

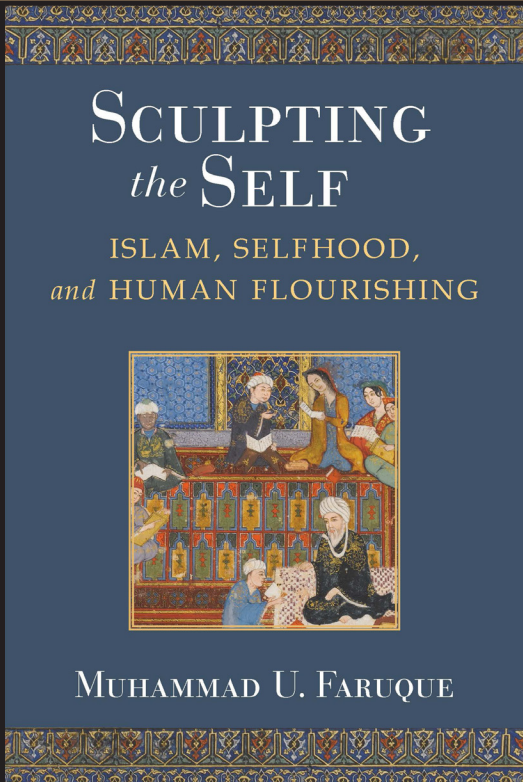
# Sculpting the Self

Islam, Selfhood, and Human Flourishing

*Sculpting the Self* addresses “what it means to be human” in a secular, post-Enlightenment world by exploring notions of self and subjectivity in Islamic and non-Islamic philosophical and mystical thought. Alongside detailed analyses of three major Islamic thinkers (Mulla Sadra, Shah Wali Allah, and Muhammad Iqbal), this study also situates their writings on selfhood within the wider constellation of related discussions in late modern and contemporary thought, engaging the seminal theoretical insights on the self by William James, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Michel Foucault. This allows the book to develop its inquiry within a spectrum theory of selfhood, incorporating bio-physiological, socio-cultural, and ethico-spiritual modes of discourse and meaning-construction. Weaving together insights from several disciplines such as religious studies, philosophy, anthropology, critical theory, and neuroscience, and arguing against views that narrowly restrict the self to a set of cognitive functions and abilities, this study proposes a multidimensional account of the self that offers new options for addressing central issues in the contemporary world, including spirituality, human flourishing, and meaning in life.

This is the first book-length treatment of selfhood in Islamic thought that draws on a wealth of primary source texts in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Greek, and other languages. Muhammad U. Faruque’s interdisciplinary approach makes a significant contribution to the growing field of cross-cultural dialogue, as it opens up the way for engaging premodern and modern Islamic sources from a contemporary perspective by going beyond the exegesis of historical materials. He initiates a critical conversation between new insights into human nature as developed in neuroscience and modern philosophical literature and millennia-old Islamic perspectives on the self, consciousness, and human flourishing as developed in Islamic philosophical, mystical, and literary traditions.

**Muhammad U. Faruque** is Inayat Malik Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Cincinnati.



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“*Sculpting the Self* is a masterpiece. It is among the finest explorations of selfhood and subjectivity in contemporary philosophical literature. Muhammad Faruque’s approach is breathtakingly erudite, analytically precise, and extraordinarily synoptic. He draws effectively on a wide range of Western philosophical literature—classical, modern, and contemporary; on classical and recent Indian philosophy; on contemporary cognitive science; and especially, and with great nuance, on a great swath of the Islamic tradition from the medieval period through the work of Muhammad Iqbal. Each of these many threads is spun with great care. But most impressive is the skill with which they are woven into a profoundly illuminating tapestry. *Sculpting the Self* is not only a superb exploration of selfhood, but a master class in the practice of cross-cultural philosophy.”

— Jay L. Garfield, Doris Silbert Professor in the Humanities, Smith College and Harvard Divinity School

“*Sculpting the Self* is a rare but essential treat that presents a creative analysis of major thinkers in Islam, and demonstrates how one might fruitfully read their work to move towards a truly global study of selfhood and philosophy.”

—Sajjad Rizvi, University of Exeter

“*Sculpting the Self* is an impressive book. Situated at the crossroads between Western and Islamic philosophies of the self, both modern and non-modern, it offers a new way forward: a “multidimensional” model that is richer, more expansive, and more inclusive than most theories available today. Smart, deeply informed, and engaging, Faruque’s book will be a cornerstone for future thinking about the elusive entity we call the self.”

—James I. Porter, Irving Stone Professor of Literature, Departments of Rhetoric and Classics, UC Berkeley

“Faruque develops a unique perspective in combining neuroscience and philosophy and offers a great conversation between Western, Islamic, and Eastern philosophers.”

—Ramazan Kilinc, University of Nebraska at Omaha

“In *Sculpting the Self* we are guided along the maze of the concept of the self in Islamic philosophy by one of the most promising, young global philosophers writing today. Muhammad Faruque’s breadth in this work is extraordinary, bringing many key pre-modern and modern Muslim philosophers from Iran and India into conversation with various currents in philosophy, consciousness studies, evolutionary theory, and neuroscience. The result is nothing less than a sophisticated, first of its kind account of Islamic philosophical conceptions of selfhood, personhood, and identity.”

—Mohammed Rustom, author of *Inrushes of the Heart: The Sufi Philosophy of ‘Ayn al-Qudat*

“Faruque’s book is a welcome attempt to engage the various strands of Islamic philosophical psychology with contemporary work on subjectivity and selfhood in the philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences. The approach is novel and should initiate a vigorous discussion concerning the contemporary relevance of the history of Islamic thought.”

— Jari Kaukua, University of Jyväskylä

“The variety of voices and sources, both Western and non-Western, bring to life the model of a multidimensional self especially in contrast to the reductionist models that Faruque critiques.”

— Sayeh Meisami, University of Dayton

“Faruque has delivered a tour de force study of selfhood across time and tradition. His expertise in Islamic thought, together with his facility with a wide range of sources and approaches, succeeds in bringing the self’s full spectrum into view. The ambition of his project is as rare as it is refreshing.”

— Charles M. Stang, Professor of Early Christian Thought and Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School



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