

CONSCIOUSNESS AND EGO

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ABSTRACT

Our journey towards an understanding of consciousness is beset with a number of difficulties. There are dark as well as gray areas which give only marginal insight into the nature of consciousness. However, in recent decades the subject has attracted the attention of physicists, biologists, psychologists and philosophers with equal enthusiasm. Yet, none of the recent data from any of these sources, as we examine it in depth, provide convincing evidence which may enable us to formulate a single unified theory of consciousness. In spite of this, sufficient information is now available which may help us carve out a path, tentatively at least, which can bring us closer to a judgment about consciousness and thus implicitly of religious experience as conceived by Iqbal. In his lecture on: The Human Ego– His Freedom and Immortality, Iqbal presents a candid analysis of human consciousness within which, as we examine it carefully, is wrapped his philosophy of ego (self). Unfortunately, for a pure physicalist (monistic materialist), there may be no joy in this verse. For him material is the beginning and material is the end. There is no room for soul or ego in his lexicon, especially the manner in which it occupies a central place in the activity of life as understood by dualists, and as unfolded in the revealed knowledge. Yet, there is plenty of room for the psychologists to ponder over it and seek evidence for the Divine time and space in the domain of religious experience (mysticism).

Our journey towards an understanding of consciousness is beset with a number of difficulties. There are dark as well as gray areas which give only marginal insight into the nature of consciousness. However, in recent decades the subject has attracted the attention of physicists, biologists, psychologists and philosophers with equal enthusiasm. Yet, none of the recent data from any of these sources, as we examine it in depth, provide convincing evidence which may enable us to formulate a single unified theory of consciousness. In spite of this, sufficient information is now available which may help us carve out a path, tentatively at least, which can bring us closer to a judgment about consciousness and thus implicitly of religious experience as conceived by Iqbal. In his lecture on: The Human Ego— His Freedom and Immortality, Iqbal presents a candid analysis of human consciousness within which, as we examine it carefully, is wrapped his philosophy of ego (self). Drawing his inspiration from the revealed knowledge, he places emphasis on the “unity of life” and rejects the idea of “redemption” on the ground that man is the chosen of God, that man with all its faults, is meant to be representative of God on earth, and that man is the trustee of free personality which he accepted on his peril.¹ In sympathy with this approach, he turns to the “unity of human consciousness”, which, as he rightly recognizes, constitutes the centre of human personality. He is right that this aspect, surprisingly, never really became a “point of real interest in the history of Muslim thought. With little information on this count, Mukallimeen² were led to propose that Soul (for our purposes, we prefer to use the word ego, or consciousness as we proceed further in our analysis) was a finer kind of matter; it dies with the body and is recreated on the day of judgment. This view of soul, however, is contraindicated when we speak of “unity of life” or even “unity of consciousness”. If this be so, what then is the basis of unity of life or for that matter of inner experience, for which Iqbal has laboured hard to draw evidences from philosophy, psychology, physical sciences, and religion which he considers as one of the sources of knowledge. Irrespective of other considerations, Iqbal states that it is “Devotional Sufism alone which has tried to understand the meaning of the unity of inner experience”³,—finding culmination in the words of Hallaj “I am the

creative truth.” Such a ‘bold affirmation’, as Iqbal accepts, is merely indicative of the finite coming in contact with the infinite and finding a permanent abode in a ‘profounder Personality’⁴. This raises the question—how do we validate this phenomenon epistemically? Let us see how is this defended by Iqbal? To begin with, the following quote from him may be illustrative:⁵

The difficulty of modern students of religion, however, is that this type of experience, though perhaps perfectly normal in its beginnings, points in its maturity to unknown levels of consciousness—modern psychology has only recently realized the necessity of such a method, but has not yet gone beyond the characteristic features of the mystic level of consciousness. Not yet being in the possession of a scientific method—we cannot avail ourselves of its possible capacity as a knowledge yielding experience. Nor can the concepts of theological systems, draped in the terminology of a practically dead metaphysics, be of any help to those who happen to possess a different intellectual background. ... the only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of this knowledge, even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us.” Keeping this in view, we will first examine in detail the nature of consciousness (ego, self) as substantiated by Iqbal, and then follow it up with some recent advancements in this area subjecting his views to a more searching analysis.

