

# The Ontology of Muhammad Iqbal's Panentheism and Its Relevance to Environmental Ethics

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## Abstract:

This article examines the ontology of Muhammad Iqbal's panentheism and its implications for environmental ethics, aiming to descriptively outline the existential relationships between God, humans, and nature, and to assess how Iqbal's concepts can enhance environmental ethical frameworks. The research addresses the challenge of Muslim responses to modern science, which often focus on an Islamization process that can be exclusive. Three methods were employed: Language Analytics, analyzing Iqbal's linguistic choices; a Hermeneutic Method to interpret his texts through literal, phenomenological, and essential lenses; and a Heuristic Method to uncover insights by critiquing existing perspectives. The findings reveal that Iqbal's panentheism establishes an ontological framework that underscores the interconnectedness of all existence, linking the divine, human, material, and spiritual dimensions. This paradigm fosters a dynamic universe reflecting God's ongoing creativity and promotes environmental ethics by emphasizing unity and interdependence. Iqbal's philosophy encourages respect for the environment, sustainable practices, and an understanding of human roles as stewards of Earth, offering a holistic and spiritually profound approach to environmental ethics.

[Artikel ini mengkaji ontologi panenteisme Muhammad Iqbal dan implikasinya terhadap etika lingkungan, dengan tujuan untuk menguraikan secara deskriptif hubungan eksistensial antara Tuhan, manusia, dan alam, serta untuk menilai bagaimana konsep-konsep Iqbal dapat meningkatkan kerangka kerja etika lingkungan. Latar belakang penelitian adalah tantangan respons Muslim terhadap sains modern, yang seringkali berfokus pada proses Islamisasi yang dapat bersifat eksklusif. Tiga metode digunakan: Analisis Bahasa, menganalisis pilihan linguistik Iqbal; Metode Hermeneutik untuk menginterpretasikan teks-



teksnya melalui lensa literal, fenomenologis, dan esensial; dan Metode Heuristik untuk menemukan wawasan dengan mengkritik perspektif yang ada. Temuan-temuan menunjukkan bahwa panenteisme Iqbal membangun kerangka ontologis yang menggarisbawahi keterkaitan semua eksistensi, menghubungkan dimensi ilahi, manusia, material, dan spiritual. Paradigma ini mendorong alam semesta yang dinamis yang mencerminkan kreativitas Tuhan yang berkelanjutan dan mempromosikan etika lingkungan dengan menekankan kesatuan dan ketergantungan. Filsafat Iqbal mendorong penghormatan terhadap lingkungan, praktik-praktik berkelanjutan, dan pemahaman tentang peran manusia sebagai pengelola Bumi, menawarkan pendekatan holistik dan secara spiritual mendalam terhadap etika lingkungan.]

**Keywords:**

Ontology, Muhammad Iqbal, Panentheism, Environmental Ethics.

## **A. Introduction**

Religious and philosophical concepts permeate our lives, shaping behavior not only through conscious means but also through the subconscious. These teachings have a profound impact on how we address social and environmental challenges. Scholar Lynn Townsend White Jr. (1907-1987) explored this connection, specifically focusing on the influence of Judeo-Christian ideology on the development of Western science and technology.<sup>1</sup> In his work, "The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis" (1967), White argues that this ideology, particularly the emphasis on "subduing" and "having dominion" over nature in Genesis 1:28, has fostered a culture of exploitation within science and technology, leading to environmental damage.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Christianity bears responsibility for environmental degradation stemming from contemporary science and technology. White proposes an alternative approach, emulating Saint Francis of Assisi's view of nature as a partner, rather than a commodity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William B. Whitney, "Beginnings: Why the Doctrine of Creation Matters for the Integration of Psychology and Christianity," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 48, no. 1 (2020): 45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091647119837024>.

<sup>2</sup> Yohanes Hasiholan Tampubolon, "Telaah Kritis Etika Lingkungan Lynn White," *TE DEUM: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pengembangan Pelayanan*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (2020): 249, <https://doi.org/10.51828/td.v9i2.13>.

<sup>3</sup> Ben A. Minteer and Robert E. Manning, "An Appraisal of the Critique of Anthropocentrism and Three Lesser Known Themes in Lynn White's 'The Historical Roots

Building on White's work, Arnold Toynbee further argues that the Judeo-Christian tradition, particularly Genesis 1:28 and 3:19, has justified human exploitation of nature.<sup>4</sup> Toynbee, like White, proposes a shift from monotheistic to pantheistic worldviews as a solution to environmental degradation. Pantheistic perspectives, which view God as an integral part of the universe, can motivate humans to value nature as part of themselves. This, according to Toynbee, can serve as the foundation for a stronger environmental ethic. This debate has sparked widespread scholarly discussions across various disciplines, resulting in diverse approaches, such as examining the Christian tradition, exploring Eastern faiths, and integrating ecological science with Eastern philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

Philosophers and theologians responded positively to White and Toynbee's research, examining their philosophical and religious views. The major focus is on the existential image of God in His position and connection to mankind and nature. This is because God is frequently represented as a despotic monarch with ultimate authority, similar to the kings of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Similarly, the idea of nature is regarded unchanging and flawless since God has predetermined every sequence of occurrences through *actus purus*.<sup>6</sup> According to philosopher Ian G. Barbour<sup>7</sup> the depiction of God is no longer relevant and violates four fundamental principles. The first is the integrity of nature, as revealed by science and theology. Second, consider the issue of crime, misery, and human liberty. Third, Christianity's idea of atonement. Fourth, feminist critique.

