

**THE VIEWS OF ALLAMAH MUHAMMAD IQBAL  
AND NURETTIN TOPÇU ON SELFHOOD  
(PERSONALITY)**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to examine the theories of selfhood (personality) developed by Allamah Muhammad Iqbal and Nurettin Topçu. Both Nurettin Topçu and Muhammad Iqbal recognized the urgent need for a new type of human being — individuals with a strong sense of selfhood — to rescue Muslims from the mire of laziness, ignorance, blind imitation, alienation from Islamic values, the loss of curiosity and the spirit of inquiry, dishonesty, deceit, incompetence, and servitude. Both thinkers developed intellectual systems centered on the concept of selfhood. According to Iqbal and Topçu, selfhood is only possible through pure and strong faith, accompanied by complete devotion to the principle of *Tawhîd* (the Oneness of God). When a person draws closer to God, they attain true freedom and are liberated from all bonds that limit them. Through love, the human self can reach a potential power, and when polished with the jewel of faith, it can draw nearer to God. What makes a human being truly human is freedom and responsibility. Possessing willpower distinguishes a person from all other creatures and makes them God's vicegerent on earth. The essence of the self is movement — a constant search and struggle. The Islamic self is courageous; it strives to break free from all restraints that limit it and seeks only to draw closer to God. A person with true selfhood is free from ostentation and hypocrisy, respectful toward both the Creator and creation, humble, generous, brave, and truthful.

**Keywords:** Muhammad Iqbal, Nurettin Topçu, Selfhood, Moral Philosophy, Islam

## **Introduction**

Nurettin Topçu and Muhammad Iqbal are two prominent figures in the tradition of Islamic thought. Both thinkers experienced similar life paths: they travelled to Europe for their education and earned doctorates in the field of philosophy. Each possessed a strong Islamic identity and a pronounced Sufi inclination. Both examined the causes of the defeats suffered by Islam and Muslims, arriving at similar solutions. Islam is a living and dynamic religion. According to Iqbal and Topçu, while Islamic thought demands experience, inquiry, and innovation, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and al-Farabi incorporated Aristotle's metaphysical thought into Islamic philosophy, thereby freezing the dynamic nature of Islamic thought. Iqbal further notes that the greatest influence on the stagnation of Islamic thought came from Plato. Plato's understanding of existence, knowledge, and ethics infiltrated Islamic thought, and an outlook that regarded the world we live in as empty and worthless was adopted by Muslims as part of Islamic philosophy. Iqbal and Topçu sought to remove Greek metaphysics from the lifeblood of Islam and to construct a dynamic and vibrant religious philosophy. Naturally, it is the human being who will renew, develop, and implement thought. Yet, the Islamic world has become barren in terms of human quality. Muslims have become subjugated to the West; their homelands and independence have been taken from them; cultural decay has begun; they have started to admire and imitate their captors. With such an identity and such personalities, the blessed dawn of Islam will not arise. Thus, there is a need for the individual who builds his own self — the person of true selfhood. Muhammad Iqbal calls this the "Philosophy of the Self," while Nurettin Topçu calls it the "Morality of Rebellion." Their aim is to cultivate a type of believer who is free, courageous, illuminated by the light of faith, knowledgeable, inquisitive, and morally complete.

## **Nurettin Topçu**

Nurettin Topçu was born on November , 20, 1909, in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. His father was Hamdi Efendi, and his mother was Fatma Hanım. He graduated from Istanbul Boys' High School in 1928, and in the same year, he won a scholarship for education abroad. He was sent by the state to the University of Paris-Sorbonne to pursue higher education. At the Sorbonne, Topçu completed both his undergraduate and doctoral studies, publishing his dissertation *Conformisme et Révolte* (Conformity and Rebellion) in 1934. He returned to the Republic of Turkey in 1934 and prepared his associate professorship thesis on Henri Bergson, which was accepted.

For forty years, Topçu wrote tirelessly, producing works on Islam, Sufism, philosophy, education, selfhood, and aesthetic morality. He authored nearly thirty books, compiled from his original works and articles. He passed away on July 10, 1975, and was buried in the Yeni Kozlu Cemetery in Istanbul<sup>1</sup>

### **Allamah Muhammad Iqbal**

Allamah Muhammad Iqbal was born on November 9, 1877, in Sialkot, Pakistan. His father was Sheikh Nur Muhammad, and his mother was Imam Bibi. Iqbal received a traditional education in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. He studied at Scotch Mission College and later, in 1895, continued his education at Government College in Lahore, where he met Sir Thomas Arnold. In 1903, he published his undergraduate thesis on economics, *'Ilm al-Iqtisād* (The Science of Economics). In 1905, he was admitted as a philosophy student to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he once again studied under Sir Thomas Arnold. After obtaining his degree at Cambridge, he proceeded to the University of Munich, where he completed his doctoral studies. His dissertation was titled *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. He later obtained a license to practice law. While in London, he delivered a series of lectures, one of which at Caxton Hall received wide coverage in the press. During his time in Europe, Iqbal was influenced by the works of Kant, Bergson, and especially Nietzsche. In August 1908, he returned to Lahore, where he began working part-time as a professor of philosophy and English literature at Government College. He passed away on April 21, 1938, and was buried beneath the minaret of the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore<sup>2</sup>

