

## EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN MUHAMMAD IQBAL'S THOUGHT<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The hegemony of rational-positivistic paradigm of modern Western epistemology contributes greatly to the development of modern thought. Iqbal is one who believes that Muslim thinkers were unable to see Islam from Quran point of view because they perceive it from the eye of rational-speculative Greek philosophy. In the postcolonial perspective, Iqbal's attempt to decolonize Western rational-speculative epistemology from Plato to Descartes found him in ambivalence. British colonialism experienced by Iqbal in India formed the hybrid culture in his project of reconstructing Islamic thought in relation to Western thought. Therefore, Iqbal's attempt to bridge the gap between rational-speculative of Western thought and mystic-religious tendencies of Islamic thought is a process of seeking "the Third Space" through mimicry as consequence of cultural interaction between the colonizer and the colonized.

**Keywords:** *decolonization of epistemology, hybrid culture, Islamic epistemology, the Third Space.*

### ABSTRAK

Hegemoni paradigma epistemologi Barat modern yang rasional positivistik berkontribusi besar terhadap perkembangan pemikiran modern. Iqbal adalah satu yang percaya bahwa selama beberapa abad lamanya pemikir Muslim tidak mampu berfikir secara Qurani akibat cara pandang mereka yang melihat Islam dari kacamata filsafat Yunani yang cenderung hanya bersifat rasional-spekulatif. Dalam perspektif pasca kolonial (*postcolonial*), usaha Iqbal untuk mendekolonisasi epistemologi rasional-spekulatif Barat sejak Plato hingga Descartes, menghadapi sikap yang ambivalen. Pengalaman penjajahan Inggris di India yang pernah dialami Iqbal membentuk kultur hibrida dalam proyeknya merekonstruksi pemikiran Islam dalam kaitannya dengan pemikiran Barat. Dengan demikian, Iqbal mencoba menjembatani jurang antara pemikiran rasional-spekulatif Barat dengan kecenderungan mistik-religius pemikiran Islam sebagai upaya mencari "Ruang Ketiga" melalui mimikri sebagai konsekuensi dari interaksi budaya antara penjajah dan terjajah.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *dekolonisasi epistemologi, budaya hibrida, epistemologi Islam, Ruang Ketiga*

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## Introduction

The modern age prides itself on its progress in knowledge and its matchless scientific development. No doubt, the pride is justified.... But in spite of all these developments, the tyranny of imperialism struts abroad, covering its face in the masks of (capitalist) democracy, (territorial) nationalism, communism, fascism and heaven knows what else besides. ... They will never be able to lead happy and contented lives, and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialize (Sir Mohammad Iqbal).

British colonialism in India could not be ignored if one wants to interpret Iqbal's thought. That is why postcolonial studies are relevant as a method which is concerned with the deconstruction of ideological motives brought by colonial during and after colonialism. The ideology penetrated through colonial systems as experienced by people of India. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2003, 177) writes:

For the Indians, after a negotiated Independence, in 1947, Western European codes and English Common Law offered models of origin. The constitution of the secular state of India was launched under the auspices of Lord Mountbatten, although the voice of Islam and a semitized Hinduism as alternatives to the European Enlightenment were still heard.

Then, India emerged intellectual movements done by Rammohun Roy, Kumar Sarkar, and Mukerji (Alatas 2010, 8) as counter-culture against the hegemony of Eurocentrism developed by British colonial. Meanwhile, in Muslim community of India, Iqbal was also involved in the intellectual, arts (literature) as well as religious movements. Considering his strategic role in India, later Iqbal is considered as the spiritual father of Pakistan (Schimmel 1985, 239), a separated country from India and was formed after his death. In the context of Asian Renaissance, Iqbal's thought, especially his concept of *khūdī* (ego) and *'isyq* (love), is

relevant to awaken the consciousness of Asian Muslim as proposed by Anwar Ibrahim (Hadi W.M. 2000, 126–141).

Iqbal's thought is also chosen because his thought opens the dynamic reading of Islamic thought in the modern spirit. Majid Fakhry is correct when he said that Iqbal has created a more impressive and conscientious effort than any other twentieth-century thinkers to offer the rethinking of Islamic problems in modern perspectives (Fakhry 1983, 354). The same way with Fakhry, Fazlur Rahman (2000, 86) categorizes Iqbal as an Islamic thinker who was really serious about studying philosophical thought. The following quotation from Ali Syari'ati is adequate to consider why Iqbal's thought is chosen:

If one were to reconstruct the form of Islam, which has been made to degenerate over the course of history, re-assemble it in such a way that its spirit could return to a compete body, and transform the present disoriented elements of Islam into that spirit, as if the trumpet of Israfil were to blow in the 20th century over a dead society and awaken its movement, power, spirit, and meaning, it is then that exemplary Muslim personalities like Muhammad Iqbal would be reconstructed and reborn (quoted in Takwin 2001, 92).

