

Lesson 1: Human Beings, the World and Ideology

In our world, with its unlimited number of creatures, the human being is a creature who 'thinks', makes choices' and then 'acts'.

On the surface, we are confronted by the behavior and acts of human beings. For instance, we see a human being who 'oppresses'. We see another human being who is 'oppressed'. Then we see a third human being who is 'indifferent'.

What are the motives and reasons for these various kinds of behavior? Why is one an oppressor and another, oppressed, and a third, indifferent?

Of course, many factors play an effective role in the reason behind why a human being acts in a certain way. But let us not forget that we said a human being is a creature who 'thinks' and then 'acts.'

There is no doubt that the way of thinking of human beings and how a human being thinks has a great effect upon the choices that that person makes and his or her acts. In other words, belief and one's way of thinking or the ideology of a human being plays an important role in his or her practice and behavior.

[Note: The word ideology, from the point of view of structure, means the science of ideas or beliefs. An idea is something one thinks, knows or imagines; a thought; a mental conception or image, notion, an opinion or belief. Anything existing in the mind as an object of knowledge or thought as an idea. 'Ideal', also from this root, means 'model', 'exactly as one's beliefs are', or 'what one would wish for.'

But today the word 'ideology' has other meanings: First, in a general sense, ideology means or refers to a school of thought and action and the collection of all of the guidelines of that school of thought and action whether at the level of thought or at the level of action. When we use the word 'ideology' in these lessons, we refer to just this.

Second, ideology in the particular sense, refers only to the behavior of a human being and the rules of

practice (the do's and don'ts). In this case, we will refer to this as a 'world view' or the basic ideas of a school of thought and action.]

It is the general meaning of ideology, that is, a collection of component's of the belief system of human beings which are used for the word maktab, school of thought and action. We say, "The ideology of Islam as compared to other ideologies and schools of thought and action..."

Thus ideology means a universal or total theory about the world of existence along with or accompanied by a design for society. Because of its harmony and solidarity, it defines the way human beings should live and its goal is the well-being and the gradual development of humanity towards perfection or completion.

In an ideology, the insights, tendencies, methods and actions of human beings are defined and formed. Also, in an ideology, all of the basic lines or ways, routes, of the life of a human being, the do's and don'ts, the good and bad, the goals and means, the needs, pains and treatment and the answers to all of the needs of human beings must be made clear and defined.

In this way, the ideology of each human being or each society is the source of inspiration of that person or that society in coming to know something. This includes one's mission in life or the mission of a country, one's duties or the duties of society, individual responsibilities and society's responsibilities.

If we want to explain it in our own words, we can say 'the principles of belief and action' which underlie and explain behavior and encounters of human beings.

In the examples given at the beginning of the lesson, an individual who because of self-interests, material interests and animal desires, oppresses others, it is more often than not for the reason that he or she only looks at the world from the point of view of materiality and an animal-like life and he or she sees the sum total of life to be in these few days.

Also, the person who defends the oppressed and who fights for them and often even sacrifices his or her life in this struggle, these self-sacrifices and also struggles are because that person worships Truth and that person's beliefs are based upon spiritual values and the principles of humanity.

The indifference of the third person who is only a spectator also, in the first place, stems from the weakness of that person's beliefs and faith in spiritual values and in general, this encounter is because of the tendencies towards quick rewards and interests that are momentary like material and animal interests.

The Role of a World View in Ideology

Our age is an age of multiple ideologies and creeds. Various ideologies exist where each one claims to alone be the leader and guide for human beings. It believes itself to have a monopoly as the bringer of

well-being and gradual development of human beings towards perfection and completion. Towards this end, it invites all human beings to follow its tenets and ideology.

Each one of these ideologies and creeds, whether they want to or not, are a perception of a general evaluation and finally, they offer a particular interpretation and analysis of the world. Every ideology looks at the world and human beings with a particular view and existence is interpreted in a certain way. This total outlook or perception which in reality is the infrastructure which forms an ideology is called 'world view'.

For instance, materialism is a world view based upon which existence is equated to materiality and no truth exists above materiality. According to the world view of materiality, the human beings is merely a material creature which is destroyed upon death and in no way does an enlightened future confront the human being.

Confronting materialism is the Divine world view and based upon it the world is not limited or confined to materiality. Rather, the material world is a world which is dependent and in need of essence 'from Him' and 'towards Him'.

