

METAPHYSICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TRACTATUS ON SPACE AND TIME

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‘Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani, a Persian scholar, wrote a Tractatus on Space and Time in Persian, known as Ghāyat al-Imkān fi Darāyat al-Makān. Iqbal obtained its manuscript copy through the courtesy of Maulānā Anwar Shāh of Deoband. In the absence of any clear indication, Iqbal took it as the work of ‘Irāqi and used it as such in his Re-construction of Religious Thought in Islam. The Iqbal Academy has got the whole Tractatus translated into English, which is expected to be published soon.

Besides the translation, the translator has given in the second part a detailed historical and philosophical account of this important problem. The following is the first chapter of the second part.

This Tractate on Space and Time is a very thought provoking contribution by Abu’! Ma’ālī ‘Abdullāh b. Mohammad b. ‘Ali (d. 525 Hijra) in an hour of crisis in Muslim thought and culture.

The philosophies of Fārābi (d. 339. A.H.) and Avicenna (d. 428 A.H.), in sympathy with the Karamites and Bātiniya movements meant a total metamorphosis of Islam by making its fundamental outlook amenable to the principles and premises of ‘Mediationism’ as necessary chain in the structure of reality from

God to man.⁹² The endogamous trends of Islam, the Ash'arites as much as the Mu'tazilites, felt the danger inherent in this movement against the foundations of Islam, which permit no intermediation between God and man. It was in this context that Ghazālī (d. 505 A.H.), mostly by rebuilding the principles of the Ash'arite philosophy, advanced a refutation of Avicenna and al-Fārābī in his book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*. His *Tahāfut* however went beyond what was warranted by Islam and touched the opposite extreme of arbitrarism in the universe, a world-view which could hardly be justified from the point of view of Muslim Theology. It erased nearly every thing rational, and put the entire reality, one and all concrete existent, at the mercy of an unprincipled will with little scope of orderliness in the world and nature ; and reduced everything, its essence, its property and its characteristics, to mere accidents, which may appear here and there without an intelligible order or plan. Avicenna, however, had preserved the order, but, it too was under a schema which never could be reconciled with Islam. He limited the First Principle (God) to a Generality which does not touch, or move, the concrete manifestations of the sub-lunary world, thus making a series of intermediaries inevitable. The First Cause created or to be more exact, produced, the first effect, which in turn created the second effect, and so on till the elements of the sub-lunary world were produced with their concrete principles of change and effects, generation and corruption. Thus God, in Avicenna, is removed far away from his creation, i.e., the concrete individuals and the temporal entities,

⁹² Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Najaf* (Egypt, 1938), pp. 448-55.

which duly attain an intelligible order, based on the axiom that 'Nothing proceeds from the one except one.'⁹³

Al-Hamadāni's *Tractatus on Space and Time* was fundamentally addressed to this problem, which demanded a workable synthesis of the rational order and Divine immediacy as necessary bases for the development and consolidation of the theoretical system of Islam. Al-Hamadāni's *Tractatus* was exactly written in this background. The metaphysical inquiry thus pervading its choice of terms was sharply focussed on two issues: (1) how does the Temporal proceed from the Eternal First? and (2) how does the First comprehend the particulars? These two questions had laid down guide line for Ghazali's *Tahafut*, and the same orientated the problems of Averroes' *Tahāfut al-Tahāfa*, a century later (d. 595 A.H.). By expounding three categories or grades of space and time, al-Hamadāni made a most original contribution in the history of Muslim thought.

Al-Hamadāni was a pupil and disciple of Abu'l Futuh Ahmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520 A.H.),⁹⁴ who is known to have paraphrased the *Ihya al-'Ulam al-Din* of his elder brother, Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī, to whom he succeeded as leader of the school. Thus, al-Hamadāni was thoroughly trained in the ways of and alive to the problems of this school and contributed his own theory in the light of Islam and the Rationalism natural to it. His theory of space and time was meant to overcome the shortcomings of Ghazali's *Tahāfut*,

⁹³ Ibid ; *Kitāb al-Shifā*, vol. vi (Teheran 1885), p. 6.

⁹⁴ Rahim Fermentish, *Ahwal wa Athar 'Ayn al-Quṣat*, (Tehran, 1338 Shamsi), pp. 12-26.

which for the preservation of Divine Immediacy as basic principle of Islam, denounced all kinds of natural and efficient causality as to be of the nature of a spur of will, with no guarantee of its certitude and continuity in future.

The issues involved in the controversies between the philosophers (Fārābi and Avicenna) and the Ash'arites (Mutakalimin and Ghazāli) around the problem of Divine Immediacy and World Order might be best stated by reproducing from No. X11I of the *Tahāfut*. Ghazāli writes, "They are all agreed on this. Those who believe that God knows nothing but Himself are obviously committed to it. But even those who hold that He knows the other—the position adopted by Ibn Sinā—assert that He knows things by a universal knowledge which does not fall under Time, and which does not change through the Past, the Present, and the Future. And in spite of this, it is asserted, (by Ibn Sinā who represents the latter) that "nothing--not even as much as a particle of dust, in the heavens, or on the earth—is hidden from His knowledge--only that he knows the particular in a Universal manner."⁹⁵

