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# 3. Claiming The Adequacy Of Science And The Intellect

A number of materialist philosophers and extremist rationalists of the Renaissance and the age of Modernism, prevented many people from professing a faith in religion. The doubts and cynicism of Western thinkers regarding religion arose from a variety of factors:

- Cultural, social, and religious weaknesses prevalent in the Middle Ages;
- Scientific and intellectual stagnation;
- The crusades;
- Trials and execution of scientists;
- Crimes perpetrated by the church against physicists, astronomers, and women;
- Distortion of the Bible and its inclusion of superstitious and implausible beliefs;
- Development of philosophical and scientific thoughts during the Renaissance and the age of Modernism;
- Impressive developments and advancement in industry, technology, and humanities in the age Modernism.

This led to religious phobia in the West, and caused other countries to incline towards them, impressed by their industrial revolution and advance in technology, science, and intellection.

Anti-religious rationalism culminated in the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment in the West. This period was called the Age of Reason. Great advance took place in physics, modern chemistry, and biology, particularly in the preliminary stages of the Industrial Revolution in England, and society was deeply affected by the technological application of physics. Major changes occurred in man's outlook

towards the world and existence, affecting society on a very large scale. 1

Confrontation against religion was so intense that some people could not tolerate to hear the name of God. For instance, when one of the proponents of natural religion was delivering a speech at the French Academy in 1798, a number of the audience protested suddenly, and one of them shouted: "Please do not mention the name of God here." Paul Henri d'Holbach and his like, considered nature to be praiseworthy: "O Nature! O sovereign of all existence, and ye, O virtue, intellect, and truth, her most endeared nurtured beings! Be our gods forever! The prevailing spirit was trust in man's perfection and attaining the desired society by making use of science in all spheres of life.4

Dr. 'Abd al-Karim Soroush is one of those who have trodden this path. He interconnects man's scientific advancements in the modern age and the needlessness of religion, thus: "The advent of science onto the scene of the history of man is the most significant occurrence in the modern world.

It distinguished modern man and the modern world from ancient man and the ancient world. We do not present the theoretical and practical preliminaries regarding its advent and naissance; in any case, the scene of history underwent transformation upon the advent of science.... The difference in awareness, even if we do not say the development of awareness, has resulted in a colossal development in the world, which nothing, not even religion and religious practice, can resist."5

Then he proceeds to answer the question:

Is modern man still in need of religion, or needless of religion? If needless of religion, what is meant by this needlessness?

He states: "It is obvious that man is needless of prophets and their teachings."

This needlessness of religion perturbs believers and they ask: "How can man be needless of religion?"6

He answers: "A distinction should be made between good and bad needlessness. Instances for the former include the student's needlessness of his teacher after graduation and that of the patient after treatment. Instances of the latter include the student's needlessness of his teacher prior to graduation and that of the patient before treatment." Then he concludes that modern man's needlessness is of the former type.7

## **Evaluation**

In reply to the above claim, it may be said that, despite man's advance in experimental sciences (i.e., physics, chemistry, medicine, mechanics, and electrical engineering), and humanities (i.e., philosophy, logic, psychology, sociology, law, and management), he requires another means of guidance.

The ordinary sources leading to advance in science are results of man's scientific and intellectual

thinking, whereas, none of the two means, despite innumerable uses, is adequate for man's guidance, due to the following limitations.

It is to be noted that discussing the shortcomings of wisdom and science does not necessitate their total negation, nor their efficiency in their specific fields, but what is meant by such shortcomings exceeds their capacities.

Some maintain that the discussion on the limitations of the twain means pose a challenge to religion or de-rationalization, whereas delimitation of the fields of epistemic sources necessitates an accurate methodology and its better use. The first step in scientific advancement is delimitation of sciences. The less blurred the limits the more accurate the conclusions.

Undoubtedly, they have rendered innumerable services for humanity and one of the great obligations of the Islamic community is to increase their usefulness. Believers make maximum use of the material sources, science and intellect, to achieve Divine goals, By thus doing they attain their objectives earlier than expected.

Divine and exalted goals can be achieved earlier and more easily than expected, by a sound body, a developed and independent society endowed with the required defensive capability, equipped with modern equipment. Health requires state-of- the-art medicine, public hygiene, and a more superior system of medical education.

Attaining an exemplary society requires the efficient use of science in various spheres, including agriculture, industry, mineralogy, and urban planning. Paving the way to attain Divine goals requires the urgent use of science and intellect. Therefore, this discussion does not ignore their positive and efficient dimensions, but aims to point out man's limits and its effect on his knowledge. Limitations are characteristics of matter.

Eyes cannot hear, ears cannot see, but the incapacity of each to function instead of the other does not mean that either of the two is incapacitated. Since successful functioning of the human body requires the appropriate use of each of them, a comprehensive elevation of man needs to give careful attention to data concerning experimental, intellectual, and Divinely inspired sciences and use it all appropriately.

The Book and the traditions have placed human perception on such an elevated level that Divine revelation complements it rather than replaces it. From the Islamic point of view, the three complement each other and ignoring any of them will lead to problems and obstacles on the path leading to establishing the Divine ideal state.

# **Shortcomings Of Science**

Science is inadequate for human guidance and includes the following shortcomings:

#### The First Shortcoming

The object of perception and judgment concerning experimental sciences embraces material and tangible matters, but falls short in judging the spiritual dimension and moral virtues. Experimental sciences may neither affirm nor reject the issues lying beyond the field of experimental sciences. He, who rejects everything that lies beyond experiment resembles one who cannot see behind the wall, so rejects the existence of anything there.

Because of the limitations of experimental sciences, they are inadequate to guide man and assist him in attaining perfection. Man possesses two dimensions, the material and the spiritual. His guidance plan needs to take the two dimensions and their interrelation into account.

Science merely takes the material dimension into consideration, whereas the guidance plan needs to consider all the existential dimensions of mankind. For instance, a medical physician cannot present all the required instructions for somatic and psychological care.

#### **The Second Shortcoming**

Because of the previous limitation, the results obtained by experimental sciences cannot be accepted even in all man's material matters. Man's dimensional nature, i.e. the interrelation existing between the body and soul, and between the material and moral perfections, necessitates applying the results of experimental sciences in so far as man's spiritual and moral dimensions remain unharmed.

However, if certain damage sounds contingent or certain, following such results shall be considered unwise. If treating a disease affecting one part of the body is assumed to be harmful to another part, a committee of specialists is set up to take all sides into consideration. While practicing material instructions to strengthen the physical dimension, the dimensions leading to man's perfection should also be taken into account.

For instance, science and medicine say it is necessary to consume nutritious victuals in the time of hunger. However if there happens to be a hungry and needy person, human and spiritual perfection and morality necessitate that one renders him assistance, even if it means reducing the amount of one's victuals. In case one merely considers one's own bodily needs, he will ignore the needy.

Women, covering themselves with a veil in the presence of *non-mahrams* (those who they can marry) is cumbersome and restricts women's freedom of movement, and is particularly bothersome in hot weather, but can this cumbersomeness justify the nudity noticed in workplaces and common areas? It is unjustifiable due to evil consequences which pave the way for the dissemination of moral corruption.

The Islamic faith has declared certain acts as *haram* (unlawful) due to their adverse effects. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an mentions the unlawfulness of drinking alcoholic drinks and gambling:

"[O Prophet] you are asked concerning alcoholic drinks and gambling. Say: In them is a great sin, and [some] benefits for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit. And they ask you what they ought to spend. Say: "That which is beyond your needs." Thus Allah makes clear to you His Laws in order that you may give thought." (Holy Qur'an, 2:219)

This Holy verse reveals that its laws take the positive and material dimensions of matters into account, but at times, if the consequences of the positive and negative dimensions are taken to be negative, they are declared unlawful.

Consequently, because of the incapability of experimental sciences to know man's immaterial dimensions, it will be inappropriate to blindly follow their instructions even concerning material issues, unless one is certain they will not harm other dimensions.

#### The Third Shortcoming

The Being whose goal is to pave the way for man's perfection, takes his existential dimensions, capabilities, the material and immaterial, into consideration, to present a comprehensive plan. Science is incapable of providing answers for all human questions and dilemmas.

Scientists have confirmed it in recent decades. A contemporary scholar remarked: "I attended a conference in 1998, in which two outstanding cosmologists explicitly informed me that their studies revealed that science was not self sufficient and to find answers to a number of questions, one had to turn to God."8

Question: Are sciences, through their interrelations, able to present a general view of the world?

**Answer:** Firstly, the interrelation among experimental sciences cannot be denied. Such an interrelation does not result in a general view, but reveals a more precise, experimental, and specific judgment. For instance, physiology is related to biology, as mechanics is connected to mathematics.

The interconnection is of the type which is termed as "the prerequisite nexus," i.e. one precedes and is a prerequisite for the other. The preceding prerequisite (biology) serves as the ground for the experimental study of the other science (physiology), but it does not result in acquiring a general view regarding existence and man.

Secondly, not only do experience and experimental sciences lack a general view of the world of existence, but they are incapable of presenting a general and final argument even concerning tangible and experimental matters.

Experiment can, at most, reveal the result of experiments acquired so far, but it cannot provide an answer to the question whether the manner shall stay the same, or any experimental contradiction shall be found.

In cases where experimental scientists have presented general dictates, they have stepped beyond experiment and have made use of the intellect. A general view, even in experimental matters, can be possible with intellection.

# **Shortcomings Of The Intellect**

The intellect is another significant means of serving man, but even this means cannot provide man with a comprehensive guiding plan. The application of the atomistic view is one of the limitations of science, but it is improbable in case of the intellect. The intellect possesses the capacity to have a holistic view.

It can proceed beyond the particulars of the material world and have a holistic view toward them, deal with the goals of life and make use of existing means and capacities. Despite the capacity of the intellect to have a holistic view, other limitations reveal that it is incapable of presenting a comprehensive guiding plan. A number of its shortcomings may be enumerated as follows:

#### The First Shortcoming

The intellect may, to some extent, recognize man's immaterial dimension and the world's immaterial affairs. It perceives the generalities regarding man's moral issues and guidance, but is incapable of perceiving all the particulars. For instance, the intellect proves God's existence and its immateriality, but is unable to understand the particulars of Divine attributes.

It proves the principle of the existence of the otherworld, but is unable to expound the particulars of the world of purgatory, Dooms Day, paradise, and hell. On the one hand, the intellect does not reject the world to come, but proves it. On the other hand, it finds itself unable to perceive its particulars. Understanding the particular realities belonging to the other world lie beyond human intellect.

Human intellect perceives the general principles of moral values and spiritual growth, but lacks the capability to provide the means to achieve them. It perceives justice and injustice, but at times, faces obstacles in distinguishing between instances of injustice, rights and justice.

Human intellect affirms the value of strengthening the spiritual dimension of the individual and society; diminishing the attachment to this worldly life, money, concupiscence; the value of sacrifice and forgiveness; assisting the oppressed and the deprived; perseverance and bravery in achieving exalted goals; struggling against tyranny and corruption; administering justice in society; awareness of virtues and their actualization in life.