Having extracted from Bradley⁶ the reluctant admission on philosophical grounds that the self ‘in some sense is ‘real’ and ‘in some sense is an indubitable fact’; Iqbal proposes that the reality of consciousness (ego, self) is too profound to be intellectualized. The predictive truth of this statement is so exact that even after seven decades of intensive research on the subject a fuller understanding of consciousness remains elusive. Iqbal considers ego (self, consciousness) as a “unity of mental states... which do not exist in mutual isolation (but) are “phases of a complex whole called mind.” Here, Iqbal leads us to the time old controversial “mind– brain problem”. A problem which remains even today the focus of research into the neurophysiology of the brain. Recently, the problem has been addressed in two ways: first, the *materialistic monism*, which means that there is no reality other than that of space–Time–matter–energy–universe, and that there is no immaterial or spiritual reality. According to this view mental states just are physical brain states which can be explained on the basis of the worldview of physics (reductionism, physicalism, metaphysical naturalism). Second, *dualism*, the philosophical view which holds that both the material and spiritual domains have real existence. Iqbal certainly

holds the latter view, though in his search for arguments, he, somehow cautiously, lands himself in the physical world, trying to draw support from the physical nature of the universe as well as psychology. There is nothing wrong about this since the voluminous literature on consciousness emerging from the works of scholars in physics or psychology is equally divided in its support for materialistic monism and dualism.

Enumerating the characteristics of ego (self, consciousness), Iqbal enlightens us about his concept of ego.

First, that ego is not space bound in the sense in which the body is space bound the time space of the ego (self, consciousness) is fundamentally different from the time-space of the physical events, though mental and physical events are both in time. The ego's (self, consciousness) duration is concentrated within it and linked with its present and future in a unique manner. True time duration belongs to ego alone. Here, it appears to us that Iqbal is trying to make a distinction between the serial time and "Divine time" to which he has referred in several of his discourses⁷. However, if relativity theory is operating in the physical universe, as we understand it today (time being the fourth dimension of space), and that neither absolute time nor absolute space exists, then, it becomes increasingly difficult to conceive the operational significance of Divine time in the schema of materialistic monism as a world view of choice for explaining functionality of consciousness (self, ego). Any attempt to place consciousness in four dimensions (except evolutionary paradigm) as has been done in a recent book: "Consciousness in four dimensions"⁸, however, may be given due consideration. It is likely that new laws of physics have yet to be discovered⁹ to understand the time characteristics embedded in 'Divine time' as conceived by Iqbal.

Second, referring to the soul-ego identity, Iqbal is rather skeptical of the metaphysical approach adopted by the Muslim schools of theology 'of which Ghazali was the chief proponent'. This school of thought regarded 'ego' as a simple, indivisible and immutable substance entirely different from the group of mental states (consciousness) and unaffected by the passage of time. Raising the question whether the soul entity is the center of our conscious experience or as a basis of immortality, he rightly points out that it neither serves psychological nor metaphysical interest. In support of this he admits into his fold a number of arguments:

- (1) The transition of a purely formal state of thought to an ontological substance falls beyond the ambit of credence;
- (2) indivisibility of a substance (soul) does not mean that it is indestructible. Such a substance may evaporate into nothingness 'like an intensive quality'¹⁰
- (3) the elements of conscious experience cannot be relegated to the qualities of a soul substance. In this way, distinguishing between 'soul substance' and acts of consciousness, he wonders how experience as qualities can enter soul substance or that soul substance can reveal itself in experiences. On the basis of these arguments, Iqbal makes a categorical statement that 'our conscious experience can give us no clue to the ego regarded as a soul substance.