In philosophical and theological literature, the comparison of the existential link between God, people, and nature is often debated in cosmology based on Plotinus' emanation theory. The term "cosmology"

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of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Organization & Environment*, Vol. 18, no. 2 (June 2005): 164, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026605276196>.

<sup>4</sup> Mujiono Abdillah, *Agama Ramah Lingkungan Perspektif Al-Qur'an. Cet I* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001), xvi.

<sup>5</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (Routledge, 1996), 192.

<sup>6</sup> F. Hale, "Debating Toynbee's Theory of Challenge and Response: Christian Civilisation or Western Imperialism?" *Acta Theologica*, Vol. 24, no. 2 (2009): 43–44, <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v24i2.48979>.

<sup>7</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Nature, Human Nature, and God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 101.

refers not only to the temporal origin of the universe and its evolutionary process, as in Stephen Hawking's quantum cosmological speculation, but also to the ontological model of the universe that can explain the problem of the eternity and diversity of nature, the whole and parts of nature, and the transcendence and immanence of God.<sup>8</sup>

Historically, the relationship between science and theology has been fraught with tension. While figures like Thomas Aquinas attempted to reconcile them by integrating Aristotelian cosmology with Christian theology, his view of God as the Prime Cause far removed from causal processes raised questions about God's role in the universe.<sup>9</sup> Modern science often presents a stark choice between atheism and a "God of the Gaps" – a placeholder deity pushed aside by scientific discovery.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the prevailing scientific paradigm, from Descartes' "divine clockmaker" to Laplace's deterministic universe, depicts God as either a remote guarantor of reality or entirely unnecessary.<sup>11</sup>

The emergence of new scientific theories, like relativity and quantum theory, challenged Newton's mechanical model of nature. These ideas suggest a more organic, interconnected view, where a butterfly's wings in Brazil might influence a tornado in Texas.<sup>12</sup> This shift has philosophical implications: the "ontological" model of nature, shaped by science, impacts the "existential" model of God created by theologians.<sup>13</sup> The question then becomes: how much scientific credibility is given to religious models of God, and vice versa? Process theologians offer "critical realism" as an answer, moving beyond traditional philosophies of science. This approach involves examining the language used in both scientific and religious models,

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<sup>8</sup> Aditama Aditama, Nafik Muthohirin, and Muhammad Rafliyanto, "Analyzing Ecotheology from The Perspective of Islam and Christianity: An Examination of Soren Kierkegaard's Existentialism Philosophy," *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 12, no. 01 (2023): 137, <https://doi.org/10.22219/progresiva.v12i01.27291>.

<sup>9</sup> John B. Cobb, "God and Physics in the Thought of Ian Barbour," *Theology and Science*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2017): 75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2016.1265218>.

<sup>10</sup> Barbour, *Nature, Human Nature, and God*, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Hatfield, "Reason, Nature, and God in Descartes," *Science in Context*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (1989): 177, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0269889700000764>.

<sup>12</sup> Werner Ulrich, "The Art of Interconnected Thinking: Frederic Vester's Biocybernetic Systems Approach," *Journal of Reserch Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2005): 6.

<sup>13</sup> Milos V. Lokajicek, "Phenomenological and Ontological Models in Natural Science," *Concept of Physics*, Vol. IV (2007): 7, <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.0710.3225>.

ultimately suggesting that both are metaphorical representations of reality, albeit with different approaches.<sup>14</sup>

Critical realism, championed by thinkers like John Polkinghorne, emphasizes the parallel nature of scientific and religious language. This approach fosters a constructive dialogue between the two, where scientific discoveries can inform theological understanding, and religious insights can inspire scientific inquiry. This perspective, known as Open Theology, differs from traditional Natural Theology, which often sought to prove God's existence through cosmological arguments, potentially leading to a deistic view of God.<sup>15</sup>

Muhammad Iqbal argues that historical attempts to justify God's existence often lead to pantheism, which undermines free will and environmental ethics. He emphasizes the importance of a God separate from creation for ethical responsibility.<sup>16</sup> This aligns with Whitehead's call for a new philosophy of God that incorporates modern science.<sup>17</sup> Whitehead's process philosophy, particularly as refined by Charles Hartshorne into panentheism, offers a radical departure from traditional theologies. This perspective posits a God who is both transcendent and immanent, existing beyond the cosmos yet intimately connected to it. This dynamic and participatory God challenges the static and distant image of traditional deities, providing a more comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of reality, the universe, and humanity's place within it.<sup>18</sup>

Arthur Peacocke, a prominent Christian theologian, embraced panentheism as a framework that reconciles God's transcendence as the ultimate source of being with God's immanence in creation.<sup>19</sup> This

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<sup>14</sup> Nancey Murphy, "Ian Barbour on Religion and the Methods of Science: An Assessment," *Zygon*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (1996): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.1996.tb00003.x>.

<sup>15</sup> John Polkinghorne, *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2009), 127.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013), 60.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, "Process and Reality (Corrected Edition)," *Philosophical Books*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (1981): 62, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0149.1981.tb00988.x>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>19</sup> Gloria Schaab, *The Creative Suffering of the Triune God: An Evolutionary Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20.

perspective elevates nature from a mere backdrop to a participant in human existence, demanding respect alongside God. However, Peacocke faces criticism from process theologians like Barbour and Polkinghorne who find his view of God's omnipotence problematic. They argue that Peacocke lacks a clear way to represent God's knowledge of creation, unlike the concept of "*hudhuri*" (knowing by presence) developed in Islamic philosophy by Mulla Sadra and Suhrawardi. This highlights a key tension within pantheism: balancing God's absolute power with a nuanced understanding of God's relationship with the created world.<sup>20</sup>

Pantheism presents a challenge for reconciling God's absolute power with His participation in creation. While Christian theologians like Peacocke struggle with the concept of God's limitations, Muhammad Iqbal argues for God's absolute omnipotence and omniscience, viewing Him as a free and creative Absolute Ego. This perspective aligns with pantheism's emphasis on God's immanence, where even seemingly supernatural events are real to the creator.<sup>21</sup> However, the exploration of pantheism within contemporary Islamic thought remains limited. This can be attributed to factors like limited scientific literacy in post-colonial Muslim societies, the focus on social issues within Islamic discourse, and the critique of modern science's impact on metaphysics, as exemplified by thinkers like Sayyed Hossein Nasr.<sup>22</sup>

Despite a focus on Islamizing science, the concept of pantheism remains unfamiliar within Muslim thought, even though it resonates with the existentialist ideas of Mulla Sadra and Muhammad Iqbal. Notably, Iqbal's pantheism views God as the Absolute Ego, the creative and all-encompassing spiritual substance of everything. This perspective, largely unexplored by both Western and Muslim scholars, presents a valuable basis for developing environmental ethics.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jonathan J. Mize and Vincent Geilenberg, "Pantheism and the Problem of World Inclusion: A Category-Theoretic Approach," *Philosophia*, Vol. 51, no. 2 (2023): 865, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-022-00552-6>.

<sup>21</sup> Yaseen Noorani, "Muhammad Iqbal and the Immanence of God in Islamic Modernism," *Religion Compass*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (2014): 66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12093>.

<sup>22</sup> Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the Making of State Power*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195144260.001.0001>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

Few scholars have explored how Muhammad Iqbal's panentheism relates to environmental ethics. This gap risks marginalizing panentheism within Islamic thought, despite its potential as an ontological foundation for environmental ethics.<sup>24</sup> On that basis, this study has two objectives, namely: First, to formulate descriptively the ontology of Muhammad Iqbal's panentheism more specifically to the position and existential relations of God, humans and nature. Second, to reflect back on the relevance of Muhammad Iqbal's panentheism concept to trigger benefits for the development of the concept of environmental ethics.

This research was analyzed using three interrelated method elements, namely: 1) Language Analytics, this method involves a detailed linguistic analysis of Iqbal's texts, focusing on the use of metalanguage and metaphors to understand the concept of panentheism.<sup>25</sup> 2) Hermeneutic Method, this method involves a three-step interpretation process: literal, phenomenological, and essential. It aims to uncover the deeper meaning of panentheism as expressed by Iqbal.<sup>26</sup> And 3) Heuristic Method, this method seeks to discover new insights into panentheism by critically examining existing scientific, theological, and philosophical perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

## B. Background of The Concept of Panentheism

The concept of panentheism, coined by 18th-century philosopher Karl Friedrich Krause, emerged as a response to the limitations of deism and pantheism. Defined as the belief that all reality exists within God, panentheism has historical roots in figures like the Egyptian pharaoh Ikhnaton, whose poetry suggests a unified God-universe concept.<sup>28</sup> Plato's concept of God's bipolarity, encompassing both eternity and change, further

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<sup>24</sup> Muzairi Muzairi, "Diskursus Mengenai Tuhan Di Dalam dan Di Luar Metafisika (God Is Being and God Without Being)," *Refleksi Jurnal Filsafat dan Pemikiran Islam* 17, no. 1 (2017): 10, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.v17i1.1869>.

<sup>25</sup> M Kaelan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Bidang Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Paradigma, 2005), 86.

<sup>26</sup> Anton Bakker and Charris Zubair, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990), 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Loy, "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2009: Building an Endowment with Community Support" (New York: Ithaca, 2015), 18, <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.22353>.

laid the groundwork for panentheism's development.<sup>29</sup> In the 20th century, theologians like Charles Hartshorne and philosophers like Dirk Baltzly revisited and expanded upon this concept, particularly within the context of process theology, which seeks to reconcile God's immanence with transcendence using scientific insights.<sup>30</sup>

Panentheism, distinct from creation *ex nihilo* or *ex materia*, emphasizes the concept of illumination.<sup>31</sup> John Cooper<sup>32</sup> argues in "Panentheism" that Plotinus' emanation hypothesis, where reality is a manifestation of God, laid the groundwork. A philosophy that views physical reality as an emanation or manifestation of God. This perspective acknowledges both God's unity and the multiplicity of nature, with nature existing within God as an emanation. Cooper's<sup>33</sup> concept of panentheism includes both the unity of God and the multiplicity of nature, but the plurality of nature exists within God. Cooper interprets the notion of emanation as referring to nature's ontological position as an emanation from God. Nature is a manifestation of God and does not exist independently. The relationship between God and nature must be regarded as a dialectical one.

Panentheism's exploration of the God-nature connection continued in the modern era.<sup>34</sup> While figures like Bruno and Spinoza grappled with the ontological link (Spinoza famously proposing God as identical to nature), others like Edwards and Schleiermacher emphasized God's role in the world's existence.<sup>35</sup> By the 19th century, panentheism emerged as an alternative to deism and pantheism. This era's understanding drew on three perspectives: idealism (Hegel and Schelling), evolutionary theory's

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God Paperback* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 54.

<sup>30</sup> Dirk Baltzly, "Is Plato's Timaeus Panentheistic?" *Sophia*, Vol. 49, no. 2 (2010): 199, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-010-0170-z>.

<sup>31</sup> Nicolas De Warren, "Miracles of Creation: Bergson and Levinas," in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael R. Kelly (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 180, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230282995\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230282995_10).

<sup>32</sup> John Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers - From Plato to the Present* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 35.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> P.A. Van der Weij, *Filsuf-filsuf Besar Tentang Manusia*, Textbook (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1991), 74–80.

<sup>35</sup> Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers*, 64.



philosophical interpretations, and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy.<sup>36</sup>

Building on Spinoza's monistic view, Hegel and Schelling developed a panentheistic perspective, emphasizing God's personality and nature's diversity. While God remains the ultimate source of being, creation is viewed as a dynamic process with a degree of autonomy.<sup>37</sup> Schelling, in particular, explored the concept of God's freedom, suggesting a "dipolar" nature where God's inner freedom influences the outer world. These ideas laid the groundwork for later developments in panentheism, particularly within process theology.<sup>38</sup>

Hegel's efforts to synthesize Fichte's subjective idealism with Schelling's objective idealism yielded a significant outcome: the development of a coherent subjective metaphysics for understanding God's evolving position within a dialectically evolving universe.<sup>39</sup> In this view, God embraces nature by absorbing it into his infinite nature, yet remains transcendent. Karl Krause, recognizing this concept as distinct from both deism and pantheism, coined the term "panentheism" in 1828.<sup>40</sup> Unlike Spinoza's "heavenly clockmaker" God, Krause believed Hegel and Schelling offered a more nuanced view of God's relationship with the universe.

The rise of panentheism became particularly intriguing when intertwined with Darwin's theory of evolution, which sent shockwaves through European scientific circles. Here, evolutionary theory was employed to explain the creativity of both God and nature. As Darwin integrated history into the concept of biology, thinkers like Alexander, Bergson, and Morgan expanded the concept of evolutionary development

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph A. Bracken, "Panentheism in the Context of the Theology and Science Dialogue," *Open Theology*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2014): 2, <https://doi.org/10.2478/opth-2014-0001>.

<sup>37</sup> Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers*, 90.

<sup>38</sup> Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 474.

<sup>39</sup> Robert C. Whittemore, "Panentheistic Implications of The Ontological Argument," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (1971): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-6962.1971.tb02194.x>.

<sup>40</sup> William Reese, 'Pantheism', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (blog), 2008, 1, *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*: <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-38155>.

to encompass all of physical reality.<sup>41</sup> They discovered that this notion could be used to better understand God's connection with nature. God was viewed as the Supreme Creator, and nature as His creative expression, endowed with the potential for continued growth. Evolution, in this context, became a cornerstone in the formation of panentheism.<sup>42</sup>

Emerging as a prominent perspective in the science-religion dialogue, panentheism offers a nuanced understanding of God's relationship with the universe. Arthur Peacocke,<sup>43</sup> a key figure in this movement, defines it as "the belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe...[but] his Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe." This view avoids both deism and pantheism, allowing for God's immanence within a complex, hierarchical universe.<sup>44</sup> Peacocke<sup>45</sup> argues that God's ongoing creation occurs through these natural processes, rejecting deistic distance and pantheistic absorption. Paul Davies<sup>46</sup> emphasized that the concept of structural and relational complexity within the universe highlights the interconnectedness between God and creation. This dynamic framework bridges the gap between traditional theism and modern scientific understanding.

### C. Ontology of Muhammad Iqbal's Panentheism

General metaphysics, also known as ontology, delves into the fundamental nature of reality, offering a foundational framework for other disciplines.<sup>47</sup> This pursuit, though intellectually demanding, is deeply rewarding. Its roots lie in the work of Aristotle, whose unnamed writings

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<sup>41</sup> Ralph Metzner, "The Split Between Spirit and Nature in European Consciousness," *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1993): 177.

<sup>42</sup> Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God Paperback*, 273.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Robert Peacocke and Philip Clayton, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans-Lightning Source, 2004), 151.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Davies, *Cosmic Jackpot: Why Our Universe Is Just Right for Life* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2007), 45–48, <https://www.amazon.com/Cosmic-Jackpot-Universe-Just-Right/dp/0618592261>.

<sup>47</sup> Rusli Malli, "Landasan Ontologi Ilmu Pengetahuan," *TARBAWI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, Vol. 4, no. 01 (June 21, 2019): 86–99, <https://doi.org/10.26618/jtw.v4i01.2133>.

following his physics texts were later labeled "Metaphysics" by Andronicus of Rhodes. Initially referred to by Aristotle as "first philosophy," the term "Metaphysics" reflects its focus on topics beyond the physical realm, encompassing questions of being, essence, and existence.<sup>48</sup>

In the Middle Ages, metaphysics was defined philosophically as the knowledge of what existing, or *post physicam et supra physicam*.<sup>49</sup> Siswanto<sup>50</sup> noted that metaphysics has evolved into a field that analyzes two things: the "categorical structure of reality" and the "essence and nature of divine substance". The theocentric nature of the Middle Ages elevated metaphysics to the role of queen of sciences.

Christian Wolf, a German philosopher who became a key figure in rationalism in the 17th century, divided metaphysics into two categories: general metaphysics, which investigates "being as being", and special metaphysics, which includes metaphysical cosmology, rational psychology, and natural theology. The evolution of metaphysics in modern philosophy cannot be divorced from the discussion of the object and manner of "being" or "existence".<sup>51</sup>

Ontology, the study of being and existence, has evolved significantly since its inception. While traditionally divided into general and special metaphysics, contemporary thinkers often blur this distinction, recognizing the interconnectedness of all aspects of reality. As noted by Anton Bakker, ontology seeks to comprehend the fundamental structure of reality, encompassing everything that exists.<sup>52</sup> This endeavor involves critical reflection on the nature of being and the world, as emphasized by Joko Siswanto. By exploring questions of existence, causation, and the nature of reality, ontology provides a foundational framework for other philosophical disciplines.<sup>53</sup>

Anton Bakker's,<sup>54</sup> which is documented in his work *Ontology: Philosophy of Being and the Foundations of Reality*, formulates the problem

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<sup>48</sup> Loren Bagus, *Metafisika* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1991), 19.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>50</sup> Joko Siswanto, *Metafisika Sistematis* (Yogyakarta: Taman Pustaka Kristen, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Anton Bakker, *Ontologi Metafisika Umum: Filsafat Pengada Dan Dasar-Dasar Kenyataan*. (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), 15.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Siswanto, *Metafisika Sistematis*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Bakker, *Ontologi Metafisika Umum*, 10.

of ontology, namely "what exists" or "being." Researcher use six problem formulations, namely: First, the problem of the unity and variety of being. Second, consider the basic essence of being: autonomous or correlative. Third, consider the processes of being: permanent and contingent. Fourth, there is the problem of the bodily and spiritual dimensions of existence. Fifth, problem the activity and causality of existence. Sixth, the problem of the meaning and value of existence. The six things above are the theoretical basis for mapping the ontological status of panentheism developed by Muhammad Iqbal.

#### 1. The problem the unity and variety of being

In his panentheistic philosophy, Muhammad Iqbal grapples with the core question of the unity and diversity of being, a longstanding debate in Islamic thought *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence). This dilemma centers on reconciling the oneness of ultimate reality with the apparent multiplicity of existence.<sup>55</sup> Drawing inspiration from both Islamic mysticism and Western philosophers like Bergson, Iqbal posits a dynamic view where God, the ultimate reality and source of all existence, continuously creates and sustains the universe.<sup>56</sup> Unlike rigid monism, Iqbal's vision emphasizes a dynamic relationship between God and the cosmos, with the universe as God's ongoing self-disclosure. This dynamic aligns with his concept of God as the "Ultimate Ego," constantly engaged in creation.

In his panentheistic framework, Iqbal tackles the apparent contradiction between the unity of God and the multiplicity of the world. He introduces the concept of "*khudi*" (self) to explain this plurality. creature possesses a degree of individual identity, and this variety reflects not an illusion but a manifestation of God's ongoing creativity.<sup>57</sup> This diversity further aligns with Iqbal's notion of "ontological relationality," where all beings are interconnected expressions of the divine. God, as the "Ultimate Ego," fuels the creative process, and the universe becomes a dynamic reflection of this

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<sup>55</sup> Sarbini Anim, "Muhammad Iqbal and The Idea of Dynamic Islam," *Al-Risalah*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2024): 391, <https://doi.org/10.34005/alrisalah.v15i1.3574>.

<sup>56</sup> Baki Karakaya and Asiye Şefika Sümeyye Kapsuz, "Kant, Bergson, and Iqbal on the Concept of Time and Its Effect on Iqbal's Reconstruction of Freewill," *Kader*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (2021): 933–35, <https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.995664>.

<sup>57</sup> Bashir Ahmad, Usman Ahmad, and Muhammad Hussain, "Searching the Self through Iqbal's Concept of 'Khudi' for Values under Today's Environment Challenges and Dichotomies," *Bahria University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (2023): 23, <https://doi.org/10.58800/bujhss.v6i1.171>.

essence. Therefore, Iqbal's approach, emphasizing individual selfhood and continuous creation, transcends the limitations of strict monism and dualism, presenting a dynamic relationship between God and the diverse cosmos.<sup>58</sup>

Iqbal's ideas offer a fundamental reconsideration of conventional Islamic metaphysics, with the goal of creating a philosophy that is both spiritually rewarding and conducive to active participation in the world. His pantheism therefore demonstrates his confidence in the capacity for human evolution, freedom, and creativity within the framework of divine oneness.<sup>59</sup>

## 2. The problem basic essence of being: autonomous or correlative

Central to Muhammad Iqbal's pantheistic framework is the question of being's essence: is it self-sufficient or inherently relational? An autonomous being exists independently, while a correlative being derives its essence from interactions. This distinction is crucial for understanding Iqbal's philosophy, as it shapes his view of how individual beings connect with the divine within his pantheistic system.<sup>60</sup> In his pantheistic philosophy, Muhammad Iqbal distinguishes between two fundamental concepts of existence: autonomy and correlativity. While autonomous existence, as argued by Azad,<sup>61</sup> posits entities as self-sufficient and independent, correlative existence, as proposed by Mohomed,<sup>62</sup> defines entities as integral parts of a broader network of relationships, including their connection to the divine. This distinction is pivotal in understanding Iqbal's perspective on the relationship between the individual and the greater reality.

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<sup>58</sup> Basit Bilal Koshul, "The Contemporary Relevance of Muhammad Iqbal," in *Muhammad Iqbal*, by Chad Hillier and Basit Koshul (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 70, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748695423-005>.

<sup>59</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, "Iqbal's Ego Philosophy and Its Importance in Awakening Man's Spirituality," *Journal of Islam in Asia*, Vol. 11, no. 1 (2014): 140–41, <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v11i1.424>.

<sup>60</sup> Hasan Azad, "Reconstructing the Muslim Self: Muhammad Iqbal, Khudi, and the Modern Self," *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2014): 12, <https://doi.org/10.13169/islamstudies.2.2.0014>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Carimo Mohomed, "Towards a Final Combination - Muhammad Iqbal's Philosophy of History," *Journal of Philosophy and Ethics*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (2020): 22, <https://doi.org/10.22259/2642-8415.0201003>.

In his panentheistic philosophy, Muhammad Iqbal offers a nuanced understanding of the relationship between God and the world. While God is the ultimate source and sustainer of existence, Iqbal rejects both a strictly immanent and a purely transcendent view. Instead, he proposes a dynamic interplay between God and creation.<sup>63</sup> The world, though distinct, is an expression of God's creative activity. The diversity of beings, while real, is rooted in the divine. This concept of a relational and evolving universe, where God and creation are interconnected, is a central tenet of Iqbal's thought.<sup>64</sup>

Iqbal's panentheism overcomes the dilemma of the essence of being by emphasizing its correlative character rather than affirming its autonomy. Iqbal's philosophy provides a profound synthesis of autonomy and correlation of being, positing that the essence of all created creatures is intrinsically related to God's autonomous, self-sufficient being. This correlative essence is crucial to Iqbal's panentheistic vision of a dynamic, ever-changing world fashioned by its interaction with divine reality.<sup>65</sup>

### 3. The problem processes of being: permanent and temporary

Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy grapples with the complexities of being, encompassing both permanent and temporal aspects. He attempts to reconcile these seemingly contrasting elements by situating them within the ongoing creative process of the divine and the universe.<sup>66</sup> To understand this fully, we need to distinguish between permanence and temporality: permanence signifies the unchanging and eternal, often associated with the divine, while temporality refers to the evolving and transient nature of entities within the flow of time. By integrating these concepts into his framework, Iqbal offers a sophisticated understanding of being processes.<sup>67</sup>

Iqbal's ontology hinges on the interplay of permanence and temporality, both transcendent and immanent within the cosmos. God, as the Ultimate Ego, embodies everlasting permanence, the unwavering foundation of all existence. This aligns with traditional Islamic conceptions of God as

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<sup>63</sup> Noorani, 'Muhammad Iqbal and the Immanence of God in Islamic Modernism', 67.

<sup>64</sup> Azad, 'Reconstructing the Muslim Self', 15.

<sup>65</sup> Anim, "Muhammad Iqbal and The Idea of Dynamic Islam," 390.

<sup>66</sup> Robert C. Whittemore, 'The Process Philosophy of Sir Muhammad Iqbal', in *Studies in Process Philosophy II*, ed. Robert C. Whittemore (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1975), 114, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-1385-7\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-1385-7_9).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

"*Qayyum*" (everlasting) and "*Samad*" (self-sustaining).<sup>68</sup> However, the created world, distinct from God's eternal state, represents the process of being through temporality. Time, with its inherent change and evolution, becomes an essential aspect of the divine creative process in Iqbal's pantheism. The universe is not a finished object but a continuous unfolding, with temporality playing a crucial role in realizing the potential within creation.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Iqbal transcends a simple dichotomy of permanence and temporality, weaving them together to present a nuanced understanding of being.

Iqbal's philosophy offers a unique reconciliation of the divine permanence and the temporal world. God, as the Ultimate Ego, is eternal and unchanging, yet also the source of all creation and change.<sup>70</sup> The temporal world, though subject to change and decay, is a manifestation of God's creative activity. The human self, a microcosm of the divine, participates in this dynamic process, experiencing both permanence (spiritual growth) and temporality (physical change). This interplay between the permanent and the temporal is central to Iqbal's understanding of existence, where the temporal world is not merely an illusion but a necessary stage in the journey towards the eternal.<sup>71</sup>

Iqbal's pantheism provides a complex response to the issue of permanence and temporality in the processes of existence. Iqbal's pantheistic philosophy therefore offers a comprehensive solution to the conundrum of permanence and temporality, combining both elements into a coherent picture of reality in which the temporal universe is a meaningful representation of God's everlasting creative power.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4. The problem of bodily and spiritual dimensions of existence

Iqbal rejects the dichotomy between body and soul, viewing them as interconnected aspects of a unified human existence.<sup>73</sup> He argues against

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<sup>68</sup> Asher Ghaffar, ed., *History, Imperialism, Critique: New Essays in World Literature*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2018), 131, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315440248>.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>70</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 55.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>72</sup> Ahmad Naeem, *Iqbal's Concept of Death, Immortality and Afterlife*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2006), 102–3.

<sup>73</sup> Bilal Ahmad Dar, "Iqbal and Nietzsche's Concept of Eternal Recurrence," *Intellectual Discourse*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (December 11, 2011): 287, <https://doi.org/10.31436/id.v19i2.234>.

ascetic views that consider the body a mere container for the spirit. Instead, the body becomes a crucial tool for self-development, providing the foundation for worldly action and a platform for self-expression.<sup>74</sup> It serves as a conduit for experiencing the world, engaging in creativity, and ultimately achieving self-actualization. This integrated perspective highlights the interdependent nature of the physical and spiritual in Iqbal's philosophy.

In Iqbal's framework, the human essence is a dynamic interplay between the spiritual and the material. The spirit, encompassing awareness, emotions, and a yearning for the divine, seeks growth through interaction with the physical world.<sup>75</sup> This interaction is not a mere limitation, but a vital step in the spirit's evolution towards a higher consciousness and a closer connection to God. This holistic view, where both realms are expressions of the divine, emphasizes the interconnectedness of body and soul in achieving self-realization.<sup>76</sup>

In contrast to dualistic views, Iqbal emphasizes a dynamic process of self-realization where the body and spirit are not separate entities, but interconnected forces.<sup>77</sup> The material world, with its challenges and opportunities, becomes the stage for the soul's development.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, the spirit provides purpose and direction to the body's actions. This constant interplay between physical and spiritual dimensions allows the self to transcend limitations and achieve its full potential through creative engagement with the world.<sup>79</sup>

##### 5. The problem of the activity and causality of existence

In his panentheistic framework, Iqbal challenges static interpretations of reality, arguing for a dynamic cosmos where action and causation reveal profound spiritual truths (Iqbal et al., 2024). Causality, for Iqbal, transcends

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>75</sup> Alim Roswanto, "The Philosophical Study of Iqbal's Thought: The Mystical Experience and the Negation of The Self-Negating Quietism," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (June 15, 2017): 5, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v6i1.1698>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>77</sup> Arham Junaidi Firman, Akhmat Noor Syofik, and Anis Rahmawati, "Muhammad Iqbal's Creativity Concept and Its Implementation in Students' Psychological Understanding," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (2021): 80, <https://doi.org/10.25217/cie.v1i2.1594>.

<sup>78</sup> Roswanto, "The Philosophical Study of Iqbal's Thought," 8–9.

<sup>79</sup> Firman, Syofik, and Rahmawati, "Muhammad Iqbal's Creativity Concept," 80.



a deterministic chain of events, becoming a manifestation of God's ongoing creativity. Both the divine and the universe are inherently active, with God as the ultimate source and the cosmos a dynamic expression of this creative will.<sup>80</sup> Iqbal's concept of causality departs from the predictability associated with classical physics. He views it as an open-ended process intertwined with the freedom of God and humankind. Causation, in Iqbal's view, is a succession of creative acts, allowing the cosmos to constantly evolve and reveal new possibilities, fostering innovation and an ever-changing reality.<sup>81</sup>

Iqbal's panentheism, in which God is both immanent inside and transcendent beyond the cosmos, provides a framework for examining the link between action and causality. All activity and causation in the cosmos are representations of God's will, yet the universe is more than just an automaton; it is a dynamic, living creature. Iqbal believes that God is not an uninvolved god, but rather an active participant in the cosmos. The cosmos is a continuing process of creation, with God constantly bringing new realities into being. Humans, formed in God's image, have the same creative capacity. Human action, therefore, reflects divine activity. Humans engage in the continuing creation process by designing their own lives and contributing to the evolution of the world.<sup>82</sup>

Muhammad Iqbal's panentheistic philosophy provides a comprehensive answer to the question of activity and cause in existence. By emphasizing the dynamic and creative quality of reality, Iqbal reconciles divine immanence with human freedom, offering a cosmos in which both God and mankind actively participate in the development of life. In this paradigm, causality is not a mechanical chain, but rather a purposeful process driven by creative freedom that allows for ongoing progress and the fulfillment of divine goals. In this sense, Iqbal balances the link between divine and human action, providing a view of existence that is both spiritually significant and existentially liberating.<sup>83</sup>

#### 6. The problem of the meaning and value of existence

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<sup>80</sup> Javed Iqbal et al., "Allama Iqbal and James Ward's Conception of God: A Comparative Review," *Kurdish Studies*, Vol. 12, no. 5 (2024): 600–601, <https://doi.org/10.53555/ks.v12i5.3278>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Noorani, 'Muhammad Iqbal and the Immanence of God in Islamic Modernism', 68.

Witnessing the erosion of spiritual values in the modern world, Iqbal identified a crisis of meaning, where life appears devoid of purpose in materialistic and deterministic paradigms.<sup>84</sup> Iqbal argued that, fostered alienation and obscured the inherent significance of existence. Iqbal contends that without acknowledging a spiritual dimension, the cosmos and human life become random and purposeless mechanisms. His response is to reclaim a sense of meaning, arguing that existence has a divinely ordained purpose – self-realization and participation in ongoing creation.<sup>85</sup> Within his panentheistic framework, the nature of God and the world determines this purpose. The cosmos, a manifestation of God's creative will, imbues everything with a purpose and value reflecting divine truth.

Iqbal's philosophy posits that life's meaning is rooted in self-realization, a dynamic process of growth and development.<sup>86</sup> The self, as an evolving entity, finds significance through active engagement with the world, contributing to both personal and societal betterment. This pursuit is guided by a divine purpose, as the cosmos and human existence are seen as manifestations of God's creative will. By aligning individual aspirations with this cosmic purpose, individuals can discover meaning and fulfillment in their lives.<sup>87</sup>

Iqbal's philosophy promotes constant self-realization as a method of discovering and achieving the meaning and value of life. The self is not a finished thing, but rather a developing being that must seek to grow and develop throughout life. This process of self-realization is not lonely; it includes interaction with the world, contributing to the well-being of others, and striving toward greater goals. Individuals achieve their goals and discover actual meaning and worth in their life as a result of this continual endeavor.<sup>88</sup>

#### **D. The Relevance Muhammad Iqbal's Panentheism with Environmental Ethics**

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<sup>84</sup> Feyzullah Yilmaz, "Iqbal, Nietzsche, and Nihilism: Reconstruction of Sufi Cosmology and Revaluation of Sufi Values in *Asrar-i-Khudi*," *Open Philosophy*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (2023): 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2022-0230>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Iqbal's pantheistic philosophy, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings, offers a valuable framework for environmental ethics. By viewing the world as a manifestation of divine creativity, Iqbal encourages a harmonious and respectful relationship with nature. This perspective, rooted in a spiritual and ethical understanding of the universe, can inspire sustainable practices and promote a sense of responsibility towards the environment.<sup>89</sup> This idea has direct implications for environmental ethics:

