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Chapter 7: The Teaching Ideology

By the virtue of the fact that the purpose of a course of instruction in ideological principles is to teach ideology before embarking on such a course we should address a number of questions. These are as following:

- 1. If we bear in mind the fact that a person's opinions and beliefs are not within his power to control; but like love are involuntary phenomena is the teaching of opinion fundamentally possible? Can one teach love?
- 2. If research is necessary in ideology2, and everyone has a duty both from the rational and religious point of view to seek out correct opinions. Is it net better to encourage people to investigate and research their opinions instead of being taught them? And is it not the teaching of ideology, in the scene of transferring an opinion from teacher to pupil, a form of *Taqlid*? And finally, why is the teaching necessary?
- 3. How many methods are there for the teaching of ideology? And in the lessons that follow which of these methods will be used to teach the principles if Islamic ideology?

These question will be answer under the following headings:

Can Ideology Be Taught?

It has already been explained that although ideology is neither within a person's power to adopt as he wishes, nor within another's power to impose forcibly on him, 3 by changing the source of beliefs it is possible to change incorrect and unscientific opinions. In other words, if the ideological basis is *Taqlid*, by breaking the chain of *Taqlid*, opinions can be changed, and if the basis is inadequate research then by means of more an adequate research scientific opinions can be substituted for follower ones.

It is the same with love. Although love is not within a person's control, and cannot be imposed on him, by changing the object of love it is possible to destroy it and even to transform it into hatred and it is also

possible to transform an absence of love or even hatred into love and interest. As the mystic poet says:

'When I was bound apprentice

My father bless his soul.

Spoke these words to my master,

"Let love be his one goal".

The teaching of love consists of the provision of instruction which caution the pupil against becoming attached to being the love of which is harmful and stress him towards things the love of which is beneficial. In other words, the teaching of love is training a person to avoid worthless loves and instead to nature love which are innate and real.

The teaching of ideology is just the same. In other words, it consists of the provision of instruction which alienates a person from false and unscientific beliefs, and inculcates in him correct and scientific beliefs. And clearly this is a feasible goal.

The Need To Teach Ideology

No knowledge, to be is so essential for a person to acquire as ideology, or the science of opinion. In this connection, there is a valuable hadith of Imam Baqer, an address to Jaber bin Yazid Ja 'fi, who had sought his advice: 'Know that there is no science to equal that which safeguards one's health, and there is no health so important as the health of one's soul'.4

Indeed, no science is so valuable as that which ensures the health of a person's heart and soul, since the standard of judgment of any science is the service it provided man, and man can only put science to work and benefit from knowledge if he is healthy. A person's health, in turn, has two dimensions. The first is his physical health, and the second is his psychological health. Now since psychological health is the more essential form of these dimensions it follows that a science which safeguards a person's psyche is the most of all sciences, and it's study has a higher than does any other science in terms of improving a person's life and curing the ills of human society.

Proof that the science of ideology safeguards a person's psychological health is provided by the fact that opinion is grafted on the his mind and soul, and as was explained in Chapter I of this introduction, unscientific grafts and incorrect beliefs cause a person's inner and real form and structure to deviate from their natural state, and this unnatural condition makes him morally sick.

The subsequent tendency towards wrong attitudes causes his individual and social life to be diverted from its natural course. Since the science of ideology prevents unscientific and fallacious beliefs from being grafted on to a person's psyche, it is a safeguard of his psychological well-being, and therefore

must be considered the most valuable of all sciences and the study of which has a greater priority than any other form knowledge.

Compulsory Education

Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that primary education should be compulsory and free for all.

If you were to have asked the signatories of this declaration why they had thus deprived illiterates of their liberty, why they did not wish to allow them to exercise the option of remaining illiterate, and what their reason was for insisting on compulsory education, their reply would undoubtedly have been that a minimum start of literacy is essential for everyone.