Third, now treating the ego independent of soul, as conceived by Iqbal, he observes that "interpretation of conscious experience is the only road by which we can reach the ego. Elaborating on this, he identifies ego as consisting of "feelings of personal life", and is as such a part of the system of thought. Every pulse of thought, present or persisting, is an indivisible unity which knows and recollects. "*The appropriation of the passing pulse by present pulse of thought, and that of the present by the successor, is the ego.*" Here he attempts a kind of relationship between thought and ego. Yet, ego is not considered as something 'over and above several converging experiences (thoughts). Thus, it is through the ego that one perceives, judges and wills. Because of its interaction with environment it is under constant tension. For supporting this concept he relies on the Qur'anic verse (17:85) making distinction between Khalq and Amr. "Whereas Khalq is creation, Amr is direction. Accordingly, Iqbal postulates that essential nature of ego (he uses the word Soul) is directive, as it flows from the Directive Energy of God, though we do not know how Divine Amr functions as ego unity." In essence, using this scheme of arguments, the conclusion is drawn that "*the real personality of a human (ego) is not a thing; it is an act*". And all acts taken together are bound by unity of directive purpose or attitude. In this circumstance it is "disciplined by its energy (Amr: The Qur'an 17:85). This means that soul or ego to this extent, proceeding from the Directive Energy, have a common flow from the same spring.

Fourth, there is no disagreement amongst current researchers on Iqbal's identification of the privacy of the ego (consciousness). For example, Peter William (2002)¹¹ commenting on the subject states: "On the physicalist's views that my mind is just my brain, it seems to

follow that the person who knows most about my brain, would know most about my mind. Yet, however, much a third party knows about my brain they would not know about the state of my mind in the special way that I know it: a neurophysiologist can know more about my brain than I do, but he cannot know more about my mental life.” Similarly, Thomas Nagel (1987)¹² argues that “your subjective experience of tasting chocolate cannot be reduced to any objective physical event inside your brain because any such physical state is observable by a third party, whereas your experience is not. our experiences are inside our mind with a kind of *insideness* that is different from the way that ‘your brain is inside your head’. Given the privacy of ego (self, consciousness), substantiated by current literature, we are not in a position to reach any conclusion as to the original relationship of this privacy, including the functionality of associated events, with material monism or dualism, unless we find out the relationship, which, if any, may exist between such terms as consciousness, thought and experience, as used by Iqbal, apparently interchangeably.

Fifth, Iqbal brings up an interesting preposition on the emergence of ego. Ordinarily, evolutionary biology taking life from Darwin’s theory of evolution tells us that the process culminating in human consciousness has bestowed a unique survival value to human species. This thing apart, Iqbal draws inspiration from the following verses of the Holy Qur’an to build up his metaphysical arguments:¹³

Mere of clay We have created man: then We placed him, a moist germ; in safe abode; then We made the moist germ a clot of blood; then made the clotted blood into a piece of flesh; then made the piece of blood into bones and We clothed the bones with flesh, then brought forth a man of yet another make. Blessed therefore be God – the most excellent of makers (23:12-14)

These are the most revealing and illuminating set of verses for a student of embryology. In Iqbal’s view, the final ego of man is organized from a colony of sub-egos with a lower order of consciousness. This claim, in a way, receives eminent support from the well established biological principle of ontogeny repeats phylogeny, meaning thereby that the individual during its embryonic development recapitulates the morphological characteristics of its ancestors. Thus, as stated in the revealed verses, the fertilized human egg implanted in the uterus, develops through such stages as *morula*, *blastula*, *gastrula*, and *neurula* till it grows into a full organism. During the process, however, groups of cells (sub-ego) are transformed into flesh, bones, nerves, blood vessels and various organs. Iqbal’s jargon interpreted in modern diction of biology simply means that it is

through recapitulation of sub-egos (phylogenetic characteristics) that the final ego emerges and this happens under the Directive Energy (Amr). We believe that the expression: “yet another make” in the verses quoted provides a sufficient testimony to this interpretation. The Directive Energy, indeed, acts as an *ab initio* continuum on a substrate at the time of fertilization of an ovum with the sperm. This also receives support from the verse: “Man has been created in the best of forms” (30:4).¹⁴ We have more to say on the subject when we will deal with evolutionary biology and genetic code.