Ghazāli criticises this theory. Later, Averroes confirms much of his criticism, assails Avicenna and then expounds the proper position in this respect. Ghazāli said that if God's knowledge of a temporal and transient body is uninfluenced by Time and change, and He knows it only by a changeless knowledge, then he does

⁹⁵ *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, English translation Sabih Ahmad Kamali, (Lahore, 1958), p. 153.

not know it at all. "Thus, at the time of an eclipse, it cannot be said that He knows that it exists now. Nor after the eclipse, can it be said that He knows that now it has cleared away. For nothing which is necessarily defined in relation to Time can conceivably be known to Him for such knowledge would necessitate a change in the knower."⁹⁶ In modern terminology, Avicenna meant that God's knowledge is nomothetic and not idiographic. Ghazālī made the same objection as Windleband (d. 1334/1915) made about the nomothetic knowledge that it cannot catch hold of the individual things and events.⁹⁷ According to Avicenna's statement, "He knows everything universally. As far as the person of Zaid is concerned, it is distinguishable from that of 'Amr only for the senses, not for the intellect. For the basis of distinction is the designation of a particular dimension, while the intellect apprehends only the absolute and the universal dimension, or the universal space. When we say, 'This and this', we allude to a relation which is perceptible object vis-a-vis the percipient because of its being near to, or far from, him or being situated in a particular direction. And this is impossible in the case of God."⁹⁸ The above point of view is based on a very noble motive, namely, to state the nature of Divine Knowledge in keeping with the Divine Nature that God is changeless and Eternal and that His Existence is free from the directions of 'here' and 'now'. It led Avicenna to infer that Divine omniscience is of universal manner.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

⁹⁷ Heinrich Rickert, *Science and History*, Eng. trans., George Reismann (New York, 1962), pp. 56-61.

⁹⁸ *Tahafut al-Falāsifah*, loc. cit., p. 155.

But this solution sets a limit of another type on God. It confines Him to the knowledge of universals only, allowing Him no knowledge of the particulars as they are. Ghazālī rehabilitated divine knowledge of the individual things in the individual way (idiographic) by stating that the knowledge of temporal or transient object does not involve a change in the Divine Essence. This solution, however, could not meet the philosophical difficulties that knowledge of a temporal and spatial entity involves its temporal and spatial relations with the knowing essence, and that there should be some position at which the subject is in the relation of ‘here’ and ‘now’ with it. It means ascribing of hither and thither to God. Thus, both Avicenna and Ghazālī failed one way or the other in representing the First Essence in relation with the perceptible objects. Shortcomings of their respective premises were exposed by Averroes in *Tahāfut al Tahāfa*.⁹⁹

Knowledge of the individual entities, that is idiographic knowledge, in the case of God, cannot be denied. It is clear that Universal know-ledge cannot replace it. But, it demands a spatio-temporal frame of reference which relates the knower and the known. Hamadāni was then in the right to have deduced a Divine Space and a Divine Time, which would make the idiographic knowledge of God as a metaphysically acceptable proposition. But, before we could appreciate it, it seems desirable to explore the discussions of Ibn Rushd on this problem.

⁹⁹ Also *Fasl al-Maqāl*, Urdu trans. ‘Ubaidullah Qudsi, (Karachi, 1967), *Kit mā b’ ad al-Tabi’yah* (Hyderabad, 1365 A.H.), pp. 119-126.

Ibn Rushd acknowledges Ghazālī's analysis which brings to light that the concrete awareness (idiographic or individual) is irreducible to abstract awareness (universal or general knowledge). He thoroughly repudiates Ibn Sinā and his forerunner al-Fārābī on the score, but at the same time, assails Ghazālī's conclusions as mere sophistry or dialectic, based on either tradition, or popular opinion, and not on the first principles, nor on self-evident truths and clear demonstration. To offer his own solutions, he denies the possibility of comparison between divine knowledge and the human perception of the transient thing. "It is impossible, according to the philosophers, that God's knowledge should be analogous to ours. He who believes this makes God an eternal man, and man a mortal God."¹⁰⁰ Ibn Rushd holds that Divine knowledge cannot be like universal knowledge, for universalization is a human act and consequence of man's intellectual faculty. Nor can it be like individual knowledge, for it is also a human faculty. He says, "The most competent philosophers therefore do not call God's know-ledge of existents either universal or individual, for knowledge which implies the concepts of universal and individual is a passive intellect and an effect, whereas the First Intellect (God) is pure act and a cause, and His knowledge cannot be compared to human knowledge."¹⁰¹ It may be noticed that human perception is brought into activity by appearance of the object. Human knowledge, be it universal or individual, is there-fore an effect of the known object. Divine

¹⁰⁰ Tahafut al-Tahāfah, vol. I, Engl. trans. Simon van Dan Berg. (Oxford 1954), p. 280.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 281.