Studies on Iqbal's thought have been done by Enver (1944), Saiyidain (1954), Dar (1956), Hakim (1973), Shahid (1977), Khan (1977), Munawar (1981), Billgrami (1982), Esposito (1983), Ahmed (1983), Maarif and Diponegoro (1983), al-Nadwi (1985), Rahman (1985), 'Azzam (1985), Raschid (1986), Maitre (1989), Danusiri (1996), Lee (2000), Lidinillah (2005), Khuza'i (2007), Hawasi (2008), and Sunardi (2012). Those mentioned mostly discuss it in the perspectives of philosophy, politics, arts, and literature. Following our research, so far, analysis of Iqbal's thought from Cultural Studies, particularly Postcolonial Studies, is not done yet. Here is an article addressed by understanding the setting of British colonization in India as a significant factor that formed Iqbal's critique of

epistemology. Meanwhile, Postcolonial Studies can be found in Said (1996), King (2001), Allen (2004), Sinaga (2004), Smith (2005), Faruk (2007), Foulcher and Day (2008), Ratna (2008), and Alatas (2010).

The hegemony of Western culture and thought to other cultures and traditions has been massively spread out through colonialism and imperialism. After seeing that dehumanization of European soul took place in the capitalistic system of Western culture, Iqbal believed that Islam is able to be an alternative model with its moral and spiritual ideal (Fakhry 1983, 350). The condition of Indian society when Iqbal lived under British colonization contributed to form his ideas on the importance of vitality of thought which had to be relevant to the experience faced by Moslems of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent as they were oppressed by the Hindus on the one side and the British colonial on the other side (Qadir 1991, 165). Iqbal felt that the order of British colonial in India, especially in academic spare restricted his academic freedom and carrier (Agustina 1992, 28–29).

In the history of India and Pakistan, Iqbal was well-known as the “spiritual father” of Pakistan (Schimmel 1985, 239) and the figure who the first time stated the idea to free Muslim community as an independent Muslim state that is now named Pakistan. He contributed to creating an atmosphere of confidence that has helped the present generation to outgrow the apologetic sound (Ahmad 1998, xv). Iqbal’s emphasis on the importance of *khūdi* to free from mental inferiority brought him into an Islamic existentialist (Hawasi 2003; Sunardi 2012, 151-265). To convey his ideas naturally except Reconstruction, Iqbal used poems and poetry, especially in Urdu and Persian language rather than in prose in order to get emotional fervor in expressing the reality he felt (Saiyidain 1954, 7).

## The Influence of Greek Philosophy to Islamic Philosophers

the history of Western philosophy, the

influence of Greek philosophy is not only very dominant in shaping the speculative and abstract thinking of European culture but also spreading intensively into Islamic world (Maitre 1996, 69). Iqbal believed that in many aspects its influence is destructive (Maitre 1996, 69), as he warned:

As we all know, Greek philosophy has been a great cultural force in the history of Islam. Yet a careful study of the Quran and the various schools of scholastic theology that arose under the inspiration of Greek thought disclose the remarkable outlook of Muslim thinkers, it, on the whole, obscured their vision of the Quran (Iqbal 2004, 3).

Iqbal mentions the great influence of Plato’s idealism on al-Ghazali’s theological thought on Islamic mysticism (Sufism) and Aristotle’s rationalism on Ibn Ruysd’s thought. Thus, they lost to grasp the great and fruitful idea in Islam holistically concerning its vision on man, God, and the world (Iqbal 2004, 3). Epistemologically, the implication for Muslims who lost their vision is they live in what Syed Hossein Alatas names as captive mind with characteristics, such as loss of creativity and capability to reveal original problems, fragmented view, alienated from big issues in society or tradition of his own nation because of Western domination all over the world (Alatas 2010, 13).

