

Lesson 5: World View

Just as we mentioned in the first lesson, a world view consists of a fundamental universal view of the totality of existence. In order for such a view to take shape, we are compelled to answer three questions that are naturally considered by every human being. In other words, the answers to these three questions become the fundamental basis of the world view for each human being. These questions are as follows:

1. Are the phenomena of the world (in general and ignoring their particularities which would relate them to particular sciences like Physics, Chemistry, Biology or other fields of science) merely created as a result of material interactions and does no other force, which is not in the category of matter, play a role in their creation or even the very being of matter? And essentially, is existence equal to matter or is it that matter merely constitutes a part of the world of existence and that it is in need of what is beyond it in order to be realized? This is a philosophical question which the mind should answer through intellectual investigations and analyses, even though empirical knowledge (in its widest sense) constitutes the starting point of these investigations. The arguments which we will bring up in search of the answer to this question relate to ontology.

2. Is the life of each individual of the human race confined merely to these few years of worldly existence, or does the possibility of life after death exist, which is longer and possibly eternal?

The issue, of and by itself, brings up yet another issue as to whether or not there is a thing named spirit which survives in addition to the material body of the human being? This is linked, in part, to the previous issue as to whether existence itself is equivalent to matter or more extensive than that. The arguments which are presented in this section relate to humanology.

3. Which is the surest way of recognizing the correct program of individual and social life? Are there any correct ways other than the orthodox ways which are commonly available and from which contradictory results are actually achieved? We could relate this issue to something called 'recognizing the way' or simply, 'recognition'.

Thus, to this point, we can conclude that a world view consists of having an opinion or point of view

about three fundamental subjects: ontology, humanology and recognition.

Should it be proven in the discussion of ontology that existence is not the equivalent of matter and that the world has a Creator who is the Maintainer and Nourisher of all creatures and Who is Omniscient and Omnipotent; should it be proven in the discussion of humanology that human life is not merely confined to this short period of worldly life, but rather there is an eternal life coupled with well-being, that adversity will exist, the preliminaries of which are provided in this world and that life is but an initial stage for the building of one's eternal destiny through one's own actions, and, also, should it be proven in the discussion of 'recognizing the way' that in order to recognize the correct program of a life, in order to be able to provide well-being in both worlds, there is a guaranteed way which is placed before all people by God, the Most High, and through His special Prophets; if all of these are proven, they will have a great affect upon the life of the human being.

They will give a value to life's activities which is incomparable with any of the achievements of the human sciences, discoveries and inventions for however great the values of the latter may be, they are still finite and limited, but the value of this recognition is an infinite one as it provides the possibility for human beings to achieve an unlimited and eternal wellbeing, and it is clear that there is no proportional relationship between the finite and the infinite.

Divine and Material World View

Although different answers have been given to the fundamental issues and the difference in these answers have led to various philosophies and schools of thought, however, in considering the negative and affirmative aspects of the answers, two opposing poles can be deciphered. World views can then be divided into two groups, the material and the Divine. The perfect example of the Divine school of thought is Islam and the most prevalent materialistic school of thought in our time is Marxism.

It is suitable to call your attention to a delicate point and that is that materialism has had a long record, its extent of which cannot be determined. We should consider this world view to be one which opposes a belief in metaphysics and not as a view which is opposed to belief in God for some people consider themselves to be monotheists but have a materialistic notion about God. Our reason for placing the Divine world view vis-a-vis materialism is because we believe that monotheism logically requires a belief in metaphysics and those who consider themselves monotheists but, at the same time, choose a materialistic world view, are logically afflicted with contradictions. They pay no attention to the correct meaning of the terms which they use and in fact they are playing with words.

In stating the principles of the world view of Islam we should briefly say that Islam gives positive answers to all these three questions. It answers ontology with monotheism, humanology with resurrection and recognition of the way with prophethood.

Summary of the Lesson:

1. The fundamental issues of a world view consist of ontology, humanology and recognition of the way.
2. These issues are in a primordial way, naturally pertinent for all human beings.
3. The fundamental issues, in addition to having the value of providing an infrastructure, are of utmost importance due to the quotient factor of infinite values.
4. Although schools of thought differ and are numerous, there are not as many world views because a world view is a universal view. Thus, world views are either based on the Divine or on the material.
5. Through monotheism, resurrection and prophethood, Islam has given positive answers to the three questions discussed.
6. Materialism, whose most common example today is Marxism, gives negative answers to all these three questions.

Questions to ask yourself

1. How are issues of one's world view explained?
2. How valuable are you in answering questions in the area of world view? Why?
3. Write down the divisions of world view.
4. How has Islam answered the three questions of world view?
5. How has the world view of materialism answered them?

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