According to the Divine world view, the world of existence has a God and a precise accounting or reckoning rules over the world. The changes in the world do not merely materially obey the endless actions and reactions. The destiny of a human being and one's future obeys particular criteria. The human being is not destroyed with death. In the next world, after death, the rewards and punishments of one's deeds will be seen.

In general, the ideologies which are prevalent in the world today are one of these two world views. The basic lines of one's desires or the way of one's reaching towards them are either based upon a world view of materiality or a Divine one. For instance, Marxism as one material ideology today, claims by offering its ideology to be able to save some of the groups of society and it has a world view based on materiality. This is why we say that Marxism is the infrastructure of materiality which its world view stands upon.

Confronting that today, Islam, as the last heavenly ideology, containing the most complete Divine world view, that is, the world view of monotheism, offers its ideology to the world of humanity. It calls or invites all to follow its guidelines which bear the responsibility of saving lost and alienated individuals of today. Its eternal questions to all of humanity, in every age, in every century from whatever group, whatever class and whatever race is this: Where do you come from? What must you do: Its special message for alienated human beings in our age: Oh mankind! Oh those who bear the mission of the Divine successors upon their shoulders, you have forgotten God and as a result, you have forgotten the self and your own mission. Today you are alienated because you are alienated from God. Return to your 'self'. Your medicine is this: Return to the selfhood of the self, the real and true self.

From the point of view of Islam, when a human being seeks the self, he or she finds God. When God is

forgotten, the self is forgotten. It is at this moment that one becomes alienated and loses one's identity.

The human being is a wayfarer and religion is a way which the wayfarer must take. The human being grows in two important dimensions: Thought and action. A complete ideology and religion must guide human beings in both the area of thought and in the area of practice. Thus the important dimension of an ideology consists of the dimension or level of thought and the dimension or level of practice. At the level of thought, a principle phase and infrastructure exists which is that very world view and in the second phase, based upon that world view, the ideals of human beings are defined. And with the actions of a human being, they give a connection which is sometimes called ideology (ideology in its particular sense) which means that ideology, in truth, is the intermediary or transition between a thought and action of a human being.

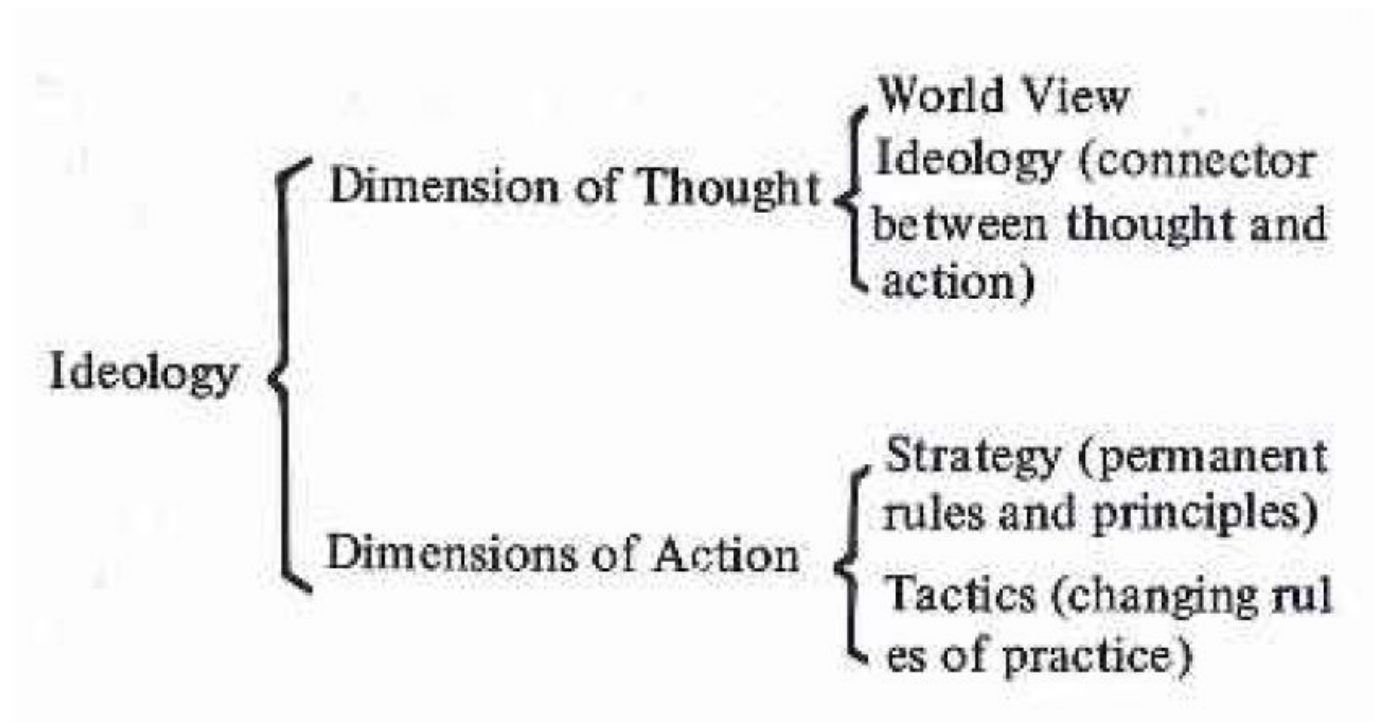
(In the Islamic view, a thought, principle or strategy is then a connection with the Divine precepts. It moves through the transition of a system of beliefs which is called an ideology. And then from there, it moves to the stage of culmination, that is, the practice of that Divine principle.)