### 1. Sacredness of Nature

Iqbal's philosophy offers a powerful antidote to the modern crisis of meaning by emphasizing the sacredness of nature. Instead of viewing the natural world as a mere collection of resources for human exploitation (an anthropocentric view), Iqbal, through his pantheism, sees nature as a reflection of the divine. This perspective elevates the status of every element – plants, animals, and entire ecosystems – to a state of inherent holiness. It compels us to revere and protect the natural world, fostering not just respect for life and the environment, but also a profound sense of duty.<sup>90</sup>

This shift in perspective imbues environmental concerns with a deeper meaning. Damaging nature becomes more than just harming our surroundings; it becomes a violation of the divine order itself. The interconnectedness of all beings, envisioned by Iqbal's understanding of self-realization, further strengthens this connection. Just as harming another person goes beyond physical injury, harming nature is seen as a spiritual and ethical transgression.

Therefore, finding meaning through self-realization according to Iqbal requires actively engaging with the world in a way that contributes to the well-being of the planet. Aligning our individual aspirations with the divinely ordained purpose of creation necessitates a harmonious relationship with nature. This perspective offers a crucial framework for environmental ethics, urging us to move beyond solely practical considerations towards a sense of sacred responsibility for the world around us.

### 2. Interconnectedness and Responsibility

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<sup>89</sup> Ibrahim Özdemir, "Muhammad Iqbal and Environmental Ethics," *Acta Via Serica*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2017): 93, <https://doi.org/10.22679/AVS.2017.2.2.89>.

<sup>90</sup> Ahmed Afzaal, "Disenchantment and the Environmental Crisis: Lynn White Jr., Max Weber, and Muhammad Iqbal," *Worldviews*, Vol. 16, no. 3 (2012): 260, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685357-01603004>.

In Iqbal's philosophy, the concept of self-realization finds profound meaning when intertwined with the interconnectedness of all things. We, as humans, are not isolated entities striving for personal growth in a vacuum. Iqbal dismantles the anthropocentric view, emphasizing that we are essential components within a vast web of life. This interconnectedness extends beyond the material world, encompassing both the physical environment and the spiritual dimension of existence.<sup>91</sup>

This interconnectedness carries a significant ethical responsibility. Our actions have the power to ripple through this web, impacting not just the physical landscape but also the spiritual balance of the cosmos. Harming the environment disrupts this equilibrium, jeopardizing both the material well-being of the planet and the harmonious flow of creation envisioned by Iqbal.

This perspective elevates environmental ethics from a practical concern to a profoundly spiritual one. Just as humans, reflecting God's image, possess a creative capacity, we also have a responsibility to contribute to the ongoing creation of life on Earth. Self-realization, therefore, becomes intricately linked to environmental responsibility. Fulfilling our potential doesn't happen in isolation; it requires living in harmony with the natural world and contributing to its well-being. By consciously choosing actions that nurture and protect the environment, we participate in the divine flow of creation and fulfill our role within the interconnected cosmic whole.

### 3. Moral Imperative for Environmental Action

Iqbal's philosophy, rooted in a dynamic understanding of the universe as a continuous process of creation, offers a profound perspective on environmental ethics. The interconnectedness of all beings, including humans and the natural world, implies a moral imperative to act as responsible stewards of the planet. By respecting the sacredness of nature and participating in its ongoing evolution, humans can fulfill their divine purpose and ensure the well-being of future generations.<sup>92</sup>

Iqbal's concept of dynamic existence challenges static interpretations of nature. The natural world is not a fixed entity but a constantly evolving system. Human activities, therefore, must be aligned with this dynamic process, promoting sustainability and regeneration. This involves not just

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<sup>91</sup> Muhammad Atif Aftab, et al., "Islamic Environmental Ethics and Climate Change in Pakistan: Exploring the Contribution of Islamic Principles to Address Environmental Issues," *Al Khadim Research Journal of Islamic Culture and Civilization*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (2024): 63, <http://www.arjicc.com/index.php/arjicc/article/view/300>.

<sup>92</sup> Özdemir, "Muhammad Iqbal and Environmental Ethics," 93.

conserving the existing environment but actively contributing to its health and vitality.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, Iqbal's emphasis on the interconnectedness of all beings underscores the ethical implications of human actions on the environment. Harming nature is not merely a practical problem but a spiritual and moral failing. By understanding our role as co-creators in the divine plan, we can approach environmental issues with a sense of responsibility and urgency. This perspective offers a powerful motivation for environmental action, inspiring us to protect and preserve the planet for generations to come.<sup>94</sup>

## E. Conclusion

Muhammad Iqbal's panentheism provides a comprehensive ontological framework emphasizing the oneness and interdependence of all existence. Within this paradigm, the divine, human, material, and spiritual dimensions of existence are inextricably linked, resulting in a dynamic and developing universe that represents God's continual creative activity. The ontological approach provides a profoundly relevant paradigm for environmental ethics by highlighting the oneness and interdependence of all reality. His philosophy promotes respect for environment, adherence to sustainable methods, and an understanding of human responsibilities as Earth stewards. Iqbal's ideas offers a holistic approach to environmental ethics that is both spiritually profound and practical. In a time of increasing environmental challenges, Iqbal's vision calls us to align our actions with the divine purpose, fostering a relationship with nature that is based on respect, care, and a deep understanding of our place within the cosmic order. []

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<sup>93</sup> Aftab et al., "Islamic Environmental Ethics and Climate Change in Pakistan," 61.

<sup>94</sup> Özdemir, "Muhammad Iqbal and Environmental Ethics," 90.

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