

Part 2: At-Tawhid In the Ideological System of Islam

In The Name of Allah – The Beneficent, The Merciful

The second part of this subject concerns At-Tawhid in the value system of Islam. The terms “value”, “value system” and other words of this kind are quite prevalent in today’s terminology and people have become familiar with these terms. But since this term "value" has in fact been translated from other languages and has gone into our culture and is not from the viewpoint of concept and contents which are in conformity with the interpretations and words which have appeared in the genuine culture of Islam and the riwayat, it is necessary to first give an explanation about this term giving an extensive meaning which is today meant by it, so that we are able to see what equivalent of this term is in the Islamic culture.

The concept of value

The common and general concept which we have about the term “value” is in fact the economic concept. The relation of a commodity and/or a service with the thing man is ready to pay for getting that commodity or service brings into existence the concept of value. But the meaning of value and the value system is other than this economic concept, though it is not totally alien to this concept and though it might very probably have at first been harrowed from this very economic concept.

The justification which can be made is that we are ready to pay some money for a good and/or a service or to deliver another good or service in return for that when that good and/or service are desired and liked by us and we have a liking for them. A hungry man needs food. Food is desirable for him and he is ready to pay some money in return, which satisfies his need. So, the criterion for economic value too, is in fact desirability and being demanded.

Hence we can abstract this meaning from its economic specifications and say: *“anything which is desired and demanded by man and which can meet his need or his want, that thing is of value.”* The term “value”, in this extensive meaning is both applied to objects as well as to men and their conduct.

But since our discussion is about man and his behavior, we have to continue speaking in this connection. Now let us see which man is more valuable from the viewpoint of Islam.

Man's honor

In spite of what is propounded in today's world culture and which is also claimed by the humanists that each man, due to his being a human, has a natural value and in other words has honor, even though he might commit many murders and crimes Islam considers two kinds of honor for man.

The first kind is general honor, meaning that each man, due to his being a man (irrespective of his conducts and attitudes) enjoys that honor. This is a creational honor and a God-given value which the Almighty Allah has bestowed upon man and which He has not bestowed upon the other creatures and perhaps the axis of these God-given blessings is man's intellect. In some of the ayat of the Holy Qur'an, too, this creational honor has been pointed out:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

“And surely We have honored the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have given them of the good things, and We have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom We have created (17:70).”

In the above ayah of the Holy Qur'an, it has been stipulated that Allah has bestowed an honor to the children of Adam (AS) and excelled them to many of His creatures. This honoring includes all men, namely, both man and woman, little and mature possess the human creational specifications. Allah has given them eyes, ears and the other limbs and parts (of the body), a beautiful and erect body, and has also bestowed upon them mind, intellect, intelligence, talents and the other spiritual and physical characteristics which every man enjoys.

But when we meditate, we will see that this honor and value in reality belong to Allah and that it is He Who has bestowed these blessings on men freely and that men have themselves no role in attaining this honor

The other kind of honor is that which man himself with free -will and the power of free choice and free selection which the Almighty Allah has granted him achieves and attains. In this kind of honor, not all men are equal and it is enjoyed just by the virtuous and if some men act un-virtuously, they will not only have any share of this honor, but rather they will get anti-value and fall so down that they will become lower than any animal. About this group of men who have not acquired any honor for themselves the Holy Qur'an says:

أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

“... They are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones (7: 179).”

Hence, that creational honor does not suffice for man to become recognized as an honorable and noble creature forever, because he may lose the God-given honor and buy for himself anti-honor, namely, meanness and lowness. The expression of the Holy Qur'an in this regard is such:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

“Certainly We created man in the best make. Then We render him the lowest of the low (95:4-5).”

Allah has created man in the best and most admirable form and fulfilled His creational honoring in the best manner, but some men are found who deprive themselves from this divine honor and who degrade themselves down to the lowest stages which are possible for a human being. Therefore, although all men have the creational and God-given honor in common, but in the stage of free choice all are not the same and equal and will have different degrees of value and honor in proportion to the difference in their degrees of virtuousness, and even sometimes some may degrade themselves so much that no honor is viewed for them and they should be omitted from the society like cancerous glands.

Moral Value

The other matter which concerns this subject is men's conduct which generally constitutes the main axis or our discussion in this series of matters. Here, starts the display of arts among the philosophers of law, the philosophers of ethics and the various thinkers of humanity. However, during tens of centuries in which they have discussed about these subjects, still their thought has not reached any decisive and correct result. A short introduction will serve to open the way towards this discussion, paying attention to which helps us in attaining this objective.

Basically, any free action fulfilled by a free agent is for the sake of attaining the result which is derived from that action and very often it might be that no action would take place if no goal was in view. Therefore, since every action is a means for a goal, and no action is in itself desirable by nature, the value and desirability of every action is also subject to the result which is derived from that action.

The person who intends to go on a trip, takes a series of actions, for instance, he buys tickets, prepares the means and necessities for the trip and gets ready for boarding the bus or an aero plane. But by fulfilling these preliminary actions he certainly means to reach the goal, the destination and the place he has in view, and does not mean the mere fulfillment of these actions.

