

# Doctrines of Space-Time, Continuous Creative Movement, Atomism and Iqbal

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The human soul acts in different phases known as past, present, and future. The soul expects, it considers, and it remembers; it gives true activity to memory, attention, choice, intellect, and intuition. The object of attention is transformed into the object of memory and when events become possible they become objects of attention and become moulded into the framework of time.

In time We shall make them fully understand  
Our messages [from what they perceive] in the  
utmost horizons [of the universe] and within  
themselves, so that it will become clear to them  
that this [revelation] is indeed the truth. [Still] it  
is not enough [for them to know that your  
Sustainer is witness to everything. Oh, verily,  
they are in doubt as to whether they will meet  
your Sustainer [on Judgment Day]! Oh, verily,  
He encompasses everything. (41:53, 54)<sup>1</sup>

The changes in time are changes in the activity of the soul. When the barriers of the past and the present are broken and they act together as a single whole, or pure duration of time in flux, then time is continuous and the future unfolds as a deliberate act of the past and the present together. If this flux has succession then it is the duration as defined by Henri Bergson, as will be discussed later. Succession reveals duration and makes it comprehensible. However, if this duration has no succession, then it is regarded as the Divine Time as portrayed by Mohammed Iqbal in his philosophical works,<sup>2</sup> as will also

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<sup>1</sup> See *Surat Fussilat* in Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1993), p.738. A progressive expansion of their insight into the wonders of the universe and a deeper understanding of humankind's own psyche point to the existence of a creator.

<sup>2</sup> M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy and the Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989; pp. 50-52.

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be discussed later. Our experience of time reveals the durational aspects of time and it is on this account that the present bridges (or fluxes) the past with the future.<sup>3</sup> This thought is central to Iqbal's thesis on space-time throughout many of his poetic and prose works that are discussed here in as much detail as possible in the context of this chapter. According to Iqbal:

Objects are not subjective states caused by something imperceptible called matter; they are genuine phenomena which constitute the very substance of Nature and which we know as they are in Nature.<sup>4</sup>

A.N. Whitehead in his work, *The Concept of Nature*,<sup>5</sup> portrays Nature split into two disparate or isolated parts; the one known to us through immediate sense experiences, and the other, the unperceived scientific entities of molecules, atoms, electrons, ether, etc., which act upon the mind from "impact" so as to produce "illusions" of sensory experiences in which it delights. Further, according to Whitehead:

Nature is not a static fact situated in a dynamic void, but a structure of events possessing the character of a continuous creative flow, which thought cuts up into isolated immobilities out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time<sup>6</sup>

This, according to Iqbal, is another way of saying that space and time are interpretations which thought imposes upon the creative activity of the Ultimate Ego:

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<sup>3</sup> S. Alam Khundmiri, "Time in Iqbal's Poetic Vision," PhD Thesis, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1969, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 27.

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Space and time are possibilities of the Ego, only partially realized in the shape of our mathematical space and time. Beyond Him and apart from His creative activity, there is neither time nor space to close Him off in reference to other egos. The Ultimate Ego is, therefore, neither infinite in the sense of the space-bound human-ego whose body closes him off in reference to other egos. The infinity of the Ultimate Ego consists in the infinite inner possibilities of His creative activity of which the universe, as known to us, is only a partial expression. In one word God's infinity is intensive, not extensive. It involves an infinite series, but is not that series.<sup>7</sup>

True infinity does not mean infinite extension, which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity; and the moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite ego must be distinct, though not isolated, from the Infinite.<sup>8</sup>

Iqbâl appears to agree genuinely with Samuel Alexander, who, in his book, *Space, Time and Deity*, metaphorically calls time the mind of space, and, conversely, states that space may be conceived as the body of time. Einstein's space-time continuum demonstrates further that space is the necessary mode of the manifestation of time and cannot be disregarded. Alexander regards time as more coequal with space than Bergson, who gives more importance to duration. As Alexander writes:<sup>9</sup> "All vital problems of philosophy depend for their solution of the problem what space and time are and more particularly how they are related to each other."

Iqbal conceives a keen sense of the reality of time and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time. According to him:<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Alexander, "*Space, Time and Deity*", The Glifford Lectures at Glasgow, 1916-1918, (London: MacMillon, 1927), vol. I, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 113.

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The point of interest in this view of history is the way in which Ibn Khaldun conceives the process of change. His conception is of infinite importance because of the implication that history, as a continuous movement in time, is a genuinely creative movement and not a movement whose path is already determined.