knowledge, on the other hand, is not an effect; its being lies in its being an act in itself, and as such, it is of the nature of cause to which the individual objects, or contents of knowledge, stand as effects. Knowledge, by its very nature is attached to the existents. Thus, the Divine knowledge is such that it is attached to the existents; it had to be attached either in the way our knowledge is attached to it, or in a superior way, and since the former is impossible, this knowledge must be attached in a superior way and according to a more perfect existence of existents than the existence of existents to which our intellect is attached. For if true knowledge is in conformity with existent, then there must be two kinds of existence, a superior and an inferior, and the superior existence must be the cause of the inferior. It is impossible that God's knowledge should be like the knowledge of man, that is, the things known should be the cause of His knowledge and their occurrence the cause of the fact that He knows them, just as the objects of sight are the cause of visual perception and the intelligible, the cause of intellectual apprehension."¹⁰²

In this way Ibn Rushd repudiates both Ibn Sinā and Ghazālī, and proves how they are entrapped in nothing more than the different kinds of human knowledge—one in the abstract knowledge of the universal type, the other in the concrete knowledge of the sensuous type—and ascribe to the First Principle, the kind of human knowledge, they respectively hold, while the First is Active Principle of all existence and is cause

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 284.

without being an effect. Divine knowledge, as Ibn Rushd holds, is above the general and particular. Both the general and particular are subject to the limitations of Time and Space. The particular is individualized through its being at a definite moment of Time and at a definite position in Space. The general, however, is subject to the conditions of Time in general and absolute Space. But divine knowledge is not subject to these conditions. The human percipient must be contemporaneous with the entity-in-becoming and be within a certain neighbourhood to behold, hear, and touch it. Divine knowledge cannot be characterized with these kinds of change in position and direction which would imply limitation upon it. But the condition of compresence, understood both in its time-aspect and space-aspect, is a pre-requisite to the consciousness of concrete things, necessitating the existence of Divine Time and Divine Space, in which this compresence, designated by Ibn Rushd as knowledge in a superior way, is realized. Hamadāni's concepts of the Space of God and Time of God are thus logical implications of the Divine compresence with the concrete things wherein Divine knowledge does not undergo the processes of induction or deduction from particular to general, or from general to particular; since, the First knows every thing unmediatedly, it means a unique modality of His co-existence with the concrete entities. This modality must be actualized in Divine Time and Divine Space. Divine Time comprehends every accident and Divine Space contains all things. There is no moment of Divine Time which has not yet begun, and there is no moment which is not yet past. It is all actuality; all

of its parts are synchronized. Being present in it, every accident is an immediate object of the divine knowledge. The topography of Divine Space is also such that not a single particle of the world is farther away than any other in its closeness to God. Since there is no 'left' and 'right', 'below' and 'above', 'here' and 'there' in Divine Space, and, since there is no 'after' and 'before' in Divine Time, quantity and division do not pervade them. Divine knowledge does not, therefore, admit of multiplicity. It is single knowledge which comprehends all in all, allowing no comparison with human knowledge.

Avicenna had also a sense of higher Time order if not of higher Space order. He designated it as *sarmadiyah*.¹⁰³ But it had no correspondence with Hamadāni's notion of Divine Time. *Sarmadiyah*, in Avicenna's philosophy, is just like Platonic universal, which by its very nature, is abstract and cannot attain to the plane of corporeal things. It is an object of intellect and only an intelligible form, while, in the Divine Time, every accident and transient entity is comprehended in one sweep and immediately. *Sarmadiyah* is indeed derived from a sophisticated philosophical system—Emanationism. It has its necessity in the First Emanation and in itself is Possible. It projects the eternity of the First Effect as necessary manifestation of the Divine Agent. It is posited as an aspect of self-consciousness of the First Effect in its being the Universal Possibility of all plurality. On the contrary, Divine Time is all actuality with God. Thus it is not an idea but a

¹⁰³ Sobel M. Afnan, *Avicenna, His Life and Work*, (London, 1956), pp. 214-1:

reality in which all actuality is posited in the unmediated presence of God, the First Principle. Avicenna's Sarmadiyah cannot be consequently equated with the order of Divine Time.

Hamadāni's theory makes a safe voyage through the contradictions of Ghazālī's philosophy. The fallacies of Ghazālī's dialectical arguments are most pronounced in his discourses on the finitude of Time. The philosophers, Fārābi and Avicenna, championed the cause that there is no initial term of time, and there is no last term either. Let it be emphasized that Ghazālī's refutation of the philosophers' belief in the eternity of the world, time, and motion, was not accepted by any thinker of worth in the tradition of Muslim Culture. Theorists, like Fakhruddin Rāzi (d. 606 A.H.) and Averroes, continued to be in agreement with Fārābi and Avicenna and with the Aristotelean tradition in holding that there is no beginning of Time, and that it has no term which does not imply another one before it. This is the doctrine of the 'beginninglessness of Time', in which Ghazālī wrongly apprehended a danger to the doctrine of Islam. It may however be conceded that though his plea of the finitude of Time was fallacious in its arguments, yet his discussion was not totally devoid of meaning. What he could not properly appreciate was that the discourse on the beginning lessness of Time belonged to a plane which does not come in conflict with the world-consciousness of Islam. The fault was not totally his. It had its origin in the treatment accorded to this problem by Fārābi and Avicenna. Hamadani coped with the issue by discovering in its scales a discourse in which different planes of being are implicit.

He explicated them by positing the concepts of the chronological time (the times of material and immaterial realities), and the Time of God.

