

Man and Faith

Man and Animal

Man is a species of animal and thus shares many features with other animals. But many differences distinguish man from animals and grant him a special virtue, an elevation, which leaves him unrivalled. The basic difference between man and the other animals, the touchstone of his humanity, the source of what have come to be known as human civilisation and culture, is the presence of insights and beliefs.

Animals in general can perceive themselves and the external world and strive to attain their desires and objects in the light of their awareness and cognition. The same holds true of man, but he differs from the rest of the animals in the scope, extent, and breadth of his awareness and cognition's and in the level to which his desires and objects rise. This grants man a special virtue and elevation and separates him from the rest of the animals.

Awareness and Desire in Animals

First, the animal's awareness of the world comes solely through its external senses and is, accordingly, external and superficial; it does not reach into the interiors and internal relationships of things. Second, it is individual and particular; it enjoys nothing of universality and generality. Third, it is localised, limited to the animal's environment. Fourth, it is immediate, confined to the present, divorced from past and future. The animal is not aware of its own history or that of the world and does not consider or relate its endeavours to the future.

The animal is thus confined in a fourfold prison. If it should perchance emerge, it does so not with awareness, by intelligence and choice, but captive to the compulsions of nature, instinctually, without awareness or intelligence.

The level of the animal's desires and objects is also limited. First, it is material, not rising above eating, drinking, sleeping, playing, nesting, and copulating. For the animal there is no question of abstract desires and objects, moral values, and so on. Second, it is private and individual, related to itself or at

the most to its mate and offspring. Third, it is localised and related to its environment. Fourth, it is immediate and related to the present. The animal thus lives within certain confines in this respect as well.

If the animal pursues an object or moves toward an end that is beyond these confines, for instance, if it shows concern for the species rather than the individual or for the future rather than the present, as do such social animals as the honeybee, this behaviour arises unconsciously and instinctually, by the direct command of the power that created it and administers the world.

Awareness and Desire in Man

Whether in the area of awareness, insights, and cognitions or desires and objects, the human domain reaches much further and higher than that of the animals. Human awareness and cognition traverse the exterior bounds of objects and phenomena to penetrate into their interiors, their essences and identities, their interrelationships and interdependencies, and the necessities governing them. Human awareness does not remain imprisoned within the limits of locale and place, nor does it remain chained to its moment; it journeys through both time and space.

Accordingly, man grows aware both of what is beyond his environment and of his own past and future, discovering his own past history and that of the universe – the histories of the earth, the heavens, the mountains, the seas, the planets, plants and other animals—and contemplating the future to the far horizons.

Beyond even this, man sends his thought racing after things limitless and eternal and gains knowledge of some of them. One who transcends a cognition of the individual and the particular discovers general laws and universal truths that embrace the whole world. Thus, he establishes his dominion over nature.

Man can also attain an elevated level from the standpoint of desires and objects. Man is a being that seeks values and aspires to virtues and ideals that are not material or utilitarian, that are not restricted to self or at most to mate and offspring, that are general and inclusive and embrace the whole of humanity, that are unconfined to a particular environment, locale, or time period. Man is so devoted to ideals and beliefs that he may at times place them above all else and put service to others and their comfort ahead of his own comfort.

It is as if the thorn that has pierced another's foot has pierced his own foot, or even his own eye. He commiserates with others; he rejoices in their joy and grieves at their grief. He may grow so attached to his sacred beliefs and ideals that he readily sacrifices to them not only his interests but his whole life and existence. The human dimension of civilisation, the spirit of civilisation, grows out of just such uniquely human feelings and desires.

The Touchstone of Man's Distinctiveness

Man's breadth of insight into the universe stems from humanity's collective efforts amassed and evolved over the centuries. This insight, expressed through special criteria, rules, and logical procedures, has come to be known as "science." Science in its most general sense means the sum total of human contemplations on the universe (including philosophy), the product of the collective efforts of humanity within a special system of logic.

The elevated and ideal aptitudes of humanity are born of its faith, belief, and attachment to certain realities in the universe that are both extra-individual, or general and inclusive, and extra-material, or unrelated to advantage or profit. Such beliefs and attachments are in turn born of certain worldviews and cosmologies given to humanity by prophets of God or by certain philosophers who sought to present a kind of thought that would conduce to belief and idealism. As these elevated, ideal, supra-animal aptitudes in man find an ideational and credal infrastructure, they are designated "faith" (*iman*).

It is therefore my contention that the central difference between man and the other animals, the touchstone of man's humanity, on which humanity depends, consists in science and faith.

Much has been said about what distinguishes man from the other animals. Although some have denied there is any basic difference between man and other animals, asserting that the difference in awareness and cognition is quantitative or at the most qualitative, but not essential, these thinkers have passed over all the wonders and glories that have drawn the great philosophers of East and West to the question of cognition in man. They regard man as an animal entirely, from the standpoint of desires and objects, not differing from the animals in the least in this respect. [1](#)

Others think that to have a psyche makes the difference; that is, they believe that only man has a psyche, or anima, that other animals have neither feelings nor appetites, know neither pain nor pleasure, that they are soulless machines only resembling animate beings. They think that the true definition of man is "the animate being." [2](#)

Other thinkers who do not consider man the only animate being in the universe but maintain basic distinctions between man and the rest of the animals may be grouped according to which one of man's distinguishing features they have dwelt upon.

They have defined man as the reasoning animal, the seeker after the Absolute, the unfinished, the idealist, the seeker after values, the metaphysical animal, the insatiable, the indeterminate, the committed and responsible, the provident, the free and empowered, the rebel, the social animal, the seeker after order, the seeker after beauty, the seeker after justice, the one facing two ways, the lover, the answerable, the conscientious, the one with two hearts, the creator, the solitary, the agitated, the devotee of creeds, the toolmaker, the seeker after the beyond, the visionary, the ideal, and the gateway to ideas.

Clearly, each of these distinctions is correct in its turn, but if we wish to advance a definition that comprehends all the basic differences, he can do no better than to speak of science and faith and to say that man is the animal distinguished from the other animals by the two features, “science” and “faith.”

Relationship between Humanity and Animality

Those features man shares with the animal plus those features that distinguish him from the animal result in man having two lives, the animal life and the human life – in other words, the material life and the life of culture. What relationship exists between man's animality and his humanity, between his animal life and his human life, his material life and his cultural and spiritual life?

Is one the basis and the other a reflection of it? Is one the infrastructure and the other the superstructure? Since we are considering this question from a sociological, not a psychological point of view, we may express it this way: Among social structures is the economic structure, related to production and production relations, the principle and infra structure? Of the remaining social structures, especially those in which man's humanity is manifested, all constitute something derivative, a superstructure, a reflection of the economic structure? Have science, philosophy, literature, religion, law, morals, and art at all times been manifestations of economic realities, having no substantive reality?

This sociological discussion automatically leads to a psychological conclusion and likewise to a philosophical argument that concerns humanity, its objective and substantive realities – the question of what today is called humanism. This conclusion is that man's humanity has no substantive reality, that only his animality has any substantive reality. Thus, any basic distinction between man and animal is denied.

According to this theory, not only is the substantive reality of human beliefs denied, including the beliefs in truth, goodness, beauty, and God, but the substantive reality of the desire to know the reality of the universe from a human viewpoint is denied in that no viewpoint can be simply a “viewpoint” and disinterested, but every viewpoint must reflect a particular material tendency. Things cannot be otherwise. Curiously, some schools of thought offer this view and speak of humanity and humanism in the same breath!

The truth is that the course of man's evolution begins with animality and finds its culmination in humanity. This principle holds true for individual and society alike: Man at the outset of his existence is a material body; through an essential evolutionary movement, he is transformed into spirit or a spiritual substance. What is called the human spirit is born in the lap of the body; it is there that it evolves and attains independence. Man's animality amounts to a nest in which man's humanity grows and evolves.

It is a property of evolution that the more the organism evolves, the more independent, self-subsistent, and governing of its own environment it becomes. The more man's humanity evolves, in the individual or in society, the more it steps toward independence and governance over the other aspects of his being.

An evolved human individual has gained a relative ascendancy over his inner and outer environments. The evolved individual is the one who has been freed of dominance by the inner and outer environments, but depends upon belief and faith.