Here, there is a very delicate point of which many of those involved in discussion and reasoning are neglectful and it is that sometimes some results are derived from one's actions which either he does not know and/or does not notice, or for which he has not fulfilled that action.

For instance, when one leaves home to go to visit his friend or to go to school or to perform some other action, if en route, other results follow this action of his which (results) he has not considered at all, nor he has meant them, it cannot be said that he has fulfilled this action for that result (which he had not meant). So, the value of man's free action is subject to the result which he has meant from the beginning and which he has put as his goal.

Another example will serve to better clarify this matter; a person builds a hospital for showing off and so that the people will applaud him and his only goal in spending money and time is gaining fame and popularity among the people. Now if this hospital is built and thousands of people, including the esteemed Islamic combatants and the fighters in the way of Allah are treated in that hospital, and good result is derived from this action, can it be said that the builder of the hospital (the person referred to) will also derive a benefit from this action? Certainly not! Because his aim has not been the realization of these results and only the love for fame has driven him to perform such an action.

On the contrary, if a person builds a hospital with the intention that Allah's creatures and the wounded and the oppressed people of the society use it, but a bomb happens to hit and destroy that hospital and so the building of the hospital would not lead to any result, his action has by no means-become valueless, because he had indeed built the hospital for an invaluable goal. Of course if that hospital remained safe and the aims of construction were also fulfilled, he would achieve more benefits.

The Criterion for Moral Value

Now, taking into consideration the above introductions which clarify that besides the result's being taken into consideration, intention and viewing the aim have also direct bearing on giving value to man's actions, the question is raised as to what behavior men should have and what goal they should take into consideration so that their actions, conducts and behaviors become valuable? Before paying attention to this matter, we should first see what is basically the truth and criterion for values from the viewpoint of Islam?

As a whole, the truth and criterion for values from the viewpoint of Islam and the value system of this school (the school of Islam) is that perfection which emerges in man's soul and which leads man towards worshipping Allah, getting near to Him and winning His favor. This perfection is not a conventional concept and is like physical power, a reality and a fact. Of course this perfection is to be achieved as a result of the free actions of men themselves so it will become possessed of moral value and the man possessing perfection attains true honor and real nobility.

Therefore, from the viewpoint of Islam, only the acquired spiritual perfections are the source of the exalted and positive human value, otherwise physical and body perfections have no genuine value and even the God-given powers of the soul cannot by themselves be the source of value either.

Extraordinary intelligence and strong memory do not by themselves become the source of the perfection of the soul, because there have been persons who were endowed with high-level of intelligence but who

however sank into the lowest abysses of human fall and/or who misused their intelligence and intellect for selling out themselves and the others. So, intelligence by itself is not a source of absolute value. Intelligence and memory are not absolute values; rather they are rated as tools for attaining true values.

People, more or less, measure some of the values with their own innate nature and intellect, included among such values are truthfulness, honesty and standing by one's words. But sometimes the matter reaches such a stage, the reality of which cannot be understood by all and rather the superior ones (those who are above the others in respect of spiritual perfection and knowledge of the religion) should understand it and teach it to the others and even, more significant than this, some of the values are not recognizable with man's ordinary thought. It is there that wahy rushes to the help of man and makes those values recognizable. Many of the moral and legal issues in the value system of Islam are determined just on the basis of wahy and their limits, terms and details are defined by the Divine Law.

For example, we briefly know that if we tell a lie which causes an innocent person to be released from the hands of an oppressor, such a lie does not have the indecency the other lies have, but how far and with what conditions? These are the issues to be determined by the Divine law. So, the basis of values consists of the virtues, qualities and manners which exalt and perfect man's soul. Among the values which are propounded in various communities of the world, there are matters which all people have—more or less accepted but which they are unable to understand.

All know that justice is good. But what is the criterion for this goodness'? All know that truthfulness and honesty are good. But which truthfulness and which honesty'? All know that the spirit of self-sacrifice is beautiful, but by what criterion? If we acquire these criteria properly, we can judge in cases of doubt and mistake properly. For example, today, in all world communities, freedom is propounded as a great value, so that if anyone says: *I oppose freedom*; it is as if he has said that I oppose the light of the sun. But do all know as to what is the criterion for this value?

The Value of Freedom

The word “freedom” has a very broad concept and has different meanings. Certainly it cannot, with this extent, be a criterion for value and the reason for making mistakes and misusing these concepts is this very fact that these values have been spread without acquiring their criterion and that the people, too, have accepted them for the sake of their sensual desires.

Anyhow, the desirability of freedom is not absolute. Rather, it is a means and tools for that spiritual perfection which is attained as a result of the person's free will and free choice. Suppose that if we leave a child free in a house where the child is surrounded by explosives or poisonous medicines, the child can freely light the match and approach the gas capsule and/or can throw the lit match near a vessel of gasoline or can consume a poisonous medicine, have we (by doing so) caused the child to become perfected or have we caused it to be killed?

Is, from the viewpoint of logic and intellect, giving such freedom to the child correct? Or, should the child be left free to the extent that it does not harm itself and the others? Of course, if we tie up the child's hands and legs or confine it to a cage, it will never make human growth.