### **Background, History, Review of Literature, and Methodology**

Since this research is a qualitative study, it has been conducted using the literature review method. Muhammad Iqbal's works in English were examined directly, while his works in Urdu and Persian were analyzed through translated texts. As the language of Nurettin Topçu's works is Turkish, primary sources were utilized. Muhammad Iqbal is a thinker who is highly admired and widely read in Turkey; consequently, there are doctoral, master's, and undergraduate theses on him in the Republic of Turkey. In the literature, there exists a considerable number of studies on Iqbal's philosophy of the self. However, no study has examined him in conjunction with Nurettin Topçu, a Turkish philosopher. In this respect, the present article can be considered original.

## Muhammad Iqbal's View of Personality (Self)

### 1. The Foundations of Personality

- **Obedience**

According to Iqbal, a human being must strive to draw near to Allah Almighty—who is the Creator (*Khāliq*) and the Ever-Living (*Hayy*)—in order to perceive Him and to establish a creative dialogue with Him, seeking to resemble Him as much as possible. “To serve and to endure hardship—this is the camel’s emblem. To be patient and to be free of restlessness is the camel’s way. Its steps gently caress the road. For the caravan, it is like a ship of the desert. Every thicket bears the mark of its feet. It eats little, sleeps little, and is a bearer of hardship. Beneath the travelers’ load, it moves forward intoxicated, swaying joyfully toward the resting place. It is drunk with the pleasure of its own stride. On the journey, it is more patient than those upon its back. Likewise, do not weary of the duties Allah has commanded you; if you act thus, you will benefit from the blessings mentioned in the verse ‘*Husn al-Ma’āb*.’”<sup>3</sup>

“O heedless human, strive to obey; for choice comes into being through compulsion. One who does not possess the qualities of being human becomes human only by obeying command. Even fire, when it transgresses its limit and rebels, falls to the level of mere chaff. O human who wishes to seize even the star Pleiades: you must bind yourself with certain chains of method and order. To remain imprisoned in a dungeon turns the wind into a sweet-scented rose. What makes fragrance like musk is its remaining within constraint. A star proceeds toward its station by bowing its head before a method and an order. Greenery springs from the earth by embracing the law of growth and flourishing; when it abandons that law, it is trampled underfoot. The rule of the tulip is to burn perpetually; thus the blood in its veins leaps and surges. Drops become a sea by adhering to the law of union and joining; particles, by following the same law, become a plain. The inner reality of everything has gained its strength through a method and an order. Why are you heedless of this being? Come, O human whom the ancient law has granted freedom: adorn your foot with this silver chain. Do not complain of the severity of method and order; do not step beyond the limits of the law set by Mustafa.”<sup>4</sup>

- **Conquering the Self**

The human ego (*nafs*) is like a camel: it thinks of its own desires and worships them. The ego is mounted upon a person's very self, constantly controlling it and steering it in whatever direction it wishes. It is incumbent upon a person to restrain the ego, ensuring that it is not the ego but the will that governs one's life<sup>5</sup>.

“Be a man; take the reins of your soul into your own hands, so that even if you were but a pebble, you may become a pearl. A person who cannot exercise authority over his own soul becomes a servant to others. They formed you from a mixture of love and fear: fear of the world, fear of the hereafter, fear for your life; fear of the pains that descend from the earth and the sky. Love of wealth, love of power, love of homeland; love of your own soul, of kin, of woman. A being composed of the mingling of water and clay is always inclined toward its own desires. It pursues feeding its stomach and seeking comfort. Because of this, it leans toward evil things—toward deeds forbidden by the Truth—and these lead to its destruction. Yet as long as you hold in your hand the staff of *la ilaha illallah*, you shatter and break all talismans of fear.”<sup>6</sup>

- ***Kalimah al-Tawhīd***

“The declaration of faith (*Kalimah al-Tawhīd*) is like a dagger in the hands of a Muslim, slaying all evil”<sup>7</sup>. A person who has achieved complete faith is freed from all worldly attachments. Such a person neither fears for their life nor for their possessions. According to Iqbal, there are two types of *shirk* (associating partners with God): the first is openly associating partners with Allah Almighty, and the second is doing so secretly. While the first type is explicit and thus easily identified, the second is extremely difficult to recognize. Love for status alongside Allah Almighty, love for children alongside Allah, and love for wealth alongside Allah are all forms of *shirk*.

- **Prayers**

The way to strengthen *Tawhīd* in the soul is through prayer (*ṣalāt*). “*La ilaha...* is like a seashell, and inside that shell lies the pearl—prayer. Prayer is like a small pilgrimage (*hajj*) within the heart of a Muslim”<sup>8</sup>.

- **Fasting**

“Fasting makes a night raid on hunger and thirst; it conquers the *Khaybar* of self-indulgence.”<sup>9</sup> Fasting grants a person endurance and resilience. It is an important act of worship for keeping the reins of the self firmly in hand.

