable emphasis in both poetic philosophies on the source of inspiration as experiencing moments of theophanic visions in which

God manifests Himself to the poet in a state of trance. In the end, what the two poets demonstrated is the place of the Divine in the poetic philosophies of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in two seemingly different cultures and civilizations: the East and the West.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Despite the obvious impact that English Romanticism has had on Muhammad Iqbal, there are remarkably very few in-depth studies that have attempted a comparative analysis of their respective philosophies (Vahid 1971, 348–351; Rastogi 1987, 205–214; Ghulam Rasool Malik 1988).
- <sup>2</sup> John Beers believes that the popularity that Neoplatonism enjoyed during Coleridge's schooldays primarily owed to the writings of Thomas Taylor, namely a small volume of his work which Taylor published in 1787, entitled *Concerning the Beautiful* (Beers 1977, xiii). For more information, see John Beers (1977) *Poetic Intelligence*, London: Macmillan.
- <sup>3</sup> For his discussion on imagination see, Al-Fārābī's *Al-Alfaz al-musta'mala f'il-mantiq [Terms Used in Logic]*. Ed. Muhsin Mahdi, Beirut, Dar-al-Machriq, 1968.
- <sup>4</sup> Kemal argues that Ibn Sina developed his own notion of imagination since Ibn Rushd criticized him for misappropriating the Greek concept (2003, 84).
- <sup>5</sup> For Mulla Sadra's most famous work on this, see *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a [The Transcendent Theosophy in the Four Journeys of the Intellect]* 9 vols. Ed. R. Lutfi et al., Tehran and Qum: Shirkat Dar al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyyah, 1958–1969.
- <sup>6</sup> All Arabic nouns carry grammatical gender whether they refer to animate or inanimate objects. In the Qur'an, the narrative refers to Allāh by using masculine pronouns, even though Muslims are required to believe that Allāh is neither male nor female.
- <sup>7</sup> Iqbal believes in the role that man's cognitive element could play in conveying mystical feelings. For more information, see Iqbal 1930, 31.
- <sup>8</sup> Iqbal contrast the different treatments that Platonism and Islam give to sense perception in Iqbal 1930, 3–4.

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## **Imagination and intuition in the poetic philosophies of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Muhammad Iqbal**

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Romanticism. Coleridge. Iqbal. Imagination. Intuition.

The stress that English Romanticism laid upon a poet's imaginative capacity as a source of poetic inspiration finds its clearest expression in the writings of its philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834). Unlike many of his English contemporaries, he developed a philosophy of poetic inspiration that conceptualized the notion of imagination within the context of a Christian theology that was informed by both Neoplatonism and German idealism. As a student and later lecturer of English literature, the Muslim poet Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) had been exposed to both English Romanticism and German idealism. Though he recognized the importance of imagination as a source of artistic creativity, Iqbal emphasized intuition as a higher form of poetic inspiration. By adopting as well as adapting certain aspects of English Romanticism and then merging it together with Islamic theology in his poetry, Iqbal argues for the importance of a special type of intuition, the "intuition of existence", as a form of poetic inspiration. This paper, hence, is a comparative study of English Romanticism's emphasis on imagination and Iqbal's notion of intuition, in order to discuss the important roles that both Christian and Islamic theologies played in both poets' poetic philosophies respectively.

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