Hamadāni cannot be properly understood without first bringing to notice the contradictions pervading Ghazālī's argument on the problem of time. It was Averroes who by a systematic examination exposed how the former had failed to distinguish between different levels of reality in his proof to establish that Time is not without an initial term. Ghazālī sought to denounce the idea of the beginning lessness of time as a fiction by comparing it with space. Just as there is no actually infinite body, and by that reason space has limiting terms beyond which there is neither an empty space nor is an extension out there, so also, he argued, there is no stretch of Time before that from which it commences. "Time did have a beginning; and it was created. And before Time there was no time whatsoever."¹⁰⁴ The infinite extension of time, viz., existence of a prior time before every beginning leading to its extension in the past ad infinitum, according to him, results "from the inability of imagination to apprehend the commencement of a being without something before it. This 'before' which occurs to the imagination so inevitably, is assumed to be a veritable existent—viz. Time." And the inability of the imagination in this case is like its inability to represent to itself finitude of the body. Hence its assumption that beyond the world there is Space—either a plenum or a void. After

¹⁰⁴ Tahafut al-Falāsifah, loc cit., p. 36.

it Ghazālī fervently argues as follows: "It is possible to deny the truth (judgement) of the imagination's supposition of a void or space of infinite extension above the world. It may be said that just as extension in space follows body, so does extension in Time follow motion. For this is going-on of motion, just as that is the spread of extension. Just as the demonstration of the finitude of body prevents one from affirming spatial extension beyond it, so should the demonstration of the finitude of motion in either direction prevent one from supposing temporal extension beyond it."¹⁰⁵

Ghazālī completes his argument by adding that there is no difference between before and after and above and below. "... If you say, the commencement of an existence, which had no before is unintelligible, the rejoinder will be, 'the extension of finite body which has no extension is unthinkable.' If you say, 'Its outside is its own surface whereby it is bounded off' we will say; 'In like manner, its before is beginning of its existence, whereby it is limited in that direction'."¹⁰⁶ He concludes: The comparison we have drawn here has enabled us to refute the philosophers. Time is finite and is limited by a beginning and an end in both of its directions."¹⁰⁷

To test the thesis let us put the question, Was it possible for God to create the world sometime earlier? According to Ghazālī, the question is superfluous, having no correspondence to any

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁰⁷ . Ibid., p. 41.

datum of reality. Time is created and finite. There was no time before the creation; he says. The force of his argument rests on two premises: (1) Time is either movement or measure of movement; and (2) movement as a series of cause and effect must commence from a Prime Mover. Fallacy of Ghazālī lies in his reducing the entire reality to a single plane of becoming or temporal transition, of which the Prime Mover, as cause of its movement, is the initial term. The Mover sets the ball rolling which passes through generation and corruption and moves towards a last term, producing history of the world, or stages of its temporality. The Unmoved Mover thus functions as the indispensable prime member of the temporal chain of causes and effects till it terminates at an effect beyond which there is no causation. Thus the first term of time is Unmoved Mover, Uncaused Cause and the last term is an uncausing effect, the un-Moving Moved from which no movement proceeds any more. Between these two terms, the first and the last, lies the span of time, wherein lies the succession of relative causes and effects, i.e. transition of elements which are effects of anterior elements and in turn are causes of posterior elements generating before and after as the terms of the time. Thus Ghazali's effort to renounce the eternity of world unceremoniously came to end by bringing God to the plane of world as if He were engine of the chronological train of its events.

The Multiple order of Space and Time, Luminous in Hamadāni's intuition, is also an immediate intuition of the multiple order of cause and effect. It means generic difference of

Divine Causality from the temporal Causation inherent in the world. Divine Space and Time are orders of existence of the Divine order of Causation, while the spaces and times of corporeal and incorporeal things unfold the natural causation, we observe in the things of the world; it is temporal causation. Ghazālī's main failure in this problem was that he could not differentiate between Divine causality and temporal causality. The failure was all the more serious, as it meant a complete obliteration of systematic theology, rational sciences, and knowledge of the world. It was all due to his failure to understand clearly how the Temporal proceeds from the Eternal. Hamadāni seemed to be acutely aware of this failure of Ghazālī. In this, he was not unlike Ibn Rushd who reached and spelled out the superb intuition that the temporal beings are preceded and followed only by other temporal beings. The relations between the temporals, according to the latter, are those of accidental causality while the Divine Causality works in essential way. Averroes further pleaded that there is no contradiction in one thing proceeding from another *ad infinitum*, in accidental causality. "You must understand that the philosophers permit the existence of a temporal being *ad infinitum* in an accidental way."¹⁰⁸ The anterior perishes and the posterior arises out of it, and you can imagine this activity continuing *ad infinitum*, All this constitutes a distinct plane, not inconsistent with any valid principle, as, for instance, with the finitude of actual body. The principle of generation and corruption repeatedly produces change unendingly in the finite

¹⁰⁸ Tahafut al-Tahāfa, loc. cit., p. 33.

substratum, which by nature is not unlimited. At this plane of accidental causality every movement is caused by the anterior movement, and causes the posterior movement.¹⁰⁹ The world, as totality of these movements, may be conceived of as an unlimited series of accidents in this way.¹¹⁰ If time is movement, or a measure of movement, then accidental time does not need a term, before which there was no other term, or after which there will be no term. The first Principle (God) or its activity is not a member of this totality of accidents, concluded Ibn Rushd.