Sixth, regarding interaction with body or environment, Iqbal expresses the view that there is a constant influence of environment on the ego and vice-e-versa; ego is not a mere silent spectator. In fact, it is a dominating force (energy); in final analysis guiding the actions of the body. Even “if the body takes an initiative, the mind enters as a consenting factor at a definite stage in the development of emotions, and this is true of other external stimuli as well, which are constantly working on the mind. It is the mind’s consent which eventually decides the fate of an emotion or a stimulus.” This leads him to the question about the freedom of ego. Using such characteristics of ego as:

- (1) that “the ego is not something rigid”;
- (2) that “it organizes itself in time”;
- (3) that “it is disciplined by its own experience”;
- (4) that “streams of causality” as noted above, “flow into it from nature and from it to nature; and
- (5) that “the ego determines its own activity in the spatio–temporal order by the same mechanism as prevails in nature” and comes to the conclusion that “the element of guidance and directive control in the *ego’s activity clearly shows that ego is a free personal causality*. He shares in the life and freedom of the Ultimate Ego, Who by permitting the emergence of finite ego, capable of private initiatives, has limited his own freewill. This freedom of conscious behaviour follows from the view of ego activity which the Qur’an takes. There are verses which are unmistakably clear on the point.”¹⁵

‘And say; the truth is from your Lord, not them, then who will, believe; and let him who will, be an unbeliever. – (18:29).’

‘If you do well to your own behoof will ye do well; and if ye do evil against yourself will ye do it – (17:7).’

Given this freedom of ego permitted by the Ultimate Ego, under the spell of His Directive Energy (Amr), it emerges as a dynamic

force “ to retain the power to act freely as a constant and undiminished factor in the life of the ego.’ On this score, though not agreeing with Spengler, Iqbal completely negates what he calls the most degrading type of Fatalism which has permeated into the social fabric of Islam, mainly due to political expediency; unfortunately almost universal acceptance of this kind of Fatalism by playing on the freedom of ego, as we examine it historically, has narrowed down the world view of Islam and has robbed the Muslim life of the dynamic impetus which Islam originally bestowed upon its followers. The following quote from Iqbal may be of some help in tracing the rise of Fatalism:¹⁶

“Now the practical materialism of the opportunist Ommayad rulers of Damascus needed a Peg on which to hang their misdeeds of Karbla, and secure the fruits of Amir Mawiyo’s revolt against the possibilities of a popular rebellion. Mo’bad reported to Hasan of Basra that Ommayds killed Muslims and attributed their acts to the will of God”. This strong message of Iqbal which has a splendid logical and pragmatic basis needs to be understood comprehensively by the Muslim youth in the context of true spirit of Islam. It is also equally important that theologians of today should grow out of the literal interpretation of the concept of destiny and take Iqbal’s understanding with the attention it deserves. In this regard attention has to be paid to the following views of Iqbal:¹⁷

‘But since Muslims have always sought the justification of their varying attitudes in the Qur’an, even though at the expense of plain meaning, the fatalistic interpretation has far reaching effect on Muslim peoples’

Seventh, before leaving this discussion, we briefly take up the phenomenon of immortality as expounded by Iqbal. This has strong links with the personality of ego (consciousness) as discussed above. We are doing this for the simple reason that it has a bearing on our main theme that is the nature of contact of finite with the infinite. We have already traced the characteristics of ego as enumerated by Iqbal. For Iqbal, ego cannot be equated with soul as understood by theologians. It is not rigid, nor is it a substance. It has an identity distinct from the body, the two having mutual influence over each other; yet, the ego playing the dominant role. It organizes itself through its own energy apparently in serial time compatible with spatio temporal order of the body. The question then is that when death occurs (man is mortal, finite) what happens to Ego? Iqbal’s arguments on this count are mostly metaphysical, drawing support essentially from various verses of the Qur’an. In the first instance he rejects out of hand what he calls “the most depressing error of materialism”, which supposes that finite consciousness exhausts its object (body). Nor could he agree with the mechanistic view of consciousness which considers “ego activity as a succession of

thoughts and ideas ultimately resolvable into units of sensation”—this being another form of atomic materialism which forms the basis of modern science. True—for the physicalists death is the end of life. As opposed to this, and in order to give strength to his thesis of ego, Iqbal has emphasized on the concept of ‘unity of life’ and ‘unity of consciousness’. From the unity of life, we understand the unity of ego and body; the former though not a substance is organically related to the body. How? This as yet is not fully understood.