On the one hand, vices such as discord, harassment, backbiting, slander, murder, theft, strong attachment to money, concupiscence, fame and sacrificing all things for them, niggardliness, jealousy, dissimulation, flattery, despotism, oblivion of the spiritual dimensions of the soul, and the like are all reproached by the intellect.

Despite the intellect's perception of moral values, it is in need of Divine revelation. Religion does not displace intellect, but uses it in order to achieve certain perfections which are deemed by the intellect as virtues.

**Question:** Are science and the intellect able to make man needless of Divine revelation through their collaboration by presenting particulars and generalities, respectively?

**Answer:** Science, to some extent, perceives the particulars of the tangible world, and intellect, to some extent, perceives the generalities of the tangible and intangible worlds.

However, intellect is inadequate to perceive:

- The particulars of the immaterial dimensions of man and the world,
- The quality of the interrelation among the various dimensions of man and,
- Particular means of attaining guidance, perfection, and moral values.

Man's detailed guiding plan requires a source further cognizant of man's existential dimensions. Besides, intellect has certain limitations which will be mentioned later in this chapter.

Regarding the epistemic role of Divine revelation in the perception of the unseen world, the Holy Qur'an reads:

"Nor will Allah disclose to [all of] you the secrets of the unseen, but Allah chooses of His Messengers whom He wills." (Holy Qur'an, 3: 179)

It is beyond anyone's capacity to be apprised of the unseen. Consequently, God chooses from among his servants, a number of people to receive such knowledge and impart it to others. The Holy Qur'an also reads thus:

"Similarly we have sent among you a messenger of your own, reciting to you Our Verses and purifying you, and teaching you the Book and the wisdom, and teaching you that which you did not know." (Holy Qur'an, 2:151)

It also reads thus:

"Allah has sent down to you the Book and the wisdom, and taught you that which you knew not." (Holy Qur'an, 4:113)

The intellect does not reject the realities inaccessible to it. No sensible man claims that what he has not perceived does not exist, but on the contrary, through the passage of time, man finds out further that he lacks the capacity to perceive many things. The wisest thinkers have been those who have admitted the incapacity of the intellect.

#### **The Second Shortcoming**

Establishing an argument or theory acceptable to man is different from demonstrating its value and reasonable argument. In other words, establishing a preliminary argument belonging to some other source is different from understanding it with the intellect. For instance, designing and building a historical monument, apart from aesthetic appreciation, lies in its harmony and solidity.

Many people are able to design a building but lack the capacity to build it. Only a skilled architect possesses the capacity to carry it out. Similarly, the intellect, at times, is capable of discovering the basis of religious ordainments, but incapable of understanding their preliminary design.

Establishing fixed rules is harder than discovering the grounds lying behind them. Presenting a theory is more difficult than understanding and analyzing it. Therefore, the intellect, at times, is capable of uncovering the grounds lying behind religious laws, but it lacks the capacity to expound their fundamentals.

In many cases, the intellect may perceive the parameters lying behind religious laws, but it cannot independently discover such laws.

### **The Third Shortcoming**

Most of the reasonable judgments presented in humanities (e.g. psychology, sociology, law, political science) sound plausible, but all of them do not stand to reason. They are based on other experimental preliminaries and since man is ignorant of their experimental preliminaries or is uncertain of them, he is misguided. Such judgments are not only based on intellection, but also experimental sciences.

An illustration of the point in question; the intellect thinks that men and women should reasonably enjoy the same economic rights, since they are both human beings from the same parents, but, it is a hasty judgment. First of all, the origin of right should be known.

The intellect's final answer to this question is that in case, the grounds for the establishment of economic rights for two individuals happen to be equal, their rights should be equal, otherwise the rights of the two individuals should be different. The intellect is incapable of independently judging whether the grounds for establishing male and female economic rights are equal.

The experimental sciences are supposed to establish the similarities and differences between men and women and expound their roles in society, i.e., constituting a family, having children and the social issues arising from them, so that the intellect can perceive the equality enjoyed by the two sexes.

In case the basis of rights happens to be one of the similarities between men and women, their rights will enjoy equality. But, if a difference results in the establishment of a certain right, their rights will also be different. If the stability of a family lies in woman's freedom and man's obligation to meet the economic

demands of the family, granting such a privilege to the woman necessitates the bestowal of another economic privilege to the man.

The intellect cannot independently perceive all the grounds underlying the establishment of the rights, similarities, and differences existing between men and women, since the intellect deals with general concepts, nor pass judgments concerning all particular cases, unless the premises stem from experimental sciences.9

Therefore, despite the invaluable results, derived from humanities, making use of them requires paying attention to the above issue and accounts for the higher error quotient in humanities, compared to purely experimental sciences.

## **Shortcomings Shared By Science And The Intellect**

In addition to the specific limitations of each of the two, other common shortcomings exist which impede their guiding capacities.

#### The First Shortcoming

Man's ignorance in the spheres of experimental and intellectual sciences far exceeds his knowledge. As he obtains further knowledge, he perceives the undiscovered and unknown depths of existence.

Consequently, we find scholars throughout the centuries admitting the frailties of the intellect and experience. Avicenna regards that man as the most ignorant who, as soon as he hears something, immediately denies its existence.

According to him, as long as the nonexistence of something is proven, the wise do not deny its existence, but regard it as potentially existent. In his words, the wise man "places it in the crucible of potentiality." 10 Therefore, despite his epistemic capacities, man has limitations, which also limit his knowledge and intellect.

