IQBAL'S CONCEPT OF ETERNITY

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In ordinary language we use certain concepts which have acquired special meanings because of their common and frequent usage. The same concepts are sometimes used without any alteration in scientific and philosophical discourse. Aristotelean division of a proposition, for example, into subject and predicate led philosophers to the formulation of the concept of "substance" which was supposed to be the underlying substratum of attributes, This division was made for the sake of linguistic convenience. Whenever we have to refer to a sensible property of a thing, say, to the colour of a table, we use a name "the table" and then brownness or whiteness is predicated of it. We say "The table is brown". We have no other means to refer to the brownness of the table than making a distinction between "the table itself" and "brownness". The impression is given as if "the table itself is over and above its sensible properties. Logically, the notion of' the "table itself" is absurd. The table is the sum of its sensible properties. With the withdrawal of its sensible properties, the table will disappear; we will not be left with any sort of simple entity called "table-in-itself ". Thus the philosophers of the past found themselves involved in metaphysical difficulties because of the ordinary usage of language.

Among other concepts born of ordinary language, there is the concept of time. Time, for a layman, is a succession of changes. We tend to think that changes, whether in our consciousness or in the objects of external world, are successional. This conception of time gives rise to serious difficulties. Zeno was the first thinker who pointed out these difficulties inherent in the ordinary conception of time.

A very important difficulty created by this conception of time is that we have become accustomed to thinking in terms of "beginning" and "end". Every thing that exists, we tend to suppose, must have a beginning and an

end. The words "before", and "after" are born of the commonsense conception of time according to which events happen in a successional manner and the duration between two events is regarded as "event-less". The succession of events is expressed in language by the words "before" and "after". By the commonsense conception of time, we have become accustomed to think of a thing or a happening with reference to its beginning and end. This is not only in the case of time that we have evolved a peculiar and rigid frame of reference, but our conception of the physical world is handed down to us by our remote ancestors. It requires great labour to change the habit of thinking in terms of those concepts whose roots shade off in the mist of antiquity. This is why the people of the past found it highly difficult to leave "geocentric" tendency and accept Copernicus's view that the earth moves around the sun.

Whenever we endeavour to understand Einstein's Theory of Relativity or any other theory presented in the light of this 'theory, we find that our previous concepts, which are rooted in common sense, are serious impediments. Iqbal's concept of eternity cannot be understood without the knowledge of the Theory of Relativity, and to understand the Theory of Relativity requires a fundamental change in our imagination and habits of thinking, Russell gives an interesting example to make the point clear:

"Let us suppose that a drug is administered to you which makes you temporarily unconscious, and that when you wake you have lost your memory but not your reasoning powers Let us suppose further that while you were unconscious you were carried into a balloon, which, when you come to, is sailing—'with the wind on a dark night--the night of the fifth of November if you are in England, or of the fourth of July if you are in America. You can see fire works which are being sent off from .the ground, from trains, and from aeroplanes travelling in all directions, but you cannot see the ground or the trains or the aeroplanes because of the darkness. What sort of the picture of the world will you form? You will think that nothing is permanent: there are only brief flashes of light which, during their short

existence, travel through the void in the most various and bizarre curves. You cannot touch these flashes of light, you can only see, them. Obviously your geometry and your physics and your meta-physics will be quite different from those of ordinary mortals. If an ordinary mortal were with you in the balloon, you will find' his speech unintelligible. But if Einstein were with you, you will understand him more easily than the ordinary mortal would, because you would be free from a host of preconceptions which prevent most people from understanding him."[1]

History of the Term. A brief account of the history of. the term "eternity" will make it easy to understand what Iqbal has to say on the subject.