Ibn Miskawaih's view of life as an evolutionary movement, and al-Biruni's definite approach to the conception of Nature as a process of becoming, constitute the intellectual inheritance of Ibn Khaldun.

Immanuel Kant in his work, *Critique of Pure Reason*,<sup>11</sup> postulated that one could penetrate into the future only by vision, but then, he had no concept of pure duration on which to base his arguments. He took into consideration perception, analyzed it, recomposed it, and allowed it to undergo the subtlest operations of the highest intellectual chemistry. However, one never obtains more than what one chooses in that chemistry. Kant took into account the relativity of the usual data and consciousness and tried to avoid Zeno's paradox on change and movement. He took time as continuous change but with a duration that neither flows nor changes nor endures. Henri Bergson, on the other hand, presents the concept of pure duration, which Iqbâl accepts as very close to the Islamic and his own concept of time, which acts as flux containing the past and the present as explained in the following.

In his work on *Creative Evolution*, Henri Bergson says: "We appreciate duration as a stream against which we cannot go. It is the foundation of our being, and, as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live."<sup>12</sup> In his book, *Creative Mind*, he gives a definition of pure duration: "It is enough to be convinced once and for all that reality is change, that change is indivisible, and that in an

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<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Plunhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arther Mitchell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998), p. 39.

Doctrines of Space-Time, Continuous Creative Movement indivisible change the past is one with the present.”<sup>13</sup> This pure duration he regards as a flux. The indivisible change is precisely defined as a true duration or real duration, which is regarded as time, but perceived as indivisible. Bergson defines pure duration as the form, which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. The intellect and the intuition act to flow through various stages in succession as perceived for the future. The concepts of intellect and the intuition give rise to the concept of spatialized time. Henri Bergson regards this time as a fourth dimension:

Through philosophy we can accustom ourselves never to isolate the present from the past, which it pulls along with it. Thanks to philosophy, all things acquire depth - more than depth, something like a fourth dimension which permits anterior perceptions, and the immediate future itself to become partly outlined in the present.<sup>14</sup>

The above statement by Henri Bergson, in which he regards pure duration as a fourth dimension differs from Albert Einstein’s special theory of relativity, where use is made of Minkowski’s four-dimensional space-time continuum, and where three spatial coordinates are used that are subject to time as the fourth dimension.<sup>15</sup>

Since Iqbal was motivated by the “continuous creative movement,” he saw difficulty in Einstein’s taking time as a fourth dimension to predict a point in time in the future. Take, for instance, the flight of a bird from point A; there is no knowledge at the time of the beginning of the flight what the end point B of the flight will be. Thus, the future is not a given and is not predictable according to the special theory of relativity, while the special and general theories of

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<sup>13</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp, 1974), p. 154.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Einstein, *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*, trans. Robert W. Lawson (New York; Avenel, NJ: Random House Publishing, 1961), p. 139.

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relativity, for scientific purposes, are capable of all points in a space-time continuum which science can predict. Ouspensky's conception of the fourth dimension as the movement of a three-dimensional figure in a direction not contained in itself is regarded by Iqbal as an argument to show that the theory cannot predict time that is unknown in the future.

Einstein's use of time as a fourth dimension of space in its treatment of future events does not fit Iqbal's notion of Reality. However, one of the later scholars on Iqbal, Dr. Raziuddin Siddiqui, has pointed out that Einstein did not take time as a fourth dimension of space but of a space-time continuum.<sup>16</sup> Although Dr. Siddiqui's interpretation of the special relativity theory is correct, he failed to realize, as stated in the above paragraph, that the relativity theory tells us nothing about "becoming" or the continuous creative movement.

Iqbal further wrote:

Personally, I believe that the ultimate character of Reality is spiritual: but in order to avoid widespread misunderstanding it is necessary to point out that Einstein's theory, which, as a scientific theory, deals only with the structure of things, throws no light on the ultimate nature of things which possess that structure.<sup>17</sup>

Here, clearly, he derives great benefit at times from extensive discussions with numerous Western and Eastern philosophers, while also differentiating the direction his work from their theories.

Although Iqbal agrees with Henri Bergson about the basic concept of pure duration, he never discusses Bergson's description of it as a fourth dimension. However, Iqbal's doctrine requires memory and imagination to be accounted for with pure duration in the state of continuous creative movement in the future. Pure duration cannot keep

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<sup>16</sup>Raziuddin Siddiqui, *Iqbal's Concept of Time and Space: Iqbal as a Thinker, a Symposium* (Lahore, Pakistan: Ashraf Press, 1973), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, 32.