## Postcolonialism and the Emergence of Islamic Counter Culture

In her book, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, Bennita Parry (2004, 3) explains that postcolonial studies are more concerned with the inequality sharing of power globally and centralism of hegemonic authorization of culture, economy, and military than a mere colonialism as a particular historical setting. Parry’s definition in accord with Chris Barker’s definition of postcolonialism as a critical theory to elaborate discursively the condition of post-colonial and its relations and

aftermath (Barker 2004, 446). In moderate sense, Simon During views the emergence of postcolonialism as an era of cultural reconciliation where all cultural agents are productively met:

Postcolonialism came to signify something remote from self-determination and autonomy. By developing categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence ... all of which laced colonized into colonizing cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category (quoted in Parry 2004, 4).

The symptoms concerning the decline of modern culture actually have a serious attack from postmodernist thinkers that started from Nietzsche until Derrida and Foucault. Their critiques give a justification that grand narrative built by modern epistemology is very fragile. The method of deconstruction they offered was so anarchistic that was not able to give a satisfactory solution of the crisis of human sciences. But their critical discourses inspired many scholars and thinkers to rethink the hegemony of modern culture. In a Gramscian postcolonial perspective, hegemony operates in cultural forms of constraint by the powerful over the subordinated (Barker 2004, 84). The hegemony of positivistic paradigm of Modern culture nearly influences all aspects of life manifested in the form of procedural democracy, Fordism, and popular culture to mention some (Forgacs 2000, 275–363).

The hegemonic modern culture, actually, had been questioned by Iqbal before the postmodernists deconstructed the authoritarianism of modern grand narratives which shut “the otherness” or subaltern cultures to speak:

Surely the present moment is one of the great crisis in the history of modern culture. The modern world stands in need of biological renewal. And religion which in its higher manifestation is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual, can alone ethically prepare modern man for

the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves, and restore to him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it hereafter. It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future, his whence and whither, that man will eventually triumph over a society motivated by an inhuman competition, and a civilization which has lost its spiritual unity by its inner conflict of religious and political values (Iqbal 2004, 149).

Iqbal's statement above shows his belief that searching holistic paradigm based on prophetic epistemology which covers integration among sense-perception, ratio, and intuition is important and urgent in order to avoid cultural catastrophe.

## Decolonization of Epistemology

For centuries, the Hellenistic philosophy had a great impact and influences to the Muslim thinkers. According to Iqbal, this historical fact misleads the way of thinking and gone away from the spirit of Quranic view. Hellenistic view tends to be rational-speculative with its representative figure, Plato. Plato believes that empirical phenomenon is not real. In the history of Islamic thought, Plato's speculative view, according to Iqbal, had colonized Muslim's thinking, especially in the emergence of passive Sufism. This passive Sufism also massively emerged in India where Iqbal lived. Therefore, Iqbal's mind and thought can only be understood if one understands Iqbal's Asia historical background and its cultural development in the end of 19th century and the early 20th century. Abdul Hadi WM mentions two factors; the first was the decline and deterioration of all aspects of life because of colonialism, and the second was the intensive relation and interaction between Asian culture and Western culture, particularly in the application of European system in education—Hardgrave mentions that the British system of education applied in India as Westernization.

There were two models of education; the Utilitarians that advocated “useful knowledge” and the Evangelicals that emphasized on “moral improvement” (Hardgrave 1975, 19–20)—and the influence of orientalist (Hadi W.M. 2000, 128).

To encounter the colonization of Hellenistic philosophy in Islamic thinking tradition, Iqbal tried to pose his critical ideas as reflected in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. It functioned to awaken the spirit of young Muslims, especially in India to have fresh vision. The final goal was to make young Moslem aware of their identity through rethinking Islam in a modern and dynamic way (Fakhry 1983, 350). Seeing that Moslem culture has been declined, Iqbal’s statement in his preface of *Reconstruction* that the Quran is “a book which emphasizes “deed” rather than “ideas” (Iqbal 2004, xxi), could be understood. It does not mean that Islam views inferior to the role of ideas but the message in it is that the final goal after grasping ideas is manifesting in the concrete life with the vitality of actions.

Iqbal’s effort to deconstructing the influence of Greek philosophy over Islamic thinkers, according to Majid Fakhry (1983, 350) is “...not to demonstrate the validity of the Western outlook, but rather its essential conformity with the Quranic Weltanschauung”. Muthahhari (2001, 73) regarded Iqbal as a thinker who mastered the treasury of Western thought but released from its trap. With the same sound, Ali Syari’ati (2002, 122) stressed on Iqbal’s uniqueness which lies on his authentic strategy to resist against previous Hellenization in the form of genuine Islamic intellectual and cultural resistance in relation with Westernization.

