

Towards a process-humanistic interpretation of Islam

*An examination of Muhammad Iqbal`s God
concept*

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Master`s Thesis submitted in Religion and Society

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“Not only Islam but also the world needs to learn from Muhammad Iqbal. His ideas, as inspired by the Qur’an and supported by process or Whiteheadian thinking, can help bring about a more humane, sustainable world for all.”

- Jay McDaniel, Professor of Religion at Hendrix College, USA

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IV

Abstract

This thesis sets out to examine, through a process perspective, the most central element in Muhammad Iqbal's system of thought, that is, his God concept. Furthermore, I will explore the spatio-temporal possibilities of his concept of God, especially as to the salient features of an Islamic state, as envisioned by Iqbal. My research questions are: (1) "What is Muhammad Iqbal's concept of God?" and, (2) "Does Iqbal's God model allow us to theorise and develop a humanistic concept of an Islamic state?"

As will be seen, Iqbal's God concept departs, in some respects, from the classical theistic interpretations depicting God as an all-knowing and all-powerful entity, leaving no scope for human agency. However, Iqbal's God can be given a "this-worldly" interpretation, in concord with modern humanism. It is also productive of preparing the way for a humanistic concept of an Islamic state, opposed to the present day exponents of militant Islamism and their "black-and-white" *Weltanschauung*. Also, I will make an attempt to formulate a "process-humanistic" God notion, developing Iqbal's reflections on God to another level. It is my profound desire that this thesis will also build bridges between Whiteheadian inspired Christian thinkers and reform-oriented Muslims, and to encourage those tendencies which will inspire us to selfless and humble service of God's creation as an interconnected whole.

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This thesis is dedicated to my role model, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938).

I take full accountability for any errors or omissions in this thesis.

Farhan Akram Shah

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1 Introduction

Over a long period climaxing in recent years, Islamic militant groups have, because of global geo-political tensions, among other factors, arisen to power in several Muslim countries. Their main purpose has been to implement and solidify a theocratic state-model, bolstered by a literalist interpretation of age-old Shariah laws at odds with modern human rights, democratic principles, and humanistic ideals. As a consequence of this regression, and moral evil unleashed “in the name of God”, Muslim peoples in the Western world are on a daily basis confronted with discomfiting questions concerning their religious faith and its essentials. One of the central questions posed by non-Muslims is if Islam is compatible with humanistic ideals such as the dignity of human individual, democracy, human rights and individual autonomy. There are pressing questions which need adequate answers, and unless reflective Muslims engage critically with their own heritage, challenging the premises that maintain and consolidate unhealthy thought patterns and societal structures, the prevailing climate of polarisation, and hostility to Islam and Muslims will continue to prevail.

Even a cursory glance over the contemporary Muslim conditions reveals a bleak and difficult picture. Majority of the Muslim countries suffers from moral and intellectual dissatisfaction, that is, a climate of immiseration, human rights abuses, high illiteracy rates, feudalism, and oligarchy. Further, the production and dissemination of conservative theologies are tending to work in the direction of rigid emulation of past authorities, which makes it difficult to generate fresh reinterpretations of Islam in the light of modern climes. There are, nevertheless, sincere attempts of groups comprising Muslim reformers who are challenging the political, social and religious *status quo* by re-visiting and re-evaluating the Islamic heritage.

In Islam, it is believed that the cardinal truth is God as the Creator of all life. However, without scrutinising commonly accepted notions of God and God-humanity models, propounded by traditional theologies, a systemic intra-reformation of Muslim thinking will not become a part of the grassroots. Mouhanad Khorchide, a Muslim theologian, argues that “our world needs a theological approach which defines the relationship between God and humanity as a dialogical and free relationship” (Khorchide 2015, 182).

Before we proceed, it need to be noted that my understanding of Iqbalian thought is only one of the many perspectives. Thus, I do not claim any finality, nor do I absolutise which is creaturely, hence the importance of an open-ended attitude.

1.1 Thematic presentation and research questions

Whilst the existence of a transcendent Divine entity is rarely called into question and challenged by adherents of various religious systems, inadequate energy and attention has been paid to the type of God one holds to be true. The representation of God or divinity a culture holds are not only fundamental to its religious life, but it also has bearings on its political, social, ethical and familial foundations. Stated differently, the concept of God as an “ultimate conviction” tends to determine our world-view and our relationship to humans as well as non-humans. An instance in point are some Christians groups or militant Islamist movements who tend to connect God solely with their own narrow faith, thus classifying others as enemies of God unless and until they atone and convert to the only “God-infused” faith. Another example is the representation of God in patriarchal manner: depicting God as a male have an effect on patriarchal structures that undermine women`s ontological and socio-political status by sanctioning sexual hierarchy and sexual inequalities. Additionally, the image of God as the ultimate controlling power reinforces sexual oppression by representing these structures as part of divine preordination.

In modern times, during the 19th century, a chain of Muslim reformers from South Asia and Middle East emerged. These modernist reformers, as a result of Western colonialism and internal factors which caused intellectual stasis and social stagnation, called for a reinterpretation of Islamic tradition by (re)applying the principle of critical hermeneutics (ijtihad) so to devise new formulations in touch with modern ideals such as human rights, democracy, scientific progress and rationalism. The inception of reform movement in modern times found its expression in pioneers as Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938). Even though these thinkers differed in their methodological approach and focus of attention, all of them responded to the modern demands generated by European narratives of social and scientific advancement.

In this thesis, we will explore and examine the central reformist ideas of Muhammad Iqbal, the main idea being related to his God concept and, furthermore, his thoughts on the idea of an Islamic state set forth in his philosophical-theological works. The choice of Iqbal is threefold: First, he is, perhaps, the only modern Muslim thinker who has systematically developed a concept of God at variance with some commonly accepted traits of a classical theistic God. Second, Iqbal is, possibly, the first modern Muslim who employed “process”

categories as to his God reflections.¹ Third, Iqbal's understanding of God and Islam serves as a relevant point of departure in developing a Process Islam, productive of interreligious cooperation between Iqbalian inspired Muslims and Whiteheadian inspired Christians. Additionally, it can serve as an antidote to the harmful effects of ideological and anti-humanistic interpretations Islamist movements are propounding to further their political agendas.

Research questions: In the above-cited backdrop, this thesis seeks to explicate the Iqbalian God concept and its relevance to modern understanding of an Islamic state. It also seeks to form a process-humanistic concept of God, a description of God coined by the author himself, which lays the foundations for further research on Iqbalian process thought and interreligious dialogue. The feasible questions to propose concerning the major themes are twofold: (1) *What is Muhammad Iqbal's God concept?* And, (2), *Does Iqbal's God model allow us to theorise and develop a humanistic concept of an Islamic state?*

The choice of research questions arises from the importance of the major challenges militant Salafism² and traditional theologies are posing to Muslim peoples, both in the West and Muslim nations. As the author sees it, without examining and explaining Iqbal's concept of God in an adequate way, his reformist ideas, especially his idea of an Islamic state, will be understood only in a superficial way. Therefore, Iqbal's description of God can be used to lay down criteria for a more adequate interpretation of the rest of his reform-oriented ideas, productive of developing a reformistic alternative to reactionary militant theologies.

1.2 Previous research and my contribution

There exists a vast plethora of Iqbal studies both in Pakistan and abroad, seeking to examine and explore various dimensions of Iqbal's body of work and his Islamic and Western influences. However, there are almost no written papers on Iqbal's God and its Whiteheadian influence, especially papers written by Muslim thinkers or those inspired by Iqbal. Moreover, there is nearly no research dealing with Christian process theology and Iqbalian thinking.

¹ However, it need to be kept in mind that Iqbal operated primary from the standpoint of Islamic faith, but found support also in Whitehead's metaphysical reflections Jay McDaniel, a Whiteheadian inspired philosopher, asserts in the article entitled "Muhammad Iqbal and Alfred North Whitehead: Springboards for Conversation" (2014), that "Whitehead offered secondary roots to his own primary roots, which lay in the Qur'an itself" (McDaniel 2014)

² Militant Salafism is a group who maintains that they possess the only right interpretation of the Qur'an. Hence, they also attempt to convert other Muslims to their own fundamentalist version of Islam.

As far as my research were able to capture, there are only a handful of papers in which Whitehead's influence on Iqbal's metaphysical reflections is highlighted, and in which Iqbal's God representation is placed in a Whiteheadian process theological context. In "Iqbal's Panentheism" (1956), Robert Whittemore shows, to some extent, Whitehead's influence in Iqbal's metaphysical thought, especially as regards a panentheistic interpretation of God. Further, the article entitled "The Process Philosophy of Sir Muhammad Iqbal" (1975), is another paper by the same author. In the paper, Iqbal's process thought is juxtaposed with western process philosophical thoughts of William James (1842-1910), Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) and Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), to cite a few. These papers are valuable contributions to furthering Iqbalian thinking along process lines, albeit not dealing with Iqbalian God concept in a systematic way and, additionally, showing the necessary connections to process theology.

Mustafa Ruzgar, in his article "Iqbal and Whitehead" (2006) makes some important and necessary connections between Whitehead and Iqbal, particularly as to science-religion relationship, the use of event-based metaphysics, the doctrines of divine omnipotence and omniscience, and God-world relationship. In this paper Ruzgar seeks to identify the fundamental similarities and differences between Whiteheadian inspired process theology and Iqbalian thought, and in which way both of these perspectives can learn from, and enrich, each other. However, this paper furnishes only a superficial interpretation of Iqbal's God idea, as the main focus is not to examine Iqbal's God but to show how Iqbal could be related to Whitehead and process theology. That being said, Ruzgar's paper is an important gesture in the direction this thesis ought to move.

In the paper "Trying to Understand Whitehead in The Context of Ibn 'Arabi" (Journal Ishrak N03, 2012, date unknown), Recep Alpyagil proposes to capture Whitehead's legacy within the Muslim context, that of Ibn Arabi. Alpyagil, before moving to Ibn Arabi, makes an important remark which throws light on Iqbal's close interaction with Whiteheadian themes. Alpyagil contends that "Muhammad Iqbal did not see any difficulty in linking Whitehead's ideas with the Qur'an. It might be a surprise that Iqbal finds some of the main Whiteheadian themes in the Qur'an itself". This observation echoes McDaniel's assertion that Whitehead's vision of an open-ended universe and human spontaneity and creativity, offers "secondary roots to his own primary roots..." (McDaniel 2014).

To ingeminate, there is only a small amount of previous research conducted on Iqbal and his connection with Whiteheadian themes and process theology. It is a pity the Muslim

scholars of Iqbal have neglected this important field of research in Iqbalian thought. This brings us to my contribution: my thesis has twofold aim: First and foremost, the thesis aims at “filling the gap” by furnishing a process theological explanation of Iqbal’s God concept.

By expounding Iqbal’s reflections on God through process perspective, the thesis will contribute to furthering Iqbalian process thinking, a field which has not been given due attention. Second, I also seek to formulate a Process-Humanistic interpretation of God, which will be employed as a framework to interpret Iqbal’s understanding of an Islamic state that can generate new insights into significant issues related to Islam, democracy and humanism. This thesis will also furnish, however slightly, a basis for positive interreligious dialogue between Christian process thinkers and reform-oriented Muslims.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into 6 chapters. The following chapter 2 will explain the basics of my theory and analytical tools that will be employed to examine the proposed research questions. The choice of my methodology, and its function in this thesis, is also presented in chapter 2. Chapter 3 will provide the necessary contextual background of Iqbal’s lifeworld, and highlight various factors which may have exerted influence on his thought patterns and reflections regarding his notion of God and an Islamic state. Chapter 4 will answer the first research question. Chapter 5 seeks to answer the second research question. Chapter 6 is devoted to a brief comparative analysis between process theology and Iqbalian process thinking, which also serves as springboards for further research in the field of process thought. Lastly, concluding remarks will be presented.

2 Theory and method

In this chapter, I will set the stage for the elucidation of my theoretical and methodological approach that builds the basis of my master thesis` deeper development and serves as tools for answering the proposed research questions. In the first section, I will give a short description of the three main areas in which the term «process thought» is used. As I move on to section 2.1, the essence of process theology is explained. Section 2.2 will discuss the connection between philosophy and theology. Further, in section 2.3 I will describe the essentials of process theology, especially the process-relational concept of God. In the third section, I will focus on the choice of my methodology and how this method is going to be employed.

2.1 Process thought as theoretical basis

One can identify the term “process thought” specifically in three main areas. A brief explanation of the respective areas is given below:

- **Process Philosophy:** Process philosophy (PF) uses the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne on issues of essentially philosophical character (McDaniel, 2012).
- **Process Theology:** Process theology (PT) applies the vision and dynamic-interdependent and holistic worldview produced by Alfred North Whitehead and later exponents of PF in construing the fundamental doctrines in Christendom and other world faiths (ibid.).
- **Process Interdisciplinary Thought:** This field of writing and discussion takes interests in topics *external* to the academic world of philosophy and theology, as for instance economics, ecology, education, social theory and women`s study (ibid.).

For the purpose of this thesis, the essentials of process theology will be its theoretical ground on which the edifice of my thesis will rest, and evolve.

2.2 The essence of process theology

Before I outline the cardinal elements of process theology, I want to share some poetic and for many novel words spoken by the *intellectual father* of process philosophy and theology, Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947):

God is in the world, or nowhere, creating continually in us and around us. The creative principle is everywhere, in animate and so-called inanimate matter, in the ether, water, earth, human hearts. But this creation is a creative process, and “the process is itself the actuality”, since no sooner than you arrive you start on a fresh journey. Insofar as man partakes of this creative process does he partake of the divine, of God, and that participation is his immortality, reducing the question of whether his individuality survives the death of his body to the estate of an irrelevancy. His true destiny as a cocreator of the universe is his dignity and his grandeur» (Epperly 2011, 12).

As will be seen throughout the development of this thesis, these words represent the essence of process theology, particularly the last sentence that reflect especially in the Christian process theology of John Cobb and Bruce Epperly (theologian, pastor, author and spiritual guide)³ and (Islamic process-humanistic⁴) theologies of Muhammad Iqbal and Ghulam Ahmed Parwez.

2.3 The use of philosophical reflection in theology

Robert B. Meller – an assistant professor in the department of theological studies at the University of Dayton – in his book *What Is Process Theology* (1975), noted that “our selection about a philosophical perspective determines the form of our theology” (Mellert, 1975). Along the same lines, Marjorie Suchocki, retired professor of theology, writes that “is not a question of *whether* theology will be used, but *which* philosophy will be used” (Epperly 2011, 18). John Cobb and David Ray Griffin, two leading exponents of Christian process theology – in their book *Process Theology, An Introductory Exposition* (1976), also notes the relationship between philosophy and theology. According to them, the question of the rightness of the use of a specific philosophical system in the interpretation and defense of the Christian faith was a “major point of controversy between Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 158). Barth, as stated by Cobb and Griffin, rejected the use of a philosophical system in the

domain of theology since it obnubilated and generated many a distortion in the Biblical faith (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 157).

Bultmann, on the other side, affirmed in theology the employment of a “well worked out conceptuality to articulate the preconceptual understanding of existence that is implicit in Christian faith” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 158). Bultmann was equally cognisant of the importance of a definite philosophy in the shaping of theology: “if the theologian is to achieve any measure of clarity and consistency, the question is not whether to be guided by philosophy, but only which philosophy to use” (ibid.). This needs unpacking:

It is universally accepted that the roots of western philosophy are centered around the knowledge paradigm of ancient Greeks. Whitehead asserts, “all of Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato” (Mellert, 1975). According to Mellert, the static concepts of “being”, “substance” and “essence” have formed and developed much of the Western body of knowledge. These concepts are mainly associated with Parmenides of Elea, who became the founding father of Greek metaphysics whose exponents were Plato, Aristotle, and the advocates of Neo-Platonism. Subsequently, with the passage of time, their philosophy became the cornerstone of Western thought (ibid.) In the past, Christian theologians derived inspiration from the philosophical systems of Plato, Aristotle and Neo-Platonists.

Modern day theologians have developed their Biblical understanding more in line with philosophers as Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Martin Heidegger. Each of the respective philosophical traditions flowing from above mentioned philosophers, influenced and molded Christian theology in specific ways (Epperly 2011, 18). Most of the Christian theologies – shaped by “substance philosophies” – have been developed and formulated in a set of non-temporal, static and individuating categories. How these substance-based philosophies have formed the unfolding of Christian theology can be illustrated by the conventional conception of the Biblical God as the unchanging and passionless Absolute, a notion absorbed from the Greeks who upheld the view that “perfection” implied “complete immutability” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 6). In addition to the former conception is the notion of God as the Controlling Power – a being who decides every detail of the world. Whether moral evil or natural evil, these occurrences are believed to be “acts of God” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 7).

2.4 Process theology and its Whiteheadian influence

As stated in section 2.3, the choice of specific philosophical system (the methodical use of human faculty of reason to interpret the world and our subjective experience within it) shapes the unfolding of theology. Bruce Epperly, in his book *Process Theology: A guide for the perplexed* (2011) writes that Christian process theologians “believe that the philosophical insights of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne provide the most adequate way of interpreting Christian faith in our pluralistic, postmodern, scientifically, and technologically adventurous world” (Epperly 2011, 19).

In what follows, I will describe the basic principles and concepts process theology has adopted from the Whiteheadian and Hartshornian philosophy. I will mainly focus on the following keys elements: (1) the dynamic conception reality, (2) the interrelatedness of reality, (3) universal experience, (4) creativity and freedom, (5) and the process-relational conception of God.

2.4.1 Reality as dynamic process and event based

As stated previously, traditional Christian theology has during its unfolding worked with static (philosophical) categories of “being”, “substance” and “essence”, derived from the Greeks. Process theology, on the other hand, operates with concepts of processive and dynamical character, such as “becoming”, “process” and “evolution” (Mellert, 1975). In other words, process theology employs the process perspective of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne that stressed the language of “becoming” and “changing” over the language of “static being”.

The roots of process thought can be traced back to the pre-Socratic Heraclitus, who is widely known for the apothegm that one can never step in the same river twice. This signifies perpetual flux and change as the basis of actuality and reality (Mellert, 1975). Mellert asserts that “our philosophical heritage is being questioned in the light of a rapidly changing culture” (ibid.). By “philosophical heritage”, he means the Western culture and tradition. As a result of the speedy changes in present times generated by globalism and scientific, technological advancement, the Parmendian vision of the universe and reality is no longer sufficient or adequate. The old perception of reality as static and substance-based is in our (post)modern world challenged by increasing global change and transformation in various spheres (politics, economics, religion, culture). Mellert argues:

No longer is reality fundamentally stable, with change being merely an accidental alteration of its makeup. Today reality itself is experienced as being in constant flux, so that the basic category of reality is process, not stability. In a more sophisticated way we have returned to the insights of Heraclitus: we cannot step into the river twice because our world is not the same world twice. Reality is a process (ibid.).

Put differently, everything in the universe is in constant motion or process of “becoming”. There are no fully developed things or finished products. This brings us to another central aspect of process reality: the centrality of events as basic units of the material world. One of the most radical elements of Whiteheadian vision of reality is its rejection of and separation from the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance.

According to the substance based ontology, reality (the material world), is built up of “inert substances that are extended in space and time and only externally related to each other” (Hustwit, ISSN 2161-0002). Process philosophy, against the substance-oriented thought, argues that events, not substances, are the fundamental elements of the spatio-temporal system. In Whiteheadian terminology, the basic elements, which constitute the material world, are “actual entities”, or “occasions/moments of experience”, i.e. actual entities are the basic units of reality (ibid). For Whitehead, the movements and processes of “becoming” are of greater importance than the “being” that is achieved. Hence, process philosophy prefers to use categories as “becomings” and not “beings” in order to accentuate the fundamental processive character of reality (ibid.). Mellert avers that

Instead of bits of matter, we might better think of the basic units of reality as moments of experience. Moments of experience provide a more suitable model for understanding these fundamental elements of reality because they have a temporal thickness to them which bits of matter do not have. Thus, when we think of reality as consisting of moments of experience, we are conscious that reality is always becoming (Mellert, 1975).

This brings us to the second key in process philosophy, the interrelatedness of reality.

2.4.2 The interrelatedness of reality

During the ages, many philosophers and theologians have grappled with the concepts of independence and interdependence. In substance-based thought, the importance was given to independence as the underlying reality of the universe and our causal lives. The primacy of the conception of substance as the nature of reality has prevailed in many fields such as philosophy, ethics, medicine and economics. An instance in point is related to medical science: because of the mind and body distinction the human body was treated as a separate, closed off system,

hence detached from spiritual and emotional life, and also environmental factors (Epperly 2011, 22). On the other hand, because process philosophy and Christian process theology bases their metaphysical system upon the dynamic concepts of becoming and events (actual occasions/drops of experiences), they reject independence as the ground of reality and affirms the primacy of interdependence/interrelatedness as the basis of reality. Writing on the subject of process philosophy and the unfolding of Christian theology, Suchocki maintains:

There have been various relational ways of talking about the world since “way back then, “ but most philosophers talked as if the ideal thing should be something solid that doesn’t depend on anything beyond itself. To be in relation was considered a lesser value than total self-sufficiency. In the 20th century we began to see that the ability to relate to another wasn’t just a happenstance of the way things are, but is the core of the way things are. To exist is to be in relation. Does God exist? If you say yes, then God must also be in relation. To whom? To everyone and everything! (Suchocki 2003, 6).

In technical terminology, the ultimate entities in macrocosm and microcosm are not isolated or self-enclosed particles, but actual entities/drops of experiences whose structure is interconnected and interdependent. Pragmatically speaking, to acknowledge the interconnectedness of reality within which our earthly life come forth has vast planetary implications. The modern individual – because of rapid globalization and scientific-technological expansion – is more capable of experiencing and appreciating the interrelatedness of human beings, other creatures, the universe and actuality as a whole than what was possible for people in the Middle Ages, e.g. Epperly, writing on the dynamic interrelatedness of reality and its implications, states:

For example, holistic approaches to medicine describe human health as a constantly-changing constellation of interdependent factors, including DNA, emotions, spirituality, relationships with others, economics, environment, all of which must be taken into consideration in promoting the health of people and communities (Epperly 2011, 22).

On the same page, he notes that “you cannot separate the mind from the body, or the person from her or his environment; the health of each is intimately related to the other” (ibid.).

The Global Financial Crisis of 2007-08 is another cogent example of the dynamic interconnection of reality and our human lives, which generated high degrees of unemployment and market sufferings, affecting millions of people especially in the US and other European countries. Warfare either armed or technological and its economical, spiritual, emotional, somatic, material and natural consequences is another illustration of the interrelational aspect of reality. The development of hermeneutic (the methodology of textual interpretation) serves as another example: in order to interpret and understand a certain text or body of work, we need

to accumulate knowledge of its context and environment, as well as have in our mind the historical horizons in which a text is produced. A text does not exist as a blocked entity. Expressed in a laconic way, every drop of reality is fundamentally connected to the sum total of reality.

In contrast to substance-oriented systems that tend to work with static, individuating concepts, process philosophy and theology, on the other hand, affirm the integrational and synthesizing nature of reality. This is the reason why Whitehead coined his philosophy the “philosophy of organism”. Just as the human body is a “web of relations”, so is humankind, the nature, other creaturely organisms, the universe etc. connected in an intricate and composite network of relations. Epperly argues:

Process theologians believe that the goal of life in an interdependent universe is to experience a widening, and not a dissolving, of self, such that the well-being of others and one’s own well-being are intimately connected in the moment by moment and long-term process of self-actualization (Epperly 2011, 23).

We will now move on to the third important element in process metaphysical doctrine, the universality of experience.

2.4.3 The universality of experience

This notion along with the notion of a process-relational God is maybe one of the most radical aspects of process thought. According to this idea, we live in an “enchanted universe” in which every actual occasion possesses some degree of experience. The process term for universal experience is “panexperientialism”. As stated by Epperly:

process thought advocates a re-enchantment of nature, in which experience, feeling, value, and beauty are understood to be inherent in the nature of things, and not merely the result of our human categories of experience (Immanuel Kant) or relationship with, or use, of non-human realities (Martin Heidegger) (Epperly 2011, 23).

In other words, the universe is not viewed as a “clock”, or in other mechanistic way, devoid of any value, experience or creativity in its makeup. All actual entities, from negatrons to human entities, have in their very constitution the quality to experience the world as well as their ability to be fundamentally self-determining (Hustwit, ISSN 2161-0002). The premise that every actual entity or actual occasion possesses experience does not necessarily signify conscious experience. There exist different grades of experiences, but what kind of experience an actual entity is able to feel varies from their complexity, composition and magnitude. Thus Epperly:

Rocks and tables, for example, don't experience the world in terms of a central organizing experience or center, such as our mind; but they are nevertheless composed of the dynamic relationships of interdependent occasions of experience, whose apparent stability is ultimately grounded in their essential social relatedness or resulting from sharing some common character, with one another (Epperly 2011, 23-24).

From the above statements, we can draw the conclusion that not only human entities but non-humans too possess some degrees of experience, which denotes that their experiences have a value apart from our subjective intentions and designs.

To ingeminate, the notion of panexperientialism is in sharp contrast to the mind-body dualism and departs from the dominant mechanistic theories of for example Isaac Newton and Rene Descartes. That non-human entities as animals experience the world (joy, pain, depression etc.) at their own right, thus sentient beings, implies that they deserve our unfeigned moral and ethical consideration. On this important issue, let us see what John Cobb has to say. In his book *The Process Perspective: Frequently Asked Questions about Process Theology* (2003), he expresses following words:

Our relations are also with the whole creaturely world. The well-being of the world contributes to our well-being, and its sickness and decay impoverish us as well. We seek the flourishing of other creatures for both their sake and ours. This has vast implications for the importance of our treatment of the natural world and our understanding of what policies are needed for a sustainable future (Cobb 2003, 6).

The words cited above represent a theology of “respectfulness of all life”, whether unto Homo sapiens, nonhuman species or inanimate objects. Our response and actions directed towards a dynamic, experiential, synergetic and interrelated universe need to reflect qualities as wisdom, responsibility and respect for humankind as well as of the natural world in which we dwell and have our very existence. Put differently, the ways of power must be guided by the ways of wisdom. Science and technology, the manifestations of human intellect, need to be means to ends and not an end in itself.

2.4.4 Creativity and freedom

The focal point of creativity and freedom is relational self-creation. Process thought stays clear from the debate between *absolute freedom* and *complete determinism* that we find in the realm of philosophy. The categories of creativity and freedom, value, relationship and experience are interrelated, thus, to exist is to experience our external climate and choose “some things over

others as supportive of one`s well-being and individual projects” (Epperly 2011, 26). Otherwise stated, in every moment of our planetary, interconnected career, we shape our experience by forming the past datum in a united whole, which, then, turns itself into an event as a process of self-creation (concrecence), “aiming at intensity and beauty of experience for itself and its immediate environment” (Epperly 2011, 27). This process-relational understanding of creativity and freedom implies that the future is an “open possibility”, not a predetermined, rigid order of settled events with definite outlines, which excludes the spontaneity and dynamism of human life. Belief in the future as something processive and flexible tend to generate a sense of responsibility towards her/his self-conscious behaviour in relation the her/his world at large, and also a sense of hope and faith for the future which is yet to emerge out of the infinite possibilities in the present moment of (self)conscious existence.

In what comes next, we will look into the process conception of God.

2.4.5 Process-relational God

Process theology speaks about God. Perhaps the most radical and non-conventional insights of process theology is the way God is represented to our view. Through process theology the readers see the notion of God in a radically different way than the traditional theologies.

David Ray Griffin and John Cobb, discussing the use of the term “God” by Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, avers in their book *Process Theology, An Introductory Exposition* (1976), that “their use of the conventional word for unconventional purposes continues to offend many theists and atheists alike” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 6). Even a cursory examination of Whitehead`s and Hartshorne`s idea of God reveals the unconventional elements, opposed to many of the Biblical and scholastic notions of God as the Lord – active on the scene of human history – and the philosophically abstract deity of the Greek philosophers such as Plato`s unchangeable supernatural entity. For Christian process theologians, Whitehead`s idea of God provides the most adequate way of explicating and formulating the biblical representations of God as the Lord and Yahweh. On this topic, Mellert contends:

...Whitehead`s notion of God does seem to be an adequate way of understanding and explaining the biblical images of God, and perhaps it is even more suitable for this task than the God of Plato or Aristotle, Augustine or Thomas (Mellert, 1975).

The God (the actual entity) in Christian process theology is the antithesis of the God of classical theism. Christian theologians, well-disposed towards process theology, call into question the representations of God in traditionalistic ways. Cobb states categorically that “the god of

traditional theism is dying and “*deserves to die*” (Epperly 2011, 33, emphasis added). What are the basic properties of this traditional God, which “deserves to die”? Although there exist significant varieties amongst process theologians, there is nevertheless a consensus achieved on the issue of what properties of the traditional God are not essential to the meaning of the term God from a process perspective.

In the following, we will draw our attention to the qualities/attributes that are flatly rejected by process theology:

(1) *God as a cosmic moralist*: Such a deity signifies, according to Cobb and Griffin,

A God as divine lawgiver and judge, who has proclaimed an arbitrary set of moral rules, who keep records of offenses, and who will punish offenders. In its more enlightened versions, the suggestion is retained that God's most fundamental concern is the development of moral attitudes. This makes primary for God what is secondary for humane people, and limits the scope of intrinsic importance to human beings as the only beings capable of moral attitudes” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 6).

The process view refuses the existence of this God. Process God is depicted more in transmoral terms, as nonjudgmental deity who integrates everything in His creative cosmic and microscopic advance.⁵

(2) *God as the Unchanging and Passionless Absolute*: According to Cobb and Griffin, this notion suggests that,

...God is wholly independent of the world; the God-world relation is purely external to God. These three terms – unchangeable, passionless and absolute – finally say the same thing, that the world contributes nothing to God, and that God`s influence upon the world is in no way conditioned by divine responsiveness to unforeseen, self-determining activities of us worldly beings” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 9).

Since process theology rejects the substance-oriented metaphysical philosophy, they, naturally, refuses the long-standing notion of divine perfection, which implicates total immutability or changelessness. The concept of immutability or impassibility means that “deity must be completely unaffected by any other reality and must lack all passion or emotional response” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 9). Furthermore, the understanding of God`s nature and His relation with the world can be depicted in terms of the key elements of process metaphysics (reality as

⁵ This notion stems from the idea of *dipolar theism*. i.e., The Divine has both a changing aspect (God`s consequent nature) as a living and ever-changing God, absorbing new experiences as the universe moves onward in creative transformation, and, on the other hand, God has an unchanging aspect (God`s primordial nature), which contains eternal objects in order to generate order and structure.

dynamic, reality as interconnected, freedom and creativity and the universality of experience), as formulated above. Whitehead asserts, “God is not to be treated as an exception to the metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification” (Epperly 2011, 28), i.e., God is the most relational and relative reality of all. Suchocki notes that,

“our long tradition thought of God as observing evil, but not feeling it – indeed much of the tradition thought that God could not feel anything at all! This was what the doctrine of divine impassibility was all about. But if God is relational, then God feels, and feels perfectly. The issue is not whether God feels the world, but what God does with God’s feelings of the world!” (Suchocki 2006, 12).

In process view, God is not transcendent, cold and passionless, as in Greek metaphysical philosophy (Aristotle and Plato). Rather, the God-world relationship is marked by intimacy, compassion and incessancy. God is, in the words of Epperly, not the “*wholly other* but rather the *wholly present one*, whose existence cannot be fully contained by the world” (Epperly 2011, 28).

(3) God as Controlling Power: The traditional theistic notion of God as the Ultimate Controlling Power implies a predetermined order of settled events. Says Cobb and Griffin,

This notion suggests that God determines every detail of the world. When a loved one dies prematurely, the question ‘why?’ is often asked instinctively, meaning ‘why did God choose to take this life at this time?’ Also, when humanly destructive natural events such as hurricanes occur, legal jargon speaks of ‘acts of God’. On the positive side, a woman may thank God for the rescue of her husband from a collapsed coal mine, while the husbands of a dozen other women are lost. But what kind of a God would this be who spares one while allowing the others to perish? (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 9).

The doctrine of divine perfection is tantamount to divine controlling power and divine omnipotence. Divine omnipotence as a notion is a natural outcome of doctrines such as God’s passive omniscience (God knows the world process and that His knowledge is unchanging), which is reflected in the doctrine of predestination. According to process view, the notion of God as controlling power is not explicitly evident in Biblical record. On the contrary, there is to be identified a good deal of plausible indications suggesting that divine control is not wholly omnipotent. However, because of the vast influence derived from Hellenic philosophy, these biblical indications were omitted.

Process theology takes a different approach to understanding God’s power (omnipotence), breaking sharply from classical tradition in Christian theology fashioned by

Greek metaphysics. As indicated earlier, process theology is a relational theology, i.e., everything; from molecule level to God is interconnected (internal relatedness). Because every actual entity involves interconnectedness, God, also being an actual entity, is fundamentally connected to the world. Furthermore, since actuality implies partial self-determination (self-creativity), occurrences in futurity are not yet wholly settled. Therefore, God does not fully determine the world process because freedom interpenetrates all existence (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 52-53). Says Suchocki, “every part of God’s creation has some element of freedom” (Suchocki 2006, 7).

Now, if God as the ultimate controlling power is rejected without reservation, how then, does God operate in the creational world? In order to comprehend the process view of God’s relationship with the world, a short explanation of “power” and “love” is deemed as helpful. Divine sovereignty and power was during the course of human history understood in unilateral and unidirectional terms. Stated differently, people experienced God’s power as one-sided and unlimited, thus shutting out any input through human agency.⁶ Cobb and Griffin notes that “although traditional theism said that God was essentially love, the divine love was subordinated to the divine power” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 53). According to process theology, love requires relationality (reciprocal love). Hence, “... if we truly love others we do not seek to control them” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 53).

In traditional Christian theology, divine love was subordinated to the divine sovereignty in relation to the world. In contrast, process theology reverses the trend by underscoring the property of divine love, also reflected in the message, life and death of Jesus. Since God is love, he does not seek to control us through exercising *cohesive power* but rather operates through *persuasive power*. Suchocki avers, “To be able to elicit the willing cooperation of another is a far greater power than simply to force the other to do as one wishes” (Suchocki 2006, 7). Put differently, divine creative influence is *persuasive*, not *coercive*. On this point, an important question arises: how does God work through persuasive power? Cobb and Griffin provides a response by arguing that,

... God provides each worldly actuality with an `initial aim`. This is an impulse, initially felt conformally by the occasion, to actualize the best possibility open to it, given its concrete situation. But this initial aim does not automatically become the subject’s own aim. Rather, this `subjective aim` is a product of its own decision. The subject may choose to actualize the initial aim; but it may also choose from among the other real possibilities open to it, given its contexts. In other words, God seeks to persuade each occasion

⁶ The concept of divine omnipotence may have historical antecedents, which will be explored in subsequent chapters.

towards that possibility for its own existence which would be best for it; but God cannot control the finite occasion's self-actualization (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 51).

The kernel of this notion of divine persuasion is that God does not dominate over non-divine entities; he rather only persuades each actual entity towards that which would generate the highest self-actualisation. In other words, God has a will in everything, but not everything that occurs is God's will. This significant change of focus or conception of divine power has serious socio-political and ethical implications in the sphere of human entities, which will be explored in subsequent chapters, focusing on the reconstructed Islamic God in the political-theology of Muhammad Iqbal. We will now move on to the fourth rejected divine property in process thought.

(4) God as Sanctioner of the Status Quo: This notion suggests that God and order (political authority) are intimately connected. In other words, submission to God and submission to the political state of affairs goes hand in hand. To reject political authorities, established by God, signifies a direct protest against the will of God. This notion is related to the idea of God as the ultimate controlling power. Thus Cobb and Griffin,

The development of traditional theism, in which God was more consistently said to be in complete control of every detail, further strengthened the conviction that the political status quo should be affirmed. For if God had not wanted those rulers in power, they would not be in power (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 58).

Therefore, to express submission to God implies the conservation of status quo. Process theologians categorically reject the existence of this God.

(5) God as male: For process theologians, the traditional idea of God is stereotypically masculine. By an overemphasis on the masculine traits, the traditional theologies excluded the feminine attributes such as patience, flexibility, and responsiveness. For Cobb and Griffin, this has led to "a one-sided and hence unhealthy Christianity" (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 61). Process theologians, in order to balance the sexually one-sided concept of deity, incorporate the positive aspects of the masculine traits into a "revolutionized concept of God into which the stereotypically feminine traits are integrated" (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 61-62).

These are, briefly put, the traditional theistic attributes of God which process theologians denies. As we proceed to chapter 4 in which Iqbal's concept of God will be examined, we will

see that Iqbal, too, rejects much of the abovementioned aspects, and embraces a philosophical foundation that emphasise the process categories of change, movement, creativity, freedom and open-endedness. In other words, Iqbal's theological reflections are connected with a philosophical system based on the categories of "becoming", "change" and "freedom".

We will now proceed to the next section, dealing with the methodology.

2.5 Methodology

The choice of my methodology is *hermeneutics*, i.e., text interpretation. The hermeneutical method will be employed because my primary material of investigation is based on textual writings. I will interpret Muhammad Iqbal's concept of God and its practical possibilities by examining his prosaic work (one book and a couple of articles and essays). In Iqbal's book *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (2012) he delineates the essentials of his conception of God. His metaphysical reflections go on to form the basis of his further reflections on the possibilities of its temporal impact.

In human interpretative process, individuals bring a whole network of "pre-understanding" to the written text understood as modes of communication. This entails a circular or spiral circle: the first dimension of the hermeneutical circle is related to our prior understanding. Before reading a written text, "we need some questions to which the text or work of art can give answers" (Jeanrond 1994, 5). There is, however, a possibility of modifying and changing our questions in the reading-process. Without any questions, says Jeanrond, "we are unable to structure our own acts of reading or seeing" (Jeanrond 1994, 5-6). The second part of the circle has to do with the relationality of parts and the whole, i.e., to understand the text as a whole we need to understand its components; further, to adequately understand the components, we need to understand their "functioning in the overall composition to which they contribute (ibid.).

Encountering a text involves a dynamic engagement in "re-creating" a text in question. It demands "that we lend of our reality to the text so that it can become real for us" (Jeanrond 1994, 1). By fusing the two realities, the reality of the text and the reality of the reader, understanding takes place. Indeed, human understanding is never fully objective; we can only take a piecemeal view of things around us. During an interpretive process, there are many factors which shape human understanding and restrict our perspectives. However, re-reading a text does not always signify a biased and false reading.

Asma Barlas (1950-), in her book *“Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’àn* (2002), argues that “the fact that a reading can never be wholly objective does not, in itself, render it false; in other words, subjectivity does not rule out the possibility of saying something that also is true” (Barlas 2002, 24). As such, by “unrealising” ourselves, and not enforcing ourselves on the text (ideological behaviour), we are able to receive from “it an enlarged self” (ibid.). By unrealising ourselves in the act of reading, thus challenging our attitudes and fore-structure, and, further, by being aware of our subjectivity and limited capacity, we can “foster a critical hermeneutical self-consciousness that can lead to better self-knowledge and thus more meaningful engagements with texts...” (ibid.). This, then, can modify the hermeneutical circle into a hermeneutical spiral (from text to context).

2.6 The purpose of hermeneutics in this thesis

In this master thesis, hermeneutics has been understood as contextual textual study. The interpretative process is at least twofold: First, as a reader, I am interested in understanding Muhammad Iqbal’s reflections on God, and, additionally, if his reflections promote the broad humanistic values or not (reading as an existential activity). Stated differently, by engaging with Iqbal’s texts, I read it to understand what the author may have meant. This is why I assign intentionality to the text/s. Moreover, I also study Iqbal’s texts in order to disclose their intrinsic meaning. As Gadamer argues, “a text or a work of art will disclose its meaning to every competent and good-willed reader who is thus disposed to see what the text has to say” (Jeanrond 1994, 9), i.e., the disclosure of a text’s “sense”. There is an element of permanence in human text’s, an intrinsic intention/intentions which readers, with right methods and attitudes, should aim to grasp. However, I do not claim any finality in my interpretation; my understanding of Iqbal’s work cannot be taken to be definitive. It is only an effort to understand Iqbal’s God idea through my interpretative horizon (the world of the interpreter). I only aim at, in the language of Friedrich Schleiermacher, “relative adequacy” (Jeanrond 1994, 117).

A written text does not exist as a closed-off entity. Rather, it is always a product of various factors. When we examine an intellectual, it is of significance to explicate the influences, circumstances, and personality traits which may have lead her/him to think about certain topics in a specific way. Put differently, as acts of reading do not exist in a “social, political, psychological, cultural or existential vacuum...” (Jeanrond 1994, 111), so do not acts of writing exist in a vacuum. That is, in order to disclose the sense of a text produced in specific

historical period, we need to amass sufficient data as to its particular context and environment, various influences, the writers' religious belief and intellectual trends prevailing at that time and understand the historical horizons in which a text has been produced. In this way, we can discover –to some degree– the writers' motives and intentions for writing a text in a certain fashion.

Keeping in mind this method, I will start chapter 3 by exploring the lifeworld of Muhammad Iqbal, which may furnish us with understanding of the patterns of his thinking and reflections on God, colored by social, political, cultural, existential and religious contexts.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the choice of theory and method. I started with explicating the central theories of process theology, influenced by the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. The essential aspect of process theology is its interpretation of God in process terms, which will be kept in mind while exploring Iqbal's conception of God in chapter 4. In section three, I explained the reason of my choice of hermeneutics as methodology, and in what manner I will employ it in this thesis.

The next chapter will deal with Muhammad Iqbal's life from a contextual perspective.

3 Muhammad Iqbal and context

In this chapter, I will deal with the historical context of Iqbal`s thought, including his factors, formative years, his relationship with the Qur`an, and his mode of approaching the scripture, which may have exercised an effect upon Iqbal`s reflections on God concept and its spatio-temporal possibilities.

3.1 The historical context internally and externally

Muhammad Iqbal was born in 1888 at Sialkot, a city of old duration in the province of the Punjab now known as Pakistan. Prior to his birth, some twenty years, an independence war (1857) broke out in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. This battle, widely known as “an act of rebellion” (mutiny) was in essence a battle for freedom against British imperialistic powers, who applied various political devices in order to take charge of Indian territories. The conquering of Indian soils in 1857 by British forces and the declaration of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India served the final deathblow to the Mughal dynasty which lasted from 1526 to 1857. After defeating the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs of the subcontinent, the British gained a firm hold over the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Especially Indian Muslims were structurally and systematically stripped of their power in collective life (judicial, economically, militarily etc.). A great section of the Muslim population was living in an abject state of degradation, decadence and dejection, ruled by the British lords on the one hand and the Indian National Congress (founded on the principles of Victorian radicalism)⁷ on the other (Rauf 1994: 183-184). Indian Muslims were falling behind the Hindu majority in almost every sector of human life: from the basic amenities of life to modern education and employment. William Wilson Hunter⁸ (1840-1900) in his book *The Indian Musalmans* (1876) discusses the likely factors behind the emergence of fanaticism among a certain segment of Indian Muslims. I quote here a passage from the book:

...The Calcutta Persian paper some time ago wrote thus: - ` All sorts of employment, great and small, are being gradually snatched away from the Muhammadans, and bestowed on men of other races, particularly the Hindus. The Government is bound to look upon all classes of its subjects with an equal eye, yet the time has now come when it publicly singles out the Muhammadans in its Gazettes for exclusion from official posts. Recently, when several vacancies occurred in the office of the Sundarbans

⁷ The Indian National Congress (1885) was, from its inception, a joint political party formed by Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in order to fight against the British colonialists on the political and legal level. However, as time went on, Indian Muslims soon became aware of its dominating power, the Hindus, and their designs to only safeguard their own political-economical vested interests by crushing the Muslims.

⁸ William Wilson Hunter was a Scottish historian, statistician and a member of the Indian Civil Service.

Commissioner, that official, in advertising them in the Government Gazette, stated that the appointments would be given to none but Hindus. In short, the Muhammadans have now sunk so low, that, even when qualified for Government employ, they are studiously kept out of it by Government notifications. Nobody takes any notice of their helpless condition, and the higher authorities do not deign even to acknowledge their existence” (Hunter 1876, 175).

In other words, their status was reduced to merely “hewers of wood” and “watercarriers”. The British Muslims were, so to speak, materially and spiritually impoverished; living in a state of stalemate. They lacked a clear-cut direction and destination, a guide and a leader, and the moral and intellectual stamina to realise their abeyant potentialities in their private and public capacity to secure their own distinct identity in the midst of exploitative and oppressive forces.

The international scene of the Muslim world was no better than internally in British India. The Muslim world was in the point of total breakdown economically, politically, culturally and ethically. Writing about the melancholic international condition of the Muslim consciousness, which Iqbal was cognisant of at a young age, the late son of Muhammad Iqbal, Javid Iqbal notes as following:

Like any other sensitive young Muslim he was aware of the tensions and frustrations of his age. The Ottoman Empire was tottering. The Central Asian Muslim Republics had been absorbed into Tsarist Russia. The old dynasty in Iran was decaying and the economy of the country was collapsing. In China the Muslim provinces had been absorbed into the Chinese National Empire and the Muslims had ceased to exist as a distinct political entity. In Eastern Europe also the Muslims were gradually being driven out. Egypt was under the heels of the British. France was preparing to seize Morocco. The Dutch were ruthlessly oppressing and exploiting the Indonesian Muslims... (Iqbal, 2008).

Additionally, Mustansir Mir⁹, in his book *Iqbal* (2008) depicts the international climate as following:

...The international scene, too, was depressing to Muslims. In 1911-12, Italy occupied Libya, France annexed Morocco, and several Balkan states attacked Turkey, divesting it of its East European possessions. The events at home at abroad created a sense of despair and helplessness in many sensitive Muslims, including Iqbal... (Mir 2008, 10).

Writing on the international condition of the Muslim lands during the lifetime of Iqbal, Rafi`ud-Din Hashmi, in his essay “Iqbal on The Reconstruction of The World Order” (2000), notes:

...Most of the Muslim lands were under the British, the Russians or the French colonialism. Since Turkey was known as “the sick man of Europe”, Iqbal had to watch the painful disintegration of the Ottoman

⁹ Mustansir Mir works as a Professor of Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University. Prof. Mir`s primary field of interests are Iqbal Studies and Qur`anic Studies.

Caliphate (1924). The Muslim Ummah suffered not only political subjugation, but also economic backwardness and poverty. More than everything, there was an overall civilizational and moral decadence. The colonial powers had descended on them with all their nationalistic prejudices, selfishness and thus perpetuated injustice on a global scale to safeguard their vested interests (Hashmi, 2000).

This, in brief, were the prevailing conditions (not to mention the World War I and its cataclysmal effects globally which profoundly affected Iqbal's later reflections on human life) in which Iqbal was learning, and developing his thoughts.

3.2 Muhammad Iqbal's formative years

It is an established fact that the psychological makeup of a family life and its prevailing climate has an important impact on how a child develops her/his personality in later phases. A study of Iqbal's formative years shows the profound influence his parents' temperament and their individual character had on Iqbal's intellectual, ethical and emotional thinking patterns.

Muhammad Iqbal's father, Shaikh Nur Muhammad – probably uneducated, was a seamster by profession and a deeply religious man. He was well-known for his integrity, piousness and honesty. Though he lacked conventional education, he was able read books in Urdu and Persian language and thirstily absorbed the company of various mystics and scholars, hence his mystic (sufi) disposition. Iqbal was exposed to Muslim mysticism at an early age through study circle held on a regular basis at his home. The young Iqbal, under his father's patronage, read the Qur'an every dawn. This reading, however, was not marked by mere ritualism or ceremonial – neither for the sake of virtuous act. Iqbal's father ensured that the Scripture was read and studied with an open mind, understanding the text as if it had been revealed in his heart by God Himself. This laconic, simple yet profound advice left an inerasable imprint on Iqbal's psyche and shaped his mental attitude towards the Scripture for the rest of his temporal career.

Iqbal's mother, Karim Bibi also lacked formal education. However, she was a benevolent and prudent lady, who provided financial support to needy people. Although Karim Bibi did not influence Iqbal's mind intellectually, she nevertheless influenced Iqbal's attitude and religious morals to a great psychological depth. Iqbal's deeply attachment to his mother is clearly manifested in an emotional poem composed at her death in 1914 (The Philosophy of Grief), a testimonial to his mother's lifelong love, wisdom and compassion (Mir 2008, 2).

Desiring to furnish a religious education to Iqbal, Nur Muhammad began his son's formal education in a mosque at the age of four years. During his stay in the mosque, Iqbal was taught how to read the Qur'an. After joining the mosque for Qur'anic study, Iqbal was fortunate, now five years old, by gaining the attention of Sayyid Mir Hasan (1844-1929), a widely known religious scholar who was in charge of a religious school in Sialkot. Under the tutelage of Mir Hasan – which lasted for many years – the young Iqbal not only developed a deeper understanding of the Islamic heritage alongside fine-tuning his literary sense, he also acquired a “modern” education (study of English and European arts and sciences).¹⁰ He entered the Sialkot's Scotch Mission College, where Mir Hassan served as a professor of Arabic. It was while at Scotch Mission College securing the Faculty of Arts diploma (1885), that Iqbal, approximately 15 or 16 years of age, began penning poetry. M. Mir, writing on Iqbal's life, personality and works, states, «...By the age of 18, Iqbal had acquired all that the city of Sialkot had to offer him... His parents had given him a deep religious and mystical orientation, which he was to retain for the rest of his life» (Mir 2008, 3). Under their patronage, an environment was created which was to a large extent contributive to the unfoldment of Iqbal's Qur'anic character in his early youth. On the other hand, the issue of mysticism (Sufism) is open to debate. Even a perfunctory study of Iqbal's thought in its totality reveals his admiration for and influence of some of the most famous Sufi exponents, particularly Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), Shaikh Mahmud Shabistari (1288-1340) and Fakhruddin Iraqi (1213-1289). However, Iqbal was quite critical of several forms of the popular Sufism. Iqbal's criticism of popular mysticism will be dealt with in chapter 5.

In what follows, an introduction will be given pertaining to Iqbal's relationship with the Quran, and, furthermore, his methodology for understanding the Scripture.

3.3 Influences, inspirations and centrality of the Qur'an

The subject of Iqbal's connection to, his understanding of, and in which manner he utilised the Qur'an requires an elaborated study of its own. However, in the interest for brevity, I will make only a few remarks.

Keeping in mind the vast plethora of Iqbal studies in Pakistan and abroad, it is a pity

¹⁰ After the British seizing Delhi in 1857 English and modern sciences and arts gained importance while the traditional Islamic disciplines of knowledge and traditional languages as Persian and Arabic were omitted from the educational sphere.

Iqbal's intimate relationship with the Qur'an still awaits a comprehensive inquiry. There is no denying of the fact that Iqbal was steeped in European and Eastern literature. He has himself expressed appreciation for various Muslim and Western thinkers and admitted of him benefiting from both Eastern and Western bulk of knowledge. In *Stray Reflections* (2008), Iqbal states as following:

I confess I owe a great deal to Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil and Wordsworth. The first two led me into the "inside" of things; the third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals of poetry, and the last saved me from atheism in my student days (Iqbal, 2008, 53).

Beside these personalities, we detect in Iqbal's prosaic and prose works several other Western and Eastern philosophers and mystics whom Iqbal benefited from. Junayd al-Baghdadi (820-910), Abu Hamid Ghazali (1058-1111), Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (1703-1762), Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838-1897), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), to name a few of them. That being said, a deeper survey of Iqbal's life, his poetical and prosaic works reveal the fountainhead of his philosophical, economical, sociological, historical, theological and political thoughts, which is the Qur'an. In other words, the *raison d'être* of the bulk of his works is the elaboration, commentary, exposition and illumination of the message of God enshrined in the book Iqbal firmly believed to be the source of guidance (Arabic *wahy*) to humanity en bloc. In this connection, Mir's remark deserve to be quoted: "The Qur'an, which he recited regularly, was a constant source of inspiration to him; indeed, Iqbal claims that his poetry is no more than an elucidation of the Qur'anic message" (Mir 2008: 3).¹¹

With regard to the demand for a research on Iqbal's relationship and his apprehension of the Scripture, a step towards this important direction was taken by the late Muslim reformist thinker and Iqbal exponent, Ghulam Ahmed Parwez (1903-1985). In his early twenties, Parwez came under the wing of Muhammad Iqbal, who furnished him with the fundamental guidelines on the methodology of understanding the Qur'an as a "living" Scripture.

A couple of decades later, after the materialisation of Iqbal's idea of Pakistan, Parwez, as a result of his own research, delivered a large amount of speeches on the subject of Iqbal's

¹¹ To this statement, I wish to add that most of Iqbal's works of prosaic nature (especially *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*) are to a high degree an elucidation and exposition of the central Qur'anic themes, also.

point of views of applying the Qur'anic injunctions on private and collective level, his intellectual and spiritual attachment to the Qur'an, and how Iqbal used the core teachings of the scripture in his philosophical reflections. These lectures were later on composed and published entitled *Iqbal aur Quran* (Iqbal and the Quran). The aforementioned Urdu book, (*Iqbal and the Qur'an*) is deplorably rather unknown – in academic and non-academic circles – both in the Muslim and Western world. There are a couple of key factors to this unknowability. For the sake of brevity, I will only mention one element. The main factor is the religious-conservative and dogmatic section (religious ulemas) of the Pakistani society. In this connection, a passage¹² from Chawla's book *A Study of Islamic Writings in Pakistan* (1990) need to be cited:

...The other reason why the religious hierarchy of Pakistan opposed Parwez was, as stated earlier, his outspoken advocacy of 'Qur'an only' as the basic and the undisputed law-giving authority. If accepted and acted upon (for which purpose the struggle for Pakistan was fought and won and which course is the ultimate destiny of the humanity ---48:28 – Al-Qur'an), it will bring immediate and exhaustive annihilation of the three institutions dubbed by the almighty Allah as the arch enemies of humanity i.e. the Priesthood (the religious exploiters), the Capitalist (the economic exploiters) and the self-styled rulers of the people (the political exploiters) (Chawla 1990, vii).¹³

In *Iqbal and Qur'an* (1987), we discover several passages which underscores Iqbal's emotional, intellectual and spiritual attachment to the Qur'an and the book serving as his fountainhead of inspiration and as the ultimate sanction for his socio-political, ethico-religious ideals. This centrality of the Qur'an supplied Iqbal with insights into its dynamism and multi-layers of meanings (Parwez 1987, 2-5, 89, 147). Parwez also sets forth a critical evaluation of Iqbal. In the interest of brevity, I will in this section only mention his Urdu book *Tasawwuf Ki Haqiqat* (The Reality of Islamic Mysticism) published in 1981, in which Parwez expresses criticism of some the dimensions of Iqbal's thinking, particularly his Sufi ambivalence.

For Iqbal, the Qur'an serves as the foremost authority of his thoughts. His poetry and reflections orbit around the Qur'an. Writing on Iqbal's relationship with the Qur'an, Mir states:

Iqbal claims that his poetry revolves around the Qur'an, and says that if his verses have any non-Qur'anic content, then he may not have, on Judgement Day, the privilege of kissing the Prophet's feet (RB, 168). This statement shows Iqbal's understanding of his role as a poet: he would use his poetry to expound the Qur'an (Mir 2008, 49).

¹² The above stated passage is a part of the publisher's note written by the late Mohammad Omar Draz. He was the Chief Executive of Annoor Printers & Publishers and the Vice Executive Head of Tolu-e-Islam Trust in 1990.

¹³ G. A. Parwez's theological stance reminds us of the Latin phrase *sola scriptura* in Christian tradition, which stands for the Bible as the only authoritative and *God-breathed* scripture for the faith-praxis of Christian peoples. We will return to this position of Iqbal and Parwez by highlighting their Qur'anic insights in order to enrich Iqbal's God conception and its potentials in the human realm, from a pragmatic perspective.

The poem Mir is referring to, which is also a peremptory statement for viewing Iqbal's poetic and prosaic bulk as the exegesis of the Qur'an's basic import, goes as follows:

If my heart a mirror with no worth is, In my word if anything except the Qur'an is, O Thou who brightens the morning of the ages gone by and speeding Whose eye the innermost recesses of our hearts is penetrating, Dry up the wine in grapes mine, Throw poison in my pure wine Wretched and ignominious on the Judgement Day make me, Deprive me of kissing the feet of the Holy Prophet (Khalil, 1996).

Khalil,¹⁴ commenting on the sources influencing Iqbal's thought in relation to his poetical work *Call of The Marching Bell* (1924) which he also translated into English, notes that Iqbal's prime criteria for either accepting or discarding external sources was the Qur'an, the hadith corpus and the effect these external sources exerted upon the well-being of the Muslim peoples worldwide. Discussing Iqbal's critical evaluation of Western thought and knowledge paradigm, Khalil avers:

...He accepted and used what was concordant with the Holy Qur'an and rejected the rest as fallacious. He had done the same with the writings of the Greek and Muslim thinkers. Thus, the benefits he acquired from Western knowledge are in detail and not in principle, whose sources continue to be the Holy Qur'an (Khalil, 1996).

A good instance of Iqbal's fidelity to and deep reading of the Qur'an (read: Qur'an-centeredness) would be his outright rejection of the platonic idealism (Neoplatonism), which paved the way for the concept of unity of being (Wahdat al-Wujud) in Islamic mysticism of known as "Sufism". Furthermore, from, the notion of "unity of being" arose the doctrines of fatalism and determinism, which, according to Iqbal, worked as forces of decay in Islamic civilization and are diametrically contradictory to the fundamental Qur'anic teachings of human autonomy and human individuality.¹⁵ While discussing the conditions of the Muslim East with their technique of medieval mysticism, Iqbal's book *Reconstruction*, asserts: "...Far from reintegrating the forces of the average man's inner life, and thus preparing him for participation in the march of history, it has taught him a false renunciation and made him perfectly contented with his ignorance and spiritual thralldom» (Iqbal 2012, 148-149).

¹⁴ M.A.K. Khalil is retired from the Canadian Forestry Service.

¹⁵ These doctrine of fatalism/determinism, its practical effects on Muslim community and Iqbal's take on it, especially by a careful reading of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and other prose works, will be further elucidated in subsequent chapters. Furthermore, Ghulam Ahmed Parwez's elaboration on this important issue will be reproduced, also.

Before we proceed the scriptural methodology of Iqbal, it is worthy of our attention to observe few remarks of Robert Whitemore¹⁶ as regards the Qur'an playing the central role in Iqbal's thought, and Iqbal being firmly rooted in the Muslim context despite the fact that his philosophical importance transcends the world of Islam. Whitemore, in his article "Iqbal's Panentheism" (1956), discusses Iqbal's basic ideas of philosophical-theological nature, especially his panentheism. Muhammad Iqbal's sojourn to England and Germany opened the door for him to become deeply conversant with the west and its intellectual heritage, from Plato to Henri Bergson. He discarded a great deal in the former, and accepted a good deal from the latter. According to Whitemore, Nietzsche, Wundt, Lotze, and William James all left their mark upon Iqbal's intellectual thought-process. However, argues Whitemore, "this is not to imply that Iqbal is merely another Asiatic turned western eclectic. For Ghazzali and Rumi also have been his teachers, the Prophet and the Qur'an his constant source of inspiration" (Whitemore, 1956). After discussing the various dimensions of Iqbal's God notion, Whitemore goes on to assert:

...his work is, from first to last, the work of a *muslim*. At every point he is at pains to indicate his conviction that his teaching is in all respects harmonious with the spirit and the teaching of the *Qur'an*. He speaks and writes always from a standpoint *within* Islam (Whitemore, 1956).

In order to emphasize Iqbal's work being "from first to last, the work of a muslim", he cites a stanza from Iqbal's poem *The Response to The Complaint (Jawab-i-Shikwah)*, which goes as following: "To my Muhammad be but true, And thou hast conquered me. The world is naught; thou shalt command My pen of Destiny" (ibid.)

The abovementioned stanza is a part of a larger poem, and is complementary to another poem entitled *The Complaint*, in which Iqbal expresses his discontent and complains to God for the wretched condition of the Muslim peoples worldwide and their intellectually and materially stagnant societies, riddled with discords. In the poem *The Response to The Complaint* (to which the stanza belongs) Iqbal reveals the answer "given by God" to the Muslim peoples. The gist of this poem is related to Muslims who, by distancing themselves from the message of the Qur'an, and the earthly career of the Prophet (whose life is a paradigm for Muslims), ceased to play an active part on the stage of human history, thus suffered from self-created ignorance, monasticism, escapism, political subjugation and mental thralldom. In this connexion, I would like to add another line of Iqbal which makes apparent his *essentially* Qur'an-centered voice.

¹⁶ Robert C. Whitemore (1921-?) is an associate professor affiliated with Tulane University, USA.

Addressing the Islamic world in one of his Persian poems, Iqbal says: “O Muslim, if you want to live (with honour), It is not possible to do so without (adhering to) the Quran (Zaman, 1995). To recapitulate, although Iqbal became steeped in the western intellectual heritage, and was thoroughly conversant with (classical) Islamic philosophical and sufistic personages, for him, the Qur’an was the centerpiece of his reformist ideas expressed in prose and poetry. The scripture was for Iqbal the deepest source of repair, which he employed in order to infuse new life into the moribund Muslim communities. In the words of Mir:

...Both intellectually and emotionally, he [Iqbal] was devoted to the ideals of Islam, which his early training had inculcated in him, and this devotion only grew with time, until his thought, as he himself remarks, became completely `Qur`anicized» (Mir 2008: 13, *sic*).

We will now move on to Muhammad Iqbal`s methodology of understanding the scriptural text.

3.4 Muhammad Iqbal`s approach to the Qur`anic scripture

Having made clear – though partially – the centrality of the Qur’an in Iqbal`s thought, which, through a careful reading, disclosed new avenues for his philosophical, theological and poetical explorations, it is also instructive to explore his approach and attitude towards the Islamic foundational scripture.¹⁷

The methodological and hermeneutical approach to the Qur’an is a significant topic, and requires elaborate explanation beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to give a brief presentation of Iqbal`s method in order to furnish sufficient background for understanding his God concept and, furthermore, its temporal possibilities.

Several scholars of Iqbal have mentioned that Iqbal, during his last five years (1933-1938), made a programme consisting of four objectives. One of these points were Iqbal`s desire to write a Qur’an commentary. Because of his deep engagement in the political sphere in Punjab province in British India, his decreasing somatic health and due to want of fiscal resources, he could not actualise his idea. In the interest of brevity, it need only to be observed a couple of remarks. Mir notes that: “...Iqbal planned to write a commentary on the Qur’an. He did not live to execute that plan, but his works, especially his poetry, give us a glimpse of the lines along which such a work might have proceeded” (Mir 2008, 50). Furthermore, Khalil (the translator

¹⁷ By Islamic foundational scripture I mean the Qur’an, and not extra-textual keys such as the Hadith-corpus, generally accepted as one of the central foundational texts in Islam.

and commentator of Iqbal's poetic work *Call Of The Marching Bell*), in chapter 2 (*The life and times of Allamah Iqbal*), published on the Allama Iqbal site¹⁸, notes the following:

... Now he wanted to prepare further elaboration of the same concept and the application of his philosophy to practical life. He had a four point plan for achieving this objective. This program consisted of writing the following three books: "Aids to the Study of the Holy Qur'an", "Islam as I Understand It" "The Book of An Unknown Prophet." In this book he wanted to discuss metaphysical problems or Qur'anic *Tasawwuf*. And Establish an "Institute of Advanced Islamic Research" in Punjab (Khalil, 1996).

Our interest is confined to the book titled as *Aids to the study of the Holy Qur'an*. There exist no written documents by Iqbal's pen reflecting upon what these aids/resources to studying the Qur'an could have been. However, Parwez, during his twenties, derived direct guidance from Iqbal on the methodological approach unto the Qur'anic scripture. Based on the guidance Parwez benefited from Iqbal, we can make an intelligent guess as to what may have been the substance in Iqbal's non-actualised book *Aids to the study of the Holy Qur'an*. In his linguistic work *Lughat-ul-Quran*¹⁹ (Qur'anic Dictionary), Parwez points out the major insights he gained under the tutelage of Iqbal's person. Discussing the various dimensions of the Qur'anic language and the methodological approach to the its text, he notes:

...I was lucky to get some insight of the thoughts of the great poet *Allama Iqbal*, just when I was struggling with this. From his insights I came to know, among other things, that Quran should be understood in the Arabic language and with the help of explanation of the verses, while external influences should be shunned (Parwez 2015, 27).

In Mohammad Iqbal Chawla's thesis *A Study of Islamic Writings in Pakistan* (1990), we notice a passage which also sheds light on the guidance Parwez absorbed from Iqbal's person. Among other things Parwez came to know that the Qur'an calls itself "An-Nur" (the light), and light requires no external elements in order to reveal its shine. Put in a different (read literal) manner, in order to understand the import of the Qur'an, one needs to desist from extra-textual keys as the hadith corpus and other traditional commentaries. The scriptural interpreter must also possess adequate skills in classical Arabic language (knowledge about its concepts, proverbs and idioms); the linguistic medium of the Qur'an. Furthermore, the Qur'an restates its verses from different vantage points; it does not cover one particular issue/subject at one place. Thus,

¹⁸ <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/>

¹⁹ English Edition published by Quranic Education Society, Oslo, Norway, 2015

it is imperative for the Qur'anic reader to look at the book in its big picture (id est, holistically). In addition, it is also important to possess knowledge in the various domains of human development because the Qur'anic text invites the readers through reason/intellect (Arabic *Aql*) (Chawla 1990, 6). In the above-mentioned passage, the key elements of a methodological approach to the Qur'an, according to Muhammad Iqbal, are: 1) The Qur'an needs to be grasped in the Arabic language of its times, (2) supported by the method of "tasreef" (a holistic, hence intratextually reading).

In the following, I will add details to the above-named methodological framework for scriptural study.

3.4.1 The Qur'an and its language

The Qur'an is written in Arabic, and need to be understood in that language, as Iqbal asserted. It is universally recognised a fact that until and unless one understands the language of a book, she/he cannot grasp its text and its multilayers of meanings. Neither are scriptural interpretations and exegesis possible without possessing adequate linguistic knowledge and skills. A reader or interpreter, who, for example, wishes to interpret Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* today must hold sufficient competence in the specific German language in which Goethe expressed himself. Likewise, a reader who desires to interpret biblical texts needs to have a grasp of the biblical languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Similarly, a reader who attempts to interpret the Qur'anic text need to understand its language in order to engage in a fruitful act of scriptural reading and interpretation, thus deriving deeper understanding of the text and its multifariousness of meanings. However, a mere grasp of Qur'anic language is not sufficient for the adequate interpretation of the scriptural text or to guard it against ideological, manipulative and reductionist interpretations.

Iqbal, in his *Reconstruction*, reproduces the words of Sa'id Halim Pàshà, the leader of the then Turkish Religious Reform Party (RRP), that are relevant for our present purpose. I cite here the words of S.H Pàshà:

... He [Pàshà], however, deplores that during the course of history the moral and social ideals of Islam have been gradually deislamized through the influence of local character, and preIslamic superstitions of Muslim nations. These ideals today are more Iranian, Turkish, or Arabian than Islamic (Iqbal 2012, 124).

Likewise, linguistically speaking, the clear and simple Arabic language of the Qur'an (*Quraish dialect*) became, after the process of localization, tainted by non-Arab elements, especially by Persian heritage. Manzoor ul-Haque, a retired Professor, writing on the influence Persian culture has had on the Muslim minds during the centuries, cites the following remark of Iqbal in his article "The Story of Pakistan – Ideological Perspective" (2015), "The conquest of Iran resulted, not in Iran becoming Islamized, but Islam being Iranized" (ul-Haque, 2015).²⁰ My interest is restricted to the bulk of scriptural exegesis and commentaries.

When the Qur'an emerged on the scene in the Arabian Peninsula in seventh century, its first audience, the desert-dwellers in the city of Makkah, grasped its ideas and meanings without any need of dictionary, commentary or lexicon. The language was not opaque to the majority of Arabs of that time. This was because the language which expressed the Qur'anic message were the same spoken during the period of the revelation. In chapter 20, verse 113 we read as following: "*And thus have We sent this down, an Arabic Qur'an, and explained therein warnings in many ways, so that people may live upright or that it make them rise to a new level of awareness*" (Qur'an 2015: 332). The words "Arabic Qur'an" (*Quraanan Arabiyyan*) is two-fold: First, it denotes that the Qur'an is revealed in Arabic language. Second, it signifies a book which explains itself accurately and distinctly (Parwez 2015, 18). The first century of Islam was devoid of any extra-textual components and the Arab language remained untouched by alien concepts, words and idioms. Throughout the Abbasid rule, however, bulks of Arabic literature (Arabic lexicons, Qur'an commentaries and linguistic sciences) were compiled and developed by non-Arabs. These commentaries were for the most part product of that time when Persian culture held sway in Islamic political and social domains, and also in Arabic literature. It is important to bear in mind that Persians after the Muslim conquests did not cease to be Persians. To the contrary, they persisted as a separate entity within the Islamic empire. On this important historical topic, the insights of Bernard Lewis (1916-), a British-American historian, deserve to be cited:

...Iran was indeed Islamized, but it was not Arabized. Persians remained Persians. And after an interval of silence, Iran reemerged as a separate, different and distinctive element within Islam, eventually adding

²⁰ This observation needs elaboration: after the Muslim conquest of Persian Empire (Sasanian Empire) in 651 CE, Islam as socio-political polity superseded the antediluvian religion of Persia, Zoroastrianism. This replacement and conquest have been viewed in diverse ways in Iran, contingent on one's own subjective lenses molded by various factors. However, the point of interest is that it was during first wave of Islamic dynasties, the Abbasid Empire (750-1258 CE), that we saw the emergence of what we in modern parlance call "Arabic literature". This literature included various books of hadith's (a tradition based on oral reports of the sayings and activities of Muhammad and his companions), Islamic history, Muhammad's first ever written biography and books of Qur'anic exegesis (tafseers) (Parwez 2015, 20).

a new element even to Islam itself. Culturally, politically, and most remarkably of all even religiously, the Iranian contribution to this new Islamic civilization is of immense importance...In a sense, Iranian Islam is a second advent of Islam itself, a new Islam sometimes referred to as Islam-i Ajam (Lewis, 1999).

Lewis is accurate when asserting, “Iranian Islam is a second advent of Islam itself, a new Islam referred to as Islam-i Ajam”. By falling prey to extrinsic, Persian influences, Muslims lost their touch with the original Arab language of their foundational text and its meanings and concepts. Elaborating on the language of the Qur’an, its evolution through the course of history, and its mutation through contact with an alien culture, Mir M. Hussain in his book *The Holy Quran and Our Daily Life* (2002), notes the following:

...The Arabs came in contact with the *ajam* (non-Arabs), especially the Persians. Instead of their original simplicity, the Arabs adopted Iranian culture and way of life which overshadowed the Muslim world. The non-Arabs, although adopted the Arabic language for interpreting the Qur’an, they kept their own concepts in mind for the interpretation purposes. Thus Arabic became a medium of projecting the non-Arabic concepts in this period (762-847 A.D) during which the edifice of the Islamic literature was constructed (Hussain 2002, 7).

Although the Qur’anic text remained unaffected, its terminology and words were systematically clothed with non-Qur’anic philosophies dominating in the civilisation of the Persian Empire. This is how the Arabic words and terminology of the Qur’an mutated, thus took entirely different import than that which was in usage during the period of the Prophet Muhammad’s times. The Persian literature gave an altogether alien complexion to Arabic linguistics. In short, the Arab language became – through the process of mutation – “persianized”. Therefore, in order to reclaim and rediscover the true meaning of Arabic words and terms used in the Qur’an, thus breaking from the Persian-derived concepts and connotations, one needs to identify the root meaning and characteristics, and the concepts behind the words by taking those meanings into consideration which persisted at the time of the Qur’anic revelation. The Qur’an maintains that it has been revealed in plain, clear and simple Arabic language (*Arabi-e-Mubeen*) which was spoken during its times (Quraysh dialect). This, briefly stated, is the function of the method of linguistic hermeneutics.

In order to illustrate the above-mentioned method, we may look at the Arabic term “sabr”, usually interpreted as mere “patience” under ills and trying circumstances, hence denoting passivity. However, by applying the method of linguistic hermeneutics to the Qur’anic text (how the words were understood at the times of the ancient Arabs of the seventh century),

it will provide us with sufficient data to understand the meaning of *sabr*. “As-Sabeer” signifies a part of a cloud, which stays on the same point for 24 hours without manifestly changing its position. “Al-Asbirah” is a word which depicts herds leaving on daytime to graze, and afterwards comes back by following their exact route, without any of the group’s members lagging behind or going astray. These perceptible examples allow us to develop a clear visualisation as to how the Arabs used to interpret and understand “*sabr*” – a representation of steadfastness, perseverance, steadiness towards an objective or a principle. Stated differently, according to the language of the Quraish tribe in Makkah, it carried a connotation of dynamism and unshakable resolution and not passiveness or inactivity in the midst of challenging climates (Parwez 2015, 24). As the Qur’an states in Surah 2, verse 153: “*O You who have been chosen to be graced with belief! Seek help in steadfastness and in diligent following of the Divine Commands (salaat). Surely, Allah is with those who are steadfast (sabireen) in ease as well as in adversity*” (Qur’an 2003: 20)

3.4.2 Hermeneutics of the sacred Scriptures

The cognizance of allegorical passages and, as a result, their non-literal theological treatment is also to be seen in for instance Judeo-Christian traditions. Werner G. Jeanrond²¹, in his book *Theological Hermeneutics* (1994), discusses the development of hermeneutics since the Greek beginnings of the discipline, and also the need and importance of hermeneutical foundations of a critical (Christian) theology in a pluralistic context. Outlining the ancient Jewish exegetical methods, Jeanrond notes that the Jewish exegetes formulated a scriptural hermeneutics which attempted to understand the meaning of some of the text’s passages symbolically,” passages that points beyond itself to a deeper reality” (Jeanrond 1994, 17). Philo of Alexandria (25 BC-50AD), was a Jewish thinker who – in order to defend Divine transcendence – employed allegoric interpretations when particular scriptural sections portrayed the Divine Being in an anthropomorphic way (ibid.).

We can also identify some commonalities between Augustine’s (354-430) exegetical and hermeneutical principles on the one hand and Muhammad Iqbal’s understanding, as outlined in some degree above, on the other. Briefly stated, the key commonalities revolve around the topic of the scriptural interpreter’s task. Both Augustine and Iqbal demands that in

²¹ Werner G. Jeanrond (1955-) is a German Roman Catholic theologian and Master of St. Benet’s Hall of the University of Oxford.

order for an adequate scriptural exegesis to take place, the interpreter of either the Bible or the Qur'an need to be conversant with the specific linguistic conventions in which the Qur'anic and the Biblical text were created. As for this reason, sufficient knowledge of Arabic, Greek and Hebrew is a prerequisite for an adequate exegesis. In addition, both of these personalities deal with their respective scriptures as unified documents. They were also aware of the difficulties arising in interpretation between signs (Arabic *ayats*) of literal and symbolic import. By treating the scriptures as unified texts (hence the importance of a reading perspective derived from the text itself, i.e., the principles of textual holism, and linguistic hermeneutics) the interpreter can grasp the text's deeper layers of meaning by understanding "darker passages through clearer passages" (Jeanrond 1994, 24). The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers in Europe is also worth noting: the exponents of the principle of "sola scriptura" (Scripture alone), through a renewed reading of the foundational text's, contested the place of an ecclesiastical institution and its function as a sole standard for right understanding(s) of Christian beliefs. For the Reformers, the Word of God was encapsulated in the Bible. As a result, only an adequate comprehension of the Bible itself became the foremost norm, freed from all mediation of ecclesiastical authorities. As Jeanrond writes:

...Every person who listens carefully to the Word of God in the Bible and uses all his or her ability to read and study the texts of the Bible will find everything he or she searches for. In this sense the Reformers could say that the Bible was *self-interpreting*. (Jeanrond 1994, 31, emphasis added).

The express purpose of highlighting these theological issues from a Judeo-Christian perspective, is to demonstrate the fact that the three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christendom and Islam) has during the course of history faced nearly similar theological tensions and difficulties in relation to the adequate methodological and reading strategies of their respective Scriptures, reckoned as the embodiment of Divine Discourse/Speech.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I concentrated on Muhammad Iqbal's lifeworld: the climes and conditions both in British India and internationally, his formative years and peoples who exerted influenced upon his personality, his relationship with the Qur'an, and his methodology of scriptural reading/approach, elucidated by Parwez.

The data furnished in this chapter will help us to understand Iqbal`s concept of God.

In the following chapter I will set out to analyse and decipher Iqbal`s notion of God.

4 The Iqbalian process concept of God

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will expound upon one of the research questions, that is, *what is Muhammad Iqbal's God conception?* As will be seen, this exposition is by no means exhaustive, but can serve as a platform for a more extensive study important to those interested in Iqbalian process-thought. In writing this chapter, I intend to delineate and analyse Muhammad Iqbal's view of the Divine Being, particularly his idea of Divine omnipotence and Divine omniscience, from a *process* perspective.²²

To begin with, a brief presentation will be given in relation to the central place of God in Iqbal's thought before I set about an exposition of Iqbal's view of God and its various properties, especially as to the elements of omnipotence and omniscience.

4.2 The centrality of God in Iqbal's thought and the importance of intimate convictions

Muhammad Iqbal's lifelong project can be summarised as follows:

the task of restoring God to the public and the private spheres, not in the way it is visualized and enacted nowadays, but in the more subtle and time-tested manner of elucidating the essential relationship between the human and the Divine; reaching for the human heart through his wisdom poetry and, through the medium of his Urdu and English prose, removing obstacles which make it difficult or impossible for the mind to understand (Koshul and Umar, 2010).

As Iqbal sees it, the Qur'an fixes its gaze on the concrete realities of human life and not on mere universals or intellectualism. And therefore, the Islamic God is not a God "in the heavens" or the abstract God of the philosopher's mental activity. As Iqbal remarks, "... A mere intellectual belief in God does not count for much in Islam." Rather, asserts Iqbal, "... The wisdom of Islam consists in exploiting the idea of God in the interest in Man" (Iqbal, 2006). As will be seen

²² It is important to bear in mind that to understand Iqbal's God conception purely from a process-perspective, is to lose sight of Muhammad Iqbal's deeply Qur'anic influence, which has certainly shaped his reflections on our present subject matter.

during the development of this thesis, Iqbal's God is of pragmatic character, which is intimately related to the earthly life. Furthermore, for Iqbal, the existence of God, the reality of the self, its freedom and immortality, forms the kernel of Islamic faith (Enver Ishrat Hasan in Ruzgar, 2002). Even a cursory examination of Iqbal's poetic and prosaic works reveal the centre of his thought, i.e., God. God is so to speak the "lifeblood" of his integralist and synthetic system of thought. In order to understand Iqbal's system of thought, the first and foremost element that needs to be understood is his God concept, from which we can derive a vision of "Islamic humanism" characterised by elements such as human individuality, its freedom and innate dignity, and a humanistic state model.

Mostly, Muslim theologians and scholars have directed insufficient attention to the idea of God in which one believes, and how our thought-patterns are influenced by a specific concept of God we sincerely hold. According to Iqbal, Islam, as a mode of behaviour and a civil society (Iqbal 2012, 123), also bases the edifice of life on belief in The Divine Being. Since human character and conduct of life depends deeply on our convictions, i.e., the conviction regarding the nature/concept of God, His power, His relationship with human beings and the natural world, the meaning of Divine guidance and the place of humanity in the universe, we need to direct following questions:

- Do our images of God, The Divine Self, encourage the realisation of "universal humanity"²³? Or, do they promote and generate sectarianism/fragmentation?
- Do beliefs in God encourage justice, equality, solidarity, freedom and the protection of humans' innate dignity or does belief in God inspire hatred and ill will towards "the Other"?
- Is God portrayed as a Creator who works through coercive, unilateral power (leaving no room for creaturely agency) or through persuasion and mutual partnership?
- Finally, yet importantly, do our concepts of God create a humanistic outlook of life or a ritualistic one?

The abovementioned questions call for, in our present climate of growing "crusade mentality" rising in Western circles and the Muslim fundamentalists' willingness to plant, in the name of "authentic" Islam, a state based on Sharia laws with punishments that goes diametrically against the fundamental human rights and human dignity, adequate responses *within* Muslim

²³ ...To realize this essential unity of mankind as a fact in life by demolishing all barriers which stand between man and man (Iqbal 2012, 75).

communities. An in-depth study of these questions will take us far afield. I will in the succeeding chapter mainly direct my attention on the last question, slightly modified and specified.²⁴

I will now move on to the next section in which Iqbal's concept of God will be analysed and explored.

4.3 The idea of God

The conception of God developed by earlier Muslim thinkers revolved around classical theism, formed by the Hellenistic philosophical heritage. The Greek philosophy wielded tremendous influence on the minds of scholastic theologians, but, as Iqbal puts it in his book *The Reconstruction*, "it [Hellenistic philosophy], on the whole, obscured their vision of the Qur'an" (Iqbal 2012, 3, *sic*). Furthermore, by approaching the Qur'anic text under the spell of Greek philosophy, the earlier generations of Muslim scholars failed to perceive that the "spirit of the Qur'an was essentially *anti-classical*" (ibid. emphasis added).

One of the chief reasons for Iqbal's categorical rejection of Hellenistic philosophy, particularly Neo-Platonism, and the Aristotelian concept of a fixed/rigid universe, rests in his insistence on the material world as a *de facto* reality, and the universe being dynamic and liable to expansion. The metaphysical position of Neo-Platonism abnegates the reality of human beings (finite egos). On the other side, the Aristotelian idea of a predetermined universe negates the very idea of novelty and freedom. Iqbal, by undertaking a discussion of the essentials of God conception, makes a clear demarcation line against the aforementioned stance, and utilises, as with Christian process thinking, the model of "becoming/event"²⁵ instead of substance-based categories. However, as I will explain, Iqbal still is traditional in the sense that he retains the property of Divine Immutability (changelessness).

²⁴The second research question I have posed is the following: Does Iqbal's God-model allow us to theorise and develop a humanistic concept of an Islamic state?

²⁵ Iqbal's notion of a dynamic reality, and an expanding universe bear a resemblance to the model formulated by the Islamic philosopher and theologian Mulla Sadra (1572-1640), who also endorses the categories of "events" instead of inflexible substances. For Sadra, "...everything in the universe is in a constant process of becoming-in-permanent flux. For him, there are no fixed or finished "things" (Ruzgar, 2002).

4.3.1 God as Individual

Depicting God as an “individual” might qualify Iqbal, in the eyes of the orthodox Ulamas (scholars), as a heterodox of the highest degree. For, does not the identification of God, the infinite, as an individual connote finitude, thus comparing God, “the incomparable” to His creatures? Such a depiction is not groundless, for Iqbal finds evidence from the Qur`anic scripture of God`s personality/individuality/egohood. In chapter III “The conception of God and the meaning of prayer”, we note the following assertion:

...In order to emphasize the individuality of the Ultimate Ego the Qur`an gives Him the proper name of Allah, and further define Him as follows: `Say, Allah is One; All things depend on Him; He begetteth not, and He is not begotten; And there is none like unto Him (112: 1-4) (Iqbal 2012, 50).

To Iqbal, the characterisation of God as an individual is “one of the most essential elements in the Qur`anic conception of God”²⁶ (Iqbal 2012, 51). Since God is an individual, or, in Iqbal`s terminology, “the ultimate Ego”, He cannot be conceived as an impersonal, formless cosmic force. To interpret God as an individual does not imply moulding God after the image of Homo sapiens, it rather connotes an acceptance that life is not a “formless fluid, but an *organizing principle of unity*” (Iqbal 2012, 58, emphasis added). The unity of God (Allah) is demonstrated in the Qur`anic verses cited above. The first verse which states, “Say, Allah is One”, is worthy of clarification.

In the Qur`anic terminology, the word “Ahad” (One) signifies unity and wholeness. That Allah is One represents God`s “ahadiyya”, the property of Oneness, i.e., integrity and self-consistency. According to Iqbal, God is the perfect individual, “closed off as an ego, peerless and unique” (Iqbal 2012, 50). This idea precludes the conception of trinity (God is one substance in three persons), and polytheistic tendencies (multiple theological entities). God`s unity is for instance witnessed in the physical realm that exhibits “principles of unity and consistency”. The permanent natural laws are an instance of this oneness, without which the natural laws would have worked in a haphazardly fashion. To reiterate, for Iqbal, God is the ultimate unity, hence the perfect individual, and not some sort of formless, vague or blind force.

²⁶ This is rightly so, because, as we will see in the next chapter, the idea of *individuality* of God is closely connected with the idea of human individuality (human personhood).

Reverting to the question of finitude (if individuality imply finitude), we note an important statement from Iqbal, which is worthy of attention. He maintains that,

...God cannot be conceived as infinite in the sense of *spatial infinity*. In matters of spiritual valuation mere immensity counts for nothing... Modern science regards Nature not as something static, situated in an infinite void, but a structure of interrelated events out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time... Space and time are possibilities of the Ego [God], 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 spatial infinity nor finite 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 (Iqbal 2012, 52, emphasis added).

Stated differently, God is finite in relation to “spatial extension”, and infinite in the sense of His infinite possibilities and/or potentialities of “creative acts”. Laconically, God is immanent as well as transcendent. The position Iqbal takes on this issue will be discussed upon in later sections of the chapter. Let us proceed to the next attribute in Iqbal's understanding of the Divine conception.

4.3.2 God and creativity

The other central attribute of God, is the property of creativeness. What is the creative method of the Divine entity? Is God a mere “spectator” in relation to the universe? Is the creation a past outcome, or a mere fortuity in the life of the Divine being, which has no relationship whatsoever to Him? A broad exposition of the property of creativity and its various dimensions is not possible in this thesis. My aim is only to throw light upon some of the salient features of Iqbal's rendition.

According to Iqbal, the “real question” which we need to furnish an answer to is the following: «Does the universe confront God as His “other”, with space intervening between Him and it?» (Iqbal 2012, 52). Iqbal also poses another question worthy of attention: «In what matter does the creative activity of God proceed to the work of creation? » (Iqbal 2012, 54).

As regards the first question, for Iqbal's person, there is no creation and event, from Divine point of view, which have a “before” and an “after”. The universe and the creation cannot be considered as an independent, ontological reality confronting God as His “other”. The categories of “before” and “after”, are so to say “introduced” by God by bringing the universe into existence and, which the human mind, for pragmatic exigencies, breaks up into a

plurality of “space”, “time”, and “matter” on the “free creative energy of God”. Therefore, the world of matter is not a stuff “co-eternal with God, operated upon Him from a distance as it were. It is, in its real nature, *one continuous act...*” (Iqbal 2012, 52-53, emphasis added). What we call man’s spatio-temporal order (nature) is only a passing moment in the life-history of God. Or, in Iqbal’s words, the “*self-revelation of the Great I am*” (Iqbal 2012, 57, emphasis added). Hence, the universe is not a “thing” occupying a vacuum but an “act” of the Divine Self. Thus, matter does not present itself as a confronting “other” to God in the same way it confronts as regards human entities (finite egos), which the human mind is cognisant of (as a manufactured article) but do not create.

Turning to our second question (the mode of Divine creativity), Iqbal mentions the atomistic theory of the Ash`arite theological school, regarded as an orthodox and popular school in Islamic history. According to the Ash`arite thinkers, the world is composed of “*jawàhir*” (immeasurably small units monads). And because the mode of God’s creativity activity is incessant, the amount of atoms cannot be regarded as limited. The monads of Ash`arite theory are neither material nor permanent. Their existence is only a fleeting existence, which comes into being and is then annihilated by the will of the Divine Being, hence their idea of a constantly expanding universe (Iqbal 2012, 55). Moreover, another aspect of this atomistic theory of perpetual creation presupposes the element of accident. As Iqbal remarks, “if God ceases to create the accidents, the atom ceases to exist as an atom” (Iqbal 2012, 56). This idea excludes the category of “permanence”, that there is no element of permanence in nature, i.e., fixed laws of nature.²⁷ Following this line of thinking developed by Ash`arites theologians, the law of causality becomes null and void since their atomistic theory of continuous creation negates the objective validity of causation in the spatio-temporal system. This model also gives rise to the idea of “special Divine action”, i.e., God intervening in the human world in order to manifest His power and absolute will (miracles), thus Divine actions transcending categories of “creation” and “conservation”.

Muhammad Iqbal, while considering the Ash`arite model as a “genuine effort to develop on the basis of an Ultimate Will or Energy a theory of creation...” (Iqbal 2012, 56), which is closer to the letter and spirit of the Qur`anic point of view (a universe liable to growth) rather

²⁷ Mouhanad Khorchide, a German Muslim theologian and director of the Centre for Islamic Theology at the University of Münster, explains the element of accidents thus: Because God, in His infinite creative power, upholds and sustains the world through His repeated activity of adding and annihilating, fire, for instance, do not possess the property of burning because God at every moment creates anew the substance of “burning” (Khorchide 2015, 26).

than the Aristotelian notion of a “fixed universe”, notes its rationalistic deficiencies (ibid.). One of the important responsibilities of future Muslim thinkers is, according to Iqbal, to improve the speculative theory of Ash`arites, and to “bring it into closer contact with modern science...” (ibid.).²⁸

As we have seen, Iqbal, as with process thought, turns down the Aristotelian idea of a closed universe, and embraces a more Whiteheadian²⁹ view of the universe and reality. If the universe is still in “becoming”, how does that relate to God’s knowledge? Is God’s knowledge unchanging, or evolving according to the ongoing creative actualisations of future possibilities?

What will come next – the notion of Divine omniscience – is, alongside Iqbal’s view of Divine omnipotence, one of the most common features between Iqbal and process thought (Open Theism).

4.3.3 God and omniscience

In classical theology and theism, God is conceived as omniscient being. This idea indicates that God has total knowledge and/or full awareness in advance of all that would actualise and occur. Described in a different manner, God has an unchanging knowledge of past, present and the future, viewing the whole of reality gathered up in a single, all-encompassing vision; a super-eternal “now”. Muhammad Iqbal finds it difficult to accept the notion of Divine omniscient, as understood orthodoxly. He is closer to the process vision of Divine omniscience, articulated by leading Christian process thinkers such as Marjorie Suchocki, Monica Coleman, David Ray Griffin, John Cobb and Bruce Epperly. If omniscient (Divine knowledge) entails “a single indivisible act of perception which makes God immediately aware of the entire sweep of history, regarded as an order of specific events, in an “eternal now” then, this, according to Iqbal, indicates a “closed universe, a fixed futurity, a predetermined, unalterable order of specific events which, like a superior faith, has once for all determined the directions of God’s creative activity” (Iqbal 2012, 62-63). If we accept the notion of the Divine Will as dependent on an order of specific predetermined events, would not then such a notion be antithetic to God’s living incessant creative activity? If God’s knowledge and awareness is total and perfect, how can human beings add and contribute

²⁸ To my mind, Ghulam Ahmed Parwez is one of the most radical natural-law Muslim thinkers in the history of Islamic thought. His magnum opus, *Islam: A Challenge to Religion* (First Ed. 1968), testifies to a “theistic-naturalistic” world-view, in concord with much of the modern scientific developments and its world-view

²⁹ The Whiteheadian position views the reality as a dynamic process, in terms of creative transformation (transmutation), and the creative flux and change which is the essence of the universe.

to the ongoing development of the human species and the cosmos? Would not the idea of God's perfect omniscient, and, by implication, the notion of predestination, subvert man's power of initiative and our position as dynamic contributors in the spatio-temporal order? If our actions and lives are fully known and determined by God, then, in the words of Epperly, "...our experience of creativity and freedom are ultimately a sham, since all of our actions are already known...decided by God" (Epperly 2011, 36). Divine omniscience, according to Iqbal, does not imply a timeless vision of the futurity in its actuality (complete knowledge about what will happen in the future). On the contrary, God knows the actual (the existent) as actual, while the future exists as possibilities to be actualised. Iqbal asserts, "The future certainly pre-exists in the organic whole of God's creative life, but it pre-exists as an open-possibility, not as a fixed order of events with definite outlines" (Iqbal 2012, 63). Engaged with the notion of Divine knowledge, Iqbal provides an illustration. He goes on to assert:

... Suppose, as sometimes happens in the history of human thought, a fruitful idea with a great inner wealth of applications emerges into the light of your consciousness. You are immediately aware of the idea as a complex whole; but the intellectual working out of its numerous bearings is a matter of time. Intuitively all the possibilities of the idea are present in your mind. If a specific possibility, as such, is not intellectually known to you at a certain moment of time, it is not because your knowledge is defective, but because *there is yet no possibility to become known...* (Iqbal 2012, 63, emphasis added).

In other words, God does not know the future in its complete actuality. God does not fully know what the result of any specific event or encounter will be in its totality until it materialises and unfolds wholly in the future.³⁰ The knowledge of the Divine evolves and "grows" in relationship to the ongoing evolution of the universe.³¹ This idea echoes the process theistic vision of God's knowledge. As David Ray Griffin and John Cobb states, "...to say that God is omniscient means that in every moment of the divine life God knows everything which is knowable at that time" (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 47). And because the concrete actuality is a state of constant flux and becoming, hence the birth of novel and unforeseeable occurrences, "...God's knowledge is dependent upon decisions made by the worldly actualities" (ibid.). Iqbal mirrors the same notion when stating that, "...if history is regarded merely as a gradually revealed photo of a

³⁰ On this point, Iqbal's understanding resembles the position of Mutazilitè. According to their position, God does not know man's decisions before they are selected by man himself. God's foreknowledge includes everything except human decisions and actions, which God knows only in the moment they are actualised (Bektovic 2012, 58).

predetermined order of events, then there is no room in it for novelty and initiation” (Iqbal 2012, 63). Nevertheless, if a specific possibility or future-knowledge is not known by God at a definite moment of time, then this does not signify God’s “defective omniscient”. Rather, it only means, according to Iqbal, that there is yet no future-knowledge to be known because the future events are still in “becoming” and not wholly settled series of actuality. Such a conception of omniscience does justice to the elements of spontaneity, creativity and novelty inherent in the make-up of finite egos, which is “a fact of actual experience” (ibid.). If the future were predetermined at a higher cosmic level by God then novelty, creativity, human freedom and spontaneity of life would be oxymoronic. The human person would have been reduced to a fully determined entity, machinelike. Is Iqbal suggesting that God voluntarily circumscribes His scope of foreknowledge of future encounters in order to let freedom exist? This, then, tend to make omniscience a matter of possessing a “quality” or “potential” to know rather than having specific foreknowledge.

Another aspect of the idea of omniscient is related to the doctrine of teleology. Even though Iqbal disagrees with the traditional notion of divine omniscience, he still retains the teleological character of Reality. The question to be posed is: what does teleology signify for Iqbal?

In order to answer the proposed question, we need to look at Iqbal’s notion of time. There is no denying of the fact that Iqbal has been influenced by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, but this is partly true. There exist some significant differences between Bergson’s understanding and Iqbal’s view. For both Bergson and Iqbal, “pure time” is regarded as a free creative movement. However, Bergson understands this free creative movement to be non-teleological in character, on the ground that teleology renders time unreal (Iqbal 2012, 43). If teleology denotes the disclosure of a plan in view of a “predetermined end or goal”, it does render time artificial and unreal. In Iqbal’s words, “...it reduces the universe to a mere temporal reproduction of a pre-existing eternal scheme of structure in which individual events have already found their proper places, waiting, as it were, for their respective turns to enter into the temporal sweep of history” (ibid.). Put differently, if the portals of the future are closed to reality, then the worldly order of events is rendered as mere “imitation of the eternal mould”. If teleology signifies rigid determinism or fatalism, it leaves no ambit for freedom, neither Divine nor human. Furthermore, by implication, such a temporal order is not worthy of autonomous actualities (human agents), it is only a stage on which “puppets are made to move by a kind of pull from behind” (ibid.). Such a doctrine of teleology certainly reduces human beings to mere

spectators, and robs them of their freedom, novelty and capacity for original action, giving rise to apathy and lethargy on the stage of human history. Iqbal categorically denies this idea, and furnishes an unorthodox understanding of teleology, which differentiates between the categories of “purpose” and “destination”. Muhammad Iqbal asserts that,

The world-process, or the movement of the universe in time, is certainly devoid of purpose, if by purpose we mean a foreseen end- a far-off fixed destination to which the whole creation moves. To endow the world-process with purpose in this sense is to rob it of its originality and its creative character. Its ends are terminations of a career; they are ends to come and not necessarily premediated. A time-process cannot be conceived as a line already drawn. *It is a line in the drawing – an actualization of open possibilities...* To my mind nothing is more alien to the Qur`anic outlook than the idea that the universe is a temporal working out of a preconceived plan (Iqbal, 2012, 44 emphasis added).

The above statement makes it clear that for Iqbal, the universe is bereft of any purpose as a foreseen end. Reality is teleological in the sense that “while there is no far-off distant goal toward which we are moving, there is a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of value as the process of life grows and expands” (Iqbal 2012, 43-44). Reality is “purposive” but not fastened to a “specific” goal, which is pulling the world-process unto itself. Therefore, reality is not, as Bergson understands, “a blind vital impulse wholly unilluminated by idea. Its nature is through and through teleological” (Iqbal 2012, 43).

As mentioned in section 4.3, even though Iqbal`s God idea departs significantly from the traditional contention, he stills retains the property of divine immutability. If the Ultimate Ego reveals its incessant creative activity in the temporal order, and, furthermore, if the future exists as an open possibility in the organic whole of God`s creative life, can change then be predicated of God? If yes, then, does change denote imperfectability? Muhammad Iqbal, in order to secure divine immutability, hence divine perfection, distinguishes between what he calls “serial time” and “pure time”. Serial time is a divided into the categories of past, present and future. It is “...the time of which we predicate long and short” (Iqbal 2012, 38). It is an interpretation the human intellect put on the constant creative activity of God. In the spatio-temporal world process (serial time), the human condition and life known to us is “...desire, pursuit, failure, or attainment- a continuous change from one situation to another” (Iqbal 2012, 47). In other words, from finite perspective – the only kind of point of departure known to human entities – change may involve the element of failure, thus imperfection. If we apprehend the divine life after the image of human life, and thus interpret it in the light of our own conscious experience, we may restrict divine life to serial time, hence an anthropocentric representation/interpretation. This will thus give space for failure and, by implication,

imperfection. On the other hand, according to Iqbal, there exist another sphere of time, that is, real time. Real time is not serial time, but "...pure duration, i.e. change without succession..." (Iqbal 2012, 46). And because Iqbal regards God as the whole of Reality or the Ultimate Reality, "...the phases of His life are wholly determined from within." (Iqbal 2012, 47). While on the contrary, the human phases are chiefly outside to us, i.e., we are related to the world-process as a "confronting other". To God, the properties of time and space and nature are His "functions", organically related to God. Expressed in a different way, they are the "habit of Allah" (Iqbal 2012, 45). As such, God lives in another time order, Divine time, which is "...free from the quality of passage, and consequently does not admit of divisibility, sequence, and change" (Iqbal 2012, 47). Reverting to the question, that is, does change denote Divine imperfection, Iqbal, on the account of God being the whole of reality and His phases being determined from within, states categorically that,

...change, therefore, in the sense of a movement from an imperfect to a relatively perfect state, or vice versa, is obviously inapplicable to His life. A deeper insight into our conscious experience shows that beneath the appearance of serial duration there is true duration. The Ultimate Ego exists in pure duration wherein change ceases to be a succession of varying attitudes, and reveals its true character as a continuous creation...To the Creative Self change cannot mean imperfection. The perfection of the Creative Self consists, not in a mechanistically conceived immobility... it consists in the vaster basis of His creative activity and the infinite scope of His creative vision. *God's life is self-revelation, not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached.* The "not-yet" of man does mean pursuit and may mean failure; *the "not-yet" of God means unfailing realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process* (Iqbal 2012, 48, emphasis added).

To recapitulate, since God lives in pure duration (Divine time), and this universe is His creative self-expression and not the "pursuit of an ideal to be reached", or a confronting "other", He is immutable. God's "I-amness" or His essence is "...independent, elemental, absolute" (Iqbal 2012, 44). Put differently, serial time and space are the creative functions of God, i.e., God's habit/character. The Divine Being is expressing itself by creating the world of time and space, but is not that time and space *per se*.³² However, it should be noted that Iqbal's treatment of the concept of time is not a "settled issue". There are various aspects of his discussion which are still inadequately addressed. One concrete example I noticed involves the categories of "purpose" and "destination". As written above, for Iqbal, pure duration is purposive but not connected to any destination (destination-bound). The question to be asked is how can our finite outlook conceptualise the category of purpose by subtracting the element of destination? Can

³² The relationship between what we call nature and God is organic, and makes Iqbal an *immanentist*. But, it is also important to note that Iqbal is equally *transcendentist* as he sees no contradiction between the attributes of immanence and transcendence. This position will be considered in later sections.

purpose exist without a goal, or *vice versa*? It is not possible in my thesis to expand on this specific topic of philosophical nature.

As we have seen, Iqbal is breaking sharply with the classical theistic interpretation of God's omniscience, which portrays God both as knower of the visible as well as the invisible (a position that, according to Iqbal, gives rise to doctrine of rigid determinism and violate the principle of free-will).³³ Whereas the human being is cognisant of the visible only (through discursive knowledge) and not the unseeable, due to its inability to transcend the divisible time (past, present, or future). Since God surpasses the divisible time, therefore, to Him there is only an "eternal now/present" (Parwez 1971, 20-21). Hence, we, the planetary beings, only know what the future holds as the future becomes our present moment. Divine omniscience does not limit future free actions in any way because the finite human entity is capable of employing his power of freedom to change his decisions. God knows that I will do x or y tomorrow, but He will in no way choose for me when more than one course of action (realisable possibilities) are open to me.

On the topic of God's omniscience, Iqbal may have reconstructed it somewhat more extensively than other scholars of Islam would care to acknowledge. However, let us put Iqbal's reflections on this point in their right context. As explained in chapter 3, Iqbal was writing and lecturing in an age where Muslim peoples were under the powerful yoke of Western colonialism and Hindu dominance on the one hand, and the Muslim priests and their ossified, imitational thinking on the other. He also spoke to middle class Muslims at a historical point of time when they were awakening out of their dogmatic slumber towards vigorous political action to secure their own distinct identity, on the basis of their religious and cultural heritage. Moreover, the "radical" interpretation of God's omniscience not as something "settled" but something in "becoming" suited the temper of the educational elite; an interpretation which paved the way for man's active role on the stage of world history.

The notion of Divine omniscience is intimately connected with the attribute of divine omnipotence. If, following Iqbal's line of reasoning, the future exists as an open possibility in the organic whole of God's life (a line in becoming), then, this signify a limitation. And, furthermore, how can we reconcile limitation with God's omnipotence?

The next section deals with the important aspect of omnipotence.

4.3.4 God and omnipotence

For Muhammad Iqbal, the express purpose of his *Reconstruction* has been to “...secure a vision of the spirit of Islam as emancipated from its Magian [non-Islamic] overlayings...” (Iqbal 2012, 114, *sic*). As has been stated in section 4.2, God is the “lifeblood” of Iqbal’s reformist ideas. Therefore, without getting the big picture of Iqbal’s God vision, it will obnubilate the “the humanistic spirit of Islam”, which is reflected through a reconstructed and to some extent novel interpretations of the various properties of Iqbal’s God. Discussing the idea of the Divine Being from a Christian point of view, Whitehead supposed that “...traditional Christian theology took a tragic turn when it chose Caesar over Jesus...” (Whitehead in Epperly 2011, 38). Furthermore, he goes on to assert, “...But the deeper idolatry, of *the fashioning of God in the image of the Egyptian, Persian, and Roman imperial rulers*, was retained” (*ibid.* emphasis added). That the imperial layers contorted the image of the Islamic God was for Iqbal evident. His task was therefore to desquamate the hard crust of this monarchical growth in order to restore the original image of God, and hence the image of Islam as a message to humanity.

As will be examined in this section, Iqbal’s interpretation of Divine omnipotence takes a different route than the more hard-line traditionalists. The conventional theistic understanding of divine power states that “nothing happens apart from divine determination or permission, even that which appears to be contrary to God’s will for humankind and the world” (Epperly 2011, 53). In some other words, God is portrayed as the Ultimate Controlling Power (*id est*, God controls every single detail of the world’s causal process). According to the traditional theistic image of God, Divine power is both *unlimited* and *unilateral*, which, as a consequence, brings about the notion of “pot and the potter”, *i.e.*, the Divine entity can exercise unlimited power divorced from its effects on the existence of human species or creation as such (blind omnipotence). God’s creation is thus portrayed as helpless, fragile and insignificant in front of the awesome and perilous powers displayed by an all-powerful theological entity. If this is what is meant by love, then, states Epperly, “...this is not love, but narcissism and objectification, according to process theologians” (Epperly 2011, 40). If everything is decided at a higher cosmic level by God, then there is no possibility of novelty and creativity. This theological view has serious restrictive implications in this-worldly interactions. The injection of new possibilities through creaturely agency is mere pipe dream. Because, says Epperly, “in relationship to the all-powerful and all-determining God, the only possible response is subservience and passivity” (Epperly 2011, 41).

Humankind learns definitions through lived/actual experience. The idea of God as a wilful despot and as exercising unilateral power may have historical antecedents. Briefly stated, man`s notion of God being a capricious and tyrannical power developed under the imperial form of government. Under the monarchic form of organization, the monarchs were mostly tyrannical, vagarious and repressive. The imperial rulers exhibited their capability of power and rule in a whimsical fashion, devoid of order, rhyme or reason. Their dominance over the masses was unilateral, which left no room for mutual partnership. A king could penalise his subjects with no reason other than demonstrating his absolute power and control, that too in an arbitrary way. Human beings brought up in such fortuitous and dreadful environments associated power, control, authority and sovereignty with tempestuousness, irresponsibility and whimsicality – the basic properties of tyrants (Parwez 1989, 161-162). The masses also considered God as a hyperbolized and glorified king – the ultimate representation of an absolute, irresponsible and unaccountable ruler destroying everything in its furious course. We also find similar thoughts in Whitehead. Discussing the topic of the traditional Christian theology and its notion of God as the Controlling Power, Whitehead remarks that, “...The church gave unto God the attributes which belonged to Caesar” (Whitehead in Epperly 2001, 49). In Islamic history, the priests (mullahs) also clothed God with attributes that belonged to kings and monarchs.³⁴ This, thus warped the Qur`anic God. This, briefly speaking, is the anthropocentric God conception that influenced the consciousness of man in more primitive societies of the past, and which, more particularly, still lingers in the collective mind of the Muslims worldwide.

Iqbal, in contrast, considers, on the authority of the Qur`an, Divine omnipotence not as a blind, capricious power without limits³⁵ but as “intimately related to Divine Wisdom (*Hikmah*)”, and finds the infinite power of God “revealed, not in the arbitrary and the capricious, but in the recurrent, the regular, and the orderly” (Iqbal 2012, 64). He goes on to say, “...at the same time, the Qur`an conceives God as holding all goodness in His hands” (ibid.). In other words, the Divine Will does not operate in isolation. Rather, it is an *aspect* of the Divine ego. God`s will, an aspect of His personality, is not destructive and impersonal, but a Will of a God who is good, wise, benevolent and compassionate unto His creative creation.

The next question which arises on this point is: if God`s will is limited, then, how is it

³⁴ “...The clergy propagated the concept of autocracy and hereditary monarchy. They likened kings to *Allah* where both are bound by no law”. (Parwez, 1997).

Mouhanad Khorchide also mirrors the same thought, that the Divine Being of the Quran has for centuries been depicted as a “tribal leader” and needs emancipation, in his interview at the following link: <https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-mouhanad-khorchide-god-is-not-a-dictator>

³⁵ “...omnipotence, abstractly conceived, is merely a blind, capricious power without limits” (Iqbal 2012, 64).

possible to reconcile omnipotence with limitation? The answer to this question is given in the phrase "...Divine omnipotence as intimately related to Divine wisdom" (ibid.). Put differently, the principle of limitation on God is not imposed from outside. Rather, it is, as Iqbal states "...born out of His own creative freedom..." (ibid.). On this point, it is important to distinguish between the domain of inanimate objects and the domain of self-conscious entities (humans), and, furthermore, in which manner God`s power is related to each of these respective domains, from an Iqbalian point of view. To recapitulate, the power of the Divine Ego operates not as a vagarious and haphazardly force, as was exerted by human imperial rulers, but rather is manifested in a systematic, orderly, and loving way. From an Iqbalian position, there are two different ways in which God`s will (power) works in the created world.³⁶ He makes a clear distinction between the category of "amr" on the one hand and the category of "khalq" on the other. We note the following important interpretation of the aforementioned terms,

In order to understand the meaning of the word *Amr*, we must remember the distinction which the Qur`an draws between *Amr* and *Khalq*. Pringle-Pattison deplores that the English language possesses only one word- "creation" – to express the relation of God and the universe of extension on the one hand, and the relation of God and the human ego on the other. The Arabic language is, however, more fortunate in this respect. It has two words *Khalq* and *Amr* to express the two ways in which the creative activity of God reveals itself to us. *Khalq* is creation and *Amr* is direction (Iqbal 2012, 82).

To begin with, the aspect of creation (*khalq*) will be considered in relation to the spatio-temporal system:

- (I) In the phenomenal domain, God`s power is expressed as controlling power. This signifies the laws of cause and effect, hence natural determinism. In the natural world (*al-khalq*), all physical objects and beings are bounded by inflexible, immutable, permanent natural laws (*Kalimàt Ullah*). We constantly experience the order, harmony, regularity and structural behaviour exhibited in the external world (*afaq*). As an instance, all of the celestial bodies are moving in their prescribed orbits. The planet Earth revolves around the sun in its gravitational field. The planets run according to set calculations (causal determinism). As the Qur`an says: "...There is no changing in the laws of Allah" (10: 64). Why is this causal

³⁶ it is important to understand that these are not disjointed activities, but rather *expressions* of the same integral activity of the Ultimate Ego.

determinism important? For Iqbal, it is related to the temporal career of the human agent. He argues:

...The ego is called upon to live in a complex environment, and he cannot maintain his life in it without reducing it to a system which would give him some kind of assurance as to the behaviour of things around him. The view of his environment as a system of cause and effect is thus an indispensable instrument of the ego...Indeed in interpreting Nature in this way the ego understands and masters its environment, and thereby acquires and amplifies its freedom (Iqbal 2012, 86).³⁷

Despite possessing unlimited power and freedom, God, through self-limitation, does not suspend or break these set calculations, hence leaving out the notion of “special divine action” in the sense of supernatural intervention in the spatio-temporal order. The edifice of science and the predictions we make in the sphere of natural world is a direct result of the permanence and inflexibility of natural laws.³⁸ God, by these permanent laws, upholds and conserves the world in its being, which gives us sufficient command over our external climate(s) and scope for a meaningful earthly career. This is something we witness with our sensory systems. Said laconically, God`s relation to the natural world is marked by controlling power (*al-khalq*). In one word, the power of God is “constrictive”.

The next aspect is related to the domain of human agents:

- (II) In the sphere of human beings, in which way does God`s power (Will) contribute? Before we set about to examine Iqbal`s views on this important topic, another dimension is deemed as necessary to mention, which is linked to Iqbal`s conception of the finite ego (human being). The human entity is, for Muhammad Iqbal, “a free personal causality” (Iqbal 2012, 86). This signifies the finite ego's partial self-determination. The human being is not a predetermined creature because God has

³⁷ Ghulam Ahmed Parwez mirrors the same understanding when he asserts that, “A lawful and orderly world is the appropriate stage for a rational being like man to play his part and achieve his objects. Man can live purposefully and can fulfil his self only in a world which he can understand and control” (Parwez 1989, 166).

³⁸ The development of quantum mechanics raises some interesting questions as regards causal determinism and indeterminism at the atomic level. Process theology utilises the theories of quantum mechanics in order to put forward their notion that freedom and partial self-determination pervades all existence. As process theologian Marjorie Suchocki states: “Every part of God`s creation has some element of freedom. What we call “freedom” ranges from very low levels of indeterminately random events to very high levels of conscious decision-making” (Suchocki 2003, 7-8).

“...chosen finite egos to be participators of His life, power, and freedom” (Iqbal 2012, 64).³⁹ The essence of this phrase is that God has limited His own omnipotence and/or controlling power in order to confer on man partial autonomy. Freedom of choice is thus the most essential property of human beings, which, in turn, is a condition of moral goodness, according to Iqbalian thought. The element of freedom entails that the human ego can select between “several courses of action open to him” (Iqbal 2012, 68). To select between various modes of action involves the possibility of choosing that which is diametrical to goodness, which is an adventure. Iqbal contends, “...that God has taken this risk shows His immense faith in man; it is for man now to justify this faith” (ibid.). Since the Qur’an is – as demonstrated in chapter 3, Iqbal’s primary sanction of his views, and on the account of him speaking primary from a Muslim standpoint, he refers to the Qur’an in order to strengthen his thesis on the basis of theological proofs. Iqbal states that “...this freedom of conscious behavior follows from the view of ego-activity which the Qur’an takes. There are verses [⁴⁰] which are unmistakably clear on this point” (Iqbal 2012, 87, *sic*). Having thus made clear the autonomy of human agents, we are now capable of understanding the mode of Divine operation in the arena of autonomous humanity.

To repeat, the power of God in relation to the physical world is exercised through controlling force. On the other hand, in the world of free humans, God’s Will takes the form of “amr”, which stands for direction. The Arabic term amr also signify guidance (Parwez 1989, 169-170).

The obvious point is that God works through guidance, and hence cannot – because of the principle of self-imposed restriction – select for the finite ego from among the various courses of action (possibilities) open to her/him. In the domain of finite egos, it is the human will which is the dominating force, not divine power. Iqbal is clear on this point by asserting that, “...God Himself cannot feel, judge, and choose for me when more than one course of action are open to me” (Iqbal 2012, 80). In process terms, God’s influence/power upon human actualities is

³⁹ It is important to note that when Iqbal speaks of the finite ego and her/his partial self-determination, it only covers the domain of man’s “inner life”, i.e., the self/ego/person of the human being. The physical structure of Homo sapiens is no doubt intimately related to the physical laws as any other lower organisms.

⁴⁰ The Qur’an verses Iqbal is pointing towards states: *And say: The truth is from your Lord: Let him, then, who will, believe; and let him who will, be an unbeliever (18: 29). If ye do well unto your own behoof will ye do well; and if ye do evil against yourselves will ye do it (17: 7).*

“persuasive”, not “coercive”.⁴¹ As Cobb and Griffin asserts, “...In other words, God seeks to persuade each occasion toward that possibility for its own existence which would be best for it; but God cannot control the finite occasion’s self-actualization” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 53). By this line of thought, Iqbal precludes the conception of fatalism⁴² altogether, a theological notion which has had a profound, detrimental impact upon the Muslim consciousness.⁴³

Clearly, by viewing and treating God’s power as persuasive in the sphere of human beings has far-reaching temporal implications for the abstraction of God-man relations, and, an equally significant implication in relation to human-to human interaction, both in private and corporate capacity. Cobb and Griffin also visualises the important earthly implications by interpreting God’s power as persuasive rather than cohesive: “...This change has implications in all our relations, from one-to one I-thou encounters to international relations” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 54). The spatio-temporal implications will be dealt with in the next chapter.

We will now move on to the next section, in which I will delineate Iqbal’s own position regarding the doctrines of pantheism and panentheism.

4.4 Pantheistic or Panentheistic God concept?

It requires little effort to interpret Muhammad Iqbal’s God conception as pantheistic through a reading of his early poetical works, in which pantheistic elements lays shattered.⁴⁴ Irfan Iqbal, in his article “Iqbal’s concept of God” (1999), outlines three periods of Iqbal’s intellectual growth. During the earliest phase of Iqbal’s intellectual life (1901-1908), the pantheistic mode of thought was prevalent. In the first phase of Iqbal’s reflection of God, says Irfan, “...God is conceived as Eternal Beauty, the universal Idos (Idea or Ideal) of Beauty...Just like a candle ceases to burn in the presence of the sun, life of this world of matter ceases to exist in the presence of Eternal life” (Iqbal, 1999). The idea of Eternal Beauty is derived from Plato’s

⁴¹ The idea of God’s power operating by *persuasion* is maybe the most essential God aspect in Christian process theology, and also in Iqbal’s process conception of God.

⁴² The doctrine holding that all events in the human realm are predetermined in advance and human entities are powerless to alter their external state of affairs.

⁴³ The doctrine of predestiny will be dealt with in the next chapter.

⁴⁴ An instance in point is Iqbal’s poetical creation *Call of The Marching Bell* (1924).

idealistic philosophy, which regards the Eternal Beauty pervading in all things. Moreover, the idealism of Plato also entails that only Ideas and/or Forms have permanence, the rest is an illusion, a shadow, and an optical illusion, which will evaporate into the Absolute Idea from which it proceeded. In relation to human beings, the outcome of this proposition is that human entities are also reduced to non-entities; devoid of permanence and reality, and, furthermore, will be wholly assimilated into the Absolute Reality, just as a drop merges with the ocean and becomes fully absorbed, thereby losing its identity.

The idealistic pantheistic elements of platonic and neo-platonic thoughts, amalgamated with Persian pantheistic ingredients, were a major influence on early Muslim philosophers. In popular Sufism, the metaphysical doctrine of “unity of being” (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) is central. This doctrine implies that God is the only reality, the necessary Being (Wujud), from which all things emanates. God is the only reality, the rest is an illusion, with no component of reality or permanence, because all that exists is a fleeting shadow (*maya*) of the Real (God). This entails, among other factors, that God and the universe and all that exists in between are identical in nature (hence the wholly immanence of God). The external, physical world is integrated part of God. The same implies for the human entity, as she/he has no reality of her/his own, but is only part and parcel of the Real Being. There is thus no distinction between the Creator and the Creation (Khalil, 1996).

In Iqbal’s *Reconstruction*, which is regarded as the expression of his mature philosophical-theological thoughts, we discover several passages which indicate Iqbal’s rejection of a pantheistic God conception. One of the most lucid rejections of pantheism as an inadequate theological description of the Divine (God as a featureless, cosmic force and wholly immanent), is seen through his comments on the element of light in juxtaposition to God. Iqbal, while citing Lewis Richard Farnell’s⁴⁵ views of God as a “vague, vast, and pervasive cosmic element” (Iqbal 2012, 51) states, “I agree that the history of religion reveals modes of thought that tend towards pantheism; but I venture to think that in so far as the Qur’anic identification of God with light is concerned Farnell’s view is incorrect” (ibid.). The verse which both Farnell and Iqbal are pointing to is as follows: *God is the light of the Heavens and of the earth. His light is like a niche in which is a lamp— the lamp encased in a glass— the glass, as it were, a star* (Qur’an 24: 35). Iqbal agrees with Farnell that the opening sentence of the verse cited above paves the way for an interpretation which is indicative of an “escape from an individualistic

⁴⁵ Lewis Richard Farnell (1856-1934) was an Oxford academic functioning as Vice-Chancellor from 1920-23 and a scholar of classics.

conception of God” (ibid.). But, states Iqbal, when we read the metaphor of light by taking the whole of the scriptural verse into account – something Farnell tunes out – the verse gives us the diametrical picture. Thus Iqbal, “The development of the metaphor is meant rather to exclude the suggestion of a formless cosmic element by centralizing the light in a flame which is further individualized by its encasement in a glass likened unto a well-defined star” (ibid.). Furthermore, Iqbal proposes a new interpretation, both in the revealed literature of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as regards the representation of God as light. Following the view of modern knowledge, especially the teachings of modern physics, which, according to Iqbal, “...is that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded and is the same for all observers whatever their own system of movement” (ibid.), the metaphor of light must indicate the Absoluteness of God, not His Omnipresence, “...which easily lends itself to a pantheistic interpretation” (ibid.). Moreover, while discussing God’s individuality, Iqbal categorically states that, “...space and time are possibilities of the Ego [God], 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...” (Iqbal 2012, 52, *sic*). It is clear from what we have seen that Iqbal does not intend that the Ultimate Ego be regarded as pantheistic, understood as “God is identical to the rational order of the universe (*logos*)” (Kessler 2008, 52), or in Sufi parlance, “Wahdat ul Wujud” (unity of being).

Another dimension of the object under investigation (Idealistic pantheism), known as Sufism/Tasawwuf in the Indo-Pak world, is connected to the human entity. For popular Sufism, the express purpose and felicity for human beings is annihilation with God (*Fana*), or, the absorption in God. This achievement of annihilation into God, by various techniques, entails the elimination of human will, and stipulates personal insignificance in front of the only Real Being. The point of view logically leads to man’s seclusion from the temporal world and its mundane affairs, thus the suppression of our vitality and efforts to shape and reshape our external environments for the betterment of humanity (Khalil, 1996). The otherworldly-oriented mysticism is considered by Muhammad Iqbal as “...a seemingly charming ideal of life which reduces the healthy and powerful to death” (Stepanyants, 1973). As mentioned earlier, Iqbal, during his intellectual career – especially in his early poetical works – was tended to a pantheistic view of existence, which also implies the unreality of human beings, reduced to mere passive conductor of God’s will. He, however, outgrew his pantheistic inclination in his more mature writings (the *Reconstruction* being the climax of his system of thought). One of Iqbal’s most shattering statements opposed to the Sufi doctrine of annihilation of the human

ego, is expressed in the following words, “The end of the ego’s quest is not emancipation from the limitation of individuality; it is, on the other hand, *a more precise definition of it*” (Iqbal 2012, 156-157, emphasis added).⁴⁶ This statement of Iqbal serves as a fruitful point of departure to Iqbal’s panentheistic conception of the Divine Being.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) defines the concept of panentheism in the following way:

Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world. It offers an increasingly popular alternative to both traditional theism and pantheism. Panentheism seeks to avoid either isolating God from the world as traditional theism often does or identifying God with the world as pantheism does (Culp, 2013).

Jay McDaniel⁴⁷, in his article “God with a Spacious Heart: An Introduction to Panentheism” (2016) writes that, “it [panentheism] emphasizes that all things are “in” God, even as God is more than all things added together. It envisions God, not on the analogy of Caesar, but on the analogy of Christ’s own spacious heart (McDaniel, 2016). Furthermore, Epperly states that the gist of process theology’s panentheistic vision of God is, “God in all things, and all things in God” (Epperly 2011, 28). In other words, God is not depicted as the “wholly other”, but rather as the “wholly present one”, “whose existence cannot be contained by the world (ibid.).

Before we proceed, there is one important difference to highlight. As McDaniel notes in his article “Panentheism: The Universe as God’s body” (2015), panentheism is, in his own words, “...a multi-religious option”. By “multi-religious option”, he means that there are various advocates for panentheism, who are working in their own religious contexts, responding to their own belief-systems. Therefore, “you can be a Jewish panentheist, a Christian panentheist, a Muslim panentheism [panentheist]...” (McDaniel, 2015, *sic*).

During the various sections, which present the most central attributes of the Iqbalian God conception, it is made clear that Iqbal perceive God not as wholly immanent – being identical with the universe ontologically – but also transcending the created order (Iqbal 2012, 45, 52, 53, 57, and 62). In other words, Iqbal’s notion cannot be interpreted as pantheistic, because for Iqbal, as Whittemore contends, “...outside God there is no individual, there is nothing...” (Whittemore, 1956). For Muhammad Iqbal, God’s transcendence is such that there

⁴⁷ Jay McDaniel, a philosopher and theologian, works as a professor of Religion at Hendrix Collage. His speciality is process thought, and has written numerous books and articles on the subject. For more information about J. McDaniel, visit the following site: <https://www.hendrix.edu/religion/religion.aspx?id=2945>

cannot exist any ontological entity “apart from” God, that limits His creative activity or Being. Furthermore, Iqbal’s God is neither a deistic God, because the created order is not ontologically separated from God but rather organically related to The Ultimate Self, which is, in Iqbalian terminology, “the partial expression of the Ultimate Ego” (Iqbal 2012, 52). In one word, Iqbal’s God conception is neither pantheistic, nor deistic, but panentheistic – understood by it that the created world is not identical with God, nor separate from God, but in God, who also is more than the sum total of the universe.⁴⁸

Before we proceed, it is noteworthy to mention a criticism by Salman Raschid, a retired British psychiatrist, against the notion of Iqbal’s God. The gist of Raschid’s criticism about Iqbal’s notion of God is related to a finite idea of divinity. Argues Raschid, “...His concept of God is a finite (panentheistic) one...Iqbal’s finite deity cannot be reconciled with the supremely transcendent, but also immanent, God of the Quran.” (Raschid 2010, xvii). Further, the ground for Raschid’s statement for the finite deity of Iqbal’s God consist of “the inclusion of the created order (nature) within the being of the creator (God)” (Raschid 2010, 62). He goes on to assert that “Iqbal’s discussion of God’s ego-hood and infinitude and the divine attributes (creativity, eternity, knowledge and omnipotence) all reinforces his fundamentally finite notion of deity” (Raschid 2010, 63). For Raschid, Iqbal’s notion of God is finite because God includes the created world within His Being. The question to be asked is: if God do not include the created world in His being, then, by implication, the “created world” must ontologically be situated outside God, hence opposed to God. If such be so, then how is it possible to reconcile God’s “infinitude” by this line of reasoning? Moreover, as I have explained, the doctrine of panentheism, from a process perspective, do not signify finitude. On the contrary, it stands for God’s transcendence as well as God’s immanence. That God includes the created world in His Being only reinforces God’s transcendence, not His finitude. A less “embracing” God would be less “infinite”. We need not delve into these subtle issues, which will take us far-off from our primary topic under investigation.

Coming to the relation between the finite and the Infinite entity, Iqbal provides us with a reformed God-human model. According to Iqbal’s understanding of the Qur’anic scripture, the kernel of the book is to make the human being conscious of his multiplex relations with God and the universe (Iqbal 2012, 7). For Iqbalian process thought (as with Christian process

⁴⁸ Parwez also reflects the panentheistic understanding of the Divine. Says he, “In the Qur’an, God is presented as both Immanent and Transcendent. He works in the world as a creative urge and also exists outside it as its ground. He manifests Himself in nature and yet transcends it. He is eternal and yet in the changing world every day a new phase of His glory is presented to our view...” (Parwez 1989, 75).

thinking), God is the Ultimate Ego, and the most creative entity, but not the only one. Thus, by virtue of possessing partial self-determination, the human agent is capable, through his own private efforts, to become God's co-worker. Iqbal is pellucid on this important issue by asserting that, "...man occupies a genuine place in the heart of the Divine creative activity, and thus possesses a much higher degree of reality than things around him. Of all the creations of God he alone is capable of *consciously participating in the creative life of his Maker*" (Iqbal 2012, 58, emphasis added). In order to become a dynamic and creative factor in the life of God, the human being must not release herself/himself from the limitations of individuality so as to submerge in the Divine Being, but, on the other hand, actualise and fortify his creative potentialities and instincts. Because God Himself "...has chosen finite egos to be participators of His life, power, and freedom" (Iqbal, 2012, 64). As Iqbal understands it, the express aim of the human ego is not to *see* something (as was the case in in popular Sufism), but to *be* something. For Iqbal, to be is to *create* and *re-create* by continuous action (Iqbal 2012, 56-57, emphasis added).

This reformed God-man model differs significantly from that of pantheistic and classical theistic model; a model depicting only God as the sole creator and reality, whereas human entities are mere spectators of a spectacular show of creation. Iqbal, by interpreting Divine power as "directive agency" in the domain of human beings, sheds light on the relationship between God and humanity, which is not based on a rigid and frightening master-servant model, but as a dynamic bond in which humanity has a stake in the creative, open-ended advance of the universe (a line in becoming). One of the most important aspects, if not *the* most essential aspect, that need to be challenged by reformist voices in the Islamic world, is related to the projection of God and the image of humanity as found in the Qur`anic scripture, and, furthermore, how these conceptions and ideas unfold on the temporal stage between humans and their environment.⁴⁹

The Iqbalian "reformistic shift" as regards to the relationship of God in juxtaposition with humanity, especially to a state, has far-reaching implications for human beings in their personal and corporeal capacity. I will address some of the salient features of this reformed model in the next chapter.

⁴⁹ Mouhanad Khorchide has in one of his interviews states that "we need an objective, courageous debate within Islam – on the image of God and man in the Koran among other things" (Topcu, 2015).

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have answered one of my proposed research questions through a *process* perspective without losing sight of Iqbal's Islamic standpoint. Muhammad Iqbal departs radically from the more classical interpretations of the Divine attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, interpretations which were more inclined to portray God in the image of dictators marked by unilateralist power, and a perfect Being with unchanging knowledge. I have also argued that Iqbal's conception of God – in his Reconstruction – is neither pantheistic, nor deistic, but panentheistic, understood as God being both immanent and transcendent, a position which does justice to the autonomy and reality of actual entities (human beings).

In the next chapter, I intend to answer my second proposed research question related to Iqbal's conception of an Islamic society inspired by his God reflection.

5 A process-humanistic God concept and the Iqbalian idea of an Islamic state

Introduction

In chapter 4 I advanced some questions as regards the conception of God and its effects on our beliefs and thought patterns. The last question I posed was as following: “Finally, yet importantly, do our concepts of God create a *humanistic* outlook of life or a *formalistic-ritualistic* one?” I then examined Muhammad Iqbal’s reflections on God and His various attributes, especially how God’s power operates in the sphere of the phenomenal world on the one side and in the sphere of human actualities on the other. There are some striking similarities between Iqbalian and Christian process conception of God (particularly in connection with God’s omniscience and God’s omnipotence); commonalities that furnish a fertile ground for cooperation for the betterment and enhancement of planet earth and its denizens. The common features and also some healthy key dissimilarities will be put forward in chapter 6. In this chapter I will take a step further and answer the second posed research question, that is, “does Iqbal’s God model allow us to theorise and develop a humanistic concept of an Islamic state”?

I have divided chapter 5 in three sections. The first section furnishes a brief account of humanism as understood in this thesis. In the second section I set out to explain the term Process-Humanistic God, which provides the basis for the last section dealing with the Iqbalian conception of an Islamic state. Also, in this chapter, I will include the thoughts and reflections of Ghulam Ahmed Parwez more extensively⁵⁰.

5.1 The meaning of humanism in this thesis

The term humanism is multifaceted, and its meanings are legion. Further, every definition of humanism is shaped by historical conditions, places and times, and its uses, which have been related to power structures of various kinds.

We have for instance Christian humanism, which have been developed within the framework of Christian values and principles. Literary Humanism stands for a classical cultural

⁵⁰ As we have seen in chapter 3, Ghulam Ahmed Parwez derived direct guidance from Iqbal’s person in relation to Qur’anic hermeneutics and other fundamental issues as to the vision of an Islamic state. Therefore, in this thesis, Parwez represents an “extension” of Iqbalian reformist ideas.

movement devoted to the humanities. Secular Humanism is a modern non-theistic, atheistic-naturalistic-oriented philosophy, emerged out of eighteenth century enlightenment rationalism, hence its rejection of supernaturalism, “higher morality”, and religious dogmas/doctrines.⁵¹

Because of its diverse expressions and contents reflective of different historical conditions and climates, it is deemed as necessary to clarify and explicate in a straightforward way what the term (humanism) signifies and stands for in this particular thesis.

I will base my understanding of humanism as formulated in Dag Hareid`s⁵² book *hva er Humanisme* (what is Humanism). My selection of the aforementioned book is not based on random choice. As will be shown, the definition of humanism Hareide formulates in his book fits the express purpose of my thesis, in which I intend to throw light on the direction in which contemporary Muslim thought ought to move by furnishing a basis, however slight, for a “holistic reformistic” interpretation of Islam (especially on the image of God and an Islamic state), suited to the temper of existing discourses on Islam in juxtaposition with humanism and human rights paradigm.

Hareide defines the word humanism as it is understood in the modern context, especially how it appears in The Norwegian Constitution and the school`s object clause (Hareide 2011, 11). Humanism, according to the author, contains six cardinal elements: the most fundamental value is the dignity of every member of the human species. He then moves onward to morality (the golden rule), the actualisation of human potentials (pedagogy), democracy (politics), the free and dynamic thought and dialogue (communication) (ibid.). Elaborating on the significance of human dignity as understood by Hareide, he asserts that human dignity transcends the barriers of ethnocentrism, and encompasses humanity *en masse*, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age etc. Furthermore, the dignity and honour of the human person finds its ultimate expression in her/him being “someone” and not “something”. In other words, the human entity is an “end in itself”, thus making collective identity`s such as family membership or citizenship, of subaltern character (Hareide 2011, 12-13). Hareide makes an important differentiation between humanity`s “intrinsic value” on the one hand and human rights paradigm on the other. The author asserts that human rights are judicial principles employed against nation states in order to protect human beings from structural injustice, whereas the innate dignity of the human species exists objectively, irrespective of human rights materialises or not. Put differently, a human being can exist in a society in which the basic human rights are

⁵¹Edwards Fred (1948-) is the director of planned giving for the American Humanist Association and also The Humanist Foundation. *What is Humanism*. http://americanhumanist.org/humanism/what_is_humanism

⁵² Dag Hareide (1949-) is a well-known Norwegian relief worker, author, and an environmentalist.

implemented and protected, but at the same time subjectively feel downgraded. Or, despite being stripped of basic human rights, a human agent may feel her/his dignity being intact (ibid.).⁵³ Nevertheless, human rights are necessary for the safeguarding of human dignity.

Another dimension of Hareide`s interpretation of humanism is related to anthropocentrism. In short, the notion of anthropocentrism - derived from the *homo mensura* sentence – was formulated by the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Protagoras, who asserted that “man (read: the human being) is the measure of all things” (Aas 2011, 25). The image that is affirmed on the basis of the *homo mensura* dictum quickly develops into human arrogance and reductionist attitude towards the planetary life as a whole. For Hareide, humanism does not stand for human entities as the sole denizens of planet earth, or that the human dignity is the only fact to be reckoned with, at the cost of the larger spectrum of non-human species and their well-being. Because humans, and not transcendental, theological powers/entities, are to be considered as the ultimate cornerstones, this perspective easily mutates into an unfortunate view which is bereft of respect and deep concern for other living organisms, and nature in her totality (Hareide 2011, 14).

The Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912-2009), developed a view that runs counter to the longstanding traditional mode of anthropocentrism. He also coined the term “deep ecology”. One of the cardinal principles of deep ecology is that (1) every living entity have an intrinsic value of its own, and hence cannot be considered exclusively in instrumental terms, and, furthermore (2) that no human being have any right to cut down the richness and plurality of planetary creation, except to meet vital human needs (Hareide 2011, 136). The term “vital needs”, according to Næss, implies that human beings can only satisfy their fundamental needs essential for their life on earth (Hareide 2011, 137).

Hareide embraces a version of humanism which not only is human-centred, but a version which expands the circle of our ethical sensibilities with regards to other non-human creatures and the biosphere as well. In other words, this is a humanism which goes *beyond* anthropocentrism.

Christian process thinking, with its relational and contextual approach to human life (interdependence, experience, joy, sorrow, value), also recognises the importance of the kind of humanism which is expressed by Hareide. Epperly argues that,

⁵³ G.A. Parwez had a same understanding, as understood from the following passage: “Man [human beings] can be free although he is confined in a prison cell. On the other hand, though outwardly free, he may have a cramped and inhibited personality” (Parwez 1989, 176, *sic*).

We cannot separate humankind from nature or the environment; we humans are embedded in the environment, both shaping and being shaped by the wider world beyond ourselves. Ecological, environmental, and planetary ethics are essential in our time because of our ability as humans to destroy our own species and threaten planetary life itself in unrepresented ways (Epperly 2011, 114).

Epperly, in order to move beyond the anthropocentric stance held by many humanists and Christians, highlights the following saying of Jesus of Nazareth, “if a man is worth many sparrows then a sparrow’s worth is not zero” (ibid.). What Jesus’ words signify is that non-human entities ought to be treated with respect, by including them in our ethical decision-makings. They are worthy of our concern, and, as sentient organisms, cannot be manipulated or used only for human profit. Non-human species have a rich and complex life of their own with different levels of experience, which ought to enter into our own moral calculations before using them for human benefit. Again, says Epperly, “Species, flora and fauna, are valuable not just because we appreciate their beauty but because they experience some level of joy and sorrow” (Epperly 2014, 8). This means that, for process thinkers, other living beings with sentience (joy and sorrow) likewise have “intrinsic dignity”. Returning to Dag Hareide, he notes that the profound recognition of the interdependence of all life, and the commonalities between *Homo sapiens* and other living creatures, would lead us from human hauteur to respect for the biosphere and its diversity of life (Hareide 2011, 141).

To recapitulate, as have been explicated above, the foundational keys of humanism are as follows: (1) Every member of the human species is endowed with an intrinsic, hence inviolable, dignity, (2) the importance of human rights, (3) humanism, from being purely human-centred, needs to be blended in respect and profound concern for the ecosphere and non-human species, i.e., in addition to humans having intrinsic value, so do other living beings. I have chosen to identify Hareid’s view of humanism as “holistic humanism”.

In what follows we consider the ideas of the process-humanistic conception of God; a term coined by myself.

5.2 Process-humanistic God

Before I set out to explain the key ideas of the process-humanistic God, some thoughts on the general philosophical-ethical ideas of God is deemed as relevant.

Simon Blackburn (1944-), a philosopher, in his book *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*

(2003), discusses in one of his sections (The Death of God) the ethical shortcomings in the conventional, traditional religious precepts accepted as inflexible, unchangeable expressions of the will of God or gods, for all times to come. For Blackburn, to obey God`s commandments solely for the sake of His infinite power and capacity for horrendous penalizations, “would be servile and self-interested” (Blackburn 2003, 15). This, then, tend to hamper the human ability for independent reflection/reasoning of rationalistic-ethical character, on the basis of fear of dreadful punishments by a powerful God, or gods. As Immanuel Kant (1724-1824) points out: to obey a rule purely because of fear of punishment is not true virtue. Rather, humans should act out of *respect* for a rule (ibid.). One of Blackburn`s sayings is seen as relevant regarding the subject in this section. He says, “A more adequate conception of God should certainly stop him from being vindictive old man in the sky (Blackburn, 2003, 15-16). Certainly, a more “adequate” representation of God is demanded; a conception of the Divine not with a “dictatorial” disposition, but rather with a “holistic humanistic” disposition.

In this connection, Mouhanad Khorchide, the Palestinian-German theologian and Professor at Munster University, points out two “model approaches” as to the conception of God and His relationship with humankind.

To begin with, the first model – the instructionist model – projects God, as touched upon in chapter 4, in the image of a restrictive, egoistical, and capricious tribal leader and dictator. Khorchide states, “Many Muslims transfer their idea of a powerful patriarch or an archaic tribal progenitor, who must be obeyed without question and whom they must submit to, to their concept of God” (Khorchide 2014, 59).⁵⁴ Parwez also expresses a similar understanding when asserting that, “Man has conceived God in different ways at different stages of his mental development...In short, God was regarded as a glorified King, or rather as a magnified Dictator. He differed from the earthly dictators only in possessing immensely greater power, and in no other respect (Parwez 1989, 160-161). This transfer of human images of absolute power towards God is part of humanity`s collective archaic experiences, may have originated in the socio-cultural traditions of monarchical societies. Furthermore, by implication, the Qur`an is seen as a manual book, or a set of rigid, ritualistic commands, which many Muslims, because of their very inability to discern for themselves between good and evil, must obey without any room for individual (critical) reflection. In other words, human agency, one of the important

⁵⁴ Parwez, in his book *The Book of Destiny* (1997, English Rendering) deplors that the conventional translations and interpretations of the Qur`anic passages dealing with God`s mode of activity, give rise to a distorted concept of God “who is whimsical, unpredictable, unsystematic and moody. This divine behavior is much like that of earthly absolute monarchs of “*royal disposition*...” (Parwez 1997, 105, emphasis added).

elements in Hareide`s humanistic interpretation, is ruled out.

There is another important dimension of this instructionist model, that is, the *worship* attitude. According to the conventional Muslim thinking, one who fulfils the five pillars of Islam (testimony of the faith, fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, alms-giving), is deemed as a righteous Muslim.⁵⁵ The dominant role of worship in ritualistic sense is transfused in the minds of Muslims because of the projection of God as an absolute ruler who is in need of acknowledgement and glorification. Khorchide avers that, "...God needs divine instructions, regardless of whether they concern religious service or social order, for His glorification. This implies that God would feel hurt or insulted in His glory if people failed to abide by these instructions" (Khorchide 2014, 61). This entails that Muslims must utilise their energy and time in enhancing their degree of worship in order to pander the demands of God. If Muslims neglect the worship in ritualistic sense, then God will feel upset and, as a result of human defective worship, direct His anger unto humans (death, illness, poverty, natural evil etc.) in order to demonstrate His absolute power and almightiness. For Khorchide, there is another model of the Divine, a God whose chief intentions are not the glorification of His being in the form of human rituals and complex ceremonials (a master-servant relationship characterised by unbridled power), but rather the development and welfare of the creation *en bloc*. Thus Khorchide, "...There is a God far greater...*a God whose main focus is not on Himself but on humanity*" (ibid. emphasis added).⁵⁶ It is this God concept – a concept which sees the well-being of humanity and creation as the primary intent and command of the Divine entity – which will be elaborated, and expanded on.

It is believed that one of the last words on the lips of Muhammad ibn Abdullah was, "Allah is the superior companion" (Ahmed 2012, 172). These words throw light upon the concept of God and His relationship with humankind.⁵⁷ There are no clear evidences of Iqbal being cognisant of the words of the prophet cited above, but his conception of God is reflective of a similar understanding. That is probably why Iqbal states that God has chosen human beings to be His "lesser" companions of His "life, power, and freedom" (Iqbal 2012, 64). Further, Iqbal also states in one of his poems that "God created the world, but Adam [humans] made it better

⁵⁵ On this point, Ziauddin Sardar, in this article "Rethinking Islam" (2011), states that the general Muslim population have only an emotional attachment to Islam, and, furthermore, "...has little or no direct relevance to their daily lives apart from the obvious concerns of rituals and worship (Sardar, 2011).

⁵⁶ This notion links with the Abba of Jesus, who leaned toward familial rather than monarchical imagery, and towards intimate familial: Abba not the Roman Pater. At least so believes John Cobb in his book *Jesus' Abba: The God who has not failed* (2016).

⁵⁷ Alfred North Whitehead once asserted that, "*God is the great companion* –the fellow sufferer who understands (Whitehead in Epperly 2001, 56, emphasis added).

–Adam, perhaps, is God’s co-worker” (Mir 2008, 30, *sic*).

As already mentioned, I have coined the term process-humanistic for Iqbal’s reflections on the conception of God. In the following I will provide the ground for the coined term.

5.2.1 Process

In my thesis, the term “process” signifies, *inter alia*, the process notion of God’s changing omniscience; an omniscience in “becoming”. The process approach states that God cannot capture –in one single glance –the entire sweep of history. Stated differently, God knows what are the future possibilities or probabilities, but not what is actual *until* it materialises. Thus, the future is “open-ended”; a line in “becoming”, even for God. From a psychological point of view, this anti-classical theistic version of God’s omniscience is conducive to fright and fear for those believers who find solace and a sense of “protection” in the classical theistic idea that God is supervising the course of our temporal career, hence the tendency to regard life in fatalistic terms, a notion which has moved Muslims towards soul apathy, both personally and collectively. Muhammad Iqbal opposed the fatalistic elements which seeped into the fold of Islam and Muslim history through the pressure of non-Islamic forces. One of the most explicit assertions against the doctrine of fatalism, and, in defence of humanity’s freedom and its creative capability, is as following: “God Himself cannot feel, judge, and choose for me when more than one course of action are open to me” (Iqbal 2012, 81).

Another aspect of the process vision of God is the idea that God does not exert unilateral control in human realm. On the contrary, God’s omnipotence is circumscribed. This limitation is however not externally imposed, but rather, in Iqbal’s words, “born out of His [God’s] own creative freedom” (*ibid.*, *sic*), hence the performance of persuasive power. In process terms, God creates *with* humans. Marjorie Suchocki illustrates this aspect in the following words:

A children’s fable once told about a rivalry between the wind and the sun. Which one would be able to remove the coat of that man down there on the road? The wind thought that it could, and so it blew and blew and blew with great force. Unfortunately, the strength of the wind was such that the man just drew his coat more firmly around himself. Then it was the sun’s turn. The sun just beamed its rays down upon the man until finally he grew quite warm—and removed his coat (Suchocki, 2003).

In other words, in the children’s parable cited above, the wind symbolises “cohesive power”, whereas the sun represents “persuasive power”, which is, in Suchocki’s words, “a far greater power than simply to force the other to do as one wishes” (*ibid.*). From an Iqbalian standpoint, the persuasive power is another description of God’s *amr*; a term I have elaborated on in chapter

4. However, in this chapter and section, we need to expand on the idea of God's *amr*. In Iqbalian terminology, God's *amr* symbolises His "directive agency" (i.e., guiding force). That is, in human world, God's will functions only through persuasion by providing potentialities which can be actualised by the actual entity (in this context human beings). On this point, a natural question arises: in what manner does God's directive agency manifest to humans? From Iqbalian standpoint which is in line with the general Islamic theological viewpoint, the answer is, through Revelation, that is, the Qur'anic scripture. In the Qur'an, we read the following verse: "This is Allah's guidance (*amr*) which He has reveals unto you" (65: 5). And since God's power is restricted in the domain of human actualities, human beings are free to either accept God's guidance or turn away from it. The Divine Ego cannot exert cohesive power so to make humans accept His guidance, God rather leaves humans unhampered in order to determine for themselves in what direction they want to move. On this topic, Parwez avers:

In the world of autonomous egos, on the other hand, it [Divine power] performs the function of guidance. It leaves them free to decide what is best for them, but they are not left to grope in darkness with equal chance of turning to the right or the wrong direction" (Parwez 1989, 168, *sic*).

The kernel of the passage I have just cited is that human beings are not left for themselves, but have been furnished with guidance through the channel of God's *amr*. The next question which must be answered is: What is the fundamental purpose of the Qur'an in this sense? According to Iqbal, the Qur'an is a book comprising "basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis" (Iqbal 2012, 142). Parwez also expresses the Iqbalian thought by asserting that "Din [the Qur'an] offers broad principles which give guidance to man in the adventure of life and which enable him to attain the goal of self-realisation and social welfare" (Parwez 1989, 77, *sic*). Furthermore, the express purpose of the Qur'an is, in Iqbal's own words, to "awaken in man the higher consciousness of his relation with God and the universe" (Iqbal 2012, 131). From an Iqbalian process perspective, we might interpret the Qur'anic scripture as a book containing "potentialities", or, "Divine aims" (the Qur'anic principles as "realisable aims"). This idea needs elaboration: I have explained that for Iqbal, God cannot select for the finite entities between the various courses of action, or range of possibilities. Human agents are free to exercise their power of autonomy and discretion; God's *amr* offers only general guidance. Let us consider the Qur'anic verse 5: 2, which addresses humans to "help one another in the pursuit of the good". This verse, from a process perspective, refers to a "potentiality", which "can" be realised by the actual entity at issue (human being). Put in a different way, God, through the Qur'an, invites the actual entities

towards “creative transformation” by offering potentialities. In Whiteheadian terms, this invitation can be interpreted as “lures for feeling” (McDaniel, 2015). The central idea to note is that this Divine invitation is one possibility among several other possibilities, and, by implication, the human being may choose to actualise among the other possibilities open to it; possibilities which may not be conducive to goodness or welfare. We might find commonalities between Iqbalian process thinking and that of John Cobb and David Ray Griffin. They write that “...God seeks to persuade each occasion towards that possibility for its own existence which would be the best for it; but God cannot control the finite occasion`s self-actualization” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 53). This statement serves as a good point of departure to the next term under investigation.

5.2.2 Humanistic

Alongside the term process stands the word humanistic. They are not to separate “God-models”, but rather interconnected aspects of the reformed Iqbalian God model. It is, however, considered as necessary to explicate these terms in separation.

According to Ali Shari`ati (1933-1977), an Iranian sociologist, Iqbal`s works and thinking pay” careful attention to this world and the material needs of humanity, yet give the human being a heart” (Shari`ati in Sahin, 2010). The “heart” symbolises the importance of human ethics and morality.

Muhammad Iqbal, in his private notebook *Stray Reflections* (2008) states that “...The wisdom of Islam consists in exploiting the idea of God in the interest of Man, and transforming him into a source of power...a mere intellectual belief in God does not count for much in Islam” (Iqbal 2008, 154). This statement of Iqbal is perhaps one of the central things in his entire thought. For the sake of explanation, we might consider the principle of God`s unity (Arabic, *tawhid*): this theological doctrine, from an ontological perspective signifies God`s Indivisibility, hence monotheism. Further, it also points towards the truth about the creational world; the order, uniformity, harmony, its inflexible laws of cause and effect etc. It all signify One power, and not multiple gods, as this will cause disorder because every theological entity will impose their own decisions upon other gods, hence a disarray of divine wills.⁵⁸ But, according to Iqbal, a mere rationalistic-scientific attitude towards God (Gods unity as a point

⁵⁸ In the Qur`anic scripture, we note the following verse: *If there were other gods beside God, there would have been chaos in both, the heavens and the earth. Glorified is Allah, the Lord of Supreme Control, above all that they contrive* (21: 22).

of instance) is not sufficient. And since Iqbal's thought is *essentially* human-centered, he wants to tap the idea of God in the interest of humanity at large.⁵⁹ In his *Reconstruction*, we notice some expressions reflective of Iqbal's understanding as revealed in his private notebook. One of these are, "...loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own *ideal nature*" (Iqbal 2012, 117, emphasis added). This aspect has been stated and elaborated on by Abdennour Bidar (1971-), a French philosopher and writer, in a passage in his article "Muhammad Iqbal" (2010). After commenting about Iqbal's *Reconstruction* as a major philosophical creation "suggesting some foundations for a humanism that Islam and the Western world could share", he goes on to exemplify his views by highlighting Iqbal's humanistic God conception. States Bidar:

...For example, he [Iqbal] knows how to speak of God from a humanistic viewpoint that appeals to a believer of any denomination, Muslim, Jewish, Christian or Hindu, as well as to a non-believer: when he writes that 'loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature', the point of his conception is indeed to underscore the fact that the idea of God is of use to all human beings, whatever their vision of the world, because first of all it refers to a culminating point in human nature and thus, whether it is only symbolic (for the atheist) or real (for the believer) does not make any difference, since in both cases it can enable man to tend towards the highest possibilities of his being (Bidar, 2010).

The phrase "...it can enable man to tend towards the highest possibilities of his being", embodies one of the deepest thoughts in the Iqbalian concept of God, that of humanism. Iqbal's concept of God is humanistic in the sense that it encourages human beings to advance their material and moral life and does not lay emphasis on quietism, passivism, or monasticism, or adherence to rigid rules and regulation. Iqbal's God is, so to speak, a stimulus to action, a moving God to struggle and incessant activity. This is why Iqbal in his preface in *Reconstruction* says above all that "the Qur'an is a book which emphasizes 'deed' rather than 'idea'" (Iqbal 2012). This statement of Iqbal is indicative of his pragmatic approach towards human life, and also to the message of Islam as understood by him from the Qur'an. A good instance of this, perhaps, would be his novel interpretation of God's unity. In his *Reconstruction*, he categorically states that, "the essence of Tawhid, as a working idea, is *equality, solidarity, and freedom*" (Iqbal 2012, 122, emphasis added). By this interpretation, Iqbal turned "faith in God" and belief in "monotheism" as mere theological propositions into

⁵⁹ In W.C. Smith's view, theologically, Iqbal "wrought the most important and the most necessary revolution of modern times". He did this by making God not merely transcendent but also immanent. Elaborating upon this point Smith states, "The revolution of immanence lies in this, that it puts God back into the world. Iqbal's God is in the world, now, with us, facing our problems from within, creating a new and better world with as and through us..." (Smith in Hassan, 2009).

concrete humanistic and social action. This, by extension, can also serve as a criterion of judgement between the right and the wrong forms of belief in God. Thus, a vital and healthy belief in God should generate action, and, as a consequence, transform the lofty humanistic ideals of equality, solidarity, and freedom into living actualities in the world-life of the human species. On the other hand, a concept of God which engenders hatred and animosity towards “the Other”, and reduces humanity’s intrinsic dignity and unity, is to be condemned. This is perhaps why Iqbal wrote in his private notebook that,

Islam is not a religion in the ancient sense of the word. It is an attitude – an attitude, that is to say, of Freedom and even of defiance of the Universe. It is really a protest against the entire outlook of the ancient world. Briefly, it is the discovery of Man (Iqbal 2008, 153),

Thus by this vision, Iqbal throws light on Islam as a humanistic ideal. Therefore, any interpretation which render Islam anti-humanistic and deleterious to human condition—materially and spiritually—cannot be sanctified as God’s invitation towards Himself. Further, by viewing the Qur’anic scripture as an “invitation towards God”, or, in Khorchide’s words, “God calls upon humankind to join Him, to join in His love and mercy...” (Khorchide 2014, 62), we can, on the basis of our free choice, enter into a meaningful relationship with God in the pursuit of a just, viable, economically wise, interconnected and compassionate world. As Parwez affirms, “The Qur’an earnestly appeals to man to work with God in bringing about a world in which justice and goodness are not merely ideals but realities” (Parwez 1989, 76). The first step towards this creative transformation in the spirit of justice and goodness is to freely and voluntarily “opt for God”. What is meant by “opt for God”, is as following: since the Qur’an is a source of God’s intentions, His aims for the creation, therefore, choosing to actualise these aims signify choosing God over other possibilities, which might not actualise that which is beneficial for us as species or for the planet earth as a living organism. The core idea is, however, that God’s power operates by persuasion and not coercion. God’s will invites, not coerces. Parwez is clear on this point:

God does not want to force people to accept His guidance. He has endowed man with the powers of understanding, judgement and free choice. If man makes use of these powers he can understand the Revelation and can profit by the guidance offered therein (Parwez 1989, 135).

It is on the basis of humanity's autonomy and their power to respond to God's invitation that God has chosen human beings as creative agents to manifest His will on earth, i.e., to materialise "God's Kingdom on Earth". In the succeeding section, I propose to look at Muhammad Iqbal's reflections on an Islamic state.

5.3 The Iqbalian idea of an Islamic state

In this section I set about to explore, keeping in mind the coined term "holistic humanism", Iqbal's vision of an Islamic society based on his God conception. An exhaustive examination of Iqbal's reformist ideas in the realm of political and social science will require several volumes. I shall, therefore, have to restrict my undertaking to two points – the general vision of the state and the principle of *ijtihad*. The principle of *ijtihad* is, because of the current streams of political Islamism and their preoccupation with shariah as a legal-formalistic, inflexible and punitive structure, a significant reformistic tool, and Iqbal's view in this sphere could be instructive. Before we proceed, I will make only a few remarks as regards Iqbal's criticism against the three central powers that caused decay and stagnation in the Muslim world, particularly in British India during his times. Iqbal, in his *Reconstruction* contends that Islam is a dynamic and progressive mode of behaviour (derived from his dynamic concept of God). He also describes the early Islamic history, especially the early schools of Laws, as pliable and adaptive to the prevailing environments. However, Iqbal laments that "during the last five hundred years religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary" (Iqbal 2012, 6). Moreover, because of the rapid and extraordinary shifts and developments in various departments of human life and thought, especially brought forth by scientific advancement, fresh points of views have arisen, and, as a consequence, new difficulties have sprung up from the womb of time. Thus expresses Iqbal, "No wonder then that the younger generation of Islam in Asia and Africa demand a fresh orientation of their faith (ibid.). In his paper "Islam and Ahmadism" (2013), Iqbal credits the blame for the intellectual stasis, social backwardness and dogmatic slumber of the Muslim societies to (1) Mullahism (religious priesthood), (2) mysticism and (3) Muslim kings. Let us briefly look into these factors:

- (1) *Priestcraft/Mullah-craft* The Ulema, according Iqbal, played an important role in developing fresh interpretations in the light of advancing thoughts and experiences, however, avers Iqbal, "during the course of centuries, especially after the destruction of

Baghdad, they became extremely conservative and would not allow any freedom of *Ijtihad*, i.e., the forming of independent judgement in matters of law.” (Iqbal, 2013).

(2) *Mysticism*: Iqbal’s coruscating critique of Sufism is directed against those modes of thought which renounces the world of matter and fixes its gaze on the spiritual, and which reckons unitary experience (the liberation from the confines of human individuality) as the ultimate aim of mystic endeavour. Iqbal puts forward that,

The masses of Islam were swayed by the kind of mysticism which blinked actualities, enervated the people and kept them steeped in all kinds of superstition. From its high state as a force of spiritual education, mysticism had fallen down to a mere means of exploiting the ignorance and credulity of the people (ibid.).

In addition, the methods of medieval mysticism, says Iqbal, “...far from reintegrating the forces of the average man’s inner life, and thus preparing him for participating in the march of history, it has taught him a false renunciation and made him perfectly contented with his ignorance and spiritual thralldom” (Iqbal 2012, 148-149). This kind of other-worldly mysticism, according to Iqbal, is anomalous to the spirit of Islam which aims at the capturing of the world of matter and not a flight from it. Iqbal states categorically that “it is [otherworldly mysticism] an alien plant in the soil of Islam” (Iqbal in Parwez 1989, 119, *sic*).⁶⁰

(3) *Kingship*: The last agent for the degeneration of Muslim societies is the dynastic kingdoms, whose sole purpose was “fixed on their own dynastic interest, and so long as these were protected, they did not hesitate to sell their countries to the highest bidder” (Iqbal, 2010).

It is because of these internal agents of decay, stasis and social crisis that Iqbal, after a critical scrutiny of Muslim collective evolution, asserts, “It is only a superficial observer of the modern world of Islam who think [s] that the present crisis in the world of Islam is wholly due to the working of alien forces” (ibid.). Put in a different way, instead of glorifying and romanticising the past achievements and advancements of followers of Islam, or pin the blame on Western colonial agents for the intern crisis, Iqbal wanted the Muslim masses to be cognisant of the

⁶⁰ Parwez also echoes the same Iqbalian understanding by stating that, “To believe in a God Who has created a world which should be shunned is derogatory both to God and man (Parwez 1989, 186, *sic*).

various internal factors which brought them to a state of stalemate and backwardness, culturally, ethically, sociologically and politically. For Iqbal, the only way to out of this unhealthy condition, beset with myriad of difficulties which suppressed the dignity of Muslims, their healthy instincts, and potentialities, was to reinterpret, reform and reconstruct the religious thought in Islam in a pragmatic, rational, humanistic and time-tested way. That is, a reinterpretation, reconstruction and reformation of Islamic thought suited to the modern temper by emphasising the value of *ijtihad* and the core values of Islam deduced from the Qur'anic scripture.

As enunciated earlier, for Iqbal, the religious ideal of Islam is organically related to a social order. Mustansir Mir notes, "The organic relationship between the abstract and the ideal and its institutional embodiment necessitates that an effort be made to translate that ideal into social reality, but also that the social reality be monitored in order to evaluate its conformity with the ideal" (Mir 2008, 140). The important question to ask is: *What are the essential component of Iqbal's vision of Islam as a religio-social polity?* What follows is more or less a concentrated examination of the salient features of Iqbalian reformist ideas as regards the state and the principle of law-making.

In the contemporary world, especially in the West, the term "Islamic state" almost instinctively connotes the implementation of punitive-oriented, sanctified Sharia laws based on religious interpretations out of touch with modernity and its main features as human rights, democratic principles as elected representatives and humanism. This unhealthy and fearsome development is brought forth by the emerging Islamist movements in various quarters of the world; the adherent of these movements depict their own version of Islam and Islamic state as the most authentic and purest representations of the message of God.

We are already cognisant of the central position of Iqbal's notion of God, which I have defined as process-humanistic. Moreover, according to Iqbal, a mere intellectual or academic belief in God does not count for much in Islam. The idea of a Creator needs to be tapped in the interest of human species; in our case, related to a Muslim state and the principle of law-making. Chapter 6 in his *Reconstruction* is, possibly, the most important chapter dealing the practical implications of his God idea. The Iqbalian concept of God's unity (*tawhid*) plays a central role for our object under investigation: we have briefly looked into Iqbal's interpretation of God's unity, which, in its pragmatic nature, denotes humanistic ideals such as equality, solidarity and freedom. Further, since the religious ideal of Islam is organically related to a social order, the idea of Islamic state is, according to Iqbal, "an endeavour to transform these ideal principles

into space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization” (Iqbal 2012, 122-123). This ambition, to actualise the broad humanistic principles, is coined by Iqbal as “spiritual democracy”. States Iqbal: “Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that *spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam*” (Iqbal 2012, 142, emphasis added). The Iqbalian concept of an Islamic state based on spiritual democracy needs unpacking. Let us firstly examine his idea of (early) Islamic democracy:

5.3.1 Early Islamic democracy

In his paper “Political ideal in Islam” (1908), Iqbal traces historical facts to show that the structure of Islamic law and ethics is grounded on the ideal of human individuality. He asserts, “...anything which tend to repress the healthy development of individuality is quite inconsistent with the spirit of Islamic law and ethics (Iqbal, 1908). In addition, he also shows how the earlier Islamic Caliphs were elected by the people, and if found incapable in their capacity to materialise the principles of equality before the law, human freedom, and election, could be forfeited by the masses. Hence states Iqbal, “...the Muslim Commonwealth is based on the absolute equality of all Muslims in the eye of the law. There is no privileged class, no priesthood, no caste system” (ibid.). Iqbal also illustrates that during the days of earlier Islamic societies (the seventh century), the Caliphs, according to the Qur’anic advice of mutual consultation in political matters⁶¹, constantly consulted “...the more influential companions of the Prophet in judicial and executive matters.” (Iqbal, 1908). Moreover, after examining the principle of election and how the functionaries were elected and deposed during the inception of the Muslim state, Iqbal states the following:

It is clear that the fundamental principle laid down in the Qur’an is the principle of election; the details or rather the translation of this principle into a workable scheme of Government is left to be determined by other considerations” (ibid.).

All this evinces, for Iqbal, that the modern notions of democracy (political freedom, principle of election, mutual consultation, equality before the law) are integral in Islam as a political ideal. It is on the basis of the historical evidences and his readings of the Qur’anic scripture that

⁶¹ ...and who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation. (Qur’an 42:38)

Iqbal, in his paper “Islam as a political and moral ideal” (1909) asseverates: “Democracy, then, is the most important aspect of Islam, regarded as a political ideal...the idea of which is to let man develop all the possibilities of his nature by allowing him as much freedom as possible” (Iqbal, 1909). John Esposito⁶², in his article “Muhammad Iqbal and the Islamic State” (1983), probes into various features of Iqbal’s theological-philosophical and political interpretations of an Islamic state. About democracy, he contends the following:

Iqbal’s central emphasis upon equality and brotherhood led to his conclusions that democracy was the most important political ideal of Islam. For this form of government (rooted in the Islamic principle that the interests of Islam are superior to those of the Muslim) allowed man the necessary freedom to develop all the possibilities of his nature while limiting his freedom only in the interests of the community... The fostering of this democratic spirit is one of the duties of the Islamic community which historical circumstances had prevented (Esposito 1983, 180).

Thus, according to Iqbal’s research on Islamic history and the Qur’an, the modern Western concept of democracy⁶³, especially its elements as human freedom, rule of law, elections and advisory councils, can be discovered in the early era, from 610-670, in which the democratic-humanistic values were living actualities. By reading the Qur’anic scripture holistically (intratextually), keeping in mind the differentiation between its foundational verses (established meaning) and those that draw on its metaphorical verses, we can detect how God’s unity is interconnected with the quest for justice and equality, and that Muslims were enjoined not to mingle Islam as a humanistic-democratic ideal with repressiveness and unjust social devices. Hence the term ethical/humanistic monotheism (Shah, 2015). However, as a result of Islam’s political expansion, these tawhid-oriented humanistic ideals lost their force and relegated to the background after the Islamic state was metamorphosed into a monarchy and dynasty ruling. Khorchide also discusses the historical background with regard to the mutation of the early Muslim state based on humanistic and democratic ideals into Arab imperialism. He asserts that, “The message of Muhammad and the first caliphs was a message of spiritual, social and political liberation. However, it took no more than 40 years for the caliphate to have turned into a kind of monarchy, demanding unconditional obedience” (Khorchide 2015, 175). Parwez also reaches the same conclusion. He states, “But shortly after his [Muhammad’s] death, the forces

⁶² John Esposito (1940-) is a professor of Islamic Studies and International Affairs at Georgetown University, Washington.

⁶³ It is important to bear in mind that Iqbal, in his own political climates, did not accept the modern Western theory of democracy completely. Esposito touches upon this topic in his article “Muhammad Iqbal and Islamic State” (1983).

of exploitation began to raise their ugly heads again. They scored their first success with the establishment of a hereditary kingship” (Parwez 1989, 14, *sic*). Muhammad Iqbal understands this political mutation in the following words:

The life of early Muslims was a life of conquest. Their whole energy was devoted to political expansion which tends to concentrate political power in fewer hands; and thus serves as an unconscious handmaid of despotism. Democracy does not seem to be quite willing to get on with Empire... (Iqbal, 1908).

Iqbal`s vision of the early Islamic state, as outlined above, clearly entails that Islam as a political ideal is diametrically opposed to those political structures which tend to suppress the healthy development/self-actualisation of the human individuality, hence the exclusion of dynasties, empires, dictatorships, imperialistic devices, patrimonial/hereditary monarchies and theocracies. We now proceed to the next word.

5.3.2 Spiritual

For Iqbal, Islam is an “unanalysable reality” (Iqbal 2012, 122), that is, the dualism of state and church, the foundation of Western democracy, does not exist in Islam. Because, as Iqbal elucidates in his *Reconstruction*, “In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains...In Islam it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another.” (ibid.). On this point we need to retrace the Iqbalian notion of God`s unity. Iqbal interprets unity of God as unifying force, which synthesis the materiel and the spiritual dimensions of life into a unity of life, because, states Muhammad Iqbal, “The Ultimate Reality, according to the Qur`an, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is, therefore, sacred in the roots of its being” (Iqbal 2012, 123). Furthermore, says Iqbal, “There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit. *All is holy ground*” (ibid., *sic*). This interconnected approach and interpretation of Islamic state, based on his tawhidic principle, which integrates the matter and spirit, profane and holy, clashes with the modern democratic states, developed through the European political ideas. Iqbal explains the reason for this dualistic doctrine in the following words:

Primitive Christianity was founded, not as a political or civil unit, but as a monastic order in a profane world, having nothing to do with civil affairs, and obeying the Roman authority practically in all matters. The result of this was that when the State became Christian, State and Church confronted each other as

distinct powers with interminable boundary disputes between them. Such a thing could never happen to Islam; for Islam was from the very beginning a civil society... (Iqbal 2012, 123).

It is because of this very fact of unity between the spirit and matter, between “Church” and “State” that the Qur’an “considers it necessary to unite religion and state, ethics and politics in a single revelation in the same way as Plato does in his *Republic*” (Iqbal 2012, 132). Thus, secularism, understood as the bifurcation between matter and spirit is the antithesis of Islam as a civil society. However, Iqbal explains that the idea of separation of Church and State is not a wholly foreign element to Islam. There is an important distinction for Iqbal, as he sees it, which we need to bear in mind. He goes on to explain that,

The Islamic idea of the division of the religious and the political functions of the State must not be confounded with the European idea of the separation of Church and State. The former is only a division of functions...Islam was, from the very beginning, a civil society, with laws civil in their nature, though believed to be revelational in origin...In the history of Muslim political experience, this separation has meant only a separation of functions, not of ideas (Iqbal, 2013).

In other words, in the Islamic state, moral values and ethical sensibilities cannot be divorced from the state and its policies. Disuniting morality from politics, says Iqbal, “results in Genghizship⁶⁴” (Mir 2008, 133). Iqbal, by his pragmatic interpretation of God’s unity, attempts to reunify morality and politics, state and “Church”, the religious and the profane. The Muslim state needs to be guided by broad humanistic ideals, which he considers the Qur’an to contain, as explained in earlier sections. Iqbal avers that, “The Religious idea...determines the ultimate structure of the Muslim community” (Mir 2008, 134). On this point, we identify a central commonality between the Iqbalian vision of a democratic-humanistic state on the one hand and Hareide’s views on the other. Hareide understands democracy as a “structure which limits the possibilities of abusing power” (Hareide 2011, 20). However, argues Hareide, the democratic structure, in order to play its constructive role, is contingent on people’s values and ethical standard. He goes on to assert that the broad humanistic ideals such as the dignity of humanity, the golden rule and character development are political virtues necessary for the enhancement of the democratic spirit. It is through internalising these virtues, notes Hareide, that the state becomes “humanised”, not humans becoming objectified (ibid.). Put in a process way, the Divine aims needs to be materialised in our commonwealth, also. In this way, since God’s

⁶⁴ In Islamic history, Genghizship is associated with unrestrained, destructive power.

power is persuasive, we are expanding the temporal impact of God`s will on planet Earth, thus becoming God`s companions in the formation of a just and sustainable world. That is why the aims of God enshrined in the Qur`an – as a book of humanising possibilities – is sovereign, according to Iqbal. As Iqbal maintains, “The law of God is absolutely supreme. Authority, expect as an interpreter of the law, has no [place] in the social structure of Islam. We regard it as inimical to the unfoldment of human individuality” (Iqbal, 1909). By this interpretation, Iqbal omits the idea of theocracy. It is in context of this understanding that Iqbal asserts: “The state, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavour to transform these ideals [equality, solidarity, freedom] into space-time forces” (Iqbal 2012, 122, *sic*). Therefore, belief in God`s unity, should inspire Muslims to bring about a Muslim body politic which is intimately related to humanistic values and ideals.

Before we proceed farther to examine Iqbal`s concept of the Islamic law, there is one important interpretation of Iqbal which could pave the way for what I have coined as holistic humanism, a concept of humanism which includes other living species in our ethical calculations. I venture to offer a brief remark on the point: While discussing the philosophical concept of God and its temporal possibilities, Iqbal makes a remark conducive to developing theocentric ethics. He states that “All is holy ground. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it: The whole of this earth is a mosque” (Iqbal 2012, 123). If the whole of the earth is a mosque, i.e., sacred, this could then lead to the conclusion that all of the denizens of earth, human as well as non-human, are sacred and interconnected (reflecting the presence of Divine energy and God`s unity). In other words, all life deserves our outmost respect by widening our horizons, thus including non-human actualities such as animal organisms and the nature in our decision-makings and policies in order to secure environments that promote the overall wellbeing of our dwelling place. There is also a hadith (traditions based on reports of the sayings of the Prophet of Islam) which reads: “Allah is kind only to those who are kind to His creations” (Ahmed 2012, 15). Explained differently, we serve God by serving God`s creation by expanding our scope of moral/ethical responsibility, thus transcending the anthropocentrism that has for long prevailed our ethical vantage point. In this context, a passage of John Cobb deserves our attention. For Cobb, to believe that

A human life is ‘of more value than many sparrows’ (Matthew 10:31) does not warrant the conclusion that sparrows are worth nothing at all. Indeed, it presupposes the opposite. The Heavenly Father cares even for sparrows; how much more for human beings! This certainly means that people too should be concerned more about a human being than a sparrow. Much more! But it does not warrant the teaching that sparrows exist only as a means to human ends God is pictured as loving the creatures and caring for them, not only human beings, but sparrows as well. (Cobb in Epperly 2011, 106).

Cobb's views can be infused into the Iqbalian vision of "all is holy ground", productive of paving the way for a holistic humanism, characterised by respect for humanity's innate dignity combined with, "world-loyalty", as Whitehead calls it. A world-loyalty "in which our self-interest is joined with our commitment to be partners with God in the quest for beauty for all creation" (Epperly 2001, 87). The point I have enunciated have far-reaching implications, but an in-depth elaboration on this issue will take us afield from our express purpose. I will now proceed to the next section.

5.3.3 The Iqbalian concept of Islamic law

Iqbal, regarding Islamic law (shariah), poses a question which, during the last decade of religious and political tensions, has only heightened its importance and relevance. He puts forward the following question: "Is the Law of Islam capable of evolution?" (Iqbal 2012, 130). As we proceed, we will discover the important fact that Iqbal's interpretations as regards the concept of Islamic law are flowing directly from his conception of the Divine, which, in addition, forms his dynamic *Weltanschauung*. In other words, Iqbal's metaphysical reflections are interwoven with the spatio-temporal realities. They are not detached from each other, but rather complected. Before we probe into the Iqbalian notion of Islamic law, I will briefly point out, as Iqbal sees it, the main factors which have during the course of historical evolution reduced Shariah to a state of rigidity. There are mainly three causes which brought about the stagnation of the Islamic Law. We will look at these serially:

- (1) According to Iqbal, the Rationalist movement in the early days of Abbasid dynasty triggered –as a result of their radical notions– rancorous contestations between their own camp and the conservative thinkers of Islam. As an instance in point, Iqbal points to the controversy related to the dogma of eternity or non-eternity of the Qur'an. The rationalist thinkers of Islam abnegated this tenet due their view that it was "another form of the Christian dogma of the eternity of the Word" (Iqbal 2012, 119). For the conservative thinkers, on the other hand, rejecting this dogma was tantamount to "undermining the very foundations of Muslim society" (ibid.). It was because of this unrestrained rationalist philosophy of some of the Muslim rationalists that the conservative camp regarded it as a disruptive force, and looked at it as dangerous to the

very “stability of Islam as a social polity (ibid.). It was because of the perceived disintegrational forces unleashed by the rationalist movement that the conservative thinkers regarded as their primary purpose “to preserve the social integrity of Islam, and to realize this the only course open to them was to utilize the binding force of Shari’ah, and to make the structure of their legal system as rigorous as possible” (ibid).

- (2) The second cause of intellectual stagnancy, as Iqbal understands it, was due to the emergence of ascetic Sufism, which “gradually developed under influences of a non-Islamic character” (ibid.). As a result of the growth of ascetic Sufism, which relied heavily on the differentiation between Appearance and Reality, produced, as Iqbal puts it, “an attitude of indifference to all that applies to Appearance and not to Reality” (ibid.). This attitude of world apathy obnubilated the central idea of Islam as a social polity. Iqbal criticises ascetical Sufism by stating that “Islam has had too much of renunciation; it is time for the Muslims to look to realities...The spirit of Islam is not afraid of its contact with matter” (Iqbal, 2013). Returning to Iqbal’s *Reconstruction*, he is of the opinion that ascetic Sufism was a reaction against the formalism of the early thinkers and jurists of Islam, which focused more on externals and technicalities rather than essentials and basic principles. Ascetic Sufism, because of the rise of formalistic tendencies in Islamic jurisprudence, “attracted and finally absorbed the best minds in Islam” (Iqbal 2012, 119). Iqbal goes on to say:

The Muslim state was thus left generally in the hands of intellectual mediocrities, and the unthinking masses of Islam, having no personalities of a higher calibre to guide them, *found their security only in blindly following the schools* (Iqbal 2012, 119-120, emphasis added).

- (3) The last cause which hastened intellectual degeneration and immobility came with the demolition of Baghdad in 1258 CE. The mayhem of Bagdad, contends Iqbal, “was indeed a great blow” on the intellectual life of Muslims. He explains that

For fear of further disintegration, which is only natural in such a period of political decay, the conservative thinkers of Islam focused all their efforts on the one point of preserving a uniform social life for the people by a jealous exclusion of all innovations in the law of Shari’ah as expounded by the early doctors of Islam (Iqbal 2012, 120).

As a result of the invasion of Bagdad, the protectionist attitude of conservative Muslim thinkers and jurists deemed the four well-known Sunni schools of thought as sufficient for further guidance of the Muslim peoples. This protective attitude towards innovation and dynamic

reflection in accommodating the clime and time of advancing civilisation boils down to the closing of the door of *ijtihad*. Hence, fresh legal and religious interpretations and revisions were relegated to the background. This thus contributed to servile adherence (*taqlid*) being the norm rather than shocking exception, resulting in the exclusion of human agency. According to Iqbal, blind imitation, “by a false reverence of the past, as manifested in the legists of Islam in the thirteenth century and later, was contrary to the inner impulse of Islam...” (ibid.).

Having thus made clear the key historical factors that contributed to intellectual stasis and ossification of the Muslim thought, we will now proceed further to explore Iqbal’s answer to his own posed question, that is, if the law of Islam is capable of evolution. As we will discover, Iqbal answers his question in the affirmative.

Regarding the issue of Islam and reform, Iqbal boldly affirms the belief in the capacity of Islamic Law to evolve with altering condition of life. This affirmative reply is grounded on his conception of God, which paved the way for the “principle of movement in the structure of Islam”. The principle he is referring to is *ijtihad*, translated as “the hermeneutical principle of creative, independent reasoning”, an indispensable tool in the system of Islamic socio-political economic life. In order to consolidate his affirmative answer, Iqbal mentions European Orientalist Max Horten (1874-1945). According to Horten, argues Iqbal, “from 800-1100...not less than one hundred systems of theology appeared in Islam, a fact which bears ample testimony to the elasticity of Islamic thought as well as to the ceaseless activity of our early thinkers” (Iqbal 2012, 130). In addition, as a result of a deeper investigation of Muslim thought and literature, Horten concludes that,

The spirit of Islam is so broad that is practically boundless. With the exception of atheistic ideas alone it has assimilated all the attainable ideas of surrounding peoples, and given them its own peculiar direction of development (ibid.).

Moreover, Iqbal also cites the conclusion put forward by another European thinker Hurgronje, who was – after a study into the spirit of Islam in the realm of law – driven to the conclusion that the spirit of Islam is capable of evolution and adaptive change. Iqbal cites these references to strengthen his affirmative reply, that “the inner catholicity of the spirit of Islam is bound to work itself out in spite of the rigorous conservatism of our doctors” (Iqbal 2012, 131). Further, that a “deeper study of the enormous legal literature of Islam is sure to rid the modern critic of the superficial opinion that the Law of Islam is stationary and incapable of development” (ibid.). Iqbal offers some remarks on the adaptivity of the early Muslim schools of law, which reveals how the early legists of Islam exercised *ijtihad* (renewed, independent thinking) –within the

ambit of the general ideals and all-embracing humanistic principles propounded in the Qur'an—in their efforts to meet the demands of a developing Muslim civilisation. An instance in point is the Andalusian scholar Abu Ishaq Shatibi (1320-1388) and his view on how the ultimate objectives/purposes of shariah (*maqasid al-shariah*) aims at protecting five fundamental human rights (*Huquq al aadamiya*) which consist of Deen (protection of religion), Nafs (protection of life), Aql (protection of faculty of intellect), Mal (protection of property and wealth) and Nasl (protection of progeny) (Iqbal 2012, 134). These fundamental rights are, for Muhammad Iqbal, the aims of Islam as a social polity, which needs to be restored and revived in their original shape “with a view to rebuild our moral, social, and political ideals out of their original simplicity and universality” (Iqbal 2012, 124). However, in order to reconstruct the laws of Shariah (jurisprudence), it is of paramount importance to re-evaluate the Muslim intellectual inheritance and traditions according to modern conditions and climes. This is only possible by re-opening the door of ijtiḥad.

5.3.4 The principle of ijtiḥad

I spoke above of the significance of ijtiḥad. The importance Iqbal attaches to the principle of ijtiḥad can be seen in his concept of God and the universe. As we have noted, God, the ultimate reality “is the ultimate spiritual basis for all life” (Iqbal 2012, 117), which includes the categories of permanent and change, or, “the constant and the variable (Iqbal 2012, 54). Hence, a human organisation

based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile, in its life, the categories of permanence and change. It must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. *But eternal principles when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Qur'an, is one of the greatest “signs” of God, tend to immobilize what is essentiality mobile in its nature* (Iqbal 2012, 117, emphasis added).

Put in a different way, human society is looked upon by Iqbal as an organism, which undergoes a series of metamorphoses. Thus, change, as Iqbal points out, “is the only constant in the world” (Mir 2008, 38). However, Iqbal also believes in certain fundamental principles of universal import which an Islamic society needs to assimilate in order to channelize its forward movement for the welfare of life. This Iqbalian idea is reflective of Whitehead's saying, “The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order” (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 57). Put in a different way, order cannot be lost, but it cannot exclude the possibilities of novelty and freshness.

The Iqbalian concept of Shariah is humanistic in nature; it consists of all-encompassing humanistic ideals, which I have coined as Divine Aims. Ijtihad is interpreted by Iqbal as the principle which enables the Muslim societies to satisfy the requirements of the exigencies of time and space, i.e., the subsidiary laws (change) needs to be devised by the Muslim community by mutual consultation within the ambit of eternal values of the Shariah. Iqbal contends that “the immobility of Islam during the last five hundred years” is a direct outcome of the exclusion of the category of “change” from the scheme of Muslim peoples intellectual and social life. John Esposito adumbrates the Iqbalian synthesis between the categories of permanence and change in the following way:

Iqbal asserted the need for both permanence and change in a living, developing Islamic state, a belief which originates in his interpretations of the Quranic view of God and its relationship to Islamic society. God or Ultimate Ego has creative, dynamic life which is both permanent and changing. Iqbal understood creation to be the unfolding of the inner possibilities of God (Ultimate Ego) in a single and yet continuing act: “The Ultimate Ego exist in pure duration wherein change ceases to be a succession of varying attitudes, and reveals its true character as continuous creation (Esposito 1983, 186).

Esposito continues to argue that

although the eternal, immutable principles of the *shariah* are necessary for the regulation of its collective life, yet the Islamic state includes a principle of change by which it can adapt itself to all the possibilities arising from that which is “essentially mobile in its nature (ibid.).

Iqbal, as regards the workings of the categories of permanence and change in the life of the Prophet of Islam, reveals the understanding of Shah Wali Allah (1703-62), the Indian reformer.

This deserves to be fully quoted:

The prophetic method of teaching, according to Shah Wali Allah, is that, generally speaking, the law revealed by a prophet takes especial notice of the habits, ways, and peculiarities of the people to whom he is specially sent. The prophet who aims at all-embracing principles, however, can neither reveal different principles for different peoples, nor leaves them to work out their own rules of conduct. His method is to train one particular people, and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal Shari‘ah. In doing so he accentuates the principles underlying the social life of all mankind, and applies them to concrete cases in the light of the specific habits of the people immediately before him (Iqbal 2012, 136).

Expressed in a different way, the legal rules formulated by taking into account the specific conditions and climates of a society “cannot be strictly enforced in the case of future generations” (ibid.). This underscores the view that the body of legal literature (*fiqh*) or traditions is not universally applicable, rather, they should be revised and even discarded for meeting the needs of changing climates and environments, provided the by-laws, as a result of mutual consultation (the principle of *Shurah*), stays within the range of universal, humanistic principles as revealed

by the Qur'anic scripture. Iqbal also points towards the views of Abu Hanifa (699-767), the founder of the Sunni Hanafi school of fiqh, which made almost no use of the earlier legal rules generated by past societies. That which is permanent and of universal import are those values revealed in the Qur'anic scripture by the Divine Life. The subsidiary laws formulated by an Islamic state under the broad values/principles, are not to be treated as divinely ordered as they are creations of human interpretation and thus subject to modification and mutability. Iqbal subscribes to the views held by Abu Hanafi. Thus Iqbal:

On the whole, then, the attitude of Abu Hanifah towards the traditions of a purely legal import is to my mind perfectly sound; and if modern Liberalism considers it safer not to make any indiscriminate use of them as a source of law, it will be only following one of the greatest exponent of Muhammadan Law in Sunni Islam (Iqbal 2012, 137).

Iqbal, after demonstrating the dynamism and evolutionary nature of Islamic law in early legal schools, contends that the bulk of legal literature produced by early systems are only subjective interpretations, “and as such cannot claim any finality” (Iqbal 2012, 133). However, due to various historical factors, as explicated above, the culture of ijthadic activity lost its force, and servile adherence became the norm. In order to break the shackles of rigid conservatism, Iqbal raised the banner of ijthad in the interpretation of Shariah. One of Iqbal's most powerful plead for the restoration of the principle of ijthad is revealed in the following statement:

Did the founders of our schools ever claim finality for their reasoning's and interpretations? Never. The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to reinterpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life is, in my opinion, perfectly justified. The teachings of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, *guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors*, should be permitted to solve its own problems (Iqbal 2012, 134, emphasis added).

This statement sums up the gist of Iqbal's reformist thought. In the abovementioned assertion, the key words are “guided but unhampered”. In other words, the Muslim peoples can utilise the earlier works as guidance, if deemed as fruitful for present times. However, the past interpretations and understandings of legal jurists and ulemas cannot freeze our interpretative horizon. By considering the bulk of Shariah as sanctified, the result will be “that while the peoples are moving the law remains stationary” (ibid.). The present state of things is, especially as regards militants Islamist groups, reflective of the divinization of the Shariah, hence the exclusion of human agency from the scene. As Ziauddin Sardar, in his article “Rethinking Islam” (2002), argues, “...our absolute frame of reference has been frozen in history...Ijthad and fresh thinking have not been possible because there is no context within which they can

actually take place” (Sardar, 2002). As has been shown, Muhammad Iqbal calls even for an *ijtihad* or reconstruction in the foundations and principles of Islamic thought in order to suit the modern temper and developments in various departments of human knowledge. As Mustansir Mir asserts, “In the Indian subcontinent at least, Iqbal seems to be the first Muslim writer to have stressed the importance of doing what may be called *basic research in Islamic law*” (Mir 2008, 108, emphasis added). This “basic research in Islamic law” is termed as “structural *ijtihad*” by Mohsen Kadivar (1959-), an Iranian theologian and Philosopher. In his article “Reforming Islamic Thought through Structural *Ijtihad*” (2015), he remarks that it was Muhammad Iqbal who used this term in his *Reconstruction*. For Kadivar, Structural *ijtihad* entails “revision in the principles and foundations of Islamic thought” (Kadivar, 2015). In other words, the reform needs to begin “beyond and before shari’a, as shari’a is subordinate to many foundations and principles that exist prior to it” (ibid.). A good instance is point is in connexion with the concept of God: is God’s power unlimited and unilateral? Or is it marked by limitation and persuasion? Has God predestined humanity’s temporal life or is it a line in becoming along with human agency? For Kadivar, the idea of God “...is the key question of theology that affects the whole of religious teachings” (ibid.). Before concluding this chapter, it is important to look at Iqbal’s interpretation of consensus (*ijma*) and renewed thinking (*ijtihad*), which differs from the traditional view.

The principle of consensus is, in Iqbal’s view, “perhaps the most important legal notion in Islam” (Iqbal 2012, 137). Briefly stated, *ijma* signifies consensus of the masses through mutual consultation. Ziauddin Sardar explains the working of the principle of *ijma* during the first Muslim community in the following way:

When the Prophet Muhammad wanted to reach a decision, he would call the whole Muslim community then, admittedly not very large to the mosque. A discussion would ensue; arguments for and against would be presented. Finally, the entire gathering would reach a consensus. Thus, a democratic spirit was central to communal and political life in early Islam (Sardar, 2002).

However, argues Iqbal, it is strange that this legal notion of import, “while invoking great academic discussions in early Islam, remained practically a mere idea, and rarely assumed the form of a permanent institution in any Muhammadan country” (Iqbal 2012, 137). He goes on to note that perhaps, after the Islamic democratic state mutated into a monarchy, the shift of the principle of consensus into a legislative institution endangered the vested political interests of Muslim monarchs. In the monarchic rules, especially in Abbasid dynasty, *ijma* became, as a result of reductive process, a mere consensus of individual religious scholars, thus excluding

the Muslim commonwealth from the political sphere. Not surprisingly, states Sardar, that “authoritarianism, theocracy and despotism reigns supreme in the Muslim world” (Sardar, 2002). This is the reason why the conservative thinkers of Islam lay claim to the monopoly of Islamic interpretation, and reign Muslim societies, both in the Muslim world, and likewise in Western societies where Muslims happen to be a minority. However, despite the restrictive nature of *ijma* in Muslim societies, it is, argues Iqbal, “extremely satisfactory to note that the pressure of new world-forces and the political experience of European nations are impressing on the mind of modern Islam the value and possibilities of the idea of *Ijma*’ (Iqbal 2012, 138). By taking note of the republican spirit, Iqbal reinterpreted, or, reformed the principle of *ijma* and *ijtihad* from individual domain (that of ulamas) to that of modern legislative bodies. John Esposito notes that, “...Iqbal called for the transfer not only of legal interpretation (*ijtihad*) but also of community authority (*ijma*) from the ulama to a Muslim legislative assembly...” (Esposito 1983, 187). This shift has important implications: by transferring the power of *ijtihad* (right to interpret Islam) from the private domain to a legislative assembly entails that no religious sects or individual ulamas can claim monopoly on Islamic exposition. Moreover, by expanding the scope of *ijtihad* and consensus from the individual to the corporate plane, the rise of factional disputes and sectarian partiality can be checked. Iqbal argues:

The transfer of the power of *ijtihad* from individual representatives of schools to a Muslim legislative assembly which, in view of the growth of opposing sects, is the only possible form *ijma* can take in modern times, will secure contributions to legal discussion from laymen who happen to possess a keen insight into affairs (*ibid.*).

Moreover, as we have observed, Iqbal criticizes the conservative ulema and their imitative attitude in relation to interpretation on legal matters, resulting in that while the human climes and social conditions are moving, the Shariah laws remain immobile and far removed from modern temperaments. That is why Iqbal asserts, “...a false reverence for past history and its artificial resurrection constitute no remedy for a people’s decay” (Iqbal 2012, 120). Iqbal is also critical of the conservative legal education in Muslim countries, as he pleads for a reform in judiciary education program by broadening its sphere “and to combine it with an intelligent study of modern jurisprudence” (Iqbal 2012, 140). This Iqbal reckons as the only way out of a state of decay towards reconstruction and fresh reinterpretations of Islam thought. The essence of his reformist thoughts can be summed up in the following rallying cry: back to the essentials of Islam, and onward with the principle of *ijtihad*.

In his *Reconstruction*, Iqbal praises the Religious Reform party of Turkey and the Grand Vizier for their efforts to set the scene for a way out of the *cul de sac* of conventional Islamic thinking towards the realm of freedom of *ijtihad*, in order to revisit and reconstruct the Shariah laws so to reform their administration of legal law in Turkey. An instance in point is the issue of the institution of *Khilafat*. According to Turkey's liberal thinkers, after the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire and the abolishment of caliphate in Istanbul in 1924, various semi-independent or independent Muslim national states have originated. Therefore, by taking the realities into account, the Caliphate cannot be vested in a single person but rather in an elected assembly or a republican form of government. For Iqbal, the republican form of government is fully consistent with the spirit in Islam (Iqbal 2012, 124-125) than the traditional idea of Caliphate which easily lends itself to monarchism, a model which is considered by Iqbal as wholly abhorrent to the spirit of Islam as a humanistic-democratic ideal. Nevertheless, Iqbal also expressed disapproval by pointing to some of the Turkish liberal thinkers and their understanding of the function of *ijtihad*. Still, Iqbal extolled the republican Turkey for reinterpreting their intellectual and legal traditions in the light of new world-forces. In Iqbal's words:

The truth is that among the Muslim nations of today, Turkey alone has shaken off its dogmatic slumber, and attained to self-consciousness. She alone has claimed her right of intellectual freedom; she alone has passed from the ideal to the real- a transition which entails keen intellectual and moral struggle (Iqbal 2012, 128).

While the majority of Muslim countries are reproducing bygone values, "the Turk is on the way to creating new values...In his life has begun to move, change, and amplify, giving birth to new desires, bringing new difficulties and suggesting new interpretations" (Iqbal 2012, 129). Despite the fact that Kamal Ataturk's model of reform was based primarily on Western model of secularism (separation between church and the state) and not on the Qur'anic holistic reformistic model (tawhidic principles), Iqbal nonetheless appreciated the liberal force in Turkey's life, which during Iqbal's own temporal career appeared as a constructive and creative enterprise to reform the law of Islam in a world of rapid political and socio-economic change.

This brief examination, I hope, will make it clear to us what the Iqbalian term "spiritual democracy" entails. The central difference between Iqbalian notion of spiritual democracy and the Western model of a secular state is related to the question of sovereignty. For Muhammad Iqbal, in an Islamic democratic state, the sovereignty rests only with God, i.e., the constitution needs to be based on two fundamental principles: (1) God's sovereignty and (2) the supremacy

of Islamic law. However, it must be kept in mind that Iqbal's vision of an Islamic state cannot, as I have explained in this section, be (mis)interpreted as a theocratic state, even though Iqbal does not accept the notion of bifurcation between matter and spirit. This is why Iqbal asserts that "Religion [Islam] is not a departmental affair...it is an expression of the whole man" (Iqbal 2012, 2, *sic*). In other words, as Iqbal sees it, Islam, as a political and ethical ideal, caters to both the material and moral advancement of human beings. And since all is "holy ground", God infuses all aspects of life, thus all is of "sacred import".

In my opinion, Iqbal's endorsement of a republican form of government, with the extension of *ijtihad* and *ijma* from individual to corporate level, the importance he attaches to mutual consultation as regards the promotion of betterment of all citizens without any artificial distinctions of race, colour, and creed bears ample testimony for a humanistic-democratic, welfare-oriented Islamic state. Expressed differently, the Iqbalian notion of Shariah is a synthesis between the categories of "permanence" and "change", based on his concept of God. Permanence signifies humanistic, eternal values, whereas change entails reinterpretation and readjustment according to the requirements of altering conditions of life, provided the legislative organ stays within the framework of eternal principles (Divine Aims). Iqbal assimilates the positive aspects of a secular state; the state being the guarantor of inviolable human rights without any discrimination, such as freedom of religion, expression, worship, protection of life, wealth, privacy, progeny, equality before the law and rule of law. This, as Iqbal sees it, is also the fundamental responsibility of an Islamic state established "in the name of God", the source of potentialities of creative transformation.

The Islamic state, from an Iqbalian point of view, is left free to frame – according to the principle of mutual consultations – bylaws so to meet the demands of varying realities of life, provided the democratically elected representatives pass laws within the broad humanistic limits prescribed by the Qur'anic scripture. This entails a principle of limitation: just as God has imposed a self-limitation on His power, so should human beings in their corporate capacity impose a principle of limitation with the express objective of utilising their powers for the common good.

In present days, the Iqbalian idea of an Islamic state might be regarded as excessively idealistic, and liable to abuse, as militant Islamist movements are demonstrating. Nevertheless, Iqbal presented a reformist model of an Islamic state which Muslim societies ought to aspire to actualise.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to answer my second research question. In the first section, I outlined the central keys of Hareide`s understanding of humanism, which I termed “holistic humanism”. In the second section, I explained briefly the coined term “process-humanistic” God. In the last section I only examined the essential components of Iqbal`s vision of an Islamic state by explaining the Iqbalian idea of “spiritual democracy” and its aspects such as the concept of Islamic law and the principle of ijtiḥad. Iqbal`s idea of an Islamic state varies from those set forth by many a traditional group, especially the present day political Islamist movements and their idea of sanctified Shariah. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, I have omitted intentionally various dimensions of Iqbal`s political reformist ideas. In this chapter, my express purpose was only to examine the essentials of Iqbalian holistic humanistic thoughts, which can be utilised as springboards for Islamic theological, political and social reform and interreligious dialogue.

The next chapter will be devoted to key commonalities and differences between Iqbalian and Christian process theology.

6 Christian Process theology and Iqbalian process thought

Introduction

The concept of God in Iqbal's thought differs in some important respects from the traditional notions widely accepted as the most reasonable and obvious, and partially meets the views of Christian process theology inspired by Whitehead. However, Iqbal still retains a couple of classical notions, which negates some Christian process ideas. In the following sections, I will very briefly put forward the essential commonalities and differences which were discovered throughout my research.

6.1 Key commonalities

The key similarities which were identified was, firstly, that both of these camps interpret God in panentheistic terms as opposed to traditional theism and pantheism. By (re)interpreting God panentheistically, a transformative move is taken which does justice to the creational world (God-world relationship). This panentheistic model offers an alternative to both pantheism and classical theism. In one word, it is a creative synthesis between divine transcendence and immanence.

The second key commonality is related to the God's power. The classical theistic model envisages God as all-determining, hence the negation of human agency. This understanding gives rise to the model of potter-and-clay, i.e., God is the potter whereas human beings are the clay, moulded by the hand of God. In contrast, Iqbal and process theology are in agreement on the principle of Divine limitation which gives space for human self-determination, hence the importance of God's power operating persuasively and not coercively. In Biblical language, God's power is best understood in terms of love. In Iqbalian terms, God's persuasive power is understood as *amr*. Speaking in process terms, God's power provides only Divine objectives, leaving human actualities free to determine how human agency is exerted.

The third and last similarity is pertained to God's foreknowledge. In both Christian and Iqbalian process thought, the mode of God's foreknowledge differs from traditional theism, which entails perfect knowledge of future events, "a fixed order of events with definite outlines".

This model gives rise to determinism, which contravenes human self-determination, creativity and moral responsibility. Iqbal and exponents of Christian process theism takes another route: they abnegate the cognisability of the future as actual. Put differently, God knows perfectly well myriad possibilities only as potentials, not as settled events. The future is open-ended, thus liable to change for good or bad. As co-workers with God, human actualities—possessing freedom of choice—are *creating* future as they move along in a stream of time.

6.2 Key differences

Among the key differences is the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. This doctrine implies that God created the universe out of nothingness. For Iqbal, God is the Ultimate Reality, hence the ultimate Creator, that is, only God creates from pre-existing material. The creation, the universe, is the self-disclosure of the “Great I am” (Iqbal 2012, 57), which is described by the Qur’anic scripture as “*the First and the Last...*” (Iqbal 2012, 85). All things exist in God, therefore, the cosmic order cannot pre-exist as pre-existent matter. This notion will make God and the universe stand in opposition to each other, a stance Iqbal rejects, as we have seen in chapter 4. Process theology, on the other hand, rejects this doctrine as non-Biblical, and embraces the view that God created the universe out of an already pre-existing chaos. Says Epperly, “Like an artist, God has created out of the welter of materials available, bringing cosmic order out of what would have been chaos...” (Epperly 2011, 54). The doctrine of creation out of nothing is closely associated with the vision of God as the ultimate controlling power, a notion process theologians turn down.⁶⁵

The second difference is related to the principle of limitation of God’s power. Even though both Iqbal and process theologians agree on the limitation of God’s power, thus providing room for human freedom, Iqbal, on the one hand, understands this limitation to be “self-imposed”, whereas process theologians flatly reject this idea. For them, God only works with the pre-existing chaos and materials in bringing about order and novelty, which also entails higher possibility for moral evil. For John Cobb, the underlying assumption of “self-limitation” is beset with problems: one being related to the immense volume of moral evil unleashed by humans such as Hitler, Stalin and Saddam Hussain. Cobb asks, “Why, in extreme cases, when

⁶⁵ Mustafa Ruzgar, in his article “Iqbal and Whitehead” (2002), contends that by admitting the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, there is no theoretical framework that will successfully reconcile the problem of evil with God’s goodness” (Ruzgar 2006, 16). He argues that the doctrine of creation out of nothingness has no basis in the Qur’an. Asserts Ruzgar, “Although the Qur’an explicitly says that the world is created, the way it was created is, nevertheless, quite vague” (Ruzgar, 2002).

so much is at stake, does God not intervene forcefully to prevent extreme forms of evil?” (Cobb 2003, 128). His forceful criticism of such a notion of God’s power is seen in the following assertion: “If God has the power to do so and refrains, just to be faithful to an unwise decision made long ago, we find it hard to admire such a foolishly stubborn God and even harder to love that God” (ibid.).⁶⁶

The last difference I identified in my research pertains to divine immutability. Iqbal does not attribute any “real “change” to God, as God transcends serial time and lives in “pure duration”, in which change ceases to exist. God’s life is, for Iqbal,

self-revelation, not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached. The “not-yet” of man does mean pursuit and may mean failure; the “not-yet” of God means unfailing realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process (Iqbal 2012,48).

On the other hand, process theology seems to attribute real change in God’s life, that is, God is affected by the decisions of worldly actualities. This is, however, true of the consequent nature of God, but, interestingly, Whitehead and those inspired by him speaks of God’s primordial nature as timeless or non-temporal (Cobb and Griffin 1976, 47-48), similar to Iqbal’s understanding of God as timeless, eternal, absolute, and independent but yet revealing Himself within the temporal time-frame and luring humans towards new possibilities of healthy change. It may be well to note that, for Whitehead, the primordial nature is non-temporal and that the consequent nature can be imagined as a series of perfect realisations rather than a movement from imperfect to the perfect. These are subtle issues, and we need not address them fully.

These are, briefly put, the central similarities and differences observed throughout my research. Thus, there are striking similarities between Iqbalian and Christian process reflections on the concept of God, but we can also identify dissimilarities. Differences, however, should not hamper the quest for transformative, open-ended dialogue of shared feelings, shared attitudes and shared goals; a joint effort towards actualising “divine aims” productive of earthly healing.

⁶⁶In one of my conversation with Jay McDaniel, he wrote the following: “Even for Whitehead, there are senses in which God is self-limiting: e.g. God decides to lure the evolving universe toward highly sentient forms of life, with great degrees of freedom, when, after all, God could have stopped with simpler organisms that suffer less and cannot as easily contravene divine aims. God could have stopped with the amoebas. Thus, in this sense, within the temporal time-frame, God limits God’s own capacities for influence by luring humans (and other mammals) into existence. Additionally, God’s act of ordering possibilities in the first place, for the sake of an evolving universe of order and novelty, was an act of self-limitation in certain ways. It involved choosing, unilaterally to have an orderly world, when perhaps the choice could have been otherwise” (2016).

7 Summary

In this thesis I sought to answer my proposed research questions. First, I argued that the Iqbalian concept of God, as expressed in his *Reconstruction*, is panentheistic, and not pantheistic, understood as the only reality, and wholly immanent. Iqbal himself has not employed the term “panentheism” in his works, but his interpretations indicate a move in that direction; a shift which sheds new light on God-world relationship, which gives room for novelty, adventure, self-determination and creativity. I have also analysed various properties of Iqbal’s God concept and made the necessary connections with Whiteheadian process thought, especially as to divine omniscience and omnipotence. Muhammad Iqbal argues mainly from within an Islamic context, but his process notion of God seems to correspond to Whiteheadian themes as well.

In chapter 5 I answered the second research question by explaining the term humanism as understood in this thesis, that is, holistic humanism, and then proceeded to identify Iqbal’s reflections on God as “process-humanistic”. Since the idea of God needs to be tapped “in the interest of man”, I connected Iqbal’s process-humanistic notion of God with the salient features of the Iqbalian idea of an Islamic state. Iqbal’s idea of God does allow us to theorise and develop a humanistic concept of an Islamic state, an Islamic state in which the universal ideals of equality, solidarity and freedom are its cornerstones, but at the same time capable of evolution in its system of law-making, within the ambit of broad humanistic values (read: humanistic politics). Iqbal’s idea of an Islamic state differs significantly from militant Islamists theological and political thoughts, which prefer to identify God in the image of a dictator, an ultimate controlling power with unchanging omniscience and the Sanctioner of status quo.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I omitted Iqbal’s notion of human beings as God’s vicegerents on Earth, a God-man model marked by persuasion, freedom and mutual partnership in bringing about a world in which all life matters, as it matters to God, with no one left behind. Additionally, I focused primarily on the negative aspects of mysticism, which include life-denying tendencies. However, it must be noted that there might be value in the release from egotism that Muslim mysticism offers. Not emancipation from “ego” in the Iqbalian sense of individual agency, but release from self-centered agency that makes a god of the self (read: anthropocentrism).

In terms of Iqbalian process thought, it is hoped that this thesis charts new ground and raises questions partially answered and partially left open. It does pave the way for a process interpretation of God, the Qur'an and Islam, indebted to Iqbal but also moving beyond Iqbal, building upon other themes in the Qur'an and Whiteheadian thought.

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