The child should be left free, but within a specified and planned framework and should not be left totally free. When this child reaches maturity and distinguishes between good and bad, then he should be left free. Also human individuals in different societies have different degrees of wisdom, perfection and recognition. If the general people (in a society) are not perfectly aware and the means for any kind of action is at their disposal, its result will be nothing but destruction for that people.

It is not proper on the strength of the fact that freedom is an absolute value, to make all things for all individuals free so that they will behave in any way they choose. This is a wrong logic. This is of the inauspicious souvenirs of the Western culture which has spread in our society. We should know these anti-values and separate them from the true values so that we can bring our society near to more and more growth on the basis of the Islamic values and attain that perfection which, if not achieved by man, can be replaced by nothing else.

Commitment and sense of duty

We have already mentioned that value is sometimes applied to man's free conduct (the actions he performs out of free -will) and it is said that such and such an action is valuable and this term "value" is sometimes applied to the final goal of these conducts and it is expressed that for what values) such and such actions are performed.

In other words, in a value system, firstly we should take into view a final goal so that for attaining that final goal the actions become valuable, provided that that very goal itself has innate and genuine value, and secondly we choose such conducts that are commensurate with that value. The most general and universal valuable conduct which exists in all value systems (whether or not those who propound that system are heedful of that general value) is commitment and being bound to fulfill the duties and responsibilities.

In the midst of such kinds of systems which are propounded in the world, one of the European moral philosophers named Kant notices this point and says: *"A good action is that which is fulfilled for the sake of the fulfillment of duty."* He has properly understood this far that a general value for all actions and conducts is the fulfillment of the duty. But what has been away from his view and has remained undone (in his expressions) is that the fulfillment of the duty itself is not the final end, rather its value is for the sake of another genuine and innate value, named man's "final perfection" which is attained in the light of proximity to Allah.

The word "committed" which is used in today's public culture, is applied to the one who attempts to know his duty and fulfill it. But in Islam, we have by far a richer and more meaningful term than the terms

“commitment” and “being bound over” and that is the beautiful term “taqwa” (piety). Taqwa is that very commitment which is propounded in other moral systems, plus the particular specifications which have arisen out of the Islamic attitude and culture. Although there have been detailed discussions about the concept of taqwa and basically in all sermons of the salat-ul-Jumu’ah (Friday prayer), it (taqwa) should be enjoined and emphasized, however, as it suits the matter, we shall express a few points briefly in this connection so far as it concerns the discussion.

Taqwa

The term “taqwa” which is from the root “wiqayah” and which means “guarding” is applied where something which is exposed to danger and corruption is to be guarded. This is the literal meaning of “wiqayah” and also “taqwa” which is the infinitive mood and/or the verbal noun of “ittiqa” that contains this same meaning. But “taqwa”, as a moral concept, has a particular point and that is that man feels that as a result of some conducts, the perfection and purity of his soul and the value of his being are endangered.

Here, two basic points exist which separate the moral taqwa from its other meanings, the first point is that what is in danger is man’s soul, not his body and physique and the second point is that the danger which threatens a man’s soul, is his own conduct, not the other men’s conduct, nor the natural events.

So, it is appropriate that man behaves in such a way as to remain guarded so that his soul will not be contaminated, will not fall in respect of value, will not be fallen and declined and will not be afflicted with eternal torment. In such cases man has naturally also fear of contamination or danger, because if he does not have fear, he will not attempt to guard himself. That is why in the concept of taqwa, the concept of fear has also been guaranteed and the expressions of the Holy Qur’an and the riwayat and the case of common usage, indicate that this is the case:

...وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا

“And be on your guard against a day when one soul shall not avail another in the least... (2:48, 123).”

Fear the day when no one comes to the help of another one and for such fearing, guard yourselves from such danger (both the meaning of guarding and the meaning of fear are considered.).

In the Islamic attitude which is based on At-Tawhid (monotheistic) viewpoint, we know all effects to be from Allah. Although there exist causes and means for these effects, but eventually it is Allah Who moves the chain of the world of being, Who is the cause of all causes and Who is the Maker of all means. Therefore, on the basis of At-Tawhid in actions if a danger threatens a person, it is also in the control of Allah.

So, if a person fears lest in future his existence, his life, his perfection and purity and also his honor and nobility be endangered, from the At-Tawhid outlook (the outlook based on At-Tawhid), he fears lest Allah –The Almighty should provide the means so that he will fall, whether in worldly means or the means of the hereafter. So this fear eventually leads to fear of Allah and so if we fear lest we should fall, we should fear Allah, i.e., lest Allah should let us fall, or if we fear lest our soul should be polluted or lest we should become afflicted with eternal torment and remoteness from Allah's mercy, we should fear Allah and regard Him as the Maker of all causes and this attitude becomes the cause and source for taqwa to be attached to Allah –The Almighty in the Islamic culture.

Do meditate about the ayat of the Holy Qur'an,

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

“O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah... (59: 18).”

The word “ittaqu” means be careful, guard yourself, but what role does the word "Allah" have here? “Allah” is the object of the verb “ittaqu”, it means fear Allah and guard yