DYNAMIC CONCEPTION OF THE WEST AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELF

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Although Galileo and Newton gave Mechanistic Foundations to human knowledge the development of scientific ideas has gradually drifted away from Mechanism to Dynamism, and it seems that the idea of 'movement' or 'change' occupies central position in our knowledge of the universe. As a consequence of their evolution in science western thought in our time shows more and more leanings towards the dynamic interpretation of reality.

But close examination reveals that the contemporary western philosophies of Dynamism are subject to dormant contradictions and have implications that the philosophy of self is bound to encounter in order to consolidate its own dynamic world-view on unmistakable footings. The philosophy of self which has been propounded in Indo-Pak sub-continent since Iqbal claims to reveal a dynamism in the nature of reality, which in all its essentials is something different from the sort of dynamism these western theories project in the structure of the Universe.

Dynamical conception of the world as it were advocated by the leaders of science and philosophy in the contemporary west is closely associated with the reality character of the appearance. They believe, to put it in general terms, that the world consists of sense-data, ideas, or impressions and since these fleeting presentations are never stationary, the world in its essence is not static. This dynamical conception is based on the concept of the 'Temporal' while the dynamic view of the theory of self is raised on deeper bases, it is grounded in the concept of the 'Duration'. It is therefore quite necessary for a philosopher of self to expose hollowness of the concept of dynamism as it pervades the current western theories according to whom the only reality which this imperfect and mortal man can ever reach or hope to decipher is a ceaseless flux and boundless vacuum. Becoming supreme in the whole realm of scientific thought, this theory has thrown into disrepute the history-long quest for the underlying reality behind the fleeting phenomena.

The distinction in philosophy between appearance and reality—the phenomenon and the noumenon,—is an old one. Appearance consists of motion and change. This appearance or change is what Dewey and Russell and many others believe to be the ultimate reality, with which we have, willy nilly, to be content, as human knowledge is restricted and cannot overstep the boundaries set up by appearances. To them appearance is reality and there is no need of further ground for this reality.

The doctrine of the reality of phenomena or appearances fits in easily with the dynamical conception of the universe as propounded by the leaders of modern science which regards motion as the ultimate and final reality.

This idea of the world as appearances and phenomena is, to my mind, a heinous logical fallacy which has had the effect of retarding philosophical enquiries and sapping the basis of higher strata of conceptualization.

Appearances and phenomena age, in the terminology of modern science, four-dimensional continua which consist of time as their cardinal ingredient. Now, time equates fully with motion. This means that appearances and phenomena consist of motion as well as space. The question of space does not concern us at the present stage of our inquiry. But so far as motion is concerned, it is obvious that motion and appearance are coextensive and the fact that they are co-extensive clearly means that appearance can, without any loss of meaning, be substituted with motion. Thus, the whole discussion revolves round the fundamental notion of motion. But motion, in turn, is co-terminous with energy which is convertible into matter. The logical way, therefore, to begin our discussion would be to make energy our central point of investigation.

At this stage of our discussion, the question which suggest themselves are: firstly, is energy appearance or reality? Secondly, does energy have any relation to space; if so, what is the nature of this relationship? If energy is accepted as the final reality, space would naturally have to step down to the second general genus in the heirarchy of genera, leaving the place of the most general genus to energy which would then be considered as the highest generalisation the human mind is capable of.

But if space, as abstracted from energy and matter (which have

become co-extensive), is regarded as the most general genus, the alternative of appearance would altogether vanish into thin air In this case, space would become the only eternal and everlasting reality in the cosmos. It is necessary to emphasise here the fact that the word 'space', as employed in the present discussion, denotes a complete abstraction from energy and matter. Thus, conceived as above and beyond the clutches of time and energy, space is, I propose, the only reality behind the fleeting phenomena and appearances. It is infinite and existent eternally, its infinitude being all rational and on all sides. Time, motion and change denote similar, one-directional activity . In this uni-directional activity, 'before', 'herenow' and 'after' are three essential stages. 'Before' is merging in 'herenow' while 'herenow' is in its turn becoming 'after'. This process of becoming 'before', 'herenow' and 'after' presupposes continuous nothingness left over behind every 'before' because every 'before' leaves nothingness behind at its merger with 'herenow'. This condition of being is a situation in which nothingness precedes 'before' and it is what is described as contingent. Thus, 'before', 'herenow' and 'after' are all contingent as all of them leave nothingness in their wake. But the contingency of all these three necessitates the contingency of time itself since time is composed of these three units only. Now, time is co-terminant with motion and change; motion is co-extensive with energy and energy is convertible into matter, which shows that all these four, along with time, are contingent. But if time, motion, energy, change and matter are all thought to be contingent, they cannot be considered as the ultimate reality. Ultimate reality, I dare say, is changeless and timeless. It cannot change as otherwise it will lose the peculiarity of being the ultimate reality.