- **Hajj**

It teaches Muslims brotherhood and equality. “Hajj illuminates the nature of the believers. It teaches them to migrate. (There, Muslims regard one another as children of the same homeland.) It is such an act of worship that it ensures gathering. It binds together people who are connected by religious ties, like the stitching that holds together the pages of a book”<sup>10</sup>.

- **Zakāt**

*Zakāt* destroys the love of wealth in the state. It instills in people a love for equality. In the Holy Qur’ān, Allah Almighty says: “*You shall never attain righteousness unless you spend [in the way of Allah] from what you love*”<sup>11</sup> *Zakāt* strengthens the soul and faith of those who comply with this Divine command, increasing a person’s belief. All of these are causes that will strengthen you — if your Islam is mature and firm<sup>12</sup>.

- **Giving From The Wealth of Loved Ones**

“*You shall never attain righteousness unless you spend from what you love. Whatsoever you spend, Allah is fully aware of it.*”<sup>13</sup> In accordance with this verse, a person can subdue and discipline the self by giving away what they love for the sake of others.

- **Uncompromising Devotion to Allah Almighty**

The self must remain constantly attached to the Truth in order to overcome the ego, never loosening its grip on that connection. “*Hold firmly to the Strong One so that you may be strong yourself, and thus mount and ride upon the camel of the earth*”<sup>14</sup>.

- **Being Allah's Caliph**

Man is the most honorable being created in the universe. When we try to understand the story of human creation under the

guidance of the Holy Qur'ān, the true value of humanity becomes clearer.

" (Remember) when your Lord said to the angels, .I am going to create a deputy on the earth!. They said, .Will You create there one who will spread disorder on the earth and cause bloodshed, while we proclaim Your purity, along with your praise, and sanctify Your name?. He said, .Certainly, I know what you know not.."<sup>15</sup>.

- **The Holy Qur'ān**

Muhammad Iqbal asserts that the path to a sound personality lies in establishing a strong connection with the Divine message. According to Iqbal, Muslims possess two essential pillars: the first is the Holy Qur'ān, the eternal and absolute truth, and the second is the Prophet Muhammad (*The Final Prophet of Allah, Peace be upon him, his Progeny and Companions*), the living embodiment of the Holy Qur'ān. The Holy Qur'ān is an unailing guide for all ages and a matchless remedy for healing hearts. Referring to the verse, "*There is nothing moist or dry but is (recorded) in the Qur'an,*"<sup>16</sup> Allah Almighty has informed humankind of all events—past and future—within the Holy Qur'ān. Therefore, if Muslims aspire to develop a strong and dignified character, they must continually strengthen their bond with the Holy Qur'ān<sup>17</sup>.

- ***Al-Ka'bah***

Muhammad Iqbal describes the *Ka'bah* as the heart of Islam and of Muslims, for it is the center in which all directions converge, yet itself has no direction. The *Ka'bah* also embodies the symbol of *tawhīd* (Divine Unity). Regardless of race, color, tribe, or geographical origin, it is a center where all people gather as one and as equals. No form of discrimination exists in this sacred place. The *Ka'bah* is a place of assembly — a center where people are free, where they can be themselves, or remain alone with their own selves<sup>18</sup>.

- **Prophethood**

Prophet Muhammad (*The Final Prophet of Allah, Peace be upon him, his Progeny and Companions*) is the very embodiment of character — a radiant sun gathering within himself all virtues, an undeniable truth, the herald and practitioner of *tawhīd*, and a precious

essence that grants a mere piece of earth the dignity of humanity. According to Iqbal, the self can only be sustained through love for the Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*), for he is the one who conveys the divine message from God to mankind, presenting them with a living book and a matchless model of character. Just as atoms lose their direction, becoming ineffective and unstable when they drift away from the nucleus, so too does the self fade into extinction when it drifts away from love for the Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*)<sup>19</sup>.

- ***Tawḥīd***

The word ***tawḥīd*** comes from Arabic and means “to unite” or “to make one.” Al-Jurjānī defines it as *keeping the essence of God free from everything that can be conceived by reason or imagined in the mind*. According to him, *tawḥīd* manifests in three aspects:

1. Recognizing God through His lordship (*rubūbiyyah*).
2. Affirming His oneness (*wahdāniyyah*).
3. Denying any equals or partners to Him.

According to Iqbal, *tawḥīd* is the force that unites society and is the source of equality, solidarity, and freedom. It is both the soul and the body of the community. *Tawḥīd* means thousands of eyes fixed on a single goal; it turns a thousand particles into one radiant sun. The unity of God reflects as the unity of humankind. Through this power, the ummah — regardless of race, nation, or geography — gains the character of a brotherhood of equals, speaking a single language: the language of the heart, and carrying one soul and one spirit<sup>20</sup>.

- ***Qadar (Divine Decree)***

It can be said that Muhammad Iqbal’s philosophy of the self is, in essence, a new interpretation of destiny. In his work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal seeks to develop a new theology in the context of human actions and freedom. He believes that there is no place for fatalism in the Holy Qur’ān, and that the idea of surrendering to a predetermined destiny is foreign to Islam. According to him, the fatalistic interpretations found in the Islamic world were introduced from outside. For Iqbal, the human being is not a creature whose destiny is predetermined; rather, he determines his own actions. Man is a being endowed with free will, who participates in God’s creative activity. By involving man in His creative process, God intended to shape the universe together with him. In this sense, God and man walk together toward an open future. Events become

known as they occur. Thus, destiny is a historical journey undertaken jointly by God and man<sup>21</sup>.

## **2. FACTORS THAT STRENGTHEN PERSONALITY**

### **1. Love**

Love stands at the very center of Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy. His Philosophy of the Self/Personality is built upon the foundation of love. Love is an unquenchable longing, an endless and unending quest, and an inextinguishable fire. The Self/Personality can only take shape if it is tempered in such a fire. Through the effort to reach God—the Eternal and Absolute—the self can discover and manifest itself.

The self is not hindered by the barriers of time and space; rather, it brings them under its own control. For a self possessed by love will never put an end to its search; when it completes its path in this world, the journey of the hereafter will begin, continuing with an unceasing and eternal burning. This is the contemplation of that which neither diminishes nor ceases; the death of the body does not mean a pause in perfection. According to Iqbal, those who have strengthened their self can overcome the shock of bodily death and even long for it as the gateway to new stages of perfection<sup>22</sup>.

“Faith arises from love, and love manifests from the believer. What we deem impossible, love makes possible. The self is strengthened through love and affection. A luminous point called the ‘self’ is the spark of life beneath our existence, which is nothing more than a handful of earth. What makes it more enduring, more alive, more burning, and more radiant is love. Its essence ignites through love. The latent potentials in the heart flare up in blazing flames. Its very creation draws its fire from love. It learns to illuminate the world from love. With divine love, in the end, everything from head to toe becomes the Truth.”<sup>23</sup>

### **2. Desire**

The driving force behind all human actions is desire. The service that desire renders to man is comparable to the role steam plays in the operation of a machine. When the substance that produces heat loses its power, the functioning of the machine stops—just as it does in the human structure. Iqbal addresses an ancient truth, namely, the

most fundamental instinct that ensures the continuation of the human species. He seeks to rekindle this desire in the Muslim masses—especially among those who regard laziness and backwardness as destiny, and who have abandoned the aspiration to master the world and shape it according to their will. The life of the self comes from creating and giving birth to desires. The survival of life depends on the existence of a purpose and a cause. Life lies hidden within a state of seeking; its essence is concealed within desire. “Keep desire alive in your heart, so that this handful of dust that is your being does not turn into a grave. Desire is the soul of the world of color and fragrance; it is present in the creation of everything. The dance of hearts in the breast comes from desire. Chests shine like mirrors through its light”<sup>24</sup>.

“It is desire that gives wings to the earth and makes it fly; it grants this power to it. It becomes the Khidr to the Moses of understanding. The heart gains life through the heat of desire. Once it begins to live, everything other than the Truth dies. When the heart becomes unable to create desire, it means its wing is broken; it can no longer fly. Desire is the lasso that captures aims. It binds the spine of the ledger of all our actions. The absence of desire kills the living. A diminishing burn extinguishes the flame. What is the essence of our wakeful eye? The delight of vision within us has brought it into being. What is the intellect that tries to seize rare things and, in doing so, rises beyond the spheres? Do you know what this miracle is? The capital of life is desire—and the intellect is born from it.”<sup>25</sup>

### 3. *Faqr*

In Arabic, *faqr* conveys meanings such as poverty, destitution, and need. Spiritually, it is the state of freeing oneself from attachment to worldly possessions and becoming effaced (*fanā*) in God. *Faqr* is considered an honorable station. *Ṣufis* are often called *fuqarā'* (“the poor”), for they have emptied themselves of worldly ownership—harbouring no love for wealth or property in their hearts. The essence of *faqr* is that the servant feels no need for anything except God. In its outward form, *faqr* means turning away from all (worldly) causes. It is not the material poverty we commonly know, but rather a state of spiritual neediness before God. Muhammad Iqbal’s understanding of *faqr* is not a poverty that degrades or weakens a person; rather, it is the kind of poverty that, by surrendering to the Eternal and All-Rich God, makes one richer and stronger than any ruler<sup>26</sup>.

*“In our world, gold is a substance that meets all our needs; yet what poverty (faqr) grants us cannot be attained through wealth. The decline of Muslims stems from another cause—and you, too, know well that their fall is not due to lack of money. The poor man’s ship battles with tempests. Faqr employs both the powers of the soul and the body. The final stage of a believer’s perfection is to reveal the self stripped of all veils. The existence of the poor man determines the value of the universe. He knows that the universe is transient while he himself is abiding. Ask him: Is that which the eye beholds truly the world, or merely the swelling and surging of color and fragrance? Ever since the Muslim has let go of this faqr, his Solomonic dominion—his material and spiritual sovereignty—has perished.”<sup>27</sup>*

#### 4. *Qalenderlik*

A *qalender* is a person who sets aside personal interests and gives importance to social moral rules and human values<sup>28</sup>. A *qalender* values work and production, yet sees money and wealth only as a means of living, not as an ultimate goal. For a *qalender*, wealth should serve as a tool to spread morality and love. *qalenders* value generosity and meet everything with tolerance. They are people who can get along and live harmoniously with everyone. According to Muhammad Iqbal, true religiosity is *qalenderlik*. Iqbal defines a *qalender* as:

*“One who is not dominated by the days, but rather one who dominates the days.”<sup>29</sup>* “Live a life of poverty within the robe of kingship. Live always awake, always thinking of the Truth. The love of the kalender is deep, and so is his character. Even if a great man has been raised through imitation, nature compels him to create anew. Even within a community, he possesses the privilege of solitude. Like the rest of the assembly, he is a friend to all, yet distinct from everyone. His thought is radiant like the sun. His speech is very simple, yet in meaning exceedingly subtle.”<sup>30</sup>

#### 5. **Courage**

Courage is the ability to manifest the power of the self. A self that lacks courage is not a perfected self. Within the tradition of wisdom, courage has always been regarded as one of the most essential virtues. It is through courage that personality resists injustice and rises

against oppression. Muhammad Iqbal calls upon Muslims to embrace courage: “*Create the destiny of your own world!*”<sup>31</sup>. In Iqbal’s philosophy of the self, courage occupies a special place, for his vision of a great Islamic unity can only be realized through brave and determined individuals. Those who are weary, disheartened, or fearful cannot serve as the representatives of such a grand cause. The sought-after individual is one who is firm in character, hawk-natured, restless, perpetually in search, constantly engaged in action—warrior-spirited and of a *qalender* disposition.

“The will and courage of those who delve deep into the self have created seas from a small fountain. Truthfulness and fearlessness are the principles of the noble person. You are the lion of God; a lion does not stoop to the ways of the fox! Do not settle yourself on the shore, where life is soft and without danger. Plunge into the sea, wrestle with the waves; eternal life is struggle”<sup>32</sup>.

## 6. Foresight (*Baṣīret*)

*Baṣīret* refers to comprehension, supra-sensory vision, certainty (*yaqīn*), knowledge (*maʿrifah*), discernment (*farāṣah*), foresight, intuition, intelligence, and similar qualities. Its plural is *baṣāʾir*. Seeing with the physical eye is called *baṣar*; seeing with the eye of the heart is *baṣīret*. In other words, *baṣīret* is the heart, illuminated by the light of sanctity, perceiving the realities of both the material and spiritual worlds. Another definition is as follows: in Arabic, it denotes perception, discernment, and seeing with the eye of the heart. In *ṣūfī* terminology, *baṣīret*—being the strength of a heart illumined by divine light—opens the veil through God’s guidance, allowing the inner essence and realities of things to be revealed. This is called a “sacred power.”

It is to the soul what the eye is to the body: just as the eye sees the outward forms of things, the soul sees their outward and inner reality through *baṣīret*. Just as the light of vision (*nūr al-ruʾyah*) is the cause of physical sight and is called *baṣar*, the faculty enabling the heart’s vision—commonly referred to in our language as the “eye of the heart”—is called *baṣīret*<sup>33</sup>.

“Recite such a *ghazal* that the melody of creation may change its scale to harmonize with it. Neither this world is a veil to that one, nor that world to this; if you have the power to see, you may look and behold. It is possible to purchase morning,

the stars, dawn, the moon, and the sun with a deepened vision. Even if hidden, there is in this body of clay a delight in divine manifestation. O heedless one! Your failure to see comes from lacking the faculty of sight! The human being is an eye; the rest is merely skin. To be an eye is to behold. Melt your entire being into your gaze!”<sup>34</sup>

## **7. Search**

Personality/Self is constantly searching. It strives to create a new formation, a new world. It is excited by the prospect of abandoning familiar paths and discovering new ways and methods. It hates the fixed and predetermined, always wanting to experience the new and untried. It wants to dispel the dark clouds that have descended upon the Islamic world and establish a free and powerful union. It wants to break free from the fatalistic understanding that kills the personality and leads people into a blind alley, and write its own destiny with its own hands.

According to Iqbal, the Muslim personality is like mercury; it is constantly in motion. It never stops or rests. The search is the blood that flows through the veins of the self. If the search stops, the self will die like a person whose heart has stopped beating. In the philosophy of the self, the search is a multidimensional concept<sup>35</sup>.

“The human being who searches for the secrets of life—so it seems that earth and sky are captive to your enchantment! What matters is that the self devote itself entirely to the suffering of the quest. Are you searching for the secret of life? You cannot find it anywhere except in writhing agony. To lie back at ease in the sea is a disgrace to the water of the river. The portion of lovers is to burn without ceasing. I rejoice in this to such a degree! How good it is, O Lord, that You did not create a cure for the anguish of seeking!”<sup>36</sup>

## **8. Activity**

Working, producing, and creating are essential conditions of the Muslim identity. The self is never satisfied with what it has and constantly desires more. Effort is its other name. It knows no rest or respite; it works tirelessly. For the Muslim self cannot tolerate bowing to anyone but Allah Almighty, seeking help from anyone, or benefiting from the blessings of another. The Muslim self aspires to great causes.

‘O Muslim! You are the man of great causes, the world is your first step! Allah has created this world for struggle’<sup>37</sup>.

“Why is there no storm in your sea? O Muslim, what has happened to your selfhood? For a person who has come to know Islam and has been honored with a truth like the Qur’an cannot be lazy, dull, or powerless. The Islamic self is, from beginning to end, work, seeking, and activity. The Islamic self seeks to restore to the human being the knowledge, morality, dignity, generosity, and courage that set him once again in his perfected and exalted station amid the clamor of the ages, reminding him that he is the subject of the universe.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Constant Struggle**

Muhammad Iqbal frequently emphasises the concept of an active self in his fourteen-volume collection. Iqbal sees inertia as the cause of the Islamic world's descent into imperialism. If Muslims strive hard, their destiny will change. Life under oppression will be drowned in the spring of sovereignty. “Do not settle down on the shore where life is soft and safe. Dive into the sea, wrestle with the waves; eternal life is a struggle.”<sup>39</sup>

“Evil and good have been born from your master’s delusions. Take delight in work, labor, and attain your desire! Rise, let me show you a world; open the eye that sees the universe, and walk to behold it. You are a worthless drop—become a shining pearl; fall from the head of the heavens (from the cloud), and settle in the sea! You are a gleaming sword—take the soul of the world. Reveal your essence; come forth from your sheath. Unleash the talon of the falcon; spill the blood of the pheasants— for a falcon to live in its nest is death. You do not yet know this: union kills love. Do you not know what everlasting life is? It is never being fully consumed. It is the struggle that makes life more vibrant; it is the struggle that gives life its wings.”<sup>40</sup>

## **3. DESTROYING PERSONALITY**

### **1. Despair (Hopelessness)**

When the self succumbs to hopelessness, it collapses. Despair is a deadly poison that dries up the self, turning a lush green valley into a desert. In the Holy Qur’ān it is stated:

- *"O my sons! Go and search for Joseph and his brother, and despair not of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, none despairs of the mercy of Allah except the disbelieving people."*<sup>41</sup>.
- *"It is He who sends down rain after they have despaired, and spreads His mercy. And He is the Praiseworthy, the Guardian."*<sup>42</sup>.
- *"Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves! Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Surely, He is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.'"*<sup>43</sup>.
- *"The angels said, 'We give you good tidings in truth, so do not be among those who despair of the mercy of Allah.'"*<sup>44</sup>.

The hadith *"Do not despair of the mercy of Allah"* also emphasizes the importance of hope. Iqbal seeks a hopeful, vibrant, passionate person who dares to face challenges. A defeated, withdrawn, and extinguished individual cannot realize Iqbal's vision. Iqbal states: *"When hope is the product of successive desires, it becomes necessary to accept that hopelessness is a poison for life. Despair grips you like a grave. Even if you were Mount Elvend, it would tear you down from your foundations. Helplessness is the slave of His grace. Misfortune, which constantly follows it, deprives one of life's share. Despair lulls life to sleep. This indicates the weakness of the elements from which we were created"*<sup>45</sup>.

## 2. Fear

Another factor that destroys personality is fear. Fear prevents the individual from using the abilities granted to the self. Once fear settles within a person, life becomes unbearable. Iqbal regards fearing anyone other than God as a form of *shirk* (associating partners with God). According to Iqbal, cowardice gives rise to certain vices in the human self—immoral behaviours that undermine it at its very root. Iqbal states, "Fear is the mother of all evils. It ruins life. *Tawhīd* (the doctrine of God's oneness) removes this dangerous disease. How does fear shackle our feet? Yet, in our sea, there are hundreds of torrents." He asserts that the Islamic world lives in fear, has surrendered its destiny to its enemies, and, as a result, has become a mere plaything in the hands of a small minority of imperialists<sup>46</sup>. Iqbal says,

*"the strings have slackened from fear; that is why the harmony you desire does not arise from the battle-tune you play. Tighten one of its pegs and see how melodies will rise. Its cry will unleash upheavals in the heavens. Fear is a spy sent from*

the land of death. Like the letter *mīm* at the head of the word *merg* (death), its inside is pitch-black. Its eye throws the order of life into confusion. The ear of death steals the news of your life. If you pay attention, you will see that every evil hidden in your heart is born of fear. Hope that deceives, cunning, lying—all are evils that draw their strength from fear. Its garment is woven from the veils of falsehood and hypocrisy. The lap of sedition is its cradle. A person who does not strengthen himself with willpower and effort becomes content even with what does not suit him.”<sup>47</sup>

### 3. Begging

Iqbal desired people who are creative, fierce, combative, and who take pleasure in struggling against difficulties. The falcon, eagle, and lion figures in his poetry are not used merely for rhyme, but as symbols of individuals who earn their own livelihood, produce, share, speak with dignity, avoid flattery, and stand tall. Iqbal preferred the falcon that hunts its own prey over the pigeons of the mosque.<sup>48</sup> Iqbal says:

“O you who have become tribute to lions, who have taken on the temperament of a fox out of need. Your wounds are from poverty. The true source of your affliction is only this illness. That need destroys the loftiness that comes from elevated thought. It extinguishes the candle of noble imagination. Draw the rose-colored wine from the jar of your own being; take your wealth from the purse of your own days. Like ‘Umar, dismount from the camel yourself. Do not ever be beholden to another—never.”<sup>49</sup>

### 4. Racism

According to Iqbal, racism is the glorification of lineage. To sanctify the body made of water and clay while ignoring the soul is to overlook its divine origin. The body ensures the continuation of a particular human race, whereas the soul is directly breathed into man by God. Iqbal states:

*“Because you have not freed yourself from the bonds of water and clay, you say: ‘I am Greek, I am Afghan!’ I am first and foremost human—utterly without color or scent; only after that am I Indian or Turanian”*<sup>50</sup>.

You have divided one nation into a hundred. You have launched a night raid against your own fortress. According to Iqbal, Muslims became a nation through the religion and honor of Prophet Abraham (*'Alaih As-Salām*). It is this bond that unites them—not any piece of land (homeland) nor any piece of flesh (race). *"In the past, Satan was created from fire; today's satans are created from clay. That is why the satans of today bind man to the soil"*<sup>51</sup>.

## 5. Slavery

Muhammad Iqbal builds the Islamic concept of personality on the foundation of free and competent individuals. A free self can become aware of itself and express its own personality. Individuals or nations under oppression or influence can only think, live, and acquire manners and morals to the extent their masters permit. Slavery kills the soul within the body, turning it into a burden upon the body. It transforms a young man into an old and weak person. Slavery pulls the teeth of a lion in the forest. It causes the individuals of a nation to turn against one another, making them enemies. People become preoccupied with fighting each other, each consumed by their own separate troubles. Slavery puts the girdle of servitude around the man of God. It devalues his very essence. Before autumn has even arrived, his branch is already bare. In his soul, you can find nothing but the fear of death. His sense of joy has gone astray—he mistakes the sting of a scorpion for an antidote. He is a corpse carrying his own dead body before he has even died. He has lost the pleasures and honors of life. Look—things that are possible for others are impossible for him. Watch how months and years pass him by<sup>52</sup>.

## 6. Imitation

Imitation is, according to Iqbal, the most dangerous and deadliest disease spreading throughout the Muslim world. The imitation of the West has led Muslims to become alienated from their own identity, to disregard their own values, and ultimately to lose their sense of self. Once their own foundations were shaken, Muslims' unity was broken; each began acting independently, becoming prey for imperialists. Iqbal laments this bitter reality in nearly all of his works: "Since you are a reed emptied of its core, you play someone else's melody. You feed on the leftovers of others and sell your own goods in foreign shops. Thus, it was another who lit the light of Islam, and the flame of the idol-house engulfed the mosque. O you who fear yourself, turn back—return to yourself!"<sup>53</sup>.

## 7. Laziness

Personality is in a constant state of searching, yearning, and activity. For the self, there is no stopping or standing still. Islam is a religion of working, producing, sweating for one's livelihood, putting forth effort, earning lawful income, and giving a portion of that income to the poor. God, in His attribute of justice, will grant the working and striving servant the reward of their labor. What matters most is a sincere heart and wholehearted effort. If the self is determined with this belief, it can change the fate of the world. Iqbal declares: "Rise, be the creator of a new world; embrace the flame and earn the fame of Abraham, the Friend of God. Do you seek the perfection of life? Learn to open your eyes and examine only yourself... Learn to drink the world like a sip of water; learn to break the spell of the notions of 'above' and 'below' that surround us"<sup>54</sup>.

## 8. The Indifferent Person

Iqbal believed that the bondage, poverty, ignorance, and exploitation experienced by the Islamic world stemmed largely from the indifference of Muslims themselves. A type of Muslim had emerged who no longer sought the freedom and dignity he had lost. When the rightful owner of a cause remains silent, the wrongdoer elevates himself to the position of being right. When one who claims to be a believer stays silent in the presence of an oppressor, faith begins to resemble cruelty, and poverty comes to resemble hypocrisy. Religion and the nation were sold for nothing; both home and possessions were set ablaze.<sup>55</sup>

## NURETTIN TOPÇU'S CONCEPT OF PERSONALITY

### 1. Action

Topçu states, "*Action is a synthesis of man and God.*" Action is the origin of our existence, the essence of life and of the human being. According to him, only through action does the soul gain embodiment, and embodiment in turn gains a soul. The embodiment of thought and feeling is a human reality, and truth becomes a human truth only when it takes on concrete form<sup>56</sup>.

### 2. Existence

Nurettin Topçu defines faith (*īmān*) as the state in which the self swells and grows, embracing its subject with all the powers of

existence and thought. In terms of its nature, faith exists in every matter that transcends partial knowledge, as in art, morality, and religion. However, instead of seeing faith as the unity that finds its ultimate purpose in these domains, he regards art as the faith of a multiplicity that condemns consciousness to aimless contemplation<sup>57</sup>.

### 3. Faith

Nurettin Topçu defines faith as the swelling and expansion of the self that embraces its subject with all the powers of existence and thought. In terms of its nature, there is a kind of faith that, as in art, morality, and religion, transcends all partial knowledge. However, instead of the faith of unity that finds its purpose in them, he sees art as possessing a faith of multiplicity—one that condemns consciousness to a purposeless contemplation<sup>58</sup>.

### 4. Love

According to Topçu, love is, first and foremost, a mode of thought. Therefore, in the emergence of his idea of will, the concept of love is indispensable; without it, his understanding of human will would remain incomplete. Consequently, he ascribes multiple meanings to love in his thought. Topçu defines love as follows: *Love is the wing that carries our hopeless existence toward infinity, and the hope of infinity itself. It is the state of overflowing with all beings*<sup>59</sup>.

### 5. Revolt

According to Topçu, the morality of rebellion is a matter of will and conscious faith. While he defines true and complete will in the morality of rebellion as one that begins with the individual, accepts authorities such as family and state, passes through the stages of nation and humanity, and ultimately reaches God, the definition of rebellion does not end there. Rebellion finds its place in every moment and stage of life<sup>60</sup>.

### 6. Will

The concept of *will* constitutes one of the fundamental principles of Topçu's thought. While it can simply mean the power to decide whether or not to do something, desire, wish, command, or order, it is also used in the sense of *divine will* (*irādah-i ilāhī*), referring to God's will and command; *partial will* (*irādah-i juz'ī*), referring to human

will; and *national will* (*milli irādah*), referring to the desire, preference, and decision of a nation<sup>61</sup>.

## **7. Freedom**

According to Topçu, over the actions a person performs freely, three distinct authorities hold sway: God, the individual's conscience, and the society in which they live. From these three authorities arise three corresponding forms of responsibility—religious, moral, and social. Topçu regards responsibility, defined in this way, as an element that determines our freedom, renders it necessary, and ensures its indispensability. In the course of action that develops in connection with responsibility, our freedom also comes into being. According to Topçu, the forces that compel the will from without originate in society, while those that constrain us from within stem from our habits and passions. Free action is the power that liberates the will from bondage by rebelling against all these forces<sup>62</sup>.

## **8. Responsibility**

The concept of responsibility can generally be defined as a person's assumption of the consequences of their own actions or of any event that falls within their sphere of authority. In other words, it is the ability to account for one's own behaviour and deeds, and the readiness to bear the outcomes that such actions may bring. In the philosophical sense, responsibility has often been considered as assuming the consequences of a deed. In the context of the idea of responsibility, however, Topçu departs from these philosophers. He sees rebellion that separates itself from divine will as dangerous, and thus he criticizes thinkers who produce ideas on responsibility while embracing such a stance<sup>63</sup>.

## **9. School – Teacher**

For Nurettin Topçu, the school is not merely a place for transferring information, nor is the teacher simply a transmitter of ready-made truths. The school is the workshop where character is shaped, where the soul learns discipline, and where generations are prepared to carry the moral mission of society. The teacher is not a mechanical instructor, but a moral guide—a craftsman of the human spirit. He shapes minds with knowledge, but more importantly, he shapes hearts with virtue. In Topçu's understanding, the true teacher lives what he teaches; he becomes an example, a living embodiment of the values he seeks to instill. Such a teacher does not simply prepare

students for exams, but for life—for service, sacrifice, and the pursuit of truth<sup>64</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Muhammad Iqbal and Nurettin Topçu are two Muslim thinkers who succeeded in combining Western philosophy with Islamic values. For both Muslim philosophers, the fundamental issue is attaining the ideal of *insān-i kāmīl* (the perfected human). For them, the ultimate goal is the establishment of a virtuous society, and to achieve this goal, virtuous and strong-willed individuals with integrity are essential. A complete and perfect personality can only be built through total submission to God, adherence to the Holy Qur’ān, and faith in the doctrine of *Tawḥīd* (the Oneness of God). When the unity of society and the individual is achieved, the ideal community emerges. The individual and the nation are mirrors of one another. The individual, on their own, cannot fully grasp true goals; their strength becomes scattered, leaving them aimless and without awareness. Unfortunately, today’s society—largely made up of individuals with weak character—has proven to be quite inadequate in producing exemplary and leading personalities. Both Iqbal and Topçu recommend to humanity the Islamic personality, characterized by qualities such as courage, tolerance, kindness, sincerity, dignity, honesty, faith, mercy, and consistency. A person with a sound heart (*qalb-i salīm*) is not one who is passive, discouraged, or dim, but one who tests their strength in great endeavours—who is combative and stands against the oppression, injustice, and tyranny of the world. According to Topçu and Iqbal, the Muslim personality is as strong as steel, formidable before its enemies. The ideal human envisioned by our thinkers is one with a strong personality—tough, bold, relentless, and combative. This is a person who cannot tolerate injustice. National morality is the compass of a society. An Islamic society cannot engage in prohibited behaviours such as exploitation, plunder, human trafficking, drug trafficking, or gambling. Today, moral decay has accelerated to such an extent that it has become nearly impossible to encounter individuals of genuine character. In such a time, the gift to humanity offered by two Muslim philosophers like Iqbal and Topçu is *personality*: the competent human being with firm and unshakable will, who uses their intellect, values thought, art, and good morals, and takes knowledge as their guide.

### **Declaration**

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bibliography. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles.

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