One of the deeper implications of his theory, more relevant to our age of science, is that the world viewed as a system of accidents denotes such causal relations (of accidental character) which have one and the same plane of becoming, with no gaps for a super-natural intervention or ingredient in their explanation. This Averroesian principle is crux of scientific theory-building in our age. Another implication is that the time-series of the world and their totalities being generically homogenous to one another are not elements of and comparable with the Eternity of God and His acts.

Thus, from Averroes' analysis it appears that if Eternity is viewed as time, it is Divine Time, which, as was done by Hamadāni, should be discriminated properly from the temporality of the world, i.e. from the Accidental Time. Though the latter may not have a term before which there was no other term and

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Rushd, *Kitab ma b'ad al-Tabiya*, loc. cit., p. 126 f.

¹¹⁰ *Kitāb al-Sumā-'a al-Tab'iyyi*, (Hyderabad, 1366 A.H.), p. 46 f.

likewise no term after, it can never be Eternity. The generically Eternal and the generically Temporal are categories of different order. No sum of the generically temporal simulates the nature of the generically eternal. In this way Averroes corrects Ghazālī and his predecessor Avicenna on the Essential Causality of the Prime Mover, and on the difference of that causality from the accidental causality. He said: "This Mover exists simultaneously with each thing moved, at the time of its motion for a mover existing before the thing moved—much as man producing a man—sets in motion accidentally, not essentially, but the Mover who is the condition of man's existence from the beginning of his production till its end is the Prime Mover."¹¹¹ And likewise His existence is the condition for the existence of all beings and the preservation of heaven and earth and all that is between them. Thus, the Divine Agent is not related to the world and its movement as number one is related to all the numbers which follow it in succession.

The Divine relationship with the world is of a different mode. God is related not only to the first, but to every element of the series till the last, and He is cause of every one and all of it in essential way. This is how Eternity is related to the temporal entities and essentially determines their being and existence in the everlasting change of the accidental time. "There are two kinds of existence," says Averroes, "one in the nature of which there is motion and which cannot be separated from time, the other in the

¹¹¹ Tahāfut al-Tahāfa, loc. cit., p. 34.

nature of which there is no motion and which is eternal and which cannot be described in terms of time.... Therefore the priority of the one entity over the other is based neither on a priority in time, nor on the priority of that kind of cause and effect which belongs to the things in motion, like the priority of a man to his shadow. Any one who compares the priority of the Unmoved Being to the thing in motion to the priority existing between two things in motion is in error, for it is only true of each one in pairs of moving things that, when it is brought in relation to the other, it is either simultaneous with it or prior or posterior to it. It is the latter philosophers of Islam who made this mistake... so the priority of this one being to the other is the priority of the unchanging timeless existence to the changing existence which is in time, and this is an altogether different type of priority.¹¹²

As to Ghazali's comparison between the spatial magnitude and time Averroes could not hold any other opinion but that it belongs to the class of sophistical arguments. It is indeed a sophistry, for conceiving of a spatial magnitude 'to increase and end in another spatial magnitude' is a conception which has no harmony with the definition and nature of the essence (the spatial magnitude).¹¹³ On the other hand, to think of posterior and anterior in time and movement 'is exactly to think in terms of the essence which belongs to it.'¹¹⁴ One cannot represent in time an initial term, which has not been the final term of another time,

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 38-39.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 44.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

"for the definition of an instant is that it is the end of the past and beginning of the future; and this is the present which is necessarily in the middle of the past and the future, and to represent a present which is not preceded by a past is absurd. This, however, does not apply to the point, for the point is end of the line."¹¹⁵ Moreover, one can imagine a point which is the beginning of a line without its being the end of another line. "But the instant cannot exist without the past and the future, and exists necessarily after the past and before the future, and what cannot subsist in itself cannot exist before the existence of the future without being the end of the past."¹¹⁶ Averroes attributes the error of comparison between point and instant, as in Ghazālī, to a common feature of theirs, that any two points are not coincidental, and likewise, any two instants are not simultaneous. But a point is inert, having no demand for another point beyond it, while an instant exists only after and before other instants and thus necessarily demands a beyond. Here lies their fundamental difference. "He who allows the existence of an instant which is not a present, or of a present which is not preceded by a past denies time and the instant."¹¹⁷

Now, we can take up the question: what was there before the world? The answer is: It was not God, who preceded the world; it was 'Adm (non-existence) which was before it.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

To the Ash'arites, 'Adm is absolute nothingness, but actually it was existence of those things (accidents) in the past which perished subsequently in the emergence of world which followed it. Thus, there was a time when the world was not; then there is a time when the world is; then there will be a time, when the world will not be. Time was, is, and will be as the world changed from non-existence into existence, remains as such, and will go from existence into non-existence. Thus existence and non-existence of a thing are contraries which may succeed each other as accidents of temporal transition. Averroes remarks that this temporal process has no initial term, but to call it 'timeless eternity' is senseless.¹¹⁸ Eternity is existentially different from it. The accidental time has no imprint of it.

