

those familiar with his oeuvre and the body of criticism written in response, Dauda and Falola's book will function best as resource to mine for historical insights.

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[doi:10.1017/pli.2023.12](https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2023.12)

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Postcolonial Bergson*. Fordham University Press, 2019, 144 pp.

The recent English translation of Souleymane Bachir Diagne's 2011 *Bergson postcolonial: l'élan vital dans la pensée de Léopold Sédar Senghor et de Mohamed Iqbal* by Fordham University Press does not come as a surprise for anyone familiar with the author's trajectory and the success of his past publications, especially this one. John E. Drabinski's foreword gives English-speaking readers insight into an important publication that has made its mark in the field of French philosophy.

Although it is not new that French philosophers and other thinkers have some influence or, at least, are put in dialogue with those of the global south, *Postcolonial Bergson* is particularly noteworthy because it is the only work that focuses on investigating the ways in which French philosopher Henri Bergson has been engaged with in two postcolonial settings: Senegal and India. More specifically, Bachir Diagne seeks to illustrate how Leopold Sédar Senghor and Muhammad Iqbal have been significantly influenced by "Bergsonian thought." The main questions addressed in the book are "How did these two figures of the colonized world come to be Bergsonian? and For what reasons, in undertakings as different as Senghor's Negritude and Iqbal's Islamic reformism, did they come to lean on Bergson's thought?" (11–12).

Postcolonial Bergson consists of four chapters, with the first and last two dedicated to Senghor and Iqbal, respectively. Chapter 1, "Bergsonism in the Thought of Leopold Sédar Senghor," explores categories such as dance, language, and emotion in order to analyze the ways in which the French philosopher impacted the outlook of the Senegalese thinker and poet. This chapter revisits some highly contentious claims made by Senghor about Africans that are reminiscent of Lévy-Buhel's charge about so-called "primitivism." Talking about emotions, Bachir Diagne contends, in apparent "defense" of Senghor, that the term "underscores the primacy of movement in the act of knowing, as opposed to the idea that it is necessary to immobilize in order to grasp. It is important to insist that emotion is not simple feeling but a real cognitive movement" (26). The next chapter on Senghor is centered on his African socialism. Like many left-leaning intellectuals, Senghor was a reader of Karl Marx: "The Marx adopted by

Senghor, and on whom he would base his spiritualist socialism, is the philosopher of alienation and not the economist of surplus value” (42). Bachir Diagne delves into this interconnectedness by exploring four factors: a reconsideration of Marx’s definition of alienation, Senghor’s socialism as a “cosmogenetic order of the movement of the world” (46), the spiritualist aspect of Senghor’s socialism, and, finally, the intuitive knowledge and ontology of art. In what liberation theologians would probably consider a fundamental abomination, Bachir Diagne illustrates Senghor’s thinking about religion in the following terms: “Religion and the movements of liberation from alienation fight the same fights; and [Senghor] specifies that this is true for both Christian and Muslim religions. It is therefore unnecessary to see an opposition between the theological and humanism” (47).

The third and fourth chapters are respectively entitled “Bergson, Iqbal and the Concept of *Ijtihad*” and “Time and Fatalism: Iqbal on Islamic Fatalism.” Although the relationship between Senghor and Bergson may be perceived as “normal” or “expected” because Senghor was French and was educated in the *belles lettres*, *Postcolonial Bergson* sheds light on the heretofore little studied encounter between the Jewish philosopher and the Indian political leader and thinker whom he has significantly influenced “in his project of rethinking Quranic cosmology in order to give meaning to the juridico-theological concept of *ijtihad*” (58). By examining “the Bergsonian heart of Iqbal’s thought,” Bachir Diagne dissects some of the foundational addresses of Muhammad Iqbal in which he identifies and assesses some particularly notable features of Iqbal’s philosophical positioning? He affirms, for example, that Islam is a culture that establishes a political community in which *ijtihad* plays a central role. For Iqbal, *ijtihad* is “the invention of practices and rules that are adapted to circumstances, and also to modernity, not the imposition of legislation that was intended to apply at all times at all places, a manner of seeing that Iqbal calls an ‘Arabian imperialism’” (67). More specifically, in relation to Bergson, Bachir Diagne contends that “Iqbal’s philosophy organises the meeting of Bergsonian thought of becoming-individual and this Sufi tradition, founded among other things on the Quranic verse that, speaking of the prophetic experience that leads Muhammad into the presence of God” (71). As was the case with Senghor, with Iqbal, one can see the strengths and values of humanism and tolerance.

The last chapter on fatalism borrows from Leibniz and other philosophers to examine the ways in which Iqbal articulates his thoughts within the context of Islamic culture. What, in the theological context, is the place of God, time, free will, or *élan vital*, which so dear to modern philosophy? How does one escape from the impasse of God’s omniscience-omnipotence versus free will? In this chapter, Bachir Diagne adeptly sheds light on the subtle and sophisticated aspects of Iqbal’s thoughts. The following comment about time is particularly brilliant: “The time that is nothing and does nothing is the serial time that is reduced to the distance separating different events on a trajectory between the present and the past that could as well extend into the future” (89).

In all, Souleymane Bachir Diagne’s *Postcolonial Bergson* is a masterful investigation of the ways in which Henri Bergson was established as a key figure of postcolonial thought through the works of two key thinkers, Léopold Sédar

Senghor and Muhammad Iqbal. This book is a major contribution to the dialogue between thinkers from totally different backgrounds. Moreover, this work is all the more valuable for the way in which Bachir Diagne provides significant and ample evidence that theoretical investigations go beyond territories and geographies, mutually enriching thinkers from three continents. The theoretical sophistication of this publication is unparalleled and refreshing. This is undoubtedly a must-read book, particularly for its meaningful contribution to the study of Bergson and the field of epistemology?

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[doi:10.1017/pli.2023.13](https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2023.13)