

Introduction

The late Ayatollah Murtadha Mutahhari, a scholar of remarkable breadth and profundity, was one of those central figures who laid the intellectual foundations of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, years before its occurrence. In this collection of six essays he demonstrates his deep understanding of and meticulous research on all the topics he covers, which include faith, the world-view of *Tawhid*, philosophy, spirit, matter and life.

In the first essay, “Man and Faith”, the author explains what separates man from all other animals. Having established that science and faith are two of the central pillars of man’s humanity, Mutahhari discusses the relationship between them. Then he explains why man needs religious faith and why Islam is the only comprehensive teaching.

The second essay is titled “The Worldview of *Tawhid*”. Explaining that all religions, customs, schools of thought, and philosophies are based on a foundation, the author describes the three classes of world-views: scientific, philosophical, and religious. But the only all-encompassing worldview is that of *Tawhid*; it alone possesses the five necessary characteristics. Both *Tawhid* and its opposite *shirk*, have levels and degrees, and Mutahhari defines them and delineates the boundary between them. The author also discusses in this essay the implications of *Tawhid* for the unity and the uniqueness of the universe, far-reaching wisdom and divine justice, and the justice in Islamic culture.

The final of the longer essays concerns philosophy. Mutahhari begins by defining the word “philosophy”, including its Muslim usage. He sketches the history of philosophy from Aristotle to modern times. The author divides Islamic philosophers into two groups– illuminationist and peripateticists– although he suggests that two other methods of thought, ‘irfan (gnosis) and kalam (scholastic theology), both of which are at variance with the first two methods, have played an important part in the development of Islamic culture. Mutahhari closes the third essay by discussing some of the problems studied in Islamic philosophy.

The fourth section of the book consists of three briefer pieces. The first concerns spiritualism, on which Mutahhari cites the work of a diverse range of Western thinkers from Aristotle to Freud before discussing the position of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophers. In the second, the author explores the Qur’anic

view of life to see with what special logic the Qur'an treats the relation between life and the supernatural, the will of God. To round out the first two discussions, Mutahhari next considers the question of *Tawhid* and evolution. He explains the errors that have led to the belief that there is a contradiction between the two.

As Mutahhari stresses, Islamic thought on all these topics helps clarify matters and resolve problems and contradictions as no other system of thought can. The Qur'an provides all the guidance one needs to solve the profound problems Mutahhari discusses.

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