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a multiplicity of objects together. It will be discussed later that the multiplicity of nature in its innumerable instants can be grasped only by an awakened inner-self, described as “appreciative self,” which can develop it into a lasting synthesis. This is where Iqbal begins his doctrine of time and space as it must address pure duration, with memory and imagination, and begins to address the continuous creative movement in the future. This realization, according to Iqbal, is possible only from an analysis of time within the depth of the inner-self. As he states: “thought, life, and purpose interpenetrate to form an organic unity.” Pure duration creates this organic unity, for time is indivisible, although it is not a change without succession.

Iqbal has conceived of time as serial (comprising change and succession), and as non-serial (change without succession). Following the true Islamic tradition, he regards time as something real and positive and that the changes in the terrestrial world take place within the context of time. Iqbal states that the characteristics of time are in creativity:

To exist in real time is not to be bound by the fetters of serial time, but to create it from moment to moment and to be absolutely free and original in creation. The deep insight into the inner self is therefore necessary to experience the non-serial time. The constant change in the inner life guides the external life.<sup>18</sup>

When discussing Divine Time, Iqbal talks about time as having neither beginning nor end, though he does not differentiate between *al-dahr* and *al-sarmad* precisely, as is discussed elsewhere in the book.

Here is a passage from Iqbal that deserves careful analysis:

Rising higher and higher in the scale of immaterial beings we reach Divine Time – time which is absolutely

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 40.

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free from the quality of passage, and consequently does not admit divisibility, sequence, and change. It is above eternity; it has neither beginning nor end. The eye of God sees all visibles, and His ear hears all audible sound in one indivisible act of perception. The priority of God is not due to the priority of time; on the other hand, priority of time is due to God's priority. Thus Divine Time is what the Qur'an 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 "now."<sup>19</sup>

The Qur'an says: "Now, verily, it is We who have created man, and We know what his innermost self whispers within him: for We are closer to him than his jugular vein" (50:16).

These are described as the two fundamental motive forces, the inner-self (*nafs*) within the nature of human beings: their primal instinctive urges and desires, both sensual and non-sensual, on the one side, and their conscious reason, both intuitive and reflective, on the other, for predominance within every human being.<sup>20</sup> Iqbal uses his own created terminology to describe this Qur'anic thought given in *Surat Qaf*. The intuitive and reflective side of human beings is termed by him the "appreciative self," while their primal instinctive urges and desires are termed the "efficient self." This efficient side is associated with the world of space, the practical self of daily life in its dealings with the external order of things. The condition in which this self lives keeps itself outside, as if unaware of the existence of the inner self that can be made to interact with it. The time and space in which the efficient self lives is associated with the spatial and temporal events external to one another like so many stages in the life in which it lives. When we make a deeper analysis of the conscious experience, we see what Iqbal terms the appreciative side of the self. It is very difficult to catch a glimpse of this appreciative self, when the efficient self is

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>20</sup>Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 798.

Doctrines of Space-Time, Continuous Creative Movement preoccupied and engaged in the daily mode of life described above. A kind of a veil is thus created between these two entirely different sides of the self. In the Islamic way of life there are many methods of meditation that help remove this veil and make contact possible between the appreciative self and the efficient self. It is by this process that the inner centre of experience is reached. According to Iqbal:

In the life-process of deeper ego the states of consciousness melt into each other. The unity of the appreciative ego is like the unity of the germ in which the experiences of its individual ancestors exist, not as a plurality, but as a unity in which every experience permeates the whole.<sup>21</sup>

The true self thus resists the transience of time for it has grasped time's real essence. Only in the moments of proximity and love – the modes of creation – can the temporality of time be arrested and pure duration grasped.<sup>22</sup> This is the intuitive grasp of pure duration that makes history a creative act of real and enduring soul that leads to open challenges for the future. This is where the understanding and clear interpretation of time and space are critical in Islam. According to Iqbal, the soul has a beginning in time as it was created with the creation of the body; hence time cannot be irrelevant to the development of personality:

There is change and movement, but change and movement are indivisible; their elements interpenetrate and are wholly non-serial in character. It appears that the time of the appreciative self is a single “now” which the efficient self, in its traffic with the world of space,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> S. Alam Khundmiri, “Conception of Time,” in Hafiz Malik, *Iqbal: Poet Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 243.

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pulverizes into a series of “nows” like pearl beads in a  
thread.<sup>23</sup>

Note that an extensive discussion further on this topic is already covered in the chapter on “The Architecture of Time and Space in Islam” with the thought process of the Qur’an (50). The path that we need to take is to analyze our conscious experience that can grasp the true nature of time. The appreciative self lives in pure duration (as defined above, it is the change without succession). According to Iqbal:

The life of the self consists in its movement from the appreciative to the efficient side, from intuition to intellect, and atomic time is born out of this movement. This then reconciles the opposition of permanence and changes, of time regarded as an organic whole or eternity, and time regarded as atomic.<sup>24</sup>

We need to refer to the treatise *Ghayat al-Imkan fi Dirayat al-Makan* (Appendix A), where it is said:

Of course, the mingling of body and soul resembles the association of Allah with the whole universe, since the soul is neither inside the body nor outside it, nor is it close to the body nor dissociated from it. The soul is from another world and the body from a different world. Physical obstructions and ailments, association or dissociation or anything else, are not applicable to the soul. Nevertheless, the soul indeed exists with each and every atom of the body in a place that is conducive to its sensitivity and dignity.<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere in the treatise it is said:

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<sup>23</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious thought*, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix A, Section 28.

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It is inconceivable that a creature could penetrate His sphere or carve a path toward Him. Wisdom and intellect are also creatures and He is part of the atoms of existence in this world just as the soul permeates every atom of a body.<sup>26</sup>

We thus have an idea of why in the midst of the arguments on the inner-self, Iqbal introduced a discussion about the importance of Atomism in Islam. Iqbal further states:

Divine life is in touch with the whole universe on the analogy of the soul's contact with the body. The soul is neither inside nor outside the body; neither approximate to nor separate from it. Yet its contact with every atom of the body is real, and it is impossible to conceive of this contact except by positing some kind of space which befits the subtleness of the soul.<sup>27</sup>

The Qur'an says:

Every single thing in existence is sourced from Us [its storehouses]; nor do We bestow anything from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined. (15:21)

It appears that the Ash`arites based their argument on the above verse that the creative method of Divine energy is atomic. They predicted that the world is compounded of *jawahir* – infinitely small particles or atoms, which cannot be further divided.<sup>28</sup> Iqbal finds himself in general agreement with the Ash`arites on their spirit of continuous creation and their denial that anything can have a stable nature, but he cannot not agree with their atomic view that there is a single order of atoms, and what we call soul is either a form of matter

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Section 36.

<sup>27</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 108.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

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or only an accident. The concept of an immaterial soul, which is also indestructible and permanent, could not possibly be accommodated in their philosophy of atoms and accidents, along with continuous creation and extinction. As the Qur'an further says: "He adds to His creation whatever He wills" (35:1). Iqbal points out that the essence of the atom is independent of its existence, a quality imposed on it by God. This existence implies that the Divine energy is visible. There is a continual creation of atoms that leads to a growing universe. Since modern science has recently observed that the growth of the universe is accelerating every moment, the creation of fresh atoms is also increasing.

Although Iqbal says that each atom occupies a position, which does not involve space, he points out that the Ash`arites regarded space as generated by the aggregation of atoms, in which case there must exist voids between the positions occupied by atoms. The Mutakallimun,<sup>29</sup> and particularly, the Ash`arite<sup>30</sup> School, provoked a revolt against the intellectual philosophers who always focused on the rational study of the universe. The scientific methods followed by these intellectuals ignored the ultimate authority of the revealed scriptures. Thus there always existed an apparent incompatibility between Divine Omnipotence and the universal law of causality. The task of the Mutakallimun and particularly the Ash`arites, was to project God as an act of force on every atom of the universe. They influenced the investigation of time from this perspective. The early Mutakallimun – Mu`tazilites initially adopted atomic synthesis in metaphysics rather than the homogeneous substance approach of Aristotle. It was Al-Nazzam from this school who solved Zeno's paradox of a vacuum between every two atomic positions with a theory of "jump" to overcome the difficulty of motion, which is discussed in several places.

The Ash`arite theory of creation has another feature called the doctrine of accidents, which, when created, make the continuity of the atom existent. Iqbal says that if God ceases to create the accidents, the

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<sup>29</sup> Mutakallimun: dialectic theologians.

<sup>30</sup> Abu al-Hasan al-Ash`ari was the founder of the Ash`ari school of theologians.

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atom ceases to exist as an atom. The Ash`arite view that the *nafs* is an accident is contrary to their own theory, which makes the continuous existence of atoms dependent on the continuous creation of accidents. What is called the accident is responsible for the continuity of the atom.

The Ash`arite theory of time is believed to be the first to present time philosophically. Time is regarded as consisting of individual “nows” or moments of time, and each individual moment of time is followed by voids which must be passed with jumps. This objective treatment of time did not accord with that of the Greeks and also encountered difficulty with the Ash`arite treatment of moments of time. Iqbal says:

The time of gross bodies which arises from the revolution of the heavens is divisible into past, present, and future; and its nature is such that as long as one day does not pass the succeeding day does not come.<sup>31</sup>

According to Bergson, movement is reduced for the purpose of study into a series of mobility, and phenomena like motion and time are analyzed into a succession of “points” and “instants.”

According to Iqbal:

Another feature of this theory of creation is the doctrine of accident, on the perpetual creation of which depends the continuity of atom as an existent. If God ceases to create accidents, the atom ceases to exist as an atom.<sup>32</sup>

The Qur`an says: Verily I – I alone – am God; there is no deity save Me. Hence worship Me alone, and be constant in prayer, so as to remember Me. (20:14.

Iqbal says:

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<sup>31</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

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The world, in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego, is the self-revelation of the ‘Great I am,’ as claimed by God in the above verse.<sup>33</sup>

Elsewhere, the Qur’an says: “Now, verily, it is We who have created man, and we know what his innermost self whispers within him: for We are closer to him than his jugularvein” (50:16). Thus every act of the Ultimate Ego is spiritual.

The first significant vision of time in Iqbal’s poetry appears in his poem “The Reality of Beauty” (*Haqiqat-i-Husn*)<sup>34</sup>, included in his Urdu poetry collection *Bang-i-Dara*. In this poem one finds man’s confrontation with God; “Beauty,” asks God: “Why was it not made immortal? It is said that the world is a mirror-house and is a tale of long nights of separation. In its appearance it has the stamp of change and carries within itself the seeds of destruction.” These words of God create a commotion in the heavens and earth and the whole cosmic atmosphere is filled with a deep sense of sorrow. In another poem, “The Moon and the Stars,”<sup>35</sup> the stars express weariness caused by the eternal journey. The moon reminds them that movement is the essence of life and only those who move endure; those who get tired die. This theme is followed in other poems about historical awareness. The poet comes to realize that the “arrest of movement” gives rise to historical gains, human history is enacted in a universe in which change is the eternal law of time.<sup>36</sup> However, the universe keeps growing and numerous treasures are added to its history at every moment. Iqbal finds hope in the awareness of this eternal change. In the last poem, “Khidr of the Way” (*Khizr-i-Rah*)<sup>37</sup> in the same collection, Iqbal

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>34</sup> Mohammed Iqbal, “*Haqiqat-i-Husn*” [The Reality of Beauty], in *Bang-i-Dara, Kuliyyat-i-Iqbâl*, Urdu edition (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbâl Academy, 1994), p. 138.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., “*Chand aur Tare*” (“The Moon and the Stars”, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Khundmiri, “*Time in Iqbal’s Poetic Vision*”, p. 203.

<sup>37</sup> Iqbal, “*Khizr-i-Rah*”, in *Bang-i-Dara*, p. 283.

Doctrines of Space-Time, Continuous Creative Movement defines the concept of time as a ceaseless duration. In his awareness are included self-awareness and historical self-awareness along with a cosmic awareness.

In his work *Secret of the Self*,<sup>38</sup> Iqbal introduces a new dimension to historical self-awareness, in which he recognizes the higher task of creating new values, new aspirations, and a new future rather than just preserving old values. As the universe continues to evolve and grow, the individual self must create new forms and explore and create new egos which are continuously and unceasingly struggling to rise to higher stages of life and will.

In his remarkable contribution, *Asrar-i-Khudi*,<sup>39</sup> Iqbal's concept of self develops in time and accepts challenges from the world of nature and human history in seeking proximity with the infinite self of God. As described by Alam Khundmiri:

The Infinite Self is not a static being, but a dynamic principle of creation Who creates the finite self of man in His own image and places Him in a world full of challenges and promises. Thus man conquers the world of nature by measuring all faculties bestowed upon him by his Creator.<sup>40</sup>

In this process of conquest, Iqbal believes (see discussion of Iqbal's appreciative self and efficient self above), God becomes man's coworker and helper (through association in prayers for God and thus getting a glimpse of ceaseless time, a concept developed in Iqbal's "*Asrar-i-Khud*" and in my other paper on "*Tahdhib al-Insan*." The conquest takes place in time; the history of humankind is the history of the gradual mastery of nature by human beings. This is organically

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<sup>38</sup> Mohammed Iqbal, *Secret of the Self*, trans.. R. Nicholson (Delhi: Saujanya Boks, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Iqbal, Mohammed, *Asrar-i-Khudi*, Farsi edition (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1994), p. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Khundmiri, "*Time in Iqbal's Poetic Vision*", p. 251.

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related to other monads, achieving completion in the course of time and experiencing time as a pure duration. Human beings are thus far superior to all other creatures for they alone are capable of consciously participating in the creative energy of God. They are endowed with the power to imagine a better world; the ego in them aspires to exploit all the various environments in which they may be called upon to operate. The stage of human activity is incomplete. The result of human activity in human history is also incomplete. There is also a possibility of novelty in both the universe and human history; adversities are not calamities but occasions for human activity. The poet envisions the future as the emergence of hitherto unknown possibilities which are not completed facts in eternity but which are hidden in the human activity itself.

In a letter to R. Nicholson,<sup>41</sup> translator of his *Secret of the Self* Iqbal writes:

Thus the universe is not a completed act; it is still in the course of formation. There can be no complete truth about the universe, for the universe has not yet become whole. The process of creation is still going on, and man too takes his share in it, in as much as he helps to bring order into at least a portion of the chaos.

In the sense of philosophy in *Secret of the Self*, Iqbal's universe is an ordered system of egos or individualities and the continuation of individuality depends upon the strengthening of the self or ego. There are different grades of individualities, and the universe, representing a perpetual process, is really an evolving universe where the lower type of ego struggles to become higher.<sup>42</sup>

At the beginning of the *Secret of the Self*, we are told that the vastness of time is the arena of the self and the spaciousness of the

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<sup>41</sup> Mohammed Iqbal, "Letter to Dr. Nicholson," in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Wahid (Lahore, Pakistan: Ashraf Printing Press, 1992), p. 93.

<sup>42</sup> Khundmiri, *Time in Iqbal's Poetic Vision*, p. 216.

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heavens is a mere billow of dust on its road. The accomplished self, the vicegerent of God, is the rider of the time who discovers hidden realms of possibilities coming to light, thus conquering time. In this selfhood, serial time has a subordinate place dealing with lower order egos. In one of the sayings of the Prophet: “*li ma‘ Allahi Waqtun*” (“I have time with God”), there is the indication that the Prophet is able to experience Divine Time, which is a time without succession, that is, in which the past, present, and the future are experienced together. This prophetic experience occurs definitely in time and cannot be regarded as any negation of time; life in this experience is one of the mysteries of time. The self needs to search for deeper levels of consciousness to understand the real nature of time, which is different from serial or spatialized time. The appreciation of the real nature of time leads the self to an understanding of freedom making it a “free-self.” The “free-self” undergoes creative movement and it creates its own destiny. All the possibilities of humanity in general and Islam in particular are not exhausted in the past. It is by the conquest of this serial time that one is able to see the wider dimensions of time and acquire insight into the inner consciousness of life and its purpose. The “free self” is the creator of new, it is the co-worker with God and fulfils the purpose of creation. One would expect that when the self is developed to be the “vicegerent of God on earth,” it would receive glimpses of Divine Time that is the fulfilment of the Divine Mission. This is the conquest of faith by human beings, where they are separated from the spell of serial time and completely free of the bondage of physical laws. The restless movement of the human ego has its ideal in the Divine personality, which was the Prophet’s highest ideal. The highest power is united in the “free self” with the highest knowledge: thought and action, instinct and reason become one.

In another outstanding collection of poems, called *Payam-i-Mashriq*, Iqbal presents a poem, called “*nawa-i-waqt*,”<sup>43</sup> where time is presented as a clothing of man and the garment of God and destiny as a mere spell of time. Here the clear-cut distinction between Divine Time

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<sup>43</sup> Mohammed Iqbal, “*Nawa-i-Waq*”t [“The Sound of Time”] in *Payam-i-Mashriq, Huliyaat Iqbal*, Farsi edition, (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1994), pp. 248.

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(the non-serial time discussed earlier) and serial time is demonstrated in a discussion between God and humankind. A critical interpretation and realization thus takes place in the revelation of the Ultimate Reality to us as pure duration in which “thought, life, and purpose interpenetrate to form an organic unity.”<sup>44</sup>

In his Urdu poem “*Zamana*”<sup>45</sup> (“Time”), Iqbal has presented the inexorable nature of phenomenal time with a beauty of expression. He visualizes three characteristics of association with time. First, there are those who have subjected themselves to be ridden by time, which pass into the biplanes of history, leaving virtually no trace. Second, there are those who have taken the initiative to ride on time and overcome it (thus discovering hidden realms of possibilities). Third, there are those who accept their follies of the past and redress them in the future.

In another poem called “*The Mosque of Cordoba*”<sup>46</sup> in the same collection, Iqbal regards human life as unique, and yet it is intimately connected with cosmic progress. The “passage of time” is a source of hope as well as agony.<sup>47</sup> Here time is described as a passage and then suddenly rises above it by an authentic human, the vicegerent of God on earth. This authentic human achieves victory, by means of prayer, over serial time, thus demonstrating a close relation between “duration” and “endurance,” coming in contact with Destiny and thus realizing “endurance.” God, Who is the source of Life Eternal, is never overtaken by slumber and is truly in possession of real endurance. Iqbal’s gaze is towards this Supreme Being Who is the source of Time and to Him return all things created. This gaze affirms that all that is real is derived from the Supreme Reality.

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<sup>44</sup> Kamal M. Habib, “*Iqbal as The Poet of Time*”, *Iqbal Review*, January 1978, p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Mohammed Iqbâl, “*Zamanah*,” [“The age of Time”] in *Bal-i-Jibril, Kuliyyat-i-Iqbâl*, Urdu edition (Lahore: Iqbâl Academy, 1994), p. 458.

<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, “*Masjid-i-Qurtuba* [“The Mosque in Cordova”] in *Bal-i-Iqbal*, Urdu edition (Lahore, Iqbal Acedmy), 1994), p. 419.

<sup>47</sup> See *Surat al-`Asr* in Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 974.

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In his poetic work *Javednama*,<sup>48</sup> Iqbal presents a dialogue with Zurvan, the genius of cosmic time in Zoroastrianism. In this dialogue Zurvan presents himself as time, the destroyer of the world. Iqbal identifies the world of nature as the spatial-temporal world created by God that subjects every other creature to these space-time bound laws of nature, which give rise to events that are neither time bound or space bound but are all space-time bound. Thus each form of existence includes some sort of reference to a space-time framework. In the world of Zurvan, the world of serial time, Time is the fourth dimension of a three-space coordinate system and is thus inseparable from space in the universe. However, in the world of God's creation, Time also penetrates deeper levels of mental life, in which time cuts its relation with space which exists in the world of the internal life of the human. This freedom from the mystery of serial time has been discussed above in the discussion of the "free self." According to the saying of the Prophet, cited above: "There is time when I am with God." It is the conquest of faith by humans which opens the doors of the higher world of freedom. In this freedom, time leaves space behind and joins with Eternity and submits to timelessness. It is timeless in the sense that the serial time of this world for humans becomes irrelevant in this experience. Since this stage occurs in time, in a deeper sense, it is an experience of time itself. The experience, which is called "timeless," is an encounter with the Eternal, and includes duration in succession as well as duration in non-succession. This experience cannot occur in a dream-like state, it must be in a state of full consciousness. It is the experience of the total personality of body and soul together and not separated. It is in this experience that the priority of time as duration is revealed to the human ego. It is very true that this state of experience cannot be fully comprehended by the intellect, for it cannot be described in physical terms. However, since the uniqueness of the Creator is believed to exist, as all the creations conform to His laws, the prayers to the Creator lift the intellect in wisdom and higher ascension into spiritual knowledge that cannot be described in any perception.

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<sup>48</sup> Mohammed Iqbal, *Javednama*, Farsi edition (Lahor: Iqbal Academy, 1994), p. 473.

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Mohammed Iqbal's religious philosophy is based on a theory of knowledge in his famous work entitled *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, in which he has tried to bridge the gulf between religious and nonreligious levels of experience, and the temporal and nontemporal orders of Reality.<sup>49</sup> To this end, Iqbal lays more stress upon religious purification to achieve reality:

In fact, religion, for reasons which I have mentioned before, is far more anxious to reach the ultimate reality than science. And to both the way to pure objectivity lies through what may be called the purification of experience.<sup>50</sup>

As stated by Fazlur Rahman: "The affinity of this doctrine of movement to Mohammed Iqbal's view of the dynamic process of reality resulting in the evolution of more concrete and spiritual selfhood of man is obvious enough."

The basic feature of *khudi* is that it must have progress. Each individual has an "I" of his/her own. There should be progress in "I" which leads to progress in *khudi*. When *khudi* progresses higher and higher by spiritual uplifting, then the *Insan* is given the status of *khalifatullah*, a right and an opportunity given to each human being who is a believer. The individual with accomplished *khudi* is a hope and inspiration for his/her surroundings and helps all around the environment.