In *Payām-i-Masyriq* (Message from the East) Iqbal (quoted in Saiyidain 1954, 24) expressed the importance of authentic identity and the danger of imitation:

Look into thy own clay  
for the fire that is lacking,  
The light of another  
is not worth striving for.

The same sound is also expressed by Iqbal in his other poem, *Bāl-i-Jibrīl* (Gabriel’s Wing) (quoted in Saiyidain 1954, 24). Here, Iqbal warned people of India to live with their own worldview, not the West:

Incur not an obligation  
to the glass-makers of the West,  
Make thy flagon and thy cup  
with the clay of Ind.

But Iqbal’s rejection of Western culture did not close his mind to appreciate the progress of Western arts and science. Iqbal could see other positive aspects of Western culture as appeared in his work (quoted in Saiyidain 1954, 25):

The power of the West  
spring not from her music,  
Nor from the dance  
of her unveiled daughters!  
Her strength comes not from irreligion,  
Nor her progress from  
the adoption of the Latin script,  
The power of the West lies  
in her Arts and Sciences,  
At their fire, has it kindled its lamps!

In order not to claim that Iqbal’s attempt of reconstruction as “Quranic” or not (Rahman 2000, 66–185), his interpretation should be positioned as a postcolonial project. Iqbal’s critique to Plato’s idealism can be seen as his factual history that the condition of Muslim culture was decadent in science and technology. The emphasis of Quranic teaching to explore empirical reality was covered by Plato’s thought. In this sense, Iqbal offered an Islamic epistemology which he believed “Quranic”. The great appreciation of Quran to sensible world is a signal that Islam is relevant with modern science. By quoting Riffat Hassan’s opinion, Robert D. Lee (2000, 94) writes that Iqbal consistently believes that material and spiritual are not separated. For Iqbal, the advancement of modern science and technology can be met with the Islamic worldview. In this context, Iqbal saw that a mutual dialogue between the

West and the East (Islam) is possible to seek the best alternative in developing modern science on the basis of religious spirituality.

For an Indian postcolonial thinker, Hommi K. Bhabha (1994), postcolonialism opens a wide possibility of the colonized and the colonizer to interact each other. This cultural interaction creates a new aspect of culture categorized as the colonized's or the colonizer's culture. Bhabha calls it "the Third Space" to form hybridity of culture. Bhabha regards that identity is something unstable, mainly between the colonizer and the colonized. Both of them are in the process of becoming that creates the possibility of finding "the Third Space" where they can share, absorb, inspire, and constructively criticize each other. Bhabha's central idea about this issue reflected in his work, the Location of Culture (Bhabha 1994).

Despite that both culture and worldviews can be shared mutually, what Iqbal criticized from the domination of Western thought is that it has a different paradigm and value from Islamic knowledge. Therefore, both have serious implications for understanding reality. Farid Alatas (2014, 41) notes some problems of the irrelevance of knowledge and implications, especially for Muslim communities who feel alienated, trivial, mystified, and inferior to face the development of Western culture.

In the same time, Iqbal saw Muslim community in India were in poor in the economy, education, and in all aspects of life. Therefore, Iqbal tried to awaken them by proclaiming the importance of strengthening individuality which is rooted from *khūdī* or ego (Saiyidain 1954, 9–54). The colonial condition and misinterpretation of religion aggravated Muslim community in India. Thus, the modern movements in politics, industry, and science also contributed to weakening individuality (Saiyidain 1954, 10). In religious and mystical movements, Platonic thought greatly influenced as manifested in Muslim minds and actions in India. For its negative impact Iqbal (2004, 3) criticized Plato who despised sense-perception as a mere opinion and no real knowledge. In

his poem, *Asrār-i Khūdī* (Secret of the Self) Iqbal (quoted in Saiyidain 1954, 17) voiced the danger of Plato's idealism:

The thought of Plato regarded loss as a profit, His philosophy declared that being is non-being. Since he was without any taste for action. His soul was enraptured by the non-existent. He disbelieved in the material universe and became the creator of the invisible Ideas. Sweet is the world of living phenomena to the living spirit, Dear is the world of ideas to the dead spirit. Our ascetic had not the power to face this world's storm, The peoples were poisoned by his intoxication, They slumbered and took no delight in action.