Now, in a way as the arguments run, the ego is immortal and at the time of bodily death finds a new abode in ‘Barzakh’ which according to ‘sufistic experience’ is a state of consciousness characterized by a change in the ego’s attitude towards time and space.” This brings out a beautiful relationship between ego and Divine time, discussed earlier. This dual perception by ego of serial time in mundane matters and of Divine time in the inner religious experience in the life of a mystic or a prophet has been noted earlier. The approach is fully enunciated by Iqbal in the following words:¹⁸

If this be so, our present physiological structure is at the bottom of our present view of time (serial time), and - ego survives the dissolution of this structure, a change in our (ego) attitude towards time and space seems perfectly natural.

Let us examine what caveats can be traced in this statement of Iqbal. The assumption is made that physiological structure of the body is dissolved and thus the perception of serial time disappears in as much as ego is concerned. This is acceptable only if we have a clear concept of Divine time. Unfortunately, under the present state of our knowledge there is little that we can present from the science of physics. Yet, the psychological outreach of this area cannot be ruled out. For the second assumption that it finds a new abode in Barzakh (again entirely based on mystic experience) finds no apparent support from scientific basis. Yet, the fallacy can be eliminated if we accept the earlier argument made by Iqbal when he distinguishes normal experience (verifiable) from inner religious experience (ordinarily non verifiable). Perhaps new psychology is in the process of discovering methods by which such an experience can be subjected to experimental analysis. Nevertheless, the arguments advanced by Iqbal that nerve impulse takes time to reach consciousness has some merit, especially in connection with Eccles’ and Popper’s work¹⁹, in which Eccles has proposed a theory of “psychon” related to the passage of nerve impulses within the brain. Be this as it may, Iqbal’s contention is well taken when he argues that

such enormous condensation of impression which occurs in our dreams – life and the exaltation of memory, which sometimes takes place at the

moment of death, disclose the ego's capacity for different standards of time.

The state of Barzakh, therefore, does not seem to be merely passive state of expectation; it is a state in which the ego catches the glimpse of fresh aspects of Reality, and prepares himself for adjustment to these aspects. It must be a state of great psychic unhingement; especially in case of full grown egos who have naturally developed fixed modes of operation on a specific spatio-temporal order, and mere dissolution to less fortunate ones. However, ego must continue to struggle until he is able to gather himself up, and win his resurrection. It is the consumption of life-process within the ego. In the same vein Iqbal remarks:

It is with the irreplaceable singleness of his individuality that the finite ego will approach the infinite ego to see for himself the consequences of his past action and to judge the possibilities of his future.²⁰

These concepts are neatly supported by Qur'anic verses quoted by Iqbal in the *Reconstruction*. The depth of Iqbal's analysis though difficult to understand is perfectly in line with the revealed knowledge and makes a rich contribution to the understanding of Islam by the modern Muslim if his intellectual capacity is not blinded by the myth of classical theology.²¹

Eighth, we would like to comment upon the terms: thought, consciousness, and conscious experience as used by Iqbal in defining the characteristics of ego, we have already dealt with the difference which Iqbal draws between soul and ego. Iqbal makes a categorical statement that

We see that our conscious experience can give us no clue to the ego regarded as a soul substance." Similarly, he writes; Yet, the interpretation of our conscious experience is the only road by which we can reach the ego...the ego consists of the feelings of personal life, and is, as such, part of the system of thought. Every pulse of thought present or perishing is an indivisible unity which knows and recollects. The appropriation of the passing pulse by the present pulse of thought and that of the present by its successor, is the ego.²²

The above quotes from Iqbal provide a sufficient justification for a student of psychology and, perhaps that of natural sciences as well, to analyse the relationship between thought, consciousness and ego. This we will do presently, comparing Iqbal's interpretations with some recent works on the subject.