The philosophical objection that an actual infinite is impossible, according to Ibn Rusted, does not apply to the temporal becoming so as to limit it in either direction. The nature of accidental time is such that its past accidents are perished and future accidents are yet to be actual. So the objection is invalid, though it is valid for spatial magnitude, which consists of actual points. Thus space cannot be in existence without being actually bounded by its sides in all directions. Just as an infinite actual number is impossible so also an actually extended body in infinity is impossible. But time does not share this property with it in either side. Beyond the being of its present moment, no part of it is now actual. "Therefore, it is not a totality, although its parts are

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 50-54.

totalities."¹¹⁹ Only the parts of time which are limited by time in both directions can enter the past,¹²⁰ but from the existence of an infinite series of bodies no actual infinite follows.¹²¹

About the nature of Divine order Averroes says; "The Eternally Existent does not enter past existence since no time limits it."¹²² There is no difference, however, between act and existence, Divine Activity consequently does not enter time. It is timeless, eternal, generically different from temporality which is extended to infinity in the past.

The greatest blunder of most of the thinkers of Islam, according to Averroes, lies in their construing emanations from God as of the nature of temporal movements. Thus they represent as if the Absolute Agent caused the first effect, which in turn caused the second effect and so on till the sub-lunary world came into being, thus separating the world from God through a series of emanations. Even, the idea of taking these emanations as mere logical (not temporal) order of anterior and posterior becoming does not protect them from intermediationism. Averroes wholeheartedly supported Ghazālī in repudiating it. He said: "The act of Him, whose existence time cannot measure nor comprehend in either direction, cannot be comprehended in Time nor measured by a limited duration. He, therefore, who assumes that from the Eternal there proceeds only a temporal act

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 71.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 163.

¹²² Ibid., p. 72.

presumes that His act is constrained in certain way."¹²³ Averroes' further critical remarks on the subject are worth reproducing. "About this statement that out of the one only one proceeds —all ancient philosophers were agreed. When they investigated the first principle of the world in a dialectical way they mistook this investigation, however, for a real demonstration and they all came to the conclusion that the first principle is one and the same for every thing and that from the one only one can proceed. . . . But when the philosophers of our religion, like Fārābi and Avicenna, had once conceded to their opponents that the agent in the Divine world is like the agent in the empirical and that from the one agent there can arise but one object (and according to all the First was absolutely one), it became difficult for them to explain how plurality could arise from it."¹²⁴ According to them, the first effect proceeded from the Divine Agent and the first effect implied duality of aspects in its nature as possible in itself and as necessary by otherself. Now, this duality was uncaused, had it not been contained in the Divine Act itself. Thus Ghazali won his point against them. The fundamental mistake of Avicenna and Farabi was that they made the statement that from the one only one can proceed and then assumed a plurality in the one which proceeds. The second mistake was that the second effect, according to them, with its entire plurality proceeded from the first, and so on.¹²⁵

¹²³ Ibid., p. 56.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

Averroes had to re-state the theory. His reconstruction of it is one of the everlasting marks of his genius. He changed its entire complexion and raised it on the basic tenets of Islam. "From the Divine agent," he said; "it is not the one effect, which proceeds," but the *absolute* effect, the entire plurality, in its complete totality, *"for the First Agent in the Divine world is an absolute agent, while the agent in the empirical world is a relative agent, and from the absolute agent only an absolute act which has no special individual object can proceed."*¹²⁶ Thus, those who believe that the Divine Activity caused only the Logos, the First Intellect, or the Essence of Mohammad as Ibn al-'Arabi later put it, are mistaken. There is no individual content of the act of the First Agent. The entire world with all its diversity is its content. It is only through it that everything is conjoined. Thus, the First by His absolute act is the cause of the plurals, and is cause of their unity. "And since everything con-joined is only conjoined through unity in it, and this unity through which it is conjoined must depend on a unity, subsistent by itself and be related to it, there must exist a single unity, subsistent by itself, and this unity must of necessity provide unity through its own essence. This unity is distributed in different classes of things according to their natures, and from this unity, allotted to the individual things, their existence arises."¹²⁷ It is evident, therefore, that there is a unique entity from which a single power emanates through which all beings exist. Thus, "there is in them one single spiritual force which connects the spiritual and bodily potencies

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

and which permeates the universe in one and the same penetration."¹²⁸ If this were not the case, no order and proportion would exist. "And this way, it is true that God is the creator and preserver of everything and to this the Divine word apply; 'Verily God supports the heavens and the earth, lest they should decline (al-Qur'an: xxxv. 41).'"¹²⁹

Averroes further explicates the relation between God and the world, the Eternal and the Temporal. "There are two kinds of agents," he said, "the agents to which the object is attached so far as it is in the making, and the agent from which nothing proceeds but the activity and the object is convertible with the activity."¹³⁰ God is not maker of the world in the first sense of the agent, which truly applies only to the artisans in our every day experience. The work of the artisan stands dissociated from his artifice after its completion, and the latter, by virtue of its being dissociated from its maker, becomes something in its own right. The artisan, then, is an accidental cause, anterior temporally, and earlier than his work. The word "production" does not adequately apply to his work, which continues to exist though he might have perished. But God is that agent 'whose act is uncreated and everlasting, and whose object is identical with its act.' We may however understand it on the likeness of the work of a singer; his song is not more than singing and thus is convertible with the activity. The world does not confront God as his other but is