Therefore, the guidance plan for the individual cannot be prepared merely by relying on man's perception, because his ignorance far exceeds his knowledge.

## The Second Shortcoming

The results derived from experimental sciences may be divided into two classes, i.e., proven hypotheses or rejected hypotheses. The former are limited in number and do not present adequate instructions for man's guidance. The latter are abundant in number, but unreliable. A glance at the history of science reveals the large number of contradictory, rejected or contending hypotheses and theories.

The results of man's reasonable thoughts may also fall into two categories. The first category constitutes

a) axioms whose conclusions are final and certain (the knowledge acquired by the empirical intellect,

e.g. the impossibility of the conjunction of contradictory elements; the whole being greater than the part; man's self-substantiated knowledge,

e.g. his knowledge concerning his psychological conditions and his existence; the knowledge acquired by the practical intellect, e.g. disgust for tyranny, egoism, niggardliness, jealousy, and the appeal of justice, self-sacrifice, equality; and, b) the final theoretical conclusions based on explicit and proven premises.

The second category includes tentative and unproven theoretical conclusions and discordant intellectual claims. Of the two categories, the former are reliable but limited in number, and cannot present an adequate guiding plan for man. Those belonging to the second category are innumerable but unreliable.

It is impossible to rely totally on the intellect or science to guide man's existence and execute an unreliable plan. How can one allow contradictory and rejected scientific theories, tentative and falsifiable intellectual conclusions, no matter how numerous the intellectual claims, to lead man toward guidance?

Has not time shown the harmful consequences of relying on suspicious views and ideas? Has not man realized his epistemic incapacities? We find serious fluctuations and even total transformation in the thoughts of a number of the greatest philosophers.

For instance, Wittgenstein, in two periods in his life, possessed two totally different and contradictory views, and by each of them impressed the West in such a manner that he totally transformed his contemporaries' philosophical trend of thought.

At the beginning, he presented a theory which attracted and influenced contemporary philosophical thought. Within the next ten years, he abstained from expressing his thoughts, after which, he presented another theory which rejected all his former theories. His new theory was so impressive that, like his previous one, it attracted the prevailing philosophical thought.

Another example is John Dewey, who went through three phases in his life with three different views. With such drastic fluctuations in the world's iconic thinkers' and philosophers' thoughts, how can their intellectual and tentative theories be considered as reliable?

How can the general and particular plans for human guidance and perfection be vested with them, let alone other people's intellect? To appreciate the unreliability of intellect in the domain of theories, rather than axioms, it suffices to take a glance at the contradictory theories to which thinkers have had recourse in the history of man's life.

A review of the intellectual development of Western philosophy uncovers abundant vicissitudes. A number of iconic philosophers, e.g. Descartes, Kant, and Hegel played on absolute and unconditional rationalism for some time and merely regarded man and the world from this angle. After the passage of

time, they noticed their errors and recognized a number of the limitations in their approach. A number of them, e.g. John Locke, Berkeley, and Hume pursued the opposite side and proceeded with extreme empiricism. Shortly, others became cognizant of their errors and dispensed with their empiricist approach.

Man experienced bitterness in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Modern times. Then began a new era that entertained doubts. Man turned to his predecessors' extreme tendencies, inclined toward perplexities and absolute relativism, and meditated on modifications of the ancients' conclusions.

Nietzsche stepped upon the stage, declared God's demise, and found a number of adherents, but after a while his views were criticized and rejected. Once Marxism prevailed in the arena of thought and politics, but its dominance lasted briefly and ended in failure in the spheres of theory and practice.

Each and every epoch is dominated by the particular views of a number of outstanding intellectuals, a flourishing but confused platform is arranged attracting intellectuals as well as the general public. A glance at the history of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Modernism, and Postmodernism provides us with clear evidence of the same story.

Despite serious contradictions among philosophical theories in different eras, even the contradictions of one single philosopher's thoughts at one time, divests human intellect of the capacity to guide man.

Besides, the predicaments resulting from the errors of experimental sciences are relatively more serious than those of intellectual sciences, since the errors of the first category, at maximum, result in material and tangible losses, but those arising from the latter category are perceived later, after the opportunities are missed and have ended in the metamorphosis of human character and his depravity.

If we are supposed to take lessons from human experience, it will be the grossest error to merely rely on the erroneous intellect for guidance. Man is not an inexpensive commodity to give the helm of his guidance to any man.

**Question:** Given the limitations of human intellect, why do we rely on it for a number of matters and regard it as reliable?

**Answer**: All the expressed errors are within the domain of tentative judgments which are not based on axioms. Theoretical propositions are tentative. They are to be scrutinized and then based on axioms, which are unfalsifiable. 11

It will be possible to obtain final conclusions, in case knowledge is based on such propositions; however, the number of such results is inadequate to present a particular plan for guidance and perfection. Apart from primary axioms which belong to the theoretical intellect, there exist self-evident logical propositions in the domain of practical intellect which are acceptable to all humanity, such as the above mentioned virtues and vices.

The majority of differences and suspicious propositions belong to cases in which the intellect attempts to present particular approaches. Consequently, we cannot present a comprehensive plan for guidance by relying on the intellect and sacrifice all our means for such a plan.

#### The Third Shortcoming

In case we disregard the invalid scientific and intellectual results, we are supposed to consider that all people cannot avail the optimal scientific and intellectual sophistication, and thereby benefit from them for their own guidance.

Man possesses the faculty of perception within the domain of scientific and intellectual understanding, but there is a long distance to traverse prior to its actualization. Many people are unaware of the full flourishing of their scientific and intellectual capacity.

How is man, in such circumstances, capable of making all his existential merits totally accessible to his experimental or intellectual perception?

**Question:** Is it possible to avail oneself of the opinions of the experts who have reached the apex of florescence?

**Answer:** As mentioned above, their reliable or conclusive opinions are limited in number, but such opinions are not adequate for attaining guidance. Their dubious opinions and inconclusive hypotheses cannot serve as acceptable authorities. It is not known whose ideas, from among the different ideas of thinkers, are to be accepted in order to attain a practical plan toward perfection. Considering the fact that the hypotheses are inconclusive and spending all the efforts in dubious ways is perilous, there exists no reason to prefer one over the other.

## **The Fourth Shortcoming**

Knowledge and intellect may reach conclusions concerning the perception of certain realities, but such attainment may take long. Through the process of trial and error and objective observation of applying different, and at times, contradictory intellectual methods, man may distinguish between right and wrong ways in order to attain

guidance, but taking this course would entail the sacrifice of the capabilities of numerous generations and non-actualization of many virtues. The pursuit of a plan for guidance resembles finding precautions or treatment for existing diseases. However, a wise man does not accept to wait all his life for the reception of a medical prescription which was prescribed for him in his childhood.

Similarly, for the sake of his growth, man should, in his prime of life, especially after adolescence, control his conduct by making use of a reliable guidance plan. The later he attains a guidance plan and applies it, the less he will attain perfection. After all, the chance of success in attaining perfection and developing

his potentials starts decreasing through adolescence, youth and middle age. The perfection of morals, spirituality, education, and character should be paved in the first years of one's life.

How can one benefit adequately from religious teachings if he perceives their values in his middle or old age? His character has already been shaped and he has lost a large portion of his capacities. Missing the chance is a great and irreparable loss for one who seeks perfection. He cannot wait for scientific and intellectual advancements to reach their end so that he may benefit from their results.

Therefore, if certain teachings assist him in his development, he should recognize them as soon as possible and act accordingly.

The Qur'an is the means of guidance, through which God, from man's prime of life, makes all the required instructions available to him. On the one hand, we notice that Islamic teachings are based on the best courses of action which have been uncovered in time. For instance, many physical and hygienic instructions, laws and regulations, and Islamic material instructions have been gradually confirmed by experimental sciences, but such confirmation has been carried out in a number of centuries after the advent of Islam.

It is quite possible that further Islamic laws find new scientific and intellectual support in future. Such instances include the following:

Consumption of pork is forbidden in Islamic law and it has been discovered in modern times that hygienically, it is harmful for man.

In a number of countries such as China, a large number of people have accommodated their regime according to that of Muslims, since medical studies carried out in that country indicate that, compared to the followers of other religions, less Muslims contract serious diseases such as hepatitis B.

It has been obvious nowadays that firstly slaughtering animal according to the Islamic law is more hygienic, since strangulation of animals, prevailing throughout the world, has adverse effects on the meat. Secondly, compared to other ways of slaughtering animals, they suffer less pain.

Nowadays, the medical value of many Islamic hygienic instructions about food consumption has been proven.

#### The Fifth Shortcoming

The dubious results achieved by the intellect and science might not lead man to salvation, but merely serve as a means to worldviews, aims, and inclinations determined somewhere else. Science serves as a means with different applications. The mere possession of means does not guarantee its appropriate application.

Experimental sciences may be put to favorable or unfavorable use. The availability of this means does

not result in man's needlessness of a guidance plan or approaches in their proper use.

In case science could be used independently to save man, it would not serve as a means for superpowers to maintain their cruel dominance. Instances include the United States and Israel that seek domination and carry out cruel massacres by making use of the weaponry produced through advancements in experimental sciences.

The power-thirsty make use of the latest achievements in experimental sciences for destruction, massacre, and genocide. Nowadays, the state-of-the-art technology serves powers that directly or indirectly commit many crimes against humanity, particularly against weak societies.

On the other hand, protecting humanity against the rebels' insurgence, and also providing the oppressed nations with facilities require the same means. Therefore, in case experimental scientists are not guided, their developments may serve the enemies of humanity. Scientific advancements may entail unfavorable results if they are not accompanied by teachings providing man with guidance, virtues, and Divine revelation directing mankind on the way to salvation.

In *Science and Synthesis*, Julian Huxley, the iconic Western scientist, writes: "In our time, innumerable discoveries have been made possible through science, but science does not teach us its proper applications. In fact, science has played the role of a magician, and has set the perilous genius, named technology, like an unfettered lunatic, on humanity." 12

Like science, the intellect may be abused for attaining ominous ends and it may be influenced by sensual desires. The possibility of blending intellect with an individual's emotions and inclinations may cause humanity to lose their confidence in it. The history of man's thoughts reveals that numerous intellectual leaders have defended views in order to find followers and attain renown, and thereby a large number of people have been misled.

The oppressive, godless and arrogant powers have, at all times, taken advantage of a number of thinkers and abused them in order to justify their own acts. All the colonial, imperialistic, and hypocritical designs and stratagems have been produced through intellectual conspiracies. It is the same instrumental intellect which has been criticized by many thinkers in the West.

Intellection may be, consciously or unconsciously, impressed by passions. In this regard, Imam Sadiq ('a) states: "Love of the world causes man to become blind, deaf and dumb." 13 This tradition reveals that passions impress man's epistemic system.

One of man's instinctive and bestial inclinations is his tendency toward freedom, unfettered by any morals and liberated from behavioral restraints. Thus the Holy Qur'an reads:

#### "Nay! Man desires to continue committing sins." (Holy Qur'an, 75:5)

With such character flaws, man abuses his intellect. As stated in the Holy Qur'an, seditious men with

sick hearts and intellects take recourse to similar Qur'anic verses and, by improper use of the intellect, attempt to interpret them according to their own aims and objectives.14

Consequently, every wise man cannot be followed. In addition to a higher perception, the guide and reformist who treads the Divine path is in need of a higher state of piety, (fearing God). One of the Divine clues to the infallibility of Prophets and Imams lies behind this point.

#### **The Sixth Shortcoming**

Restricting the basis of guiding individuals and society to human intellect and materialistic science and depriving them of the protection of Divine revelation gradually places man on a precipice and creates crucial complications.15

#### The Seventh Shortcoming

The utmost capacity of science and the intellect is to provide man with perception in a certain sphere, but besides the epistemic factor for man's guidance, we are also in need of the motivating factor. Man possesses the twain dimensions of perception and inclination.

He does not necessarily actualize what he knows and understands, but one of his problems has been the fact that he does not act upon his knowledge and tramples his intellectual knowledge. Instinctive and bestial passions and the domination of moral vices easily suppress human emotions and intellect.

People lack the firm will to act upon ethical principles which are perceptible to all. For instance, many people are aware of the harms caused by smoking, but they do not quit it. It has been in the news that somebody murdered his daughter to gain wealth. A 38 year old man threw his 9 year old, hearing—impaired daughter under a truck in order to receive \$ 200, 000 as insurance compensation and was convicted of willful murder. 16

It is through the conscience that all people understand the value of respecting senior citizens and parents, assisting the depressed, the needy, and children, but certain factors may adversely impress the conscience and enfeeble it. Everyone dislikes the modern life which is governed by machines and financial values affecting human relationships and human emotions.

They grieve about such misfortunes and endeavor to find an exit out of them. Religious teachings awaken the conscience and prevent it from being victimized by the frailty of emotions. In contrast, irreligiousness may result in weakening the conscience.

Trampling down moral values and the conscience is not only specific to the general public, it includes men of thought and reason as well. They easily become afflicted with arrogance and egotism and sacrifice moral values for them. In certain instances, the complications of men of science, possessing specific capabilities, exceed those of others.

According to the secretary general of the Association for Struggling against Smoking Tobacco Products, findings of a scientific study carried out by the Iranian Medical Organization reveal that physicians smoke two times more than others. The percentages of Iranian female and male smoking physicians exceed 4 and 28.3 respectively. 17

What was mentioned above explicitly indicates that science and the intellect do not adequately serve as motives for action, nor produce the required power to act. Man is in need of a more rigorous power to approach perfection and abstain from error. Faith and religious beliefs play significant roles in this regard.

Acknowledging Divine revelation and believing in it create a particular power in man, incomparable to other internal and external motives, which set him in motion. Religious faith produces the energy which leads man to treading the path toward perfection and compels him to harmonize appropriate conduct with accurate self–perception.

Thus, religion may be considered as a support for the actualization of the ordainments of practical wisdom. Listening to the words originating from a sacred source like God entails further impressions and creates a more rigorous will to act. Man is potentially more inclined to obey the Sublime Being and the Divinely appointed saints, the most elevated in station among created beings.

Besides, considering the chastisement and reward for human actions, man is compelled to act according to faith and religion. Consequently, excluding religion, morality leads nowhere, even if it sets man to proceed, abandons him halfway and never assists him in attaining his goal. In fact, religion invigorates the dormant conscience.

Science and the intellect lack such capacity, but accompanied by religion, they overcome this deficiency. Thus, religion does not contradict science and the intellect, rather complements them. Religion uncovers and extracts the treasures of the intellect and leads experimental sciences towards felicity and virtue.

### **The Eighth Shortcoming**

Despite possessing inward epistemic means and due to bestial and instinctive tendencies and restrictions imposed by a number of factors leading to negligence, Men are negligent and forget their morality. Therefore, besides the inward perception faculty, man is in constant need of reminders from a sacred source to tread the path of guidance.

The intellect and science cannot independently achieve such objectives. This shortcoming has been eliminated through Divine revelation, sent down through the medium of good-natured prophets.

According to the Holy Qur'an, one of the functions of prophethood is to remind men of their duties towards their Creator. References are to be found in the Qur'an regarding the Qur'an per se and many other sacred books (e.g. *dhikr* "remembrance"; *dhikra* "reminiscence"; *tadhkira* "reminder"; *mudhakkir* 

"reminder" and so forth) referring to the same issue. According to Imam 'Ali ('a), one of the objectives of sending down Divine revelation and prophethood is to remind men of forgotten bounties and man's God-worshipping nature. 18

#### The Ninth Shortcoming

Limitations of science and the intellect are not only claimed by us, but Westerners have also come to such a conclusion. Nowadays, postmodern thinkers criticize the rationalist and scientist orientation of the age of modernism. Basically, the advent of the postmodern trend of thought is the consequence of deficiencies in the modernist outlook and a critique of their intellectual principles; the most outstanding being extreme scientism and rationalism.

#### The Tenth Shortcoming

Presently, none of the aforementioned limitations of science and the intellect have been eliminated. Dissemination of philosophical and intellectual schools and advancements in science and technology in recent centuries have not been able to eliminate their shortcomings and they still survive.

Axioms have not increased quantitatively, nor have theorists presenting dubious theories provided man with guidance, nor has modern man's intellect, in the presentation of details, attained adequate and certain conclusions, nor has modern man been able to deliver himself of the influence of his emotions and inclinations by applying his intellect and science, nor have the other aforesaid limitations been removed.

One of the reasons lying behind the continuity of the above limitations, particularly in experimental sciences, is that such characteristics are related to the essence and quiddity of experimental sciences and humanities.

The increase in man's experimental data does not transform its essence, but assists him to know himself further and recognize his limitations. Consequently, nowadays compared to the past, limitations of science are more evident to scientists. 19

Advancements in intellectual and experimental sciences have not only failed in eliminating and compensating for the aforesaid weaknesses, but also, compared to the past, the need for religion is further felt. The reasons lying behind such a need are enumerated as follows:

Firstly, man's capacity to make use of science has been on the increase and further facilities have been provided for their further misuse. Therefore, compared to the past, modern age is further in need of some force to harness its power.

Similarly, when man is in possession of a more robust body and more sophisticated weaponry, he will be more capable of using his power in the right and wrong directions; possession of the state-of-the-art

scientific instruments and facilities presents the same risks and it is conducive to the rise of his destructiveness and constructiveness.

For the same reason, the more knowledge one possesses, the more is he in need of guidance in the application of his means and facilities.

Secondly, compared to the past, the path is further paved for to arouse man's passions and emotions with his bestial orientation, play with humanity, go astray, confront dilemmas, and drown in the sea of perplexity. Experimental sciences and humanities are further, and with unprecedented force, employed to achieve these goals.

As a result, in such circumstances, a greater urgency is felt to guide man and save him from whirlpools and tempests.

## **Limitations Of Collective Reason**

At times, mention is made of collective reason and it is said that individual reason may suffer from error, but reference may be made to collective reason and thereby one may become needless of religion.

**Question:** Can collective reason make us needless of Divine revelation, lead us toward truth and provide us with guidance and perfection?

**Answer**: Collective reason in this sense is not meant to choose a superior individual for the practical administration of the government and political system, but to discover the truth.

A critique of collective reason as a substitute for Divine revelation to uncover truths which individual reason is unable to do, does not contradict the necessity of making use of collective reason and opinions for the religious administrative system, since in the sphere of government and legislation, we are not necessarily in pursuit of discovering the truth, but pursue legislation and enforcement of laws, and in this regard, people possess the right to choose within the frame work of Divine law (shari'a).

Emphasis is placed on reason as a substitute for religion to perceive material and immaterial dimensions of man and the world, and also to present strategies required to attain guidance and perfection.

Mentioning the limitations of individual reason does not denote rejecting the value of reason in specific cases, nor exposing the limitations of collective reason as a substitute for religion denote rejecting its effectiveness in specific cases.

Collective reason may be used in the following cases:

- The collective reason of all the people of the world throughout history.
- The collective reason of all the people of the world at a particular time and place and in the case of a

certain people.

- The collective reason of all the elite of the world throughout history.
- The collective reason of all the elite at a particular time and place and in the case of a certain people.

The first and the third cases entail the following complications:

Firstly, the consequences of the first and the third cases are not accessible, since we do not have access to the ideas of prospective generations, or those of the near and remote past. Besides, we are unaware of the ideas of future generations. In case, all the ideas of the world's wise men be taken as standards for action, it will be impossible to ignore the viewpoint of prospective generations.

Based on the advancement of mankind and the awareness arising from the experience of former generations, they may attain more certain theoretical conclusions. Making our utmost efforts, we can merely be aware of the results achieved by collective reason of our predecessors and contemporaries.

Thus, we do not have access to the unanimity of the wise men of the world in the past, present and future. Of course, when we said that our predecessors and contemporaries did not attain unanimity regarding any explicit and guiding issues, it would suffice to say that all men of the past, present and future are not unanimous concerning any explicit and guiding issues.

In other words, contingent unanimity of prospective generations in this case may not distort the truth of the aforementioned words, since when the collective reason of predecessors and contemporaries lack such unanimity, that of future generations does not necessitate ignoring or eliminating the existent difference. The mere unanimity of future generations does not denote the unanimity of mankind throughout history.

Secondly, even if we ignore the unanimity of future generations, that of our predecessors and contemporaries is very limited and their number would be inadequate to present a comprehensive plan to guide mankind.

It is impossible to actualize man's moral and social guidance through reliance on such limited issues. The evidence includes: justice, assisting the oppressed, denouncing oppression, and supporting oppressors. It is noteworthy that, despite the existence of certain common factors and explicit evidence; for e.g., the virtue of assisting the oppressed, there are differences and ambiguities in this respect.

Can we say that it is hideous to wrong anybody, even enemies and wrong-doers? The difference of further significance lies in the sense of justice and injustice. Numerous interpretations of the meaning of justice are given by different intellectual schools. Such differences have existed among thinkers and philosophers since olden times in ancient Greece, e.g. Plato and Aristotle, and also in the Middle Ages onwards.

After the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment and the recent centuries, thinkers like Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Michel Walzer, presented different interpretations of justice.20

The second and fourth cases entail the following complications:

In case, collective reason stands for the general public or the elite of society at a particular time and place, the following complications shall arise:

Firstly, the preference of the general public or the elite over others is groundless.

Secondly, unanimity over guiding issues is quite limited and entails another complication, mentioned in the first and the third cases.

Thirdly, ideas maintained by a group of elite are not infallible and their veracity is not guaranteed. The commonly accepted ideas in a society are called axioms in logic; since they are exposed to error and uncertainty, they do not appear in the premises of arguments, but are employed in argumentation and rhetoric.

Besides, axioms and commonly accepted ideas often originate from the words of the elite of society in the past and present, and they are also used in the mass media, but none of which may lead to certainty; as the elite themselves have often erred in perception and theorization. A survey of the history of human thought explicitly reveals the same, as it will be expressed further in detail.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, termed as the Age of Modernism, Western scholars, impressed by past developments, emphasized the denial of religion and placed emphasis on the capacity of the intellect and senses. Consequently, Western societies developed a negative attitude toward religion.

Nowadays, the plight of science has been, to some extent, revealed to Western scholars, and the negative aspects of industrialization and technology constitute the topics of arguments, and psychology and sociology of religion are respected. People's attitudes have also undergone gradual transformation.

Another instance would be the fact that a considerable number of Western scholars are not adequately informed of the Islamic faith, particularly of Shi'ism, since a large number of Islamic sources, especially those pertaining to Shi'ite thought, are not available in translation.

The efforts taken in this respect are rather recent. Most of Western scholars are not familiar with Persian and Arabic, nor have they access to adequate sources. Consequently, the general public in Western societies have not been able to have access to Islamic and Shi'ite thought.

**Question:** Can the Western scholars' and the general public's ignorance concerning Shi'ism, and particularly the negative attitude inculcated by the mass media, account for their judgment regarding Shi'ism? How can the collective reason of people in such circumstances serve as a means of accurate

judgment regarding the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of Shi'ism?

The mass media which constitutes one of the most important formative factors of popular thought is a toy in the hands of its organizers. They propagate their true or untrue thoughts by employing charming means.

This issue is explicitly observed in the modern world. For instance, a large number of people in Western societies regard Islam as a religion of terrorism or that of seeking violence.

They depict a negative, violent, and media-enhanced picture of Imam Khomeini, who was a God fearing, and affectionate leader, but such misconceptions, more or less, still prevail.

- 1. Ian Barbur, 'Elm va Din, p. 70.
- 2. Seyr-e Takamol-e 'Aql-e Novin, vol. 1, pp. 334-335 quoted from Kherad- varzi, p. 43.
- 3. Ian Babur, 'Elm va Din, p. 77.
- 4. Ibid. P.71. For further details in this regard, see the chapter "The trend of the scholars' belief in religion until the 20th century.
- 5. Kiyan (periodical), 29, p. 12.
- 6. Ibid. pp. 12-13.
- 7. Dr. Soroush's view on the good needlessness of religion and his further arguments shall be discussed in detail in the chapter "Arguments substantiating needlessness of religion
- 8. Mahdi Golshani, Keyhan (periodical) 7.11.1357 and 22.4.1378.
- 9. Mesbah Yazdi, Qalamrov-e Din ["The Realm of Religion"], the Qom-based internet website: http://andishe%20qom%2082-10-13/Index.htm [1].
- 10. Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyya, vol. 1, p. 364.
- 11. It stands beyond our discussion to express the mystery of the unfalsifiability of primary axioms. For further information, see: Muhammad Taqi Mesbah, Amuzesh-e Falsafe ["Primer in Philosophy"], vol. 1, pp. 151–157; Muhammad Hosayn-zadeh, Ma'refat-shenasi ["epistemology"], pp. 43–48, 124–127.
- 12. Jean Forestier, Bohran-e Daneshgah, tr. 'Ali Akbar Kasma'i, p. 69.
- 13. Kafi, vol. 2, p. 136.
- 14. "It is He Who has sent down to you the Book. In it are verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book (and any complications may be removed by referring to them) and others are similar (because of the exaltedness of the material and other intellects, different possibilities may appear, but considering the clear verses, their meanings become clear). So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking alfitna (in order to mislead people), and seeking (an inaccurate interpretation) for its hidden meanings, but none knows its hidden meanings save Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge (and seek to understand the mysteries of all the Qur'anic verses in the light of Divine Knowledge) say we believe in it; the whole of it are from our Lord. And none receive admonition (and do not understand this fact) except men of understanding."(Holy Qur'an, 3 7)
- 15. A detailed discussion will follow in the chapter "The West and the damaging consequences of excessive emphasis on knowledge and intellect."
- 16. International Ettela'at (periodical), 9.9.1375, p. 4.
- 17. Bulletin, No. 57, p. 36. Regarding the same, Muhammad Reza Masjedi, at Iran's Fifteenth Conference of the Experts' Medical Association stated: "unfortunately, our physicians who are expected to take fundamental steps in the prevention and the decrease in using tobacco products, do not believe in the real harms caused by such products."
- 18. Nahj al-Balagha, the first sermon (khutba): li-yasta'du-hum mithaqa fitratih wa yudhkaru-hum mansiyya ni'mati "to ask them regarding loyalty to the covenant of nature and to remind them of the forgotten bounties." For further information see: Muhammad Taqi Mesbah, Rah va Rahnama-shenasi ["the path and knowing the guide to the path"], pp. 38–39.

- 19. The West and the damaging consequences of excessive scientism and rationalism.
- 20. Hosayn Tavassoli, "Mabna-ye 'Adalat dar Nazariyye-ye jan Ralz" ["Foundations of justice in the Theory of John Rawls"], Naq va Nazar ["Critique and Review"(periodical)], no. 10; Rabert Nazik, "'Adalat va Estehqaq" ["Justice and Worthiness"], tr. Mostafa MaleKiyan, Naqd va Nazar, no. 10; "Niche ya Arastu? Dar Guft o Gu ba alder Mak Intayer" ["Nietzsche or Aristotle? An Interview with Alder McInntyre"], tr. Gholam-Hosayn Tavakkoli, Naqd va Nazar, no. 10.

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