In 1949, Donald Hebb,²³ a psychologist, made an intensive study about the mechanism underlying thought and consciousness. He

concluded that “*mind is the capacity of thought; consciousness is a present activity of thought; and thought itself is an activity of brain.*”

Based on neurophysiological studies he presents the view that a hierarchy of neural assemblies ranging from simple to complex is present in the brain. When a simple assembly is stimulated, the same stimulus is passed on to other more complex assemblies. A series of such events has been called a phase sequence– the thought process. In support of the presence of cell assemblies, Hebb cites an experiment which he conducted on chimpanzees he had raised in laboratory. From birth he could control their every stimulus. Such animals, he noted, exhibited spontaneous fear upon seeing a clay model of a chimpanzees’ head, which chimps, Hebb knew, had never seen a decapitation, yet some of them screamed, defecated, and fled from their outer cages to the inner rooms where they were not within the sight of the clay model; those that remained within the sight stood at the back of the cage, their gaze fixed at the model in my hand (Hebb,1980).²⁴ From this experiment conclusion was drawn that

(a) the reaction of the chimps were clearly not reflexes, nor could they be explained as conditioned responses to the stimulus and

(b) they could have earned no behavioural rewards by acting in such a manner”. This experiment it was argued was a testimony to the presence of cell assemblies and tells us about the origin of thought process when all these cell assemblies are sequentially stimulated. Hebb’s work (1949)²⁵ has been supported subsequently by a number of studies (Milner, 1993;²⁶ Rapport, 1952;²⁷ Rochester et. al., 1956;²⁸ Smith and Davidson, 1962;²⁹ White, 1961)³⁰. This important work of Hebb and others lends remarkable support to Iqbal’s concept of “the system of thought”, though, at that time he was unaware of the hierarchy of nerve cell assemblies in the brain. Hebb’s theory of stimulation of nerve cell assemblies in sequence over a time frame does not stop here. We have already noted Hebb’s concept of phase sequence, in which one thought leads to another under the guidance of external stimulation and is closely related to consciousness. Iqbal on the other hand relates the “system of thought” (a Hebb phase sequence) to ego. Are then consciousness and ego identical?

Now to answer this question we take stock of the characteristics of consciousness and ego as advocated by Alwyn Scott and Iqbal respectively. Though Iqbal conceded that ego is nothing but a succession of thoughts, yet, he holds the view that the emergence

and appropriation of thought in succession in the jargon of Iqbal does not represent true consciousness as we find it in ourselves. According to him “consciousness is something single, presupposed in mental life, and not bits of consciousness reporting to each other.”³²

This description of consciousness is acceptable if we grant that my succession of thoughts at a given time for a given event provides consciousness about the event in question. For example, if I know from my experience that touching a hot iron rod will bring me pain, the chain of thoughts will bring an awareness at that moment, and will make me conscious that I should not touch the hot rod. Only a child will touch the hot rod because he has no previous experience of such a hazard. If I do so it will bring me pain, clearly then consciousness and awareness go together. One cannot but agree both with Iqbal and Alwyn Scott that consciousness is a “present activity of thought: however, beyond this statement, Iqbal makes a series of tangled arguments through which he draws the conclusion that this view of consciousness far from giving us any clue to the ego, entirely ignores the permanent element in experience. We are afraid that such is not the case, since if consciousness is taken as awareness; it can only be conceived as a continuum of a succession of thoughts appropriating the past, the present and the future. In our opinion, therefore, a thought, unlike the position taken by Iqbal, is not irrevocably lost. It becomes a permanent asset of the system of thought, seeking abode in the crevices of the memory dispersed in the brain. This is how an almost permanent stairway of consciousness is developed through thought, experience, knowledge, and awareness. In fact, expressed elsewhere, in the *Reconstruction*, this interpretation of consciousness supports Iqbal’s view of mutually penetrating multiplicity of thoughts based on experience.