The individual has the capacity to capture and respond to the meaning and purpose of all creations. The plight of this individual is the dream of Iqbal, which he thinks can be realized in the future. The poet thinks that the light of his vision will remove all darkness. He is worried that the time in which he lives does not have the ability to catch up with the wisdom of his ideas. He calls on God to fill the cup of knowledge and wisdom for him so that he can convey his thought to his community. He sees his mentor (peer) Rumi in his dream which then

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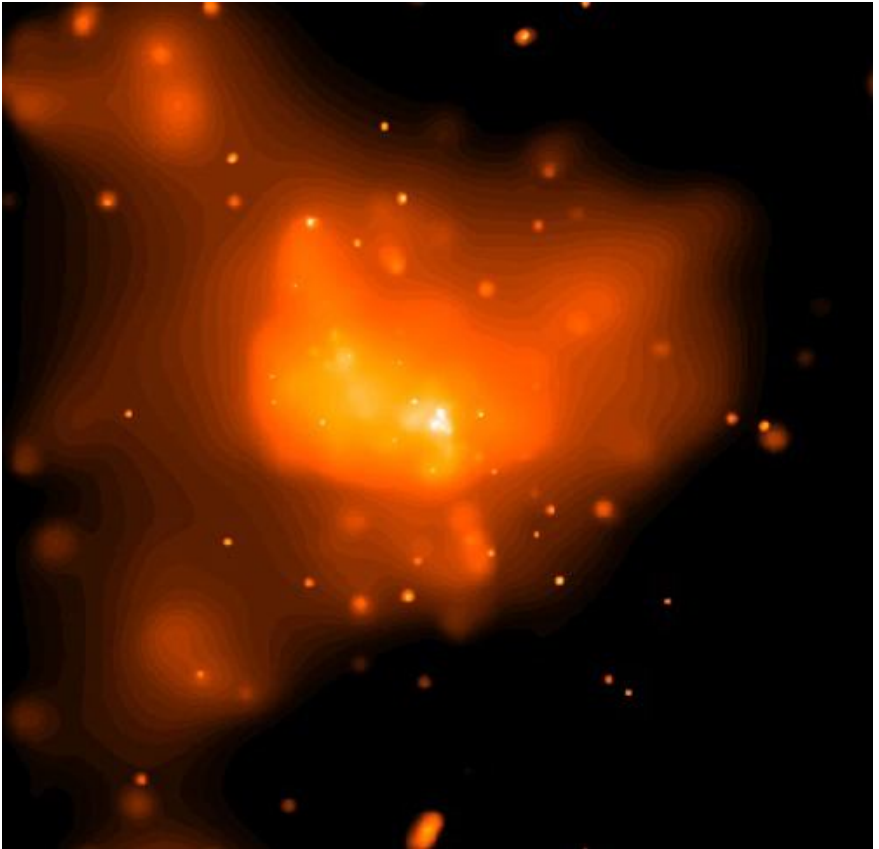
<sup>49</sup> Khundmiri, *Time in Iqbal's Poetic Vision*, p. 244.

<sup>50</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p.155.

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motivates him to get up and write and convey the spirit of Islam to the ordinary person for hope and determination. The purpose of this work is to open the secrets of the individual talents that are hidden and need to be rejuvenated. When *khudi* sleeps, it is darkness; when *khudi* is awakened, it is the light of the day. When a drop of water is awakened to its *khudi*, it becomes transformed into a pearl. The *khudi* of wine is weaker than the *khudi* of the glass cup and hence it simply follows the shape of the glass. Mountains have their *khudi* in maintaining their strength in their structure, instead of spreading out like particles of dust. The sun maintains its *khudi* in supplying light and energy, although the earth revolving around the sun, and the moon revolving around the earth have become dependent. The *khudi* of a simple and small seed (grain) takes the form of a tree. When *khudi* lives, it gives rise to many oceans. Hence, human beings must awaken their *khudi* so that they can enlighten the world around them.

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NASA/PSU/G.Garmire, F. Baganoff (MIT): This image shows the relationship between the black hole Sagittarius A\* and the supernova remnant Sagittarius A East, both of which are located in the center of our galaxy in the constellation Sagittarius. For the first time, astronomers using Chandra were able to separate the supernova

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remnant, Sagittarius A East, from other complex structures in the center of the Milky Way. The emission from the supernova Sagittarius A East is depicted by the bright yellow and orange tones in the middle of this image. While dozens of supernova remnants are known in our galaxy, the proximity of Sagittarius A East to the black hole in the center of our galaxy makes it important. By detailing the association between Sagittarius A East and Sagittarius A\*, astronomers hope to learn if this is an example of a common relationship between supernovae and black holes throughout the Universe.

<http://www.msfc.nasa.gov/news/photos/photogallery/chandra/chandra5.htm>