"Eternity" is derived from the Latin aeternus, a contraction of aeviternus, which, in turn, is derived from aevum, a word from the same root as the English words "ever" and "aye". In Greek, the corresponding adjectives are even more obviously connected with the notion of everlasting existence. This is the original sense of the word "eternal" and probably also the sense that is still the most common in ordinary language. But in certain philosphical contexts, the notion of everlasting existence is expressed rather by "sempiternal," eternal being reserved for the sense of "timeless".[2] We may say that eternal is that to which the category of time cannot be applied, for example, in mathematics and logic there are certain expressions which are regarded as "timeless". "Twice two are four" or "The straight line is the shortest distance between two points" are the sentences which are timeless. We can't say, "Twice two were four" or "The straight line will be the shortest distance between two points."

In the case of sempiternal, beginning in time is accepted but end in time is denied. The word "sempiternal" may be regarded as synonymous with "everlasting". Human ego is sempiternal or everlasting (or, as Iqbal calls it,

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[1] Bertrand Russell, A.B.C of Relativity, pp. 10-11.
[2] Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, III, 64-65.

immortal), if it has a beginning, in time. The universe is eternal, if it has no beginning and no, end in time.

Parmenides is the first Greek thinker who put forward clear and definite theory of eternity.[3] Only Being, Parmenides' holds, is and Not-Being is not. Being cannot arise from Not-Being, because ex nihilo nihil fit. So Being has arisen from Being itself, that is, it has no beginning. Similarly, Being can pass on either into Being or into Not-Being. Not-Being is not. Hence Being will pass on into Being, which amounts to saying that Being has no end. Being is, therefore, "eternal". It neither was at any time nor will be, since it is now all at once our "a single whole" [Parmenides, "The Way of Truth"].

In Parmenides, we discern a conception of the mode of existence which is in the timeless present. The same conception appears in Plato when he attributes eternity to Ideas or Forms and time to the mundane existence. Some critics contend that Plato had never asserted the objectivity of Forms and that by the eternity of Forms, he had meant what is understood by the timelessness of definitions or mathematical entities. They think that Plato's doctrine of the objectivity of Forms is the result of wrong interpretation of Aristotle. Whether Plato ascribed objectivity to Forms or took them as mathematical entities, the fact is beyond the shadow of doubt that he did believe in the eternity of Forms in the sense that they have no beginning and no end in time and that they are not subject to aging. Hence, one thing is to be noted that, like Zeno and Parmenides, Plato did not deny reality to time. In Datums us (3pb5), he speaks of the creation of time.

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[3] Although a conception of cyclical time-order is to be found in the Pythagorean society, yet it was never presented as clearly and definitely as Parmenides did. Parmenides is said to have been associated with the Pythagoreans in his youth. He might have learnt this doctrine from them. In Indian philosophy the concept of eternity had appeared much earlier than Parmenides or the Pythagoreans. As sonic historians of philosophy maintain that Pythagoras had visited India and that he learnt the doctrine of transmigration of souls from the rishis it may be said that the Greek concept of "eternity" is Indian in origin. This issue, however, deserves further research and separate treatment.

"Time was created with heaven." He also speaks of time as the moving image of eternity (Timaeus, 37d).

Aristotle's conception of eternity is somewhat different. He applies the term "eternity" to a number of beings. The universe as a whole, the celestial spheres, the moon, the matterless Intelligence and the Unmoved Mover--all are eternal in the sense of having no beginning and no end. When he speaks of the eternity of the universe and other moving objects, he means an infinite time by it, because, for him, change and time are identical and an infinite change implies an infinite time. The universe, he holds, is a ceaseless and gradual development of matter into form. There-fore, the question of its coming to an end does not arise. The moment will never come when the universe, as a whole, will achieve its end, i.e. Pure Form, in time. Although Pure Form is absolutely real, yet it is non-existent in the sense of being temporal and spatial. Pure Form is the unachievable end of the moving universe. At the same time, however, it is the beginning of the universe, so far as the logical order is concerned, because Form is that which is logically prior to matter. The form of a seed, say, an actual pine tree, is given as a potentiality before the seed, the matter of the pine tree, begins to grow.

Now, we can bring out the difference between Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of eternity. Plato's world of Ideas is completely free from temporal relations. But, like Parmenides, he does not deny the reality of time. On the other hand, he ascribes all temporal relations to the sphere of becoming and believes that eternal is that to which the category of time does not apply. Aristotle, retaining Platonic sense of eternity, refers to more than one eternal being. Aristotle has, along with the beings to which time is inapplicable, given eternity to time itself, the absense of which is a mark of eternity for Plato.

In subsequent thought these ideas are echoed and re-echoed in various degrees. In Jewish and Christian theology we come across a certain interpretation of God in which such expressions as "The First" and "The

Last" are supposed to stand for the negation of temporal relations. Bahya and Maimonides take the terms "First" and "Last" and referring to God's absolute priority and posteriority.[4] Augustine has drawn a distinction between the "ever-fixed" (Semper Stantis) and the "never-fixed" (Numquam Stantis) to explain the nature of eternity and time. Boethius is also of the opinion that the infinity of time should not be confused with the eternity of God. "Wherefore, if we will give things their right names, following Plato, let us say that God is eternal and the world perpetual."[5] In all medieval philosophic writings this distinction was maintained and a different term aevum was coined to signify the infinity of time and thereby keeping it apart from the eternity of God. Suarez has given a list of scholastic views on eternity.[6] But he himself has given a special meaning to the term "eternity". He thinks that such statements as "God has no beginning and no end in time," and "Change and movement cannot be predicated of God," are negative definitions of the eternity of God. What God's eternity positively means is that His essence implies His necessary existence; God's essence and His necessary existence are identical.

Now I briefly mention Spinoza's conception of eternity. In this regard, he has accepted the scholastic view that substance should exclude all temporal relations. He was aware of the distinction between the eternal and perpetual or what is sometimes called "sempiternai". The infinite duration of becoming should not be confused with the eternal existence of God. Indeed, in common speech, we speak of the eternity of the world when we mean its eternal duration in time, but this is an erroneous use of the term. It is only because of the defective terminology that we say "the world has existed from eternity". As we have already seen, Boethius had also tried to remedy this defect by introducing the use of the term "perpetual".[7]

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[4] Hobot ha-lababot, 1, (Wolfson, The Philosophy of Spianoz, pp. 262-63).
[5] Stewart and Rand, Eds., Consolatio Philosophiae, VI, 402-03i Wolfson, op. cit., p. 263.
[6] Suarez, Disputationes Metaphysicae, Disp. L, Sec. III.
[7] Wolfson, op. cit., pp. 36567.

Spinoza further distinguishes between the eternity of that which exists and the eternity of that which does not exist. Here he is referring to the self-evident ideas or axioms of Descartes. Axiomatic truths are eternal, but they are non-existent. Hence the eternity of these first principles should not be confused with the eternity of God. Wolfson refers to the "peculiar Cartesian passage" which Spinoza had in mind. "When we apprehend that it is impossible that anything can be formed of nothing, the proposition ex nihilo nihil fit is not to be considered as an existing thing, or the mode of a thing, but as a certain eternal truth which has its seat in our mind, and is a common notion or axiom."[8]

From the above passage, it becomes clear that Spinoza applies the term "eternity" to existent or, more appropriately, real beings. It is only God Whose essence involves existence. All other things have possible existence. God's essence implies His necessary existence. Now Spinoza defines eternity as an "attribute under which we conceive the infinite existence of God". When Spinoza says that essence involves existence, he means the fact of being "causeless". Since it is only in the case of God that His essence and existenee are identical, God is to be regarded as causa sui—(causeless) or infinite-infinite in the sense of being undetermined by a cause. God, for Spinoza, is the cause of Himself: "By cause of itself, I understand that whose essence involves existence or that whose nature cannot be conceived unless existing" (Def. 1).

"By substance I understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself" (Def. 3).

"It pertains to the nature of substance to exist" (ibid, Prop. 7).

Two points in Spinoza's conception of eternity are to be noted.

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[8] Ibid., p. 367.

(1) He has accepted the traditional view that Reality excludes all temporal relations and is, consequently, immovable, imperishable, indivisible (and is all that which the exclusion of time logically calls for).

(2) He has admitted the identity of essence and necessary existence only in the case of God Who is infinite.

Einstein's Conception. The traditional view of an infinite. eternal, indivisible and unmovable substance as the ultimate ground of every thing reappears in Newton's conception of "absolute space" in a different garb. The problem which troubled Newton was that of distinguishing relative motion from "absolute" motion in a universe which represents degrees of motion. To give a mechanical view of the universe, he looked for a point in space which was absolutely at rest. This is why he spoke of the f possibility of' somebody in the "remote regions of fixed stars or perhaps far beyond them" which is absolutely at rest. But he thinks that to prove this is impossible. Then he puts forward the notion of "absolute space" in order to determine the relative motion of planets. Lincoln Barnett remarks:

It seemed to Newton that space itself might serve as a fixed frame of reference to which the wheeling of the stars and galaxies could be related in terms of absolute motion. He regarded space as a physical reality, stationary and immovable; and while he could not support his conviction by any scientific argument, he nevertheless clung to it on theological grounds. For, to Newton space represented the divine omnipotence of God in nature."[9]

Thus to prove his law of Inertia, he put forward a hypothetical view of absolute space of ether which to him was absolutely at rest. "Absolute space, in virtue of its nature and without reference to any external object

[9] Lincoln Barnett, The Universe and Dr. Einstein, p. 40.

whatsoever, always remains immutable and immovable… Relative space is a measure of or a movable part of the absolute space. Our senses designate it by its position with respect to other objects."[10] Newton's conception of time is also similar. He says:

"Absolute true and mathematical time follows in itself and in virtue of its nature uniformly and without reference to any external object whatsoever. It is also called duration. Relative, apparent and ordinary time is a perceptible and external, either exact or unequal, measure of duration which we customarily use instead of true time. such as hour, day, month, year. . All motions may be accelerated or retarded. Only the flow of absolute time cannot be changed. The same duration and the same persistence occurs in the existence of all things, whether the motion be rapid, slow or zero."[11]

After Newton, Faraday gave a slightly modified conception of ether as the carrier of electric and magnetic forces. The case for ether was further strengthened by Maxwell's discovery that light is an electromagnetic phenomenon which consists of waves and is capable of propagation in vacuum at a constant pace. For the scientists of the second half of the nineteenth century, the notion of any kind of waves (e.g. sound waves, water waves) presupposed a medium to occur in. So, to account for the propagation of light as electromagnetic waves through vacuum, the conception of a very fine medium was put forward. This medium was denominated ether. Thus the mechanical scientists retained Newtonian absolute space.

In 1881, two American physicists, Michelson and Morley, performed an experiment by means of their delicate device "interferometer" which was made to record the velocity of light. Michelson-Morley experiment created doubts as to the actual existence of ether. "The one indisputable fact

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[10] Raziuddin Siddiqi, "Iqbal's Conception of Space and Time," Iqbal, The Poet of Tomorrow, p. 40.
[11] Ibid.

established by Michelson-Morley experiment was that the velocity of light is unaffected by the motion of the earth. Einstein seized on this as a revelation of universal law. If the velocity of light is constant regardless of the earth's motion, he reasoned, it must be constant regardless of the motion of any sun, moon, star, meteor or other system moving anywhere in the universe. From this he drew a broader generalization, and asserted that the laws of nature are the same for all uniformly moving systems. This simple statement is the essence of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity."[12]

Einstein held that there is no fixed frame of reference, i.e. there is no absolute space. The movements of planets, stars and galaxies are to be determined with respect to each other. Long before Einstein, Leibniz had visualised that space is merely an order of relations of things among themselves If all things are withdrawn from the universe, space will also disappear.

The Newtonian conception of absolute time is also no; C acceptable to Einstein. There is not such thing as absolute, eternal and unvarying duration flowing from infinite past to infinite future. Like space, time is also a form of perception. If no event takes place, there will be no moment, no hour or no day. Just as space is a possible order of things, so is time a possible order of events. The subjectivity of time is explained in Einstein's own words:

"The experiences of an individual appear to us arranged in a series of events; in this series the single events which we re-member appear to be ordered according to the criterion of 'earlier' and 'later'. There exists, therefore, for the individual, an I-time, or subjective time. This in itself is not measurable. I can, indeed, associate numbers with the events, in such a way that a greater number is associated with the later event than with an earlier one. This association I can define by means of clock by comparing the order of events furnished by the clock with the order of the given series of events.

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[12] Barnett, op. cit., p. 45.

We understand by a clock something which provides a series of events which can be counted."[13]

Time, according to Einstein, is not an objective concept. The clocks and calendars to which we refer our experiences are geared to our solar system. Therefore there is no such thing as "the simultaneity of two events". Two events may be simultaneous for a person in one frame of reference but may not be simultaneous for another in a different frame of reference. At 7 p.m. from New York you telephone a friend of yours who is in London where it is midnight. You will say that you are talking "at the same time". This is because both of you are in the same frame of reference, i.e. the planet earth. For the person who is outside this system, these two events may not be simultaneous. Thus Einstein showed that the notion of absolute time is as false as the notion of absolute space. The universe we live in does not consist of two fundamentally different and independent categories of space and time as Descartes had held. Space and time, on the contrary, are relative and dependent on each other. We should not speak of absolute time or absolute space because our universe is made up of single "space-time-continuum" in which both space and time are equally important. Now, the old conception of three-dimensional world is replaced by the notion of four dimensions of the world, i.e. breadth, length, depth and "time".

It is now time we should try to portray the picture of the universe in the light of the Theory of Relativity. This is known as Relativistic Cosmology. But before we try to understand the nature of Einsteinian universe, we should take note of a few possible types of worlds. In what follows a few models or types are given in which our world may exist.

Suppose a bug is confined on a straight line. The bug cannot move sideways or up and down. Its movement will be restricted to backward or forward. Now the bug's movement is confined to the straight line which has a definite measurement, the world of the bug will be finite. And since the bug

[13] Quoted in ibid.

cannot go beyond the ends of the segment of that line, its world will be regarded as finite and bounded.

If the bug is placed on the perimeter of a circle, it can still move forward and backward. However, in this case, its movement will not be hindered by the "ends". So, on the perimeter of a circle, the bug will keep on moving without ever confronting any barrier. Its world, now, is unbouended. But since the perimeter of the circle is a definite measurable length its world will be still finite.

You can have the idea of two-dimensional world, if you put the bug on the surface of a square or a sphere. In the case of a square the bug can move in any direction, forward and back-ward and also sideways. But it cannot move off the surface. Since the area of the surface is measurable, its world is finite; and since it cannot keep going in a straight line through the edges of the square, its world is bounded. In this case its two-dimensional world is finite and bounded. Now, in the case of a sphere if the bug is not allowed to go off the surface, its two-dimensional world will be finite and unbounded. A gain, if it is put on an in-finitely large flat plane, its two-dimensional world will be infinite and unbounded.

You can have a rough idea of three-dimensional world if you put the bug in a spherical hallow shell. This will be its three-dimensional world, because it can move up and down in addition to forward and backward and sideways. This three-dimensional world will be finite; since the area of the shell will be measurable and bounned; since the movement of the bug in a straight line will be barred by the wall of the shell.

In order to have a picture of three-dimensional world which is finite and unbounded, you should suppose that the bug lives with a whole family of bugs in a space which has no physical boundaries. Now assume that each and every bug is very huge and massive. This group of bugs cannot disintegrate because of its gravitational attraction as a whole. Thus no bug will be in a position to leave its family. Moreover, the gravitational attraction is so strong

that light rays will not be able to leave the mass of bugs either. Therefore, whenever any bug will try to see in the direction of space beyond the group, its sight will curve back towards the group, always producing "bugs in his eyes," and it will never be able to see beyond the group—"straight ahead" for each bug always will mean towards the centre of the group. The bugs will not be conscious of any physical barrier; though, as far as they know, they will live in a world which is unbounded. Their world is finite since the size of the group as a whole is finite and the group constitutes their world.

An example of a three-dimensional world which is infinite and unbounded could exist for a bug if we left it alone to roam all by itself in an infinite space without any gravitational masses or other forces to hinder it. Or, if there were other bugs present, their universe could still be infinite in an infinite free space, provided that gravitational attraction could be turned off and on like other types of physical attraction.[14]

According to Newton, the universe was like a finite island in an infinite ocean of space. Therefore we can say that the Newtonian universe is finite and bounded.

Einstein does not subscribe to Newton's view for the following main reasons.

(1) Newton's theory implies that the light and energy continuously radiated by the stars would go off into the vast space beyond the stars, never to return If this is true, then the energy of the universe will gradually dissipate and a day will come when the universe will disappear.

(2) Einstein had mathematical reasons to reject the Newtonian conception of the universe. In a world situated in the vast ocean of space, the average density of matter throughout the universe would have to be zero. The laws of Newton were predicted on the fact that light travelled in a

[14] This illustration has been taken from Coleman, Relativity for the Layman, p. 105.

straight line. The General Theory of Relativity showed, however, that light rays are deflected by gravitational masses. On the basis of the results of the General Theory, Einstein concluded that our universe is finite and unbounded. The universe is finite because the entire mass of the universe is measurable and, according to his calculation, the radius of the universe is about 200,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles.

Iqbal's Conception Iqbal is a great admirer of Einstein. He agrees with him that the conception of an Absolute Space is unworkable both on philosophical and scientific grounds:

".. . The scientific view of nature as pure materiality, is as sociated with the Newtonian view of space as an absolute void in which things are situated. This attitude of science has, no doubt, ensured its speedy progress; but the bifurcation of total experience into two opposite domains of mind and matter has to-day forced it, in view of its own domestic difficulties, to consider the problems which, in the beginning of its career, it completely ignored he criticism of the foundations of the mathematical sciences has fully disclosed that the hypothesis of a pure materiality, an enduring stuff situated in an absolute space, is unworkable."[15]

He accepts Professor Whitehead's presentation of the Relativity Theory:

". . . Modern science regards Nature not as something static, situate in an infinite void, but a structure of interrelated events out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time."[16]

Although Iqbal accepts the notion of space-time-continuum,[17] yet he attaches priority and superiority to time. The relation of space and time is like the relation of body and mind. Iqbal thinks that to take into consideration all the characteristics relevant to philosophical interpretation of the world is

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[15] Reconstruction, pp. 35-36.
[16] Ibid., p. 65.
[17] In Jāvīd Nāmah, the spirit Zarwān stands for space-time continuum.

beyond the purview of science. Hence we should turn to our own inner conscious experience for a further understanding of the nature of time.

Iqbal, like Bergson, draws a distinction between serial time and pure or real time. McTaggart had not recognised this distinction. Hence he was erroneously led to deny the reality of time. A close reflection on our own inner mental life reveals the fact that our consciousness is not made up of static and distinct states. Our conscious life is a perpetual and indivisible flow of change in which past keeps on accumulating in the present and it "gnaws" into future. Future is merely an open possibility; it is not an already drawn line upon which we are to travel. "If we regard past, present, and future, as essential to time, t en we picture time as a straight line, part of which we have travelled and left behind, and part lies yet untravelled before us. 1 his is taking time, not as a living creative movement, but as a static absolute."18 This real time is "pure duration" as Bergson called it. Serial time is the intellectual apprehension of pure duration. Intellect carves out distinct and static bits from the indivisible flow of real time. Real time or pure duration is change without succession. It is associated with the appreciative ego. Serial time is the time of the efficient ego.[18]

Now, ultimate reality according to Iqbal is a rationally directed creative will in which life, consciousness and purpose are organically united. For Bergson, creative movement of life was not teleological. He thought that purpose would deprive the vital flow of creativity; evolution would become determined. Iqbal, however, thinks that purpose is not a distant goal towards which the Divine energy is directed. It is, on the other hand, inner necessity. Hence the presence of purpose does not affect the creative nature of ultimate reality. This ultimate reality Iqbal conceives as a self and calls it Ultimate Ego or Supreme Ego. Nature is its self-expression. In his own words:

"A critical interpretation of the sequence of time as revealed in ourselves has led us to the notion of the ultimate Reality as pure duration in.. which

[18] Reconstruction, p. 58.

thought, life, and purpose inter-penetrate to form an organic unity. We cannot conceive this unity except as the unity of a self---an all-embracing concrete self- the ultimate source of all individual life and thought… To exist in pure duration is to be a self and to be a self is to be able to say 'I am'. Only that truly exists which can sly 'I am'. It is the degree of the intuition of 'I-amness' that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being. We too say 'I am'. But our 'I-amness' is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not-self. The ultimate Self, in the words of the Quran 'can afford to dispense with all the worlds'. To Him the not-self does not present itself as a confronting 'other', or else it would have to be, like our finite self, in spatial relation with the confronting 'other'. What we call Nature or the not-self is only a fleeting moment in the life of God. His I-amness' is independent, elemental, absolute. Of such a self it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception. As the Quran says, 'Naught' is like Him; yet 'He hears and sees' Now a self is unthinkable without a character, i.e., a uniform mode of behaviour. Nature, as we have seen, is not a mass of pure materiality occupying a void. It is a structure of events, a systematic mode of behaviour, and as such organic to the ultimate Self. Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the Quran it is the habit of Allah. From the human point of view it is an interpretation which, in our present situation, we put on the creative activity of the Absolute Ego. At a particular moment in its forward moment it is finite; but since the self to which it is organic is creative, it is liable to increase, and is consequently boundless in the sense that no limit to its extension is final. Its boundlessness is potential, not actual. Nature, then, must be understood as a living, ever-growing organism whose growth has no final external limits. Its only limit is internal, i.e., the immanent self which animates and sustains the whole. As the Quran says: 'And verily unto thy Lord is the limit' (53: 14)."[19]

[19] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

The Universe is an expression of God and all existents are organically related to Him as ideas, desires, emotions, caprices, etc., are related to the finite human mind.

In Muslim theology, the problem of time is discussed along-side the problem of ultimate Reality. This is, Iqbal points out, for two main reasons:

"[i] According to the Quran, the alternation of day and night is one of the greatest signs of God, and [ii] partly to the Prophet's identification of God with Dahr (time)."[20]

Now the time of the Ultimate Ego or God is fundamentally opposed to the time of finite egos. Time, according to an ordinary ego, is a 'succession of individual "nows". This view of time, which was accepted by the Ash'arites and Newton, gave rise to serious difficulties referred to by Iqbal:

"…From this view it obviously follows that between every two individual 'nows' or moments of time, there is an unoccupied moment of time that is to say, a void of time. The absurdity of this conclusion is due to the fact that they [the Ash'arites] looked at the subject of their inquiry from a wholly objective point of view. They took no lesson from the history of Greek thought, which had adopted the same point of view and had reached no results. In our own time Newton described time as 'something which in itself and from its own nature flows equally'. The metaphor of stream implied in this description suggests serious objections to Newton's equally objective view of time. We cannot understand how a thing is affected on its immersion in this stream, and how it differs from things that do not participate in its flow. Nor can we form any idea of the beginning, the end, and the boundaries of time if we try to understand it on the analogy of a siftam. Moreover, if flow, movement, or 'passage' is the last word as to the

[20] Ibid., p. 74.

nature of time, there must be another time to time the movement of the first time, and another which times the second time, and so on to infinity."[21]

Iqbal does not accept the traditional view of time as a succession of individual moments. He, on the other hand, refers to Professor Rougier (Rongier in Reconstruction), Professor Alex. ander and Mullah Jalal-ud-Din Dawwani and concludes that "infinite varieties of time [are] relative to the varying grades of being intervening between materiality and pure spirituality."[22] Time of gross and material bodies is successional and divisible into past, present and future. Though the time of spiritual beings is also successional, yet its passage is such that a whole year in the time of gross bodies is not more than a day in the time of an immaterial being. Time at the level of God, becomes absolutely non-successional. Iqbal writes:

"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. . . . Thus Divine time is what the Quran describes 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-eternal 'now'."[23]

Here we should note that Iqbal has made a distinction between the appreciative self and the efficient self. Serial time belongs to the efficient self and it is only partially helpful in understanding the nature of reality. Appreciative self, however, lives in pure duration or Divine time and grasps the whole of reality in a single, indivisible act of perception. Here the reader should recall Russell's example given in the beginning of this article. If under the effect of the drug administered to you, you have lost your previous memories but not your reasoning power and now sitting in the balloon you

[21] Ibid., p. 74-75.
[22] Ibid., p. 76.
[23] Ibid.

form a new conception of the world, your geometry, your physics and your metaphysics will be absolutely different from those of ordinary mortals. Your thoughts and your language will be unintelligible for an ordinary mortal. But you will understand what Einstein would say because you have caused that fundamental change in your imagination which is a prerequisite for understanding his views. Our habits of thinking and our concepts are geared to serial time or the time of efficient self. So we tend to suppose that everything has a beginning and an end. But if we are free from a "host of pre-conceptions" and live in pure duration or Divine time, then the question "What is the beginning and the end of the universe?" will lose all meaning and significance. A deeper analysis of conscious experience, thinks Iqbal, enables us to attain to the level of appreciative self where the opposition of change and permanence, of serial and real time, is reconciled.[24] Iqbal writes

"…The life of the self consists in its movement from appreciation to efficiency, from intuition to intellect, and atomic time is born out of this movement. Thus the character of our conscious experience—our point of departure in all knowledge—gives us a clue to the concept which reconciles the opposition of permanence and change, of time regarded as an organic whole or eternity, and time regarded an atomic. If then we accept the guidance of our conscious experience, and conceive the life of the all-inclusive Ego on the analogy of the finite ego, the time of the Ultimate Ego is revealed as change without succession, i.e., an organic whole which appears atomic because of the creative movement of the ego. This is what Mir Damad and Mulla Baqir [sic] mean when they say that time is born with the act of Creation by which the Ultimate Ego realizes and measures, so to speak, the infinite wealth of His own undetermined creative possibilities. On the one hand, therefore, the ego lives in eternity, by which term I mean non-successional change; on the other, it lives in serial time, which I conceive as

[24] Iqbal's interpretation of Barzakh can very well be understood in the light of Russell's example. Death is not the end of an ego. After the death and before resurrection, the ego remains in Barzakh, a place where it attains adjustment to a new spatio-temporal order.

organically related to eternity in the sense that it is a measure of non-successional change. In this sense alone it is possible to understand the Quranic verse: 'To God belongs the alternation of day and night.'"[25]

It has now become clear that, according to Iqbal, the ultimate Reality is a Self Who expresses Himself in the laws and behaviour of Nature. He is the absolute "First" and "Last," i.e. has no beginning and no end. Finite egos "proceed" from Him and live like "pearls" in the flow of "Divine energy". Iqbal thinks that human ego has a beginning in time. But once having come into existence, it will not perish, i.e. it is immortal. Human ego then, as already pointed out, is sempiternal in medieval terminology. Only God or Supreme Ego is eternal because He has no beginning and no end. Iqbal's position has become some what pantheistic. But he has at several places avoided pantheism and rather criticized it. If Nature is organically related to God and finite egos proceed from Him, then the question arises "What fundamental difference is there between God and finite egos and how finite egos retain their identity?"

This question, though very important and significant, is outside the scope of this article. I have dealt with it elsewhere.[26]

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[25] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[26] Vide my article: "Wafā'-i Insāni t Wafā'-i Kabīr se Ta'alluq—Iqbāl kī Nazar Men," Awraq, October 1975.