Having examined the views of Iqbal on the nature of the ego and its relationship with the concept of soul as understood by Mutkalam in tandem with consciousness, thought process and experience, it is time now to find out how Iqbal distinguishes between serial time and Divine time. This seems necessary for the reason that, as proposed by Iqbal, ego is the only legitimate path through which the possibility of religious experience can be explored. Now to understand the space-time characteristics of the ego, one has to have an appreciation of the dual perception of time by the ego; one in relation to the body (serial time) and second in relation to the Ultimate Ego (Divine time). The main Qur’anic verses from which Iqbal extracts his evidence for Divine time and space are

reproduced below from his discourse on: “The spirit of Human Culture”:³¹

O company of Djin and men if you can overpass the bounds of Heaven and Earth, then overpass them. But by power alone shall ye overpass them ... “(55:33). Again”, And verily towards thy God is the limit.

Interpreting the last cited verse Iqbal remarks:

This verse embodies one of the deepest thoughts in Qur’an; for it definitely suggests that the ultimate limit is to be sought not in the direction of stars, but in the infinite cosmic life and spirituality.

Unfortunately, for a pure physicalist (monistic materialist), there may be no joy in this verse. For him material is the beginning and material is the end. There is no room for soul or ego in his lexicon, especially the manner in which it occupies a central place in the activity of life as understood by dualists, and as unfolded in the revealed knowledge. Yet, there is plenty of room for the psychologists to ponder over it and seek evidence for the Divine time and space in the domain of religious experience (mysticism).

Obviously, the properties of Divine time as well as of Divine space are not the same as that of serial time. We understand that in the latter case we pursue Newton’s laws of motion and even Einstein’s theory of relativity in which time is merged with space. Since both time and space as we use in the current scientific jargon are factors of human imagination or better the cognitive limit, the expression ‘And verily towards God is the limit’ is difficult to experience on usual mathematical and physical grounds. The appreciation of Divine time and Divine space, as the case may be, according to Iqbal’s persistent emphasis, belongs only to ‘religious psychology’ by which he means higher Sufism. This is why the idea of hyperspace being discussed in recent times as distinct from perceptual space, first proposed by the Muslim mathematician Nasir Tusi (A.D. 1204 – 74), finds favour with Iqbal. Within the same stream of arguments Iqbal takes into his fold a quasi scientific approach in which he distinguishes three levels of space, namely, the space of material bodies (any physical object) the space of subtle bodies (for example air and sound) and third the space of light. The space occupied by a subtle body like light does not disturb the space occupied by another subtle body, (air or another stream of light) though some kind of space continues to exist between these subtle substances. The existence of such an order of space can only be appreciated at the level of *intellectual perception*. The certitude of this

perception may be acknowledged in various wave lengths comprising sound energy or light energy notwithstanding the fact that element of distance is not entirely absent from these variety of spaces. Thus, agreeing with Iraqi, Iqbal concedes that “the highest in the scale of spatial freedom is reached by the human soul (ego) which, in its unique essence, is neither at rest nor in motion. Thus passing through the infinite varieties of space we reach Divine Space which is absolutely free from all dimensions (ordinarily known to humans from scientific schema) and constitutes the meeting point of all infinities. On this count Iqbal pays tribute to Iraqi in the following words:³²

From the summary of Iraqi’s view you will see how a cultured Muslim sufi intellectually interpreted his spiritual experience of time and space in an age which had no idea of the theories and concepts of modern mathematics and physics.

In spite of this long discussion on time and space, Iqbal has mostly stayed in the metaphysical domain, which is hardly verifiable experimentally. More so, even today, there is neither such mathematics nor such physics which can prove or disapprove the concept of Divine time and space for the concrete mind. There is a hope, however, that the unified theory combined with the biology of mind, now in the making may be able to explain through its ultra physical approach the secrets of Divine Time and Divine Space. May be, more than physics psychology may come to help us out. Yet, at this stage, we are treating the words ego and consciousness as cognate, *albeit* concentrating on consciousness which has been the subject of extensive research in recent years.

Notes and References

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