We accept this view and the Prophet of Islam some thirteen centuries ago ordinary the acquisition of knowledge to be a religious duty incumbent on every male and female Muslim.5

Our disagreement with these gentlemen is over the question of why they made literacy compulsory on the grounds that it is essential in life, but made no mention of the teaching of correct opinions.

Is minimum standard of literacy a necessity, but correct opinions which guide life in a proper direction not such a necessity? Which is more harmful for a person, wrong opinions or illiteracy? Do illiterates create more trouble for themselves and others, or literate people with false opinions, wrong ideas and psychological deviations?

The truth of the matter is that if we judge man's essential requirements for life equitably and without considering political interests we see that nothing is more essential than psychological health, because if a person does not possess this he cannot benefit from a healthy body, or from knowledge and science, or indeed from anything else. As was stated in the words of Imam Baqer, the science which ensures a person's health in this field is the most essential thing a person should know. This makes it necessary for the way to be prepared for everybody to be taught ideology, and such instruction, like literacy, should be universal and obligatory.

As for the objection that the teaching of ideology amounts to the conveying the opinions of the teacher to the pupil by means of blind obedience and *Taqlid*, the answer is quite clear, since *Taqlid* consists of accepting the views of others without reason or proof, and ideological instruction that is based on reason and proof cannot be considered *Taqlid*. Moreover, if instruction in ideological studies is considered to be *Taqlid* then all classes in which the various sciences are taught must be so considered.

Finally, the proposal that instead of ideological instruction people should be encouraged to study and research opinions for themselves cannot be carried put without formal instruction. Because a study of ideological problems, although it may require no more instruction than the other sciences, certainly does not requires less than they do, and if literacy classes need a classroom and a teacher how can it to be

said ideological instruction does not need a teacher?!

Methods Of Teaching Ideology

It can be said that there are all three methods of teaching ideological principles:

- 1) The method of the philosophers.
- 2) The method of the scholars.6
- 3) The method of the divinely-inspired prophets.

Each of these three groups-philosophers, scholars divinely-inspired prophets-have discussed the question of ideological principles, but each has its own particular method of explaining them.

The method used by the prophets to teach the principles of ideology has two important and fundamental characteristics which the method of the philosophers and scholastics does not have. These are: universality and comprehensiveness.

The first characteristic of the method adopted by the prophets in teaching ideological principles is that it is universal, and addresses all classes of society, unlike the method of the philosophers and scholastics, which is directed at specific audiences.7

The audience of the philosophers and scholastics are special individual who understand their particular language and style, and not the people as a whole. In other words when philosophers and scholastics discuss ideological questions or write books they are not talking to the general public. Their audience is solely people with an interest in and specialized knowledge of philosophy or scholasticism, and have studied these subjects is intend to do so; hence their words and writings cannot be appreciated by the general public.

But the audience of the prophets is everybody. They are the teachers and mentors of all mankind. In matters of ideology they refer everybody to reason, argument and proof. Their audience is not only people who have studied or intend to study philosophy, or whose inclinations and talents are towards scholasticism. Their message is not addressed solely to scholars and students, or to any other specific social group.

Every social group or class is addressed by the prophet of God, so they must talk in a manner that everybody can benefit from, and in ideological fields they must reason in such a way that is universally comprehensible as well as being useful and convincing to all classes of society, from the most learned to the most illiterate.

The second characteristic of the method used by the prophets of God in teaching ideology is its comprehensiveness. In the method used by the philosophers and scholastics beliefs are discussed

without reference to action, and the ideological argument consists of a series of dry scholarly discussions divorced from social, political and moral activity. But in the prophets, method ideological discussion is particularly comprehensive, and belief and action are examined in relation to each other.

Instruction in the principles of ideology that utilizes this method, while introducing a person to deep scientific and philosophic arguments in matter relating to the origins of life and the resurrection of the dead can also reach him the most delicate question of mysticism, and explained the most precise questions of economics, politics and sociology to him.

In other words, the principles of ideology, when taught according to the prophet method, are a mixture philosophy, mysticism, sociology, economics and ethics. The nature of this comprehensiveness to the extent that the writer's scientific ability permits—will be illustrated in the course of the lectures that follow.

Our Method of Teaching Ideological Principles

In view of the universality and comprehensiveness of the method used by the prophets in teaching ideological principles, as explained above the writer has chosen this method. Rather than the method of the philosophers or scholars, that is, he will try as far as possible to make the discussion universal, understandable to all, and at the same time comprehensive. To this end, the overall plan of the discussions and the structure of the lectures will be taken from the words of the divinely–inspired prophets.

In other words, the reason found in the Quran or the words of the prophets and Imams regarding ideological matters will be gathered analyzed and commented on. This does not mean to say that in ideological discussions that require pure rational interpretation we will rely on the Quran and Hadith, but rather that the purely intellectual reasoning are taken from the Quran and hadith and subjected to explanation and study. We will also show how the divinely-inspired prophets, who always referred people to their reason in matters of ideological principles, themselves use to prove the opinions they invited the people to adopt. We will also show whether or not these arguments are convincing from the rational point of view.

The selection of this method, furthermore, may achieve two other results: it may prove the scientific miracles of the prophets, and it may show their immunity from ideological error.

In a hadith already quoted in our discussion of *Taqlid* Imam Sadeq says: 'When a person knows his religion from the book of God, mountains will be moved before he abandons his beliefs, whereas a person who becomes involved in a business through ignorance may also leave it through ignorance.8

The teaching of ideological principles according to the method of prophets establishes belief in the origins of life and the resurrection of the dead in a person's heart with a firmness that the very mountains of the earth cannot mated. See how firmly and peacefully the mountains are set in the around the plains.

A person's religious beliefs which have been implanted in his heart by the instruction of the prophets are even firmer than this, for as the Imam says mountains may move before such beliefs will change.

A Suggestion To Committed Artists

One of the characteristics of the method which we have chosen, inspired by the method used by the prophets, to teach ideological principles is that it enables committed artist to convert ideological questions and discussions into image–form for presentation on stage.

To take an example some of the questions discussed in this Introduction could be very interestingly acted on stage: the Battle of the Camel and the question which Imam 'Ali was asked by the Bedouin Arab in the midst of the battle and the Imam's reply explaining the importance of ideological debate: the question of *Taqlid* could be shown by the way supporters of political organizations and groups copy their leaders in ideological matters and blindly follow the party–line; people suffering from self–delusion and pseudo–knowledge could be portrayed as could really wise people, who refer to the authority of their reason in matters of belief.

All of these could be most effective in publicizing ideological discussion and even in exporting the culture of the Revolution and creating cultural revolutions in Islamic and non–Islamic countries. In other words, putting ideological questions and discussions into theatrical form is a way of adopting the allegorical method which the prophets used to explain intellectual problems to the masses.

If we study the Quran and the words of the prophets and Imams we see that they often used parables to explain an intellectual question. A parable can turn a rational idea into a mental picture, and give it cinema or television screen, and this is much more effective than a parable in illustrating reality.

In other words, we can explain ideological and intellectual questions by means of television or film images so as to complement the use move by the prophets of parables. Committed artist, inspired by the prophets' method, can play a useful, effective and delusive role in enhancing society's awareness and intellectual maturity and mobilizing the people of the world towards authentic Islamic beliefs.

The writer would therefore like to propose to committed artists that they should try to bring ideological questions and principles of Islamic belief to theatrical form in a respectable and appropriate way. It is of course realized that this is no easy task, yet it should not be impossible.

- 1. See previous chapter under 'Freedom to choose one's opinions P. 108.
- 2. See Chapter III of this Introduction.
- 3. See previous Chapter under 'Freedom to choose one's opinions' p.***
- 4. Mizan Hadith No. 13838.
- 5. Mizan hadith No. 13445.
- 6. The scholastics (motekallemin).
- 7. For an understanding of the method used by the philosophers and scholastics see Mortahari's Ravesh-haye Fikr Eslami (Islamic Intellectual processes).

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