The evolution of society precisely corresponds to the evolution of the spirit in the lap of the body or the evolution of the individual's humanity in the lap of his animality. The germ of human society is economic structures; the cultural and ideal aspects of society amount to the spirit of society. Just as there is an interaction between body and spirit, so there is one between the spirit and the body of society, that is, between its ideal structures and its material ones.³

Just as the evolution of the individual leads to greater freedom, autonomy, and sovereignty of the spirit, so does the evolution of society. That is, the more evolved human society becomes, the greater the autonomy of its cultural life and the sovereignty of that life over its material life. Man of the future is the cultural animal; he is the man of belief, faith, and method, not the man of stomach and waistline.

Human society, however, is not moving inexorably and directly to the perfection of human values. At every temporal stage, it is not necessarily one step more advanced than at the preceding stage. It is possible for humanity to pass through an era of social life in which, for all its scientific and technical progress, it declines with respect to human ideal values, as is said today of the humanity of our present century. This idea of human social evolution means rather that humanity is progressing in the sum total of its movements, whether material or ideal, but the movement sometimes twists to the right or left, sometimes stops, or occasionally even reverses itself. However, on the whole, it is a progressive, evolutionary movement. Thus, future man is the cultural animal, not the economic animal; future man is the man of belief and faith, not the man of stomach and waistline.

According to this theory, the evolution of the human aspect of man (because of its substantive reality) keeps step with, or rather anticipates, the evolution of the tools of production. It gradually reduces his dependency on and susceptibility to the natural and social environments and augments his freedom (which is equivalent to his dependence on belief, ideals, principle, and ideology), as well as his influence upon the natural and social environments. In the future, man will attain to ever more perfect spiritual freedom, that is, ever greater independence or ever greater dependence upon faith, belief, and ideology. Past man, while enjoying fewer of the blessings of nature and of his own being, was more captive to nature and to his own animality.

But future man, while enjoying more of the blessings of nature and of his own being, will be proportionately freer from the captivities of nature and of his own animal potentials and better able to govern himself and nature.

According to this view, the human reality, despite having appeared along with and in the lap of animal and material evolution, is by no means a shadow, reflection, or function of these. It is itself an independent, evolving reality. Just as it is influenced by the material aspects of being, it influences them.

It, not the evolution of the tools of production, determines man's ultimate destiny, his substantive cultural evolution, and his substantive reality.

This substantive reality of the humanity of man keeps him in motion and evolves the tools of production along with the other concerns of life. The tools of production do not evolve of themselves, and man's humanity is not changed and transformed like the tools defining a system of production, such that it would be spoken of as evolving because it defined an evolving system of production.

Science and Faith

Relationship of Science and Faith

Now let us see what relationship to each other these two pillars or aspects of humanity bear, or can bear.

In the Christian world, owing to some textual corruptions in the Old Testament (the Torah), the idea of the opposition of science and faith has become widespread, an idea that has cost both of them dearly.[4](#)

This idea has its roots chiefly in the Book of Genesis. In Genesis 2: 16–17, we find, regarding Adam, paradise, and the forbidden tree: “[The Lord God] told the man, ‘You may eat from every tree in the garden, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die.’” [5](#)

In Genesis 3: 1–8, it is said: The Serpent was more crafty than any wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree in the garden?” The woman answered the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except for the tree in the middle of the garden; God has forbidden us either to eat or to touch the fruit of that; if we do, we shall die.”

The serpent said, “Of course you will not die. God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods knowing both good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to contemplate, she took some and ate it. She also gave her husband some and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

In Genesis 3:23, it is said:

[The LORD God] said, “The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; what if he now reaches out his hand and takes fruit from the tree of life also, eats it and lives forever?”

According to this conception of man and God, of consciousness and rebellion, God's command (*din*) is

that man must not know good and evil, not grow conscious – the forbidden tree is the tree of consciousness. Man, in his rebellion, his mutiny, against God's command (his balking at the teachings of the revealed laws and prophets), attains consciousness and knowledge and so is driven from God's paradise. According to this conception, all satanic suggestions are the suggestions of consciousness; therefore, the suggestor, Satan, is reason itself.

To us Muslims, who have studied the Qur'an, God taught Adam all the names (realities) and then commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before him. Satan was expelled from the court for not prostrating before this viceregent of God, conscious of realities. And the sunna has taught us that the forbidden tree was that of greed, avidity, something of this sort, that is, something connected with the animality of Adam, not with his humanity, that Satan the suggestor always suggests things contrary to reason but conforming to the passions of the animal ego, and that what manifests Satan within man's being is the ego that incites to evil, not the Adamic reason. For us who are thus schooled, what we see in Genesis is quite astonishing.

It is this conception that divides the last fifteen hundred years of European history into the Age of Faith and the Age of Reason and sets faith and science at odds. But the history of Islamic civilisation is divisible into the Age of Flowering, or the Age of Science and Faith, and the Age of Decline, in which science and faith together have declined. We Muslims must eschew this wrong conception that has inflicted irreparable injuries on science and on faith, indeed on humanity; we must not take this opposition of science and faith for granted.

Let us now proceed analytically and ask in a scholarly fashion whether these two aspects or bases of humanity actually each pertain to a certain era. Is man condemned ever to remain half-human, to have only half his humanity in a given era? Is he forever condemned to one of these two species of misfortune: the misfortunes arising from ignorance and the misfortunes arising from want of faith?

Every faith is inevitably based on a special mode of thought and a special conception of the universe and of being. Many conceptions and interpretations of the universe, although they can serve as bases for faith and devotion, are inconsistent with logical and scientific principles and so necessarily deserve rejection. But is there a mode of thought, a kind of conception and interpretation of the universe and of being, that both draws support from the region of science, philosophy, and logic and can be a firm foundation for a felicitous faith? If such a conception, mode of thought, or worldview exists, then it will be clear that man is not condemned to the misfortunes arising from either ignorance or want of faith.

One can address the relationship of science and faith from either of two standpoints. One standpoint is whether an interpretation or conception exists that is both productive of faith and idealism and supported by logic. Are all the ideas that science and philosophy impart to us contrary to faith, devotion, hope, and optimism? (This is a question that I will take up later in discussing the idea of a worldview.)

The other standpoint is that of the influences upon man of science on the one hand and faith on the

other. Does science call us to one thing and faith to another, and opposed, thing? Does science seek to shape us one way and faith another, opposed, way? Does our science carry us in one direction and faith in another? Or do science and faith fulfil and complement one another? Does science shape half of us and faith the other half, harmoniously?

Science gives us enlightenment and power; faith gives us love, hope, and ardor. Science makes instruments; faith constructs purposes. Science gives speed; faith gives direction. Science is power; faith is benevolence. Science shows what is; faith inspires insight into what must be done. Science is the outer revolution; faith is the inner revolution. Science makes the universe the human universe; faith makes the psyche the psyche of humanity. Science expands man's being horizontally; faith conveys him upward. Science shapes nature; faith shapes man.

Both science and faith empower man, but science gives a power of discrimination, and faith gives a power of integration. Both science and faith are beauty, but science is the beauty of the reason, and faith is the beauty of the spirit. Science is the beauty of thought, and faith is the beauty of feeling. Both science and faith give man security, but science gives outward security, and faith gives inward security. Science gives security against the onslaught of illness, floods, earthquakes, storms; faith, against worry, loneliness, feelings of helplessness, feelings of futility. Science brings the world into greater harmony with man, and faith brings man into greater harmony with himself.

Man's need for science and faith together has greatly excited the interest of both religious and nonreligious thinkers. Allama Muhammad Iqbal of Lahore has said:

“Humanity needs three things today – a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic systems on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring.

This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical achievement.

On the other hand the Muslim is in possession of these ultimate ideas on the basis of a revelation, which, speaking from the inmost depths of life, internalizes its own apparent externality. With him the spiritual basis of life is a matter of conviction for which even the least enlightened man among us can easily lay down his life”.[6](#)

Will Durant, author of the History of Civilisation, although nonreligious, says: “[Lucretius would suggest of our progress in mechanisation] that this was a difference of means and not of ends. ...What if all our

progress is an improvement in methods, but not in purposes?” He also says: “Our wealth is a weariness, and our wisdom is a little light that chills; but love warms the heart with unspeakable solace, even more when it is given than when it is received.”⁷

Today most people realise that scientism and the unalloyed scientific education are incapable of shaping the whole human being. The product of this education is the raw material of humanity, not the fully shaped humanity. It shapes a humanity with capacity, not one with attainment. It shapes a uniform humanity, not a multiform one. Today most people realise that the age of science—and-nothing-but has come to an end.

A vacuum in ideals threatens society. Some would fill it with philosophy; others have resorted to literature, the arts, and the humanities. In Iran, too, some propose to fill this vacuum with a humanistic culture, and especially with the literature of *‘irfan*, including such writings as those of Rumi, Sa’di, and Hafiz. But they forget that this literature has derived its spirit and attraction from religion. The humanistic spirit of these literatures is that selfsame religious spirit of Islam. Otherwise why are some modern literatures so cold, lifeless, and unattractive, for all their humanist affectations? The humane content of our literature of *‘irfan* derives from the kind of thought concerning the universe and man that is specifically Islamic. If we take the spirit of Islam from these literary masterpieces, we are left with nothing more than the dross, or a dead form.

Will Durant feels this vacuum and proposes that literature, philosophy, and art fill it. He says:

“Our schools and colleges have suffered severely from Spencer's conception of education as the adjustment of the individual to his environment; it was a dead, mechanical definition, drawn from a mechanistic philosophy, and distasteful to every creative spirit. The result has been the conquest of our schools by mechanical and theoretical science, to the comparative exclusion of such “useless” subjects as literature, history, philosophy, and art.... An education that is purely scientific makes a mere tool of its product; it leaves him a stranger to beauty, and gives him powers that are divorced from wisdom. It would have been better for the world if Spencer had never written on education”.⁸

It is remarkable that although Durant acknowledges that the existing vacuum is, in the first place, a “vacuum of ideals,” a vacuum in the area of objects, ends, and aspirations, a vacuum leading to nihilism, although he affirms that it is a vacuum of a kind of thought for and a kind of belief in humane objects and goals, he nonetheless supposes it is remediable through any sort of ideal values, even though they may not go beyond the realm of imagination. He supposes that busying oneself with history, art, aesthetics, poetry, and music can fill this vacuum that arises from the depths of man's aspiring and idealistic nature.

Non-interchangeability of Science and Faith

Science cannot replace faith to give – besides illumination and power – love and hope. It cannot raise the level of our desires. Although it can help us attain objects and goals, to follow the road to them, it

cannot take from us those objects, aspirations, and desires that by nature and instinct turn on individuality and self-interest and give us in their place objects and aspirations that turn on love and on ideal and spiritual bonds. Although it is a tool in our hands, it cannot transform our essence and identity. Likewise, faith cannot replace science, to enable us to understand nature, discover its laws, or learn about ourselves.

Historical experiences have shown that the separation of science from faith has brought about irremediable harm. Faith must be known in the light of science; faith must be kept far from superstition in the light of science. When science is removed from faith, faith is deformed into petrification and blind fanaticism; it turns on its own axis and goes nowhere. When there is no science and true knowledge, the faith of an ignorant believer becomes an instrument in the hands of the clever charlatans exemplified in early Islam by the Kharijites and seen in various forms in later times.[9](#)

Conversely, science without faith is a sword in the hands of a maniac, or else a lamp at midnight in the hands of a thief, so he can pick out the choicest goods. Thus, the scientifically informed person of today without faith does not differ in the least from the ignoramus without faith of yesterday in the nature and essence of his behaviour. What difference is there between the Churchills, Johnsons, Nixons, and Stalins of today and the Ghengises and Attilas of yesterday?

But, it might be said, is science not both light and power? Do the light and power of science not only apply to the external world, but also illuminate and reveal to us our inner world and so empower us to change it? If science can shape both the world and man, it can perform both its own function (world shaping) and that of faith (man shaping). The reply is, this is all correct, but the power of science is instrumental—that is, dependent upon man's will and command. In whatever area man wishes to carry out something, he can do it better with the tool of science. Thus, science is man's best aid in attaining the objects he has chosen, in traversing the roads he has decided to follow.

But when man puts the instrument to work, he already has an object in view; instruments are always employed in pursuit of objects. Where has he found these objects? Because man is animal by nature and human by acquisition, that is, because his human potentialities must be gradually nurtured in the light of faith, by nature he moves toward his natural, animal, individual, material, self-interested objects and employs his instruments accordingly.

Therefore, man needs a power not among his own instruments and objects that can impel man as an instrument in its own direction. Rather he needs a power that can detonate him from within and activate his hidden potentialities. He needs a power that can produce a revolution in his heart and give him a new direction.

This is not accomplished by science, by discovery of the laws governing nature and man. It is born of the sanctification and exaltation of certain values in one's spirit, which values in turn are born of a range of elevated aptitudes in man, which result further, from a particular conception and way of thinking about

the universe and man that one can acquire neither in the laboratory nor from syllogism and deduction.

History shows the consequences of disjoining science and faith. Where faith has been, and science not, individuals' humanitarian efforts have produced no great effect—at times, no good effect. Sometimes they have given rise to fanaticisms, stagnations, and ruinous conflicts. Human history is filled with such events. Where science has been, with the place of faith left empty, as in some contemporary societies, all the power of science has been expended on selfishness, egoism, acquisitiveness, ambition, exploitation, subjugation, deceit, and guile.

One can regard the past two or three centuries as the age of the worship of science and the flight from faith. Many thinkers came to believe that science could solve all man's problems, but experience has proven the contrary. Today no thinker would deny man's need for some kind of faith—if not religious faith, at least faith in something beyond science. Bertrand Russell, although he had materialistic tendencies, admits “Work of which the motive is solely pecuniary cannot have this value [of bringing a man into fruitful contact with the outer world], but only work which embodies some kind of devotion, whether to persons, to things, or merely to a vision”.^{[10](#)}

Today materialists are driven to claim they are materialists in respect to philosophy but idealists in respect to morals, that is, they are materialists in theory, but idealists in practice and aims.^{[11](#)} The question of how it is possible to be a materialist in theory and an idealist in practice is for the materialists themselves to answer.

George Sarton describes the inadequacy and incapacity of science to humanise personal relationships and man's urgent need for the power of faith: “Science has made gigantic progress in certain fields, but in others, e.g., in politics, national and international, we are still fooling ourselves.” He admits that the faith man needs is a religious faith. He says this of man's need for the triad of art, religion, and science: “Art reveals beauty; it is the joy of life. Religion means love; it is the music of life. Science means truth and reason; it is the conscience of mankind. We need all of them – art and religion as well as science. Science is absolutely necessary but it is never sufficient.”^{[12](#)}

Effects and Advantages of Religious Faith

Without ideals, aspirations and faith, man can neither live sane life nor accomplish anything useful or fruitful for humanity and human civilisation. One lacking ideals and faith becomes either selfish, never emerging from his shell of private interests, or a wavering, bemused being who does not know his own duty in life, in moral and social questions. Man constantly confronts moral and social questions, and must necessarily respond. If one is attached to a teaching, a belief, a faith, one's duty is clear; but if no teaching or method has clarified one's duty, one lives ever in a state of irresolution, drawn sometimes this way, sometimes that, never in balance. So without any doubt, one must attach oneself to a teaching and an ideal.

Only religious faith, however, can make man truly “faithful” – can make faith, belief, and principle dominate selfishness and egoism, can create a kind of devotion and surrender in the individual such that he does not doubt the least point the teaching advances, and can render this belief something precious to him, to the extent that life without it is hollow and meaningless and that he will defend it with zeal and fervour.

Aptitudes to religious faith prompt man to struggle against his natural, individual inclinations and sometimes to sacrifice his reputation and very being for the sake of faith. This grows possible when his ideal takes on an aspect of sanctity and comes to rule his being completely. Only the power of religion can sanctify ideals and effect their rule in its fullest force over man.

Sometimes individuals make sacrifices and relinquish their fortunes, reputations, or lives not for ideals and religious belief but driven by obsessions, vindictiveness, and revengefulness, in short as a violent reaction to feelings of stress and oppression. We see this sort of thing in various parts of the world. The difference between a religious ideal and a non-religious one is that when religious belief appears and sanctifies an ideal, sacrifices take place naturally and with complete contentment. There is a difference between an act accomplished in contentment and faith – a kind of choice – and an act accomplished under the impact of obsessions and disturbing internal stresses – a kind of explosion.

If man’s world view is a purely materialistic one founded on the restriction of reality to sense objects, any sort of social and humane idealism will prove contrary to the sensible realities through which man then feels related to the world.

“What results from a sensual world view is egoism, not idealism. If idealism is founded upon a world view of which it is not the logical consequence, it amounts to nothing more than fantasy. That is, man must figuratively make a separate world of realities existing within him, from his imagination, and be content with them. But if idealism stems from religion, it rests on a kind of world view whose logical consequence is to live by social ideals and aspirations. Religious faith is a loving bond between man and the universe, or to put it differently, is a harmony between man and the universal ideals of being. Non-religious faith and aspirations, on the other hand, constitute a kind of “severance” from the universe and an imaginary construction of a world of one’s own that is no way reinforced by the outer world.” [13](#)

Religious faith does more than specify a set of duties for man contrary to his natural propensities; it changes the mien of the universe in man’s eyes. It demonstrates the existence of elements in the structure of the universe other than the sensible ones. It transforms a cold, dessicated, mechanical, and material universe into one living, intelligent and conscious. Religious faith transforms man’s conception of the universe and creation.

William James, the American philosopher and psychologist whose life extended into the early part of the present Christian century, says: “The world interpreted religiously is not the materialistic world over again, with an altered expression; it must have, over and above the altered expression, a *natural*

constitution different at some point from that which a materialistic world would have.” [14](#)

Beyond all this, there is an aspiration to sacred truths and realities that can be worshipped innate in every human individual. Man is the focus of a range of potential extramaterial aptitudes and capacities waiting to be nurtured. Man’s aptitudes are not confined to the material and his ideal aspirations are not solely inculcated and acquired. This is a truth science affirms.

William James says: “So far as our ideal impulses originate in this [mystical or supernatural] region (and most of them do originate in it, for we find them possessing us in a way for which we cannot articulately account), we belong to it in a more intimate way than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong.” [15](#)

Because these impulses exist, they should be nurtured. If they are not rightly nurtured and rightly profited from, they will deviate and cause unimaginable harm leading to idolatry, anthropolatry, nature worship, and a thousand other forms of false worship. Erich Fromm says: “There is no one without a religious need, a need to have a frame of orientation and an object of devotion.... He may be aware of his system as being a religious one, different from those of the secular realm, or he may think that he has no religion and interpret his devotion to certain allegedly secular aims like power, money or success as nothing but his concern for the practical and expedient. The question is not *religion or not* but *which kind of religion*.” [16](#)

What this psychologist means is that man cannot live without worship and a sense of the sacred. If he does not know and worship the One God, he will erect something else as the higher reality and make it the object of his faith and worship.

Therefore, because it is imperative for humanity to have an ideal, an aspiration, and a faith and because, on the one hand, religious faith is the only faith that can really penetrate us and, on the other hand, by our nature we seek for something to hold sacred and to worship, the only road open to us is to affirm religious faith.

The Noble Qur’an was the first book:

1. To speak explicitly of religious faith as a kind of harmony with the creation:

***“Do they seek for other than God’s religion, while all in the heavens and on earth bow to Him?”
(3:83)***

2. To present religious faith as part of the makeup of human beings:

“So set your face toward religion as one upright – such is the disposition with which God has created man.” (30:30)

Tolstoy, the Russian thinker and writer, says: “Faith is that by which people live.” Hakim Nasir-i Khusraw

‘Alavi says to his son:

*From the world I turned to religion,
Without which what's the world but my prison?
Son, religion imparts to my heart a kingdom,
That will never fall into ruin. [17](#)*

Religious faith has many beneficial effects, including producing cheer and expansiveness, ameliorating social relationships, and lessening and remedying inevitable troubles that arise from the structure of the world.

Producing Cheer and Expansiveness

Religious faith creates optimism toward the universe, creation and being. In giving a special form to man's conception of the universe, in representing creation as having an object and the object as goodness, happiness, and evolution, religious faith naturally shapes man's view of the universal system of being and its governing laws into an optimistic one.

The conditions of a person who has faith in the “country” of being resembles the condition of a person who regards as right and just the laws, institutions, and regulations of the country in which he lives and believes in its administrators' good intentions. He will perceive the way open to progress and elevation for himself and everyone else, and he will believe that only his own laziness and inexperience could hold him back and that the same holds for other responsible beings. Such a person would view himself, not national institutions and regulations, as responsible for his backwardness. He would blame any shortcoming on the failure of himself and his peers to carry out their tasks. This thought would naturally rouse him to zeal and compel him to optimism, hope, and action.

A person without faith in the “country” of being is like a person who regards the laws, institutions, and regulations of the country in which he lives as corrupt and oppressive but he must endure them. Such a person is always filled with rancor and vindictiveness. He never thinks of reforming himself; rather he thinks that somewhere earth and sky are askew, that all of being is injustice, oppression, and wrongness.

He thinks: “What effect can the rightness of a speck like me have?” Such a person never takes pleasure in the world; the world for him is always like a nightmarish prison. This, the Noble Qur'an says:

“For whoever turns away from remembrance of Me, life will be narrow” (20: 124).

Faith gives expanse to life within us and checks pressures on the spiritual agencies. Religious faith also illumines the heart. When through religious faith man sees the world illumined with truth and reality, this clairvoyance illumines the spaces of his spirit. It becomes like a lamp illuminating his inward being. By contrast, an individual without faith, who sees the universe as futile and dark, is devoid of perception, insight, and light. His heart is dark and oppressed in this dark dwelling he has conceived.

Religious faith provides hope, hope of a good outcome for one's efforts. According to the logic of materialism, the universe regards impartially and indifferently those following the road of verity and those following the road of falsity, those following the road of justice and those following the road of injustice, those following the road of right and those following the road of wrong. The outcome of their work depends only on the level of their effort.

But according to the logic of the individual with faith, the system of creation supports people who work in the way of truth and reality, in the way of right, justice, and benevolence.

"If you aid God, He will aid you" (47:7).

The reward to those who do good never goes to waste:

"Truly God does not lose the wages of those who do good" (12:90).

Religious faith gives one peace of mind. Man innately seeks his well-being. He becomes immersed in pleasure at the thought of attaining well-being, and he trembles at the thought of a blighted future filled with deprivation. Man's well-being arises from two things:

1. Effort
2. Confidence in environmental conditions.

A student's success arises from two things: his own efforts and the appropriateness or supportiveness of the school environment, which includes the encouragement and appreciation of the school authorities. If a hardworking student has no confidence in his study environment or in his teachers who will grade him at the end of the year, if he fears he will be the target of unjust conduct, he will be filled with apprehension and anxiety every day of the year.

Plainly one's duty toward oneself does not give rise to anxiety in the area because anxiety arises from doubt and uncertainty. One does not feel doubt or uncertainty in relation to oneself. What does induce such feelings of anxiety, what one feels unsure about one's role in relation to, is the world.

Is there no use in doing good? Are veracity and trustworthiness pointless? Do all our striving and dutifulness lead only to deprivation? Apprehension and anxiety here loom in their most terrible forms.

Religious faith, in relating man, one partner to the transaction, to the universe, the other partner, gives assurance and confidence. It alleviates apprehension and anxiety over how the universe acts upon man and brings peace of mind in their place. Thus, one of the effects of religious faith is peace of mind.

Another effect of religious faith is a greater enjoyment of ideal pleasures. Man knows two kinds of pleasures. Material pleasures are connected with any of the senses and felt when a relationship is set up between an organ and some external object (the pleasures of the eye in seeing, the ear in hearing,

the mouth in tasting, the sense of touch in contact).

Ideal pleasures are connected with the depths of the human spirit and conscience, not with any particular organ and not dependent upon a relationship with any external object. Such are the pleasures one feels from beneficence and service, from love and respect, or from one's own success or that of one's offspring. These pleasures neither pertain to a particular organ nor arise under the direct influence of an external, material factor.

Ideal pleasures are both stronger and more enduring than material pleasures. For the 'arifs and devotees of Truth, the pleasures of worship of God are of this order. Such worshippers, whose worship is conjoined with presence, humility, and absorption, derive the highest of pleasures from worship, such as are commemorated in the language of religion as "the relish of faith" and "the sweetness of faith". Faith has a sweetness above all sweetness. Ideal pleasures are redoubled when such works as scientific study, beneficence, service, and success stem from the religious sense and are carried through for the sake of God, when they fall in the domain of worship.

Ameliorating Social Relationships

Like some other animals, man has been created social. The individual alone is incapable of satisfying his needs; life must assume corporate form in the duties of fruits of which all are to share; a kind of division of labour must exist among individuals. But man differs from the other social animals, such as the honeybee, whose divisions of labour and function nature dictates will take the form of instincts and who are denied any chance to oppose and rebel against these preassigned functions.

Man is free and empowered to perform his work freely as a function and duty. Other animals have social needs, but they also have social instincts that govern them. Man likewise has social needs, but is not governed by social instincts. Man's social instincts consist of a range of demands within him that must be channeled by education.

A sane life for society consists in individuals' respecting the laws, the bounds, and each other's rights; in their regarding justice as sacred; and in their showing kindness to one another. Each should wish for another what he wishes for himself and not deem acceptable for another what he does not accept for himself. All should repose trust and confidence in one another and to guarantee each other's confidence should be their spiritual quality.

Each individual should be committed and responsible to his society; each should be as privately pious and honest as he is publicly. All should act with beneficence to one another with the greatest possible degree of disinterestedness. All should rise against injustice and oppression and leave the oppressors and the corrupt no room to practice their oppression and corruption. All should venerate ethical values. All should unite with and support others as the members of a body.

That which above all else honors truth, sanctifies justice, endears hearts to one another, establishes

mutual confidence among individuals, causes piety and integrity to penetrate to the depths of the human conscience, invests ethical values with credence, creates courage in the face of oppression, and interlinks and unites all individuals like the members of one body is religious faith. Human beings' humane manifestations, shining like stars in the sky of a tumultuous human history, are those manifestations welling forth from religious faith.

Lessening Troubles

Just as human life has its joys, delights, gains, and successes, it also has suffering, disasters, defeats, losses, hardships, and disappointments. Many of them can be averted or obviated, albeit after great expenditures of effort. Man is clearly obliged to come to grips with nature, to transform the bitter into the sweet. But some of the vicissitudes of the world, such as old age, cannot be averted or obviated. One advances toward old age, and one's life flame dies down. The infirmity and weakness of old age, together with the rest of its adversities, give life a grim face. On top of that, the thought of death and non-being, of closing one's eyes to the world, and of entrusting the world to others causes one anguish of another order.

Religious faith instills in man the power to resist. It turns bitter to sweet. One with faith knows that everything in the universe has a fixed valuation. If he responds to hardships in the proper manner, even though they are irremediable, God Most High will recompense him in another way. As old age ceases to be seen as the end of man's existence and as the individual with faith regularly fills his leisure time with worship and nearness to God, through remembrance of God, life becomes more pleasant in old age than in youth.

The visage of death is different in the eyes of one with faith; death is no longer oblivion and nothingness but is a transfer from an ephemeral world to an enduring one, from a smaller world to a greater one. Death is a transfer from the world of labor and sowing to the world of fruition and harvest. Thus, the individual with faith obviates his anxieties about death through efforts at the good works called in the language of religion "acts of devotion".

According to psychologists, non-religious individuals experience most of the psychological illnesses arising from spiritual turmoil and life's hardships. The stronger and firmer the religious individual's faith, the greater his immunity to such disorders. One of the features of contemporary life arising from the weakening of the faiths is an increase in mental and nervous disorders.

The Teaching – Ideology

Classifications of Actions

What is a teaching, an ideology? How are these concepts defined? By what necessity does one as an individual or as a member of a society follow a school and cleave to, invest faith in, an ideology? Is the

existence of an ideology essential for the human individual or society?

Some prefatory remarks are called for here:

Man's acts are of two kinds: pleasure oriented and goal-oriented. Man carries out pleasure oriented acts under the direct influence of instinct, nature, or habit – which is second nature – to attain some pleasure or avoid some form of pain. For instance, he grows thirsty and reaches for water, he sees a snake and flees, or he feels a craving for a cigarette and lights one. Such acts conform to appetite and have to do directly with pleasure and pain. A pleasurable act attracts and a painful act repels.

One is not drawn to or repelled from goal oriented acts by instinct and nature. One carries them out or leaves them undone according to reason and volition and with a view to the benefit of either course of action. That is, man's final cause and motive force is benefit, not pleasure. Nature discerns pleasure; reason discerns benefit. Pleasure excites appetite; benefit mobilises will. Man takes pleasure in the midst of performing a pleasure oriented act, but he does not take pleasure in carrying out goal oriented acts. Rather he finds satisfaction in conceiving that he has taken a step on an ultimately beneficial course – one leading to a future good, a future attainment, a future pleasure.

There is a difference between an act that brings pleasure and happiness and an act that brings neither, that may even bring pain, but that man carries through contentedly, bearing even the pain. Because the result is deferred, goal oriented acts do not result in pleasure and cheer, but they give satisfaction. Man and animal alike experience pleasure and pain, but satisfaction and dissatisfaction are unique to man, as is hope. Satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and hope belong to the domain of intelligence and to the thought per se of man, not to his senses and perceptions.

That the goal oriented acts are performed under the governance of reason means that the evaluative power of the reason sees a good, an attainment, or a pleasure from afar, describes the road to it, which may at times be arduous, and plans for the journey to fulfilment. That these acts are performed through the power of the will means that there exists in man a faculty dependent on the faculty of reason that has the function of executing what reason has sanctioned. At times it puts these things thought has devised and reason has sanctioned into effect in the teeth of all appetites and all natural inclinations.

For example, consider a student. His youthful nature calls him to sleep, food, comfort, sensuality, and play; but his evaluative reason, which considers, on the one hand, the disastrous issue of such acts and, on the other, the ultimately happy issue of working hard, foregoing sleep, and abstaining from sensual delights and pleasures, commands him in the name of benefit to adopt the second alternative. In this instance, man elects the governance of reason, which is benefit, over the governance of nature, which is pleasure.

As another example, a sick person may loath his bitter and distasteful medicine and recoil from drinking it. But he drinks it, governed by this reason that takes thought for benefit and by this willpower that overrides appetites. The stronger are reason and will, the better they impose their command upon

nature, despite nature's inclinations.

In his goal-oriented acts, man is continually implementing some plan, some design, and some theory. The more man evolves in the area of reason and will, the greater is the ratio of his goal-oriented acts to his pleasure-oriented acts. The nearer he draws to the animal level, the more the reverse is true because the animal's acts are all pleasure-oriented.

Occasionally, animals are observed to act in ways that suggest remote ends and outcomes (nest building, migrations, matings, and reproduction, for example). But none of these are enacted in awareness, with an end in mind, or with thought given to what means to elect to attain that end. Rather, they take place through a kind of irresistible instinctual suggestion from the beyond.

Man has so extended the scope of his goal-oriented acts that it has encompassed his pleasure oriented acts. That is, the plans benefit dictates maybe laid so finely that pleasures are incorporated into the structure of benefits: Each pleasure, just as it is a pleasure, becomes a question of benefit; and every natural act, just as it answers to a natural need, proves obedient to the command of reason as well. If goal oriented action covers pleasure-oriented acts, and if pleasure-oriented acts assume a role as part of the general plan and program of life under a goal-oriented outlook, then nature will accord with reason and appetite, with will.

Goal oriented action, in turning on a range of remote ends and objects, as a matter of course calls for planning, programs, methods, and selections of means to reach these ends. Insofar as this action has an individual aspect (that is, insofar as an individual himself plans for himself), the planner, programmer, and theoretician – the one who determines the method and means – is the individual reason, which, of course, is dependent on the level of the individual's qualifications, information, learning, and power of judgement.

Goal oriented action, even at a hypothetical apogee of perfection, is not sufficient for man's actions to be truly human. Man's goal-oriented action is a necessary condition of humanity in that his reason, science, consciousness, and foresight constitute half of his humanity, but it is not a sufficient condition. Human action is truly human when, in addition to being rational and volitional, it serves the more sublime aptitudes of humanity, or at the very least does not oppose them. Otherwise, the most criminal of human acts may take shape through projections, ingenuity, forethought, planning, and theorising. The satanic designs of imperialism are the best evidence for this assertion.

In Islamic religious terminology, the power of foresight when divorced from human aptitudes and aptitudes for faith and put at the service of material and animal ends is called “abominable” (*nukran*) and “Satanism” (*shaytanat*). Goal oriented acts are not necessarily human; rather, if they turn on animal objects, they become far more dangerous than the pleasure oriented animal acts themselves. For instance, an animal may rend another animal or a person to fill its stomach, but man the planner and evaluator will destroy cities and incinerate alive hundreds of thousands of innocent souls to achieve ends

of the same order.

The Insufficiency of Reason

To what extent can reason point out an individual's best interests? The power of reason, reflection, and thought is certainly indispensable for one's particular and limited plans in life. One is constantly confronted with such problems as choosing friends, a field of study, a spouse, a job, travel, a social circle, entertainment, charitable activities, struggling against crookedness, and so forth. One needs to think, reflect, and plan in all these instances; and the more and better one considers them, the better one will succeed. At times, one will need to call upon others' reflection and experience (the principle of consultation). In all these particular instances, one first prepares a plan and then puts it into effect.

What of questions of a broad and general scope? Can one draft a plan covering all the problems of his personal life, according with his best interests in every respect? Or is the power of the individual mind to plan confined to limited and particular questions? Is it beyond the allotted power of reason to comprehend one's best interests in life as a totality, embracing happiness in all its aspects?

We know that some philosophers believe in such self-sufficiency. They claim to have discovered the road from adversity to happiness and to be building their own happiness on the strength of reason and will. But we also know that no two philosophers can be found in the world who are of one mind as to where this road lies. Happiness itself, which is the central and ultimate end and which at first appears self evident, is one of the most ambiguous of concepts.

What is happiness? How is it to be realised? What is wretchedness? What factors go into it? These questions point out a great gulf in our knowledge because even now man himself, with his potentialities and possibilities remains unknown. Is it possible, while man himself remains unknown, to know what constitutes his happiness and the means of attaining it?

Moreover, man is a social being. Social life brings about thousands of problems for him, all of which he must solve, vis-a-vis all of which he must define his responsibility. Because man is a social being, his happiness, aspirations, criteria for good and evil, methods, and choice of means are interwoven with others' happiness, aspirations, criteria for good and evil, methods, and choices of means. One cannot choose one's way independently of others. One must pursue one's happiness on the highway that is leading society to happiness and perfection.

The Need for Ideology Today

If we consider the eternal life of the spirit and the inexperience of reason with respect to the hereafter, the question becomes much more difficult. It is here the need for a teaching, an ideology, becomes apparent – the need for a general theory, a comprehensive, harmonious, and concrete design whose central object is to perfect man and secure universal happiness.

Along the lines and through the methods it suggests, musts and must nots, goods and evils, ends and means, needs, ailments and remedies, responsibilities and duties may be discerned, and every individual may derive a sense of his own responsibility from these.

From his first appearance, or at least from the age when the growth and diffusion of his social life culminated in a series of differences and disputes, man has needed an ideology – in the language of the Qur'an, a “revealed law” (*shari'a*).¹⁸ As time has passed and man has evolved, this need has intensified. In the past, tendencies born of consanguinity, race, ethnos, tribe, and nation governed human societies as a collective spirit.

This spirit in turn generated a range of collective (if inhuman) aspirations and imparted to society unity and direction. Growth and evolution in reason and science have weakened these ties. An individualistic tendency is an essential property of science. It weakens sympathies and bonds of feeling. What will give unity, direction, and shared aspirations to the man of today, and a fortiori to the man of tomorrow, what will serve as his touchstone of good and evil of musts and must nots, is an elective, conscious, inspirational philosophy of life armed with logic – in other words, a comprehensive, perfect ideology.

More than the man of yesterday, the man of today needs such a philosophy of life: the philosophy that is able to win him over to realities beyond the individual and his private interests. Today there is no longer any room for doubt that a teaching, an ideology, is among societies most pressing needs.

Designing such a teaching is beyond the power of individual intelligence. But is it within the power of the collective intelligence? Can man design such a thing by using the aggregate of his past and present experiences and learning? If we first assume that man is the greatest of unknowns to himself, knowledge of human society and of what constitutes its happiness would seem to be even more difficult to attain. What is to be done?

If we have the correct view of being and creation, if we regard the system of being as a system in equilibrium, if we deny there is emptiness and futility in being, we shall be obliged to admit that this great system of the creation has not ignored this greatest of needs, but has delineated the basic lines of this highway from a plane above human reason, that is, on the plane of revelation (the principle of prophecy). It is the task of reason and science to move along these basic lines.

How beautifully and sublimely Avicenna spoke in his *Kitab al-Najat*, where he elucidates people's need for a divinely revealed law expressed by human (Prophetic) means.

He says: “The need for such a man to preserve the species of man and to bring it to fruition is much greater than the need for a growth of hair on the eyebrows, the arching of the soles of the feet, and other such advantages, which are not essential for man's survival; indeed most of them do not serve that purpose at all.”¹⁹ That is to say, how should the great system of creation, which has not neglected these slight and less-than-pressing needs, neglect the most pressing need of all?

But if we are denied the correct view of being and creation, we must acquiesce in man's condemnation to bewilderment and error. Any design, any ideology advanced by this bewildered humanity in this dark edifice of nature, will amount to nothing more than a distraction and an entanglement.

Two Types of Ideologies

Ideologies are of two kinds: human and corporate. Human ideologies are addressed to the human species, not to some special nationality, race, or class, and have for their motive the salvation of the whole human species. They attract supporters from all strata, groupings, nations, and classes. Corporate ideologies are addressed to a certain group, class, or stratum and have for their motive the liberation, or the hegemony, of that group. They thus attract supporters and soldiers from that group only.

These two types of ideology are each based on a vision of man. The catholic and human type of ideology, exemplified by Islam, embodies a kind of realisation of man defined by the concept of the primordial nature. According to Islam, in the course of the creation and prior to the influence of historical and social factors, man gained a special existential dimension and lofty capacities that distinguished him from the animals and impart to him his identity. According to this view, man within creation has gained a kind of species–intelligence and species–conscience that exists in all people, and this primordial conscience has given him a species–individuation, an aptitude to be summoned and addressed and to move. These ideologies begin their summons and engender movement in reliance upon the primordial conscience that distinguishes the human species.

Another group of ideologies has a different vision of man. According to these, man as a species has no such aptitude to be summoned and addressed or to move because his intelligence, conscience, and aptitudes coalesce under the influence of historical factors (in the life of nations and peoples) or social factors (in the class situation of man). Man in the absolute, apart from special historical and social factors, has no intelligence, conscience, or aptitude to be summoned or addressed; rather, he is an abstract being, not an objective one. Marxism and the various nationalistic and ethnic philosophies are based on such a vision. These philosophies arise from class interests, national and racial sentiments, or at best from an ethnic culture.

Beyond all doubt, Islamic ideology is human and arises from the primordial nature of man. Thus, Islam is addressed to the *nas*, the people at large, not to a special group or class.²⁰ Islam in practice has been able to attract supporters from among every group, even from among the very class that it has arisen in struggle against—that is, the class the Qur'an terms the “grandees” and the “affluent” (*mala' wa mutraf*in).

To recruit from a class warriors against that class, to engage members of a group against the interests of that group, even to incite an individual against his own corruption are things Islam has done in numerous instances throughout its history. Islam, in being a religion and so penetrating to the deepest strata of man's existence and in resting on the primordial human nature of man, is able to incite the individual

against his own corruption and to bring about a revolution of self against self known as repentance (*tawba*).

The only power for revolution the corporate and class ideologies have is to incite individual against individual or class against class. They are never able to incite a revolution of individual against self, just as they cannot exert control over an individual in his inwardness, at the locus of his essential selfhood.

Islam, in being a religion – in being, of all the revealed religions, the seal of religions – exists to institute social justice.²¹ It follows that its goal is to liberate the deprived and oppressed and to struggle against the oppressors. But Islam is not addressed to the deprived and oppressed alone, just as it has not attracted its supporters from these classes alone. Islam has recruited soldiers even from among the classes that it has risen in struggle against, in reliance on the power of religion on the one hand and on the human primordial nature on the other. Islam is the theory of the victory of humanity over animality, science over ignorance, justice over injustice, equality over discrimination, virtue over iniquity, piety over dissipation, *Tawhid* over *shirk*.²² The victory of the downtrodden over the tyrants and the arrogant is one of the manifestations of these other victories.

Cultural Unity or Diversity

Does the genuine human culture have a single identity? Does culture have an ethnic, national, or class identity, so that what is and always will be are cultures, not culture? These questions, too, relate to whether man has a single and authentic primordial nature, which could bestow a unity on culture, or he has no such single primordial nature, so that cultures must be the products of historical, ethnic, and geographical factors or of profit oriented class tendencies. Because Islam's worldview upholds a single primordial nature, it favours both a single ideology and a single culture.

Only a human ideology, not a corporate ideology, a unitive ideology, not one based on the division and fragmentation of man, a primordial ideology, not a profit-oriented one, can rest on human values and be human in its essence.

Ideological Temporality and Environmental Specificity

Is every ideology tied to a time and a place? Is man condemned to have a particular ideology for each permutation of temporal circumstances and under each set of varying local environmental conditions? Do the principle of variation (according to region and locale) and the principle of abrogation and substitution (according to the time) govern ideology? Or, just as man's ideology is single, not multiple, from the standpoint of grouping, is it likewise single, not multiple, from the standpoints of time and place? In other words, just as it is general, not special, from the standpoint of grouping, is it absolute, not relative, from the standpoints of time and place?

The question of whether an ideology is absolute or relative from the standpoints of time and place relates to the question of whether it arises from the specific primordial nature of man and has for its

object the happiness of the human species or whether it arises from corporate interests and ethnic and class sensibilities.

In another respect, it depends on what we regard as the essence of social transformation. When a society undergoes transformation, leaving behind an era and embarking on a new era, does that society undergo a change in identity and so come to be governed by a new set of rules, just as, for instance, water, as its temperature rises, finally vaporises, thereafter to be governed by the gas laws, not the laws governing liquids? Or are the primary laws of social evolution constant? Is the axis on which social change turns itself fixed? Does society undergo changes in stage, but not in the axis, the law, of evolution, just as animals transform and evolve biologically, while the laws of evolution themselves always remain constant?

In a third respect the question of whether an ideology is absolute or relative from the standpoints of time and place depends on that ideology's worldview. Is it scientific, philosophic, or religious? A scientific ideology, in being founded on an unstable worldview, cannot itself be stable. It thus contrasts with the philosophic worldview founded on first principles and first axioms, and with the religious worldview, founded on revelation and prophecy.[23](#)

Ideological Constancy or Change

Does the principle of constancy or the principle of change govern ideology? Whether man's ideology varies as time and place vary is a question of the abrogation and substitution of ideologies, but here I speak of a different question – that of the change and transformation of a single ideology. Whether an ideology is general or special in its content, whether it is absolute or relative, is it as a phenomenon constantly transforming and developing, given that this is the nature of phenomena? Is not the character of an ideology at its inception different from its character as it grows and matures?

That is, must it not of necessity constantly undergo modification, augmentation and deletion, and revision at the hands of leaders and ideologues (such as we witness present day materialistic ideologies undergoing)? Otherwise, will it not soon grow exhausted and dated and lose its authority? Or can an ideology be so ordered and so set along the primary lines of movement of man and society that it needs no revision or deletion and correction, that the role of the leaders and ideologues is only that of *ijtihad* in tenor and content, and that ideological evolution takes place in the realm of these acts of *ijtihad*, not in the substance of the ideology? [24](#) The answer to this question, too, will grow clear from the answers to the preceding questions.[25](#)

The Need for Faith

The individual act of cleaving to an ideology takes its true form when it takes the form of faith, and true faith cannot arise through coercion or with a regard to expediency. One may be made to submit to a matter and yield oneself, but ideology is not to yield to. Ideology is to be magnetised by and to embrace.

Ideology calls for faith.

An appropriate ideology should, on the one hand, rest on a kind of worldview that can convince the reason and nourish the mind and, on the other hand, logically deduce attractive goals from its worldview. *At this juncture, love and conviction, the two basic elements of faith, work hand in hand to shape the world.*

Islam: The Comprehensive and All-Encompassing Teaching

Islam, in being founded on such a worldview, is a comprehensive and realistic teaching. It considers every aspect of human needs, whether this worldly or otherworldly, physical or spiritual, intellectual or emotional and affectual, individual or social. From one standpoint, the aggregate of Islamic teachings comprises three areas:

1. Principles of belief, that is, things in which it is the duty of every individual to strive to attain belief. The task that man is charged with in this area falls under the heading of investigation and the acquisition of knowledge.
2. Morals, that is, traits that it is the duty of every Muslim to incorporate and adorn himself with and whose opposites it is his duty to shun. The task that man is charged with in this area falls under the heading of self-control and self-moulding.
3. Decrees, that is, rules that relate to the overt and objective acts of man, inclusive of acts with this worldly and otherworldly ends, and of individual and social acts.

According to the Shi'i school of thought, the principles of Islamic belief are five: *Tawhid*, justice, prophecy, the Imamate, and the Hereafter (*ma'ad*, the Destination). As regards the principles of belief, according to which each individual is charged with acquiring a right belief, Islam does not regard imitation and blind submission as sufficient; every individual must freely and independently verify the rightness of these beliefs. According to Islam, worship is not confined to physical acts of worship, such as the alms-taxes *zakat* and *khums*. There is another kind of worship, and that is mental worship. Mental worship, or contemplation, if directed at man's admonition and awakening, is superior to years of physical worship.

Where Thought Stumbles

The Glorious Qur'an, in summoning us to reflect and draw conclusions, in regarding reflection as worship, and in not regarding acceptance of the principles of belief as sound without logical reflection, has attended to this basic question: Where do the stumblings in human thought arise? What is the taproot of error and straying? If one wishes to think straight and avoid error and deviation, what must one do?

In the Glorious Qur'an, a series of phenomena are named as the occasions and causes of error and straying: reliance on supposition, psychological tendencies and desires, haste, traditionalism, and obedience to personalities.

Reliance on Supposition Instead of Knowledge and Certainty

The Noble Qur'an, in numerous verses, stringently opposes action based on supposition instead of knowledge and certainty; it says:

“Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge” (17:36)

and “The nature of most people is such that if you try to follow them, they will mislead you, because they rely on supposition (not on certainty) and act solely on conjecture and estimation” (paraphrase of 6:116). Modern philosophy has established that this tendency is one of the chief factors in error and confusion.

A thousand years after the Qur'an, Descartes made this recognition the first principle of his logic. He says: “The first of these [precepts to which I have adhered] was to accept nothing as true which I did not clearly recognise to be so: that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice in judgements, and to accept in them nothing more than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I could have no occasion to doubt it.”^{[26](#)}

Psychical Tendencies and Desires

If one wishes to judge rightly, one must preserve a complete impartiality toward the matter under consideration; that is, one must strive to find only reality and submit to reasons and evidence. One must be just like a judge considering a case, impartial to the two sides of the dispute. If a judge has a personal bias toward one side, he will unconsciously pay more heed to the reasons adduced for that side's case. Such a bias will cause the judge to err.

If in his own reflections one fails to preserve his impartiality relative to the negation or affirmation of a matter, if his psychological tendencies are to one side, automatically, without his being aware, the meter-needle of his thought will swing to the side of his psychological tendencies and desires. Thus, the Qur'an terms the desires of the psyche, along with reliance on supposition, one of the factors in thought's stumbling. It says in the Sura Najm:

“They follow nothing but supposition and what their own psyches desire” (53:23).

Haste

Every judgement or expression of opinion demands a certain amount of evidence. Until sufficient evidence has been gathered on a question, any sort of expression of opinion constitutes haste and occasions stumbling in thought. The Noble Qur'an repeatedly alludes to the paucity of man's stock of

knowledge and its insufficiency for some major judgements; it conceives of dogmatic assertions as highly imprudent. For instance, it says:

“Only a little knowledge has been given you” (17:85),

which is to say that the amount of knowledge and information that has reached us is slight and insufficient for judgement.

Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said: In two verses of the Qur'an God has singled out His servants and admonished them: first, that they not affirm a thing until they have attained knowledge of it [haste in affirmation], and second, that they not deny a thing until they have attained to knowledge of it – until they have reached the stage of knowledge and certainty [haste in denial]. God says in one verse:

“Was not the Covenant of the Book [the book of essential disposition or the revealed books] taken from them that they would not ascribe to God anything but the truth?” (7: 169).

He said in the other verse:

“But they deny what their knowledge does not encompass” (10:39). [27](#)

Traditionalism and Looking to the Past

In accordance with his first nature, when man sees that a particular thought or belief was accepted by past generations, he automatically accepts it without allowing himself time to consider it. The Qur'an reminds us not to accede to the accepted notions and beliefs of past generations until we have weighed them on the scales of reason, and recommends independence of thought vis-a-vis the beliefs of past generations.

It says in the Sura Baqara, verse 170:

“When it is said to them, ‘Follow what God has sent down,’ they say, ‘No, we follow the customs we found our ancestors to believe in.’ What! Even though their ancestors were void of reason and unguided?” (2: 170).