The practice of an ideology may also be divided into two sections. The first consists of the constant and permanent precepts and criteria. We normally refer to this part as the practice of religion and today it is called the strategy of an ideology.

The second part is the changing methods which obey the conditions of time and place and they change within the framework of strategies. This section is the one which today is called tactics.

[Note: Here it is relevant to know that the authority or power of 'leadership through a religious jurisprudent' (wilayat al-faqih) which Islam gives to a religious jurisprudent' who meets all of the conditions of a religious authority relates to this very section on the tactics of an ideology. That is, it is the religious jurisprudent who meets all the conditions of a religious authority who relates to this very section on the tactics of an ideology. That is, it is the religious jurisprudent who meets all the conditions of a religious authority alone who can assume the responsibility of being aware of the strategic issues of an ideology which he has arrived at through reasoning from the basic texts of religion throughout the various periods of history. The changing and permanent relevant Islamic laws are expressed by him as well as all of the duties which that Islamic law gives.]

Islam has in a complete way turned its attention to this issue with Islamic laws that are permanent and changing and one of the eternal secrets of this code is found at this very point.



In order to further clarify the point, we will bring forward issues on the ideology of Islam: In the ideology of Islam, in the section on world view, we say: The Creator of the Universe exists above these creatures.

In the section of the principles of ideology, we consider friendship with the friends of God and enmity with His enemies.

In the section on strategy, in order to reach our goal, we say:

"And prepare against them what force you can ...to frighten thereby the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know (but) God knows them; and whatever thing you will spend in God's way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly." (8:60)

That is, "Prepare yourselves and equip yourselves before the enemies of God in such a way that any thought on their part to attack you or aggress against you will be put aside."

The section on tactics contains the totality of the Islamic laws that the leaders with belief brought (the Prophets, the Imams and the Imam's successors) in a limited period of time and under particular circumstances. As an example the stand of Ayatullah Mirza Shirazi against the Tobacco concession may be mentioned.

It is also very important to know that a great section of the tactical issues of Islam form the general issues of the permanent Islamic laws which in various times and places take various branches. For instance, the very existence of preparedness before the enemy which was mentioned as being part of the section on strategy like 'preparedness' which is the issue of a ruling for the general public in whatever time or place has a new application.

It is clear that at the time of the descent of the revelation, it was to make the swords, arrows, chain mail, horses; etc. ready. The application was preparedness and in our times we have made ourselves ready with modern weapons which can answer any unmanly attack of the enemies of God and mankind.

Summary of the Lesson

1. Ideology as the Principle of Beliefs and Practice is a total or universal plan which is comprehensive and harmonized, whereby insights, tendencies, methods and actions of human beings are determined and the main purpose is to complete human beings and guarantee their well-being.
2. Every ideology is based upon basic principles which interpret a particular view of the world. These basic principles which are the infrastructure of thoughts of the ideology are called world view.
3. The ideology of Islam is based upon the Divine world view which is that of monotheism:

"Say: I am God, the One."(112:1).

4. The Islamic world view can be summarized in one sentence: Everything is from God and returns to God.
5. From the point of view of Islam, the reasons for the alienation of human beings in our age is because they have forgotten God.

Questions to ask yourself

1. What do we mean by ideology and world view?
2. Explain the world view of Islam and the world view of Marxism.
3. What sections make up the rules of practice in an Ideology?

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