Change, which is the essence of time, energy and motion, has some peculiar qualities of its own which deprive it of its right of the ultimate reality. Firstly, because every change presupposes the existence of space prior to itself, space has a greater right to be called ultimate reality. Secondly, change by its very nature, is finite. Change denotes the finitude while the ultimate reality cannot be * finite. The third reason as to why change cannot be regarded as the ultimate reality is more important than the former two.

Change, by its very nature, has three states as its fundamental

* 'The Finite Universe' in the Proceedings of the Forth Session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress, PP 143-148.

units. These are 'before', 'herenow' and 'after'. Between these three states (a,b,c) two more states intervene. The state coming between a and b covers innumerable possibilities. Also, the state y which intervenes between b and c, has innumerable possibilities too. Then again, a third state z comes after c, having an infinite field of innumerable possibilities.

These six states, a,b,c and x,y,z are all the possible and conceivable stages through which every change has somehow to pass. Now, if change is considered as the final reality, the question would arise as to which one of the six states is the final reality. Change as such is comprised of only first three stages a, b and c. The question is: at what point in a,b or c the motion becomes real in the ultimate sense of the word? Is it reality at a,b or c or at all of them collectively? Whatever answer this question may have, the fact remains that the very existence of these states excludes the possibility of reality. Of these three states, everyone has something more or something less than the other two, as it were very clearly shown by the fact that these are three states, not one. Here, the famous principle that no two things in the world can in all respects be identical, applies very aptly, as otherwise they would be one, not two. Thus, everyone of the three states of change has some excess or diminution in relation to the other two. If, therefore, the three states of change are considered as the final reality, they would naturally consist of something more or something less than reality since all of them are severally considered realities.

Therefore, the diminution or excess of reality at every stage in comparison with the other two stages is unavoidable. But this makes reality unreal as neither more nor less than reality is to be considered reality. One is more and the other is less than reality and, therefore, both of them are a little bit different from reality. And this is reduction to absurdity.

Thus, change alongwith motion, time, energy and matter cannot be considered as reality. But in the case of space, the situation is altogether different. Space can be abstracted away from time, motion, etc. Thus abstracted, it can be regarded as the final reality, acting as it does as the final resting place of all our notions and external motions in the universe. The view that time can be merged with space, as Einstien innocently believed, is quite inadmissible. Time is essentially an activity. The serious mistake that Einstien commits in regard to he merger of time and space in his theory of relativity is *due to a con-*

fusion between the meanings of the words 'space' and 'place'. The word 'place' has a significance of very limited applicability while space is the most general notion the human mind is able to conceive. Interpreted thus, space as distinct from place is a kind of conception which cannot be equated with the concept of activity.

Indeed some very obvious and clear differences exist between the conceptions of space and time. A very apparent difference is that space can be abstracted from time *while time cannot be conceived of as existing without space*. Metaphysically speaking, the very notion of time requires that it should not be regarded as anything more than a contingent entity. At the same time, the view that space is contingent is patently ridiculous. The idea the word 'space' conveys is the widest possible notion a human mind can comprehend. This widest possible notion is comprised of what is termed as the Universe and the non-activity preceding it and reigning beyond the farthest conceivable confines of this universe. Space thus defined and the idea connoted by the word "time' as explained above represent two quite different categories. One is completely fundamental while the other is a mere auxiliary.

Space is the ultimate reality while time, along with other similar processes, is simply a derivative of it. It is only a particular manifestation of the Ultimate Reality which is infinite in all directions, ubiquitous, and all-inclusive.

The western theorists of the present age universalize time, and thus make the whole concept of reality superfluous. Time cannot be ultimate. It is space which is presentation of the ultimate reality. The philosophy of self, as it was propounded by Iqbal and leading thinkers internalizes this truth in the concept of 'specious presence'.

The category of 'specious presence' with which the ultimate ego is omnipresent in objective terms is projected in the category of space. The dynamic aspect of this objective consciousness is posited in the notion of 'Duration'. When Iqbal disowns the 'time as a mechanical concept', he was in fact visualizing a higher order of reality in the idea of Duration.

This 'Duration' is reality without succession. A reality which is without succession is supratemporal, which provides the ground for

the fleeting temporal things, the appearances and the presentations. As an abstract concept this duration is space.

I have already pointed out that the notion of space loses its significance when it is used in the sense of a 'place,' Iqbal has this sense of the word 'space', when like Bergson, he speaks of the spatialization of time. But when the word 'space' is restored to its full meanings as the infinite boundless objectivity, the human mind can ever comprehend, it transcends the 'localizations' and in the order of consciousness is reproduced as the 'specious presence'.