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 137.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 156-57.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 156-57.

identical with his activity. Ibn Rushd expounds its nature thus: "It is act of God; ... God's act proceeds from Him through knowledge, not through any necessity which calls for it, either in His essence or outside His essence, but through His grace and bounty."¹³¹ The world may be truly called as the production of God, because a production, in contrast to a work of the artisan, exists by virtue of and through the activity itself, and has no being apart from it. In this way the world is God's product, "and the word 'production' is even more suitable than the word eternity."¹³² He is its causing agent. "The causing agent is always connected with the effect. The world is, during the time of its existence, in need of the presence of its agent for both reasons together, namely because the substance of the world is continually in motion and because its form through which it has its subsistence and existence is of the nature of a *relation*, not of the nature of *Quality*, i.e., the shapes and states.... A form which belongs to the class of quality and is included in it is, when it exists, and its existence is finished, in no need of an agent. All this will solve the problem for you."¹³³

Similar views have been forcefully expressed by Iqbal in our time, who reached the same conception of the Ultimate Reality. The Universe which seems to us to be a collection of things,' said Iqbal, 'is not a solid stuff occupying a void. It is not a thing but an

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 157. (0. Ibid., p. 90.

¹³² Ibid., p. 97.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 101.

act.¹³⁴ 'It is a structure of events, a systematic mode of behaviour and as such organic to the Ultimate Self.'¹³⁵ Averroes had concluded that it is "through the emanation of this power (Divine causality that), the World in its totality becomes a unity, and it is . . . through this power (that) all its parts are connected so that the Universe aims at one act as happens with the one body of an animal."¹³⁶ Iqbal further remark "Finite minds regard nature as a confronting other, existing *per se*, which the mind knows but does not make. We are thus apt to regard the fact of creation as a specific past event, and the Universe appears to us as a manufactured article, which has no organic relation to the life of its maker and of which the maker is nothing but a mere spectator. All the meaningless theological controversies about the idea of creation arose from this narrow vision of the finite mind The real question which we are called upon to answer is this: Does the Universe confront God as His other with space intervening between Him and it? The answer is that from the Divine point of view, there is no creation in the sense of a specific event having a before and an after. The Universe cannot be regarded as an independent reality standing in opposition to Him. This view of the matter will reduce both God and the world to the separate entities confronting each other in the empty receptacle of an infinite space. . . . It is, in its real nature, one continuous act, which

¹³⁴ Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, (Lahore, 1962), p. 51.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

¹³⁶ Tahāfut al-Tahāfa, loc. cit, p. 136.

thought breaks up into a plurality of mutually exclusive things."¹³⁷ Averroes' words may be added: "Therefore, the term eternal becoming is more appropriate to the World than the term eternity."¹³⁸ This clarification might be significantly read along with Iqbal's comments on the notion of predestination in relation to this eternal becoming. 'If history is regarded merely as a gradually revealed photo of a predetermined order of events, then there is no room in it for novelty and initiation. Consequently, we can attach no meaning to the word creation, which has a meaning for us only in view of our capacity for original action. The truth is that the whole theological controversy relating to predestination is due to pure speculation with no eye on the spontaneity of life."¹³⁹ As eternal becoming, the world is eternal activity of God, and the divine activity has no predetermination. Therefore, the eternal becoming is not an unfoldment of pre-conceived idea. It is continuously original production.

Viewed in the mode of accidental causality, eternal becoming looks like an infinity of accidents one after another, with no beginning in the past. But this temporal infinity cannot form a self-contained whole. In fact, it is an external experience of the movement, i.e. passing from *one* accident to another, to which Iqbal's words veritably apply: 'If flow, movement, or passage is the last word as to the nature of time, there must be another time to time the movement of the first time, and another which times

¹³⁷ Reconstruction, loc cit, pp. 65.66.

¹³⁸ Tahāfut al-Tahāfa, loc. cit. p. 104.

¹³⁹ Reconstruction, loc. cit., p. 79.

the second movement, and so on to infinity.¹⁴⁰ *We* have already seen that Ghazali faced the same problem, but dismissed it as an irresistible instigation from imagination, which should be brought under control on the ground that rational thought does not permit infinite extension of the spatial manifold in a similar case of imaginative projection. This solution of Ghazali is naive as it completely overlooks the fact that there is no comparison between spatiality and temporality, the latter being characterized by non-actuality on both of its sides, past and future, while the former is all actual. There is undoubtedly an apprehension of infinite regress in the nature of time. It cannot be overcome at the plane of temporality itself, except by realizing that the temporal infinite cannot be a self-contained whole, and thus consequently, in its being has a necessary demand for a higher order of reality. This higher order is posited in an essential time, with an essential causality, as identical with the Absolute Act, the Single Act, which is undifferentiated and unmultipliable. It was Hamadāni, who intuited and contributed the idea of Divine Time as mode of His Absolute Act. Iqbal fully realized this contribution as he explained it in a lengthy passage: "It is clear that if we look at time from a purely objective point of view (i.e., accidental point of view in Averroes' analysis),* serious difficulties arise ; for we cannot apply atomic time to God and conceive Him as life in the making, as professor Alexander appears to have done in his lectures on *Space, Time and Deity*. Later Muslim theologians fully realized these difficulties. Mullā Jalal-ul-Din Dawwani in a passage of his *Zoura*,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