Obedience to Personalities

Another of the occasions of stumbling in thought is obedience to personalities. Great historical and contemporary personalities, owing to the proportions of grandeur they assume in others' minds, exert an influence on others' thoughts and wills, to the point of overwhelming them. Others think as they think and resolve as they resolve. Others give up their independence of thought and will to them.

The Noble Qur'an summons us to independence of thought and regards blind following of great men and personalities as leading to eternal torment. Accordingly, it has the people who were lost down this road

say on the resurrection:

“Our Lord! We obeyed our leaders and great men, and so they misled us as to the path” (33:67).

Wellsprings of Reflection in Islam

The Qur'an, in summoning us to thought and reflection, in addition to pointing out the stumbling points of thought, has also presented the wellsprings of reflection, that is, the subjects that are suitable for man to think upon and avail himself of as the sources of his knowledge and information.

In Islam, there has been a general opposition to the expenditure of mental energy on questions that can have no other issue than mental fatigue (that man has no means to investigate) and on questions that, although they could be investigated offer no benefit to the human condition.

The Most Noble Messenger characterised as pointless a science that brings no benefit and whose absence brings no detriment³ but Islam supports and encourages sciences in which investigation can be pursued and that additionally are beneficial. The Noble Qur'an teaches that three subjects are useful and fruitful to reflect upon:

1. Nature: Throughout the Qur'an, there are many verses mentioning nature (including earth, sky, stars, sun, moon, clouds, rain, winds, movements of ships upon the sea, plants, animals – in sum, all the sensible phenomena that man sees about himself) as something we are to consider closely. As an example, I cite the verse:

“Say, ‘Observe all that is in the heavens and on the earth’ (10: 101).

2. History: There are many verses in the Qur'an that summon us to study peoples of the past and that present such study as a resource for acquiring knowledge. According to the Qur'an, human history, with its transformations, takes shape in accordance with a range of norms and laws. The exaltations and abasements, victories and defeats, successes and failures, joys and miseries of history are subject to exact and ordered calculations. By studying these calculations and laws, one can gain control of present-day history and employ it to further one's own happiness and that of one's contemporaries. Here is one verse as an example:

“[Normative] systems have gone away before you. So travel the earth and observe how things came out for those who practised denial” (3: 137).

That is, before your time, norms and laws were actually put into effect. So explore and study the land and the historical remains of those who have gone before and see how things came out for those who took for lies the truth that God revealed to them.

3. The inner being of man: The Qur'an names the human heart as a source of a special kind of

knowledge. According to the Qur'an, the whole of creation is a set of signs of God and indications pointing out reality. The Qur'an terms man's external world "the horizons" [*afaq*] and his internal world "the selves" [*anfus*]. It thereby points out the special importance of the inner being of man. This is the source for these terms so frequently met in Islamic literature.²⁸

The German philosopher Kant has a sentence that has universal renown, and it is inscribed on his tombstone: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."²⁹

¹. The English philosopher Hobbes had such a view of man.

². This is Descartes's theory.

³. The hukama' of Islam have a principle for the interrelation of the spirit and the body, worded this way: "The soul and the body reflect each other responsively and preparatorily." [The author makes repeated mention of 3 classes of traditional Islamic scholars in the course of this work. The falasifa (sing. failasuf) are concerned with the theory of knowledge, the structure of language, and objective relations. Their field of inquiry is known as falsafa. Basically, they are Aristotelians. Avicenna typifies this class. The terms falasifa and falsafa are translated by their English cognates, philosophers and philosophy.

[The hukama' (sing. hakim) are said to more concerned with ultimate questions of being, the meaning of life, its end, and the human responsibility within it. Their field of inquiry is known as hikma (wisdom, sagesse). Avicenna would also be included in this group in certain respects. More typical representatives would be Mulla Sadra, Mulla Hadi Sabzavari, and Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi. These terms appear untranslated, except in a few instances where the author has used them in non-Islamic contexts or where hikma is translated as 'wisdom'.

[The 'urafa, (sing. 'arif) are the exponents of the theoretical Sufism codified by Ibn 'Arabi and especially influential in Shi'i thought, known as 'irfan. These terms, too, appear untranslated.

[The author seems sometimes to treat falsafa and hikma as synonyms, particularly in the essay "Philosophy". There he also treats 'irfan as a synonym for Sufism as such, and many persons familiar in the West as Sufis are introduced throughout as 'urafa'.

[My thanks to Muhammad Javad Larijani for his help in clarifying these terms. Trans.]

⁴. Tawrat: The word is cognate with the word Torah, but Muslim commentators hold that the work it refers to is not to be identified with the existing Jewish scripture. See A.Yusuf Ali, translator, The Holy Qur'an (n.p., 1946), pp.282-285. Trans.

⁵. This and the following quotations are from the New English Bible. Trans.

⁶. Muhammad Iqbal, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, (Lahore, 1962) p.179.

⁷. Will Durant, The Pleasures of Philosophy, (New York, 1953) pp.240, 114.

⁸. Ibid. pp.168-169.

⁹. The Kharijites: a religio-political sect that rejected the claims to rule of both 'Ali and Mu'awiya, founder of the Umayyad dynasty, as well as evolving certain distinctive theological positions.

¹⁰. Bertrand Russell, Marriage and Morals (London 1929) p.102.

¹¹. See, for instance, Geoges Politzer, Cours de philosophie: I. Principes elementaires (Paris 1948).

¹². George Sarton, Six Wings: Men of Science in the Renaissance (London, 1958) p.218.

¹³. This quotation is without attribution and the source is unknown. Trans.

¹⁴. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York 1929) p.508.

¹⁵. Ibid., p.506.

¹⁶. Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion (New York, 1950) pp.25-26.

¹⁷. Divan-i Ash'ar, ed., Nasrullah Taqavi (Tehran, 1335 Sh./1956) p.364. Nasir-i Khusraw was the famous poet,

philosopher and Isma'ili missionary (d.481/1088) Trans.

[18.](#) It can be inferred from the noble verses of the Qur'an taken as a whole that these variations and needs appeared in the time of the prophet Noah. No earlier prophet had been given a revealed law. See 'Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Tafsir al-Mizan (hereafter referred to as Tafsir al-Mizan), the commentary to the blessed sura Baqara, verse 213:

"The people were a single nation, and God sent messengers" (2:213).

[19.](#) Exact place of occurrence not found. Trans.

[20.](#) Sometimes this word, nas, meaning the people at large, is erroneously taken to be synonymous with the masses of the people, as opposed to the privileged classes. Because Islam is addressed to the nas, it is claimed that Islam is the religion of the masses, and this is likewise accounted a special feature of Islam. But the real virtue of Islam is that it arose with the support of the masses of the people, not that it is addressed solely to them and so has a corporate or class ideology. What distinguishes Islam even further is that not only does it take hold among the exploited and deprived classes, but, in resting on the human primordial nature, at times it has stirred the conscience of the exploiting classes and capitalists themselves, to the advantage of the exploited.

[21.](#) Note Hadid:25:

"We had sent our apostles with clear signs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that the people might stand up in equity" (57:25).

Note also A'raf:29:

"Say, 'My Lord has commanded equity'" (7:29).

[22.](#) See pages below – (Levels and Degrees of Tawhid, Levels and Degrees of Shirk, Boundary between Tawhid and Shirk).

[23.](#) I cannot here explore either the question of the primordial nature, which is the "mother of questions" in Islamic theology, or the issue of social transformation.

[24.](#) The deduction of particular applications of the law from its principles and ordinances, exercised by a mujtahid, here and occasionally elsewhere used in a broad and analogic sense. Trans.

[25.](#) In "Khatm-i Nubuvvat" ("The Seal of Prophecy") appearing in Muhammad, Khatim-i Payambarān ("Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets"), a publication of the Husayniya-yi Irshad, and later published separately as a pamphlet, I have discussed the universality and absoluteness of Islamic ideology along with the role of ijtihad in adapting it to the circumstances of different places and changing temporal conditions. I have shown that what is subject to development and change is ijtihad, not Islamic ideology. Interested readers should refer to that work.

[26.](#) Rene Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason", in Philosophical Works (Cambridge, 1931), vol. 1, p.92.

[27.](#) Tafsir al-Mizan, (Arabic text) vol.6 p.319, commentary to A'raf: 169.

[28.](#) See Fussilat:

"Soon We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in their souls, until it grows clear to them that this is the Truth" (41:53).

[29.](#) Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (Indianapolis, 1956), conclusion.

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