Iqbal's concept of epistemology is based on religious experience that human being can apprehend the complex aspect of reality continually. This religious experience has an outward as well as inward aspect. The outward aspect is empirical character meanwhile the inward is mystical one (Fakhry 1983, 351). In *Payām-i-Masyriq* (quoted in Saiyidain 1954, 104) Iqbal expressed:

Do not seek guidance from the Intellect  
Which has a thousand wiles!  
Come to Love which excels  
By the singleness of its purpose!

The empirical aspect is developed by intellect meanwhile inward aspect is based on intuition. They are derived from the same origin but only different in the gradation of existence. For this Iqbal states that intuition is considered as "...a higher kind of intellect" (quoted in Danusiri 1998, 48). He shows how empirical the Quran is in its nature and holds that "in the domain of knowledge, scientific or religious, complete independence of thought from concrete experience is not possible." Saiyidain (1954, 15–16) writes that Iqbal's concept of epistemology as a futuristic attempt to give a feeling of reverence for the actual, an approach that is very needed for making the Muslims of the earlier era the founders of modern science.

What Iqbal needs is not science without religion but science structured by religion. Conversely, his need is not religion without science and philosophy, but religion given intellectual content by science and philosophy (Ahmad 1998, 147). Here, the gap between the speculative thought and religion are tried to be united by Iqbal (Fakhry 1983, 350). Iqbal, finally, offered a kind of spiritual humanity. He saw that truth revealed through pure reason failed to color a civilization meanwhile religion, in higher meaning, was capable of elevating individuals and transforming a society:

Humanity needs three things today – a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic systems on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men, while religion has always elevated individuals and transformed whole societies... (Iqbal 2004, 142).

## Hybridity of Culture

In Iqbal's view, Greek thought was concerned with abstract thinking; meanwhile, Islamic thought turns primarily on the concrete. In this sense, Iqbal warns that the spirit of Islam is based on the importance of historicity (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) as proved by the historical circumstances in which the revelation was made (Fakhry 1983, 354). It can be denied that Iqbal's attempts to reconstruct Islamic thought were fallen into ambivalence. It was the consequence of history that Iqbal is the thinker who was produced by his time that had embedded Eastern and Western knowledge (Qadir 1991, 165–166). From one side, Iqbal did internal critique to the passivity of the Moslem community because of Islamic mysticism. Here, we must be careful to the position of Iqbal concerning his appreciation

to Islamic mysticism or Sufism. Actually, Iqbal greatly appreciate Sufism, in Fazlur Rahman's words: positive Sufism, which is believed to be able to form a dynamic character of Moslem's personality. This kind of Sufism was rarely found in Moslem world, especially in India when Iqbal lived (Rahman 2000, 66), but from another side he accepted Western advancement of science and technology while giving external critique to Western culture because of losing its religious basis. As the product of the colonized country, Iqbal's ambivalent identity to the position between East and West forced him to accept all aspects he thought excellent from both. Robert D. Lee (2000, 95) appraises that Iqbal's ideas borrowing from the West are not a betrayal but nothing other than a substance.

Iqbal's tendency of bringing up those both sides attracted many scholars' comments on him. Majid Fakhry (1983, 354) gives a description of Iqbal's eclecticism as a process of mimicry in hybrid culture:

...the reader of Iqbal's Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam is overwhelmed with the vastness of his learning and the scope of his metaphysical and religious speculation. His versatility and eclecticism, however, are often exasperating. For one thing, he often rambles from one theme to another and provides only the most tenuous links. For another, he frequently invokes the authority of illustrious philosophers and scientists in support of his own major themes, only to turn on them later and show their inadequacy or incoherence. Very often the multiplication of authorities, ancient or modern, Western or Islamic, is done at such a pace that the reader is left breathless. In the scope of six pages, for instances, the following names are cited: Berkeley, Whitehead, Einstein, Russell, Zeno, Newton, al-Ash'ari, Ibn Hazm, Bergson, Cantor, and Ouspensky – to mention only the principal figures or authorities.

Through the figure of Sir Thomas Arnold (1864–1930) —a British orientalist and historian of Islamic art— Iqbal also formed

his wide insight on the mastery of Western philosophy and deep understanding of Islamic culture and Arabic literature. Prof. Arnold contributed to give the harmonious combination between the Western and the Eastern thought in Iqbal (Agustina 1992, 27). Annemarie Schimmel (1985, 239) describes Iqbal's work as "a fascinating web of diverse strands that range from Islamic fundamentalism to the most recent scientific theories of the West, from mystical flights into the Divine presence to rational analyses of a spiritual phenomenon."