which reminds the modern student of Professor Royce's view of Time, tells us that if we take time to be a kind of span which makes possible the appearance of events as a moving procession and conceive this span to be a unity, then we cannot but describe it as an original state of Divine Activity, encompassing all the succeeding states of that activity. But the Mullā takes good care to add that a deeper insight into the nature of succession reveals its relativity, so that it disappears in the case of God to whom all events are present in a single act of perception. The Sufi poet 'Irāqī (Iqbal mistook Hamadani as the celebrated poet 'Iraqi of the seventh century Hijra) has a similar way of looking at the matter. He conceives infinite varieties of time, relative to varying grades of being intervening between materiality and spirituality Rising higher and higher in the scale of immaterial beings we reach Divine time, time which is absolutely free from the quality of passage, and consequently does not admit of divisibility, sequence and change. It is above eternity; it has neither beginning, nor end. The eye of God sees all the audibles in one indivisible act of perception. The priority of God is not due to priority of time; on the other hand, the priority of time is due to God's priority; Divine Time is what the Qur'an described as the 'Mother of Books' in which the whole of history freed from the net of causal sequence is gathered up in a single super-natural now.¹⁴¹"

Now, it may be explained that, the Ash'arites and Ghazali made God something of an accidental cause of everything. On

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 75.

each occasion God's intervention becomes a necessary factor, to them, in the corruption and generation which fills the concrete succession of the things of the world. Thus, in their representation, they levelled all the grades of being to the same plane. What they lacked is the discrimination of Divine Time, and its essential typological difference from the Accidental Time. As necessary consequence of this defect, Ghazālī was forced to deny the reality of Time altogether, and refused to give any significant meaning to *was*, *is* and *will be*, as features of the world in becoming. He reduced them to the conceptions of soul, having no outer or objective reference. In this way, he anticipated Kant who explained them away as forms of perception. But it was all against the tradition of Islam. Reality of Time, in Islamic thought, was once again rehabilitated by Averroes, who said that *was*, *is* and *will be* are not interchangeable in any sense, and that they have denotable objects so far as temporal succession is concerned. According to him, past, present, and future are incessant, ever arising relativities, which cannot be dispensed with. They are thus not rooted in imagination or perception. They are parts of time, and the time of which they are parts is existentially real as an accidental infinite having no actual position. Divine Time does not persist as a perspective of this accidental infinite, but exists as an order of reality in its own right. Dawwānī's passage in *Zourā* does not preserve this subtle point which is necessary to attribute reality to time. He does not distinguish Accidental Time from the Time of God in his remark that the past and future of time cease to exist in the case of God. Royce's view of time is also like that

of Dawwani, who makes the accidental infinity of Time at its bottom to be identical with the eternity of God. By discovering its varieties and hierarchies, Hamadani emancipated the idea of Time not only from this confusion as we have noticed in Dawwāni and Royce but also from the pitfall of subjectivism and perspectivism, i.e., the different views of the same object.

In the light of Ibn Rushd's discussion and that of Iqbal's exposition, generic contents of the different kinds of Time are distinguishable. Being accidental infinite, our realm of temporality is characterized by a particular logical structure of causation. It has in its fold, as contents of its essence, natural causation found in inorganic bodies and also has voluntary causation found in human agents consisting of the sequence of want and satisfaction. It is empirical world. Matter and form are its principles. Everything in this empirical world comes into being as a consequence of the intermediary principles, which too owe their being to the First Principle (God). The First holds the things and the intermediary principles thereof directly in His own causative sweep. The order of reality having adequacy with His causation or His Absolute Act is Divine Time and Divine Space. The Ash'arites and Ghazālī could not realize this ontological gradation of causality and confused natural and voluntary causation with Divine causation. Divine causation, to quote Averroes, is superior to any kind of causality. Even the voluntary causality, we behold in rational beings such as man, does not assimilate His causation: "The First Agent cannot be described as having either of these two actions (i.e. of natural agents and

voluntary agents). For he who chooses and wills, lacks the things, which he wills; and God cannot lack anything He wills God is still farther distant from natural action for the act of a natural thing belongs to its entelechy."¹⁴² "They are not the (only) possible ways—the act of God can proceed from Him neither in a natural way nor in a voluntary, in the sense in which it is understood in the sublunary world What proceeds from God proceeds in a nobler way than the voluntary, a way which nobody can understand but God Himself."¹⁴³ Ibn Rushd denies human kind of volition in His case. It does not mean denial of Divine Will, as he said, "And the proof that He wills is that He knows the opposites, and if He were an agent in absolutely the same way as He is knower, He would carry out the two contrary acts together, and this is impossible and therefore it is necessary that He should perform one of the two contraries through choice."¹⁴⁴

Thus, the sublime plane of the act of God is distinct. It has its own space and time, sharply different from the spaces and times of creation. His will is indivisible, numberless and unmultipliable and is explicit with its own space and time, which comprehend all those spaces and times which belong to the spiritual entities and the corporeal things.

¹⁴² Tahāfut al-Falāsifah, loc. cit., p. 88.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.