That combination was increased by continuing his study in Europe for B.A. program at Trinity College, Cambridge University, Heidelberg University, and Munich University for Doctoral program by writing a doctoral thesis entitled *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia: A Contribution to the History of Islamic Philosophy*. Three years living in Europe brought a revolution of thought in Iqbal. Rationality developed in European culture inspired Iqbal. He thought that rational approach was suitable to interpret Islamic religious thought in facing modernity (Ahmad 1998, 41). His living and studying in Europe opened Iqbal's mind and undoubtedly accepted some philosophical thoughts of Bergson, Nietzsche, and McTaggart, Leibniz, and Kant (Enver 1944, vii-viii), to mention some, in order to show the similarities and the difference of Islamic thought with some Western thought.

Iqbal's attempts to bridge between the East and the West were intended to foster a hybrid culture that was always experienced by countries colonized. Eva Meyerovich claimed that Iqbal is the prominent thinker as she found its evidence in his *Jāved-Nāma* (*The Song of Eternity*, 1932) (Iqbal 1987, xiii). In the time living in Europe Iqbal was doubt to choose between reflection represented by the East and action represented by Western culture (Maitre 1996, 67). In fact, some Western thinkers, like Nietzsche, Kant, and Bergson to mention some, inspired Iqbal. They joined to build the maturity of Iqbal's thought. In Bhabha's

postcolonial reading, Iqbal experienced a kind of mimicry to seek "the Third Space", a space in-between that the two culture or more are met together productively. This tendency is also reflected in Iqbal's mind that stands in a middle position between the two; neither extreme optimism nor extreme pessimism, but meliorism (Qadir 1991, 165). This view opens the unfinished process and changes as Iqbal found in Whitehead's philosophy of process. In the same time, this view is in line with the spirit of Islam which highly appreciates *ijtihad*—defined as the exertion with a view to form an independent judgment on a legal questions (Qadir 1991, 168)—that is nearly collapsed in Islamic thought and tradition changed by orthodoxy as noted by Edward W. Said (2010, xxviii) as a cultural catastrophe.

Similarly, In the eye of Fazlur Rahman (2000, 184–185), *Iqbal's* attempt to reconcile religion and science was highly appreciated with some corrections concerning his unsystematic explanation and his reading of Quran for topical theories. For Fazlur Rahman (2000, 159), Iqbal still failed to build a systematic Islamic thought to Islamize some disciplines of science. Therefore, Rahman suggests to do intellectual inquiries through systematizing Islamic metaphysics which is based on Quran. But, at least, Iqbal had put a philosophical foundation for integrating religion and science harmoniously (Agustina 1992, 45). The spirit of scientific tradition of Islam whoever colored European culture tried to be awakened in the time that for the last five hundred years, according to Iqbal (2004, 6), religious thought in Islam has been practically stagnant. Concerning the excellence of scientific investigation in Islam, Iqbal (2004, 73) compared the process of the scientific observer of nature as a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer. The difference of both are only in method, but their final goal is identical. For the reason, Iqbal (2004, 155) explained:

In order to understand this, we must make a distinction between experience as a natural fact, significant of the normally



observable behavior of Reality, and the experience as significant of the inner nature of Reality. As a natural fact it is explained in the light of its antecedents, psychological and physiological; as significant of the inner nature of reality, we shall have to apply criteria of a different kind to clarify its meaning. In the domain of science we try to understand its meaning in reference to the external behavior of reality; in the domain of religion, we take it as representative of some kind of Reality and try to discover its meaning in reference mainly to the inner nature of that Reality. The scientific and the religious processes are in a sense parallel to each other. Both are really descriptions of the same world....

Iqbal interprets nature as living, an ever-growing organism which has no final external limit and he put a fresh spiritual meaning into it. Iqbal (2004, 45) said, "Knowledge of nature is the knowledge of God's behavior and it is only another form of worship;" therefore, "In our observation of Nature we are seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego...." Here, Iqbal verified and validated the two sources of knowledge. The first knowledge is what the West affirms in the manifestation of modern science and technology. The second knowledge is popular in the East with what Iqbal called as unfortunate name, which is mysticism.

Iqbal's rejection to blind dogmatism, even in thinking is worth getting serious attention in the postcolonial era in order to get the holistic understanding that is relevant to the contemporary problems of the Moslem world. In the same time, Muslim communities are also ready to accept the new paradigm of knowledge, science and thought advances as a process of cross-cultural fertilization. As Iqbal (2004, xxii) warned in his preface of Reconstruction:

As knowledge advances and fresh avenues of thought are opened, other views and probably sounder views than those set forth in these Lectures are possible. Our duty is carefully to watch

the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude towards it.

The careful watch that Iqbal offered to anticipate the advances of contemporary sciences is based on what is now called prophetic epistemology. This epistemology is rooted from religion that guides sense perception and ratio (Danusiri 1998). For Iqbal, phenomenal experience in its origin is spiritual. Here, Iqbal tries to answer Kant's skepticism on the possibility of religion as knowledge (Iqbal 2004, 4). Iqbal's answer is "yes" that religion is possible. Iqbal integrated the dualistic tendency of modern epistemology rooted from Hellenistic tradition of Greek philosophy which dichotomizes ratio (represented by Aristotle) and intuition (represented by Plato). This dichotomic thought colored modern epistemology as represented by Rene Descartes (rationalism) and Henry Bergson (intuitionism). The integration of Iqbal's epistemology is clearly seen from his division of three periods of religious life: The periods of "faith", "thought", and "discovery":

In the first period, religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of that command. ...perfect submission to discipline is followed by rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of authority. In this period religious life seeks its foundation in a kind of metaphysics – a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view. In the third period metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and the religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the Ultimate Reality (Iqbal 2004, 143).

Iqbal's appreciation to religious-mystical experience did not mean to draw on the mystical experience reported in past Muslim traditions or by contemporary Muslim mystics

or theologians. He tried to bring this valid experience to prophetic mission – to guide mankind away from authoritarian, and towards the inductive approach to the moral and spiritual problems of modern man. The only method to understand the religious discourse is the method of science (Ahmad 1998, 44). That was why Iqbal claimed that the birth of Islam is the birth of inductive intellect and the spirit of revelation experienced by the prophet is not only concerned with the ancient but also with the modern time (Iqbal 2004, 100–101). Besides inner experience, nature and history according to the Quran are two other sources of knowledge. It is in tapping these sources of knowledge that the spirit in Islam is seen at its best (Iqbal 2004, 102).

The final goal of integrating the three sources of knowledge is to sharpen man's objectivity and acquire a more fundamental "I am" in existential sense. Therefore, Iqbal rejects Descartes' dictum, *Cogito ergo Sum* (I think so I am) and more closed to Kant's "I can":

The ultimate aim of the ego is not to see something, but to be something. It is in the ego's effort to be something that he discovers his final opportunity to sharpen his objectivity and acquire a more fundamental "I am" which finds evidence of its reality not in the Cartesian "I think" but in the Kantian "I can". The end of the ego's quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality; it is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it. The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act (Iqbal 2004, 156–157).

As a matter of fact, Cartesian epistemology became philosophical foundation of modern culture and reached its peak to rationalism school of thought in Western modern philosophy. Because of its anthropocentric view in approaching reality, Cartesian rationalism raises the plight of modern man. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1997, 43–44) criticizes Descartes' rationalism as "I am" who had lost its sacred knowledge because of its illusive ego which does not centralize to Divine Ego.

For Iqbal, "This is how the modern man's secret despair hides behind the screen of scientific terminology.... The modern man has ceased to live soulfully.... Therefore... he finds himself unable to control his ruthless egoism" (Iqbal 2004, 148). That is the implication of instrumental ratio introduced by Rene Descartes which lost the warmth of intuitive desire and only live with rational desire which is mechanistic.

To avoid the trap of rationalism of Descartes as well as criticism of Kant, Iqbal would go further by taking Islamic mysticism (positive Sufism) for a direct revelation of God, the mysteries of Self, its immortality and freedom through the method of intuition. His project of epistemology was intended to answer a problem left by Kant concerning the impossibility of metaphysic knowledge (Enver 1944, 9–30). In his letter to Saiyidain, Iqbal elucidated the relationship of knowledge gained through intellect and that gained through love or intuition:

I have generally used the word "knowledge" in the sense of knowledge based on the senses. It gives man power which should be subordinated to religion. If it is not subordinated to religion, it is a satanic force. This knowledge is the first step to true knowledge, as I have pointed out in *Jāved-Nāma*. The knowledge of Truth is gained first through the senses and then through direct realization. Its ultimate stages cannot be encompassed within consciousness.

Knowledge, which cannot be circumscribed within consciousness and which is the final stage of truth is called love or intuition (quoted in Saiyidain 1954, 111–112).

According to Muthahhari (2001, 74), Iqbal tried to strongly introduce Islamic culture and civilization foundation offered to anticipate the predicament of secular tendencies of Western culture without losing his objectivity to accept which Iqbal considered "good" from Western culture. Therefore, Iqbal's rejection of tradition should be read in the context of a tradition that obstructs cultural dynamism. As a thinker,

Iqbal reflectively could see some strengths and weaknesses that Eastern and Western culture has and try to judge and accept all elements of both objectively. His deep interaction with Western thought and religious values inherited from his parents are an ideal combination that is now called hybrid culture.

He tried to apply "Islamization of knowledge" of Western secular knowledge. Epistemologically, Iqbal offered the degrees of knowledge as a kind of knowledge hierarchy (Khuza'i 2007, 135). For Iqbal, the failure of Plato, Hegel, and Descartes, to mention some Western philosophers criticized by Iqbal, are their dichotomic view in apprehending reality. In a broader sense, this dichotomic view of Western thought is formulated in the form dualism that is separated from empirical, rational, and intuitive knowledge. In Iqbal's view there is a degree of knowledge: the early step is sense-perception, and continued by rational inquiry, and then the final is through intuition to introduce other reality that is not able to reach by sense-perception and ratio. As comparison, see Osman Bakar (1998a) when elaborating hierarchy of science in Islamic philosophy according to al-Fārābī, al-Ghazālī, and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. Seyyed Hosein Nasr stresses the hierarchy of knowledge in Islam (from sense perception to revelation) which is different from Western Cartesian rationalism. In Islam knowledge starts from the lowest level through sense-perception to the top hierarchy through revelation (Bakar 1998b, 12).

A tradition that appreciate the rationality highly, direct or indirectly was the tradition that Iqbal borrowed from Western culture. The advancement of Western science and technology convinced Iqbal to adopt rationality in order to make Islam modern. But the loss of spiritual foundation faced by Western culture warned Iqbal to keep his spiritual outlook, of course with a new insight into understanding religion as reflected in Reconstruction. Again, Iqbal's understanding of religious thought in Islam is as a consequence of his interaction with British colonialism and his study abroad. Iqbal offered a new epistemological reading

that is strategic for Western thought as well as Islamic thought.

In another hand, Iqbal's external criticism is kind of a "deconstruction" for Cartesian rational epistemology which is old-fashioned as also has criticized by some postmodernists. In other hand, Iqbal internally criticized the death of *ijtihād* in Islamic tradition and tried to revive it in order to bring Islam suitable for the development of modern science and technology. Here, Iqbal did two counter-cultures: the first was his critique over the hegemony of Greek philosophy and Cartesian rationalism in Islamic thought, and the second was his critique over the hegemony of normative Islamic theology and mysticism that made Muslim communities passive and decadent.

## Conclusion

Iqbal's attempt to trace speculative thought of Hellenistic philosophy and its cultural force over a history of Islamic thought is a kind of an "epistemological counter-culture". Iqbal tried to "deconstruct" the hegemony of Hellenism of Greek thought over Muslim world so long that Islamic thought was stagnant more than five hundred years. Iqbal's critique of Greek philosophy really opens our minds about the danger of mere rational- speculative thought as operated by modernism with its multidimensional crisis until today. His deep readings of Western philosophy from Plato to Bergson show his accuracy to filter which aspects are relevant to be used to reconstruct Islamic thought. Iqbal tried to decolonize Western epistemology and changed into what he claimed as "Islamic" epistemology. In the same time, he also criticized normative outlooks in understanding Islam which claimed as absolute. Finally, Iqbal found in an ambivalent position concerning epistemological decolonization. It is found in his claim on the importance of rationality and his option to use discursive analysis in explaining religious thought in Islam which is borrowed from the Western tradition. Iqbal's appreciation

on rationality and discursive analysis of religious thought in Islam, and then his effort to integrated it to spiritual love shows “the Third Space” as the consequence of his intensive interaction with two cultures, the East and the West. Here, Iqbal experienced a hybridity of culture. What Iqbal did was a “rational attempt” which is now learned in Postcolonial Studies as one variant of Cultural Studies. Counter-culture done by Iqbal, so far, is more closed to Hommi K. Bhabha, whose idea tends to see postcoloniality as productive activity because the colonizer and the colonized can share mutually without dichotomy. In this regard, mimicry as has been shown by Iqbal, to modern culture, does not mean a betrayal but a consequence of cultural interaction, above all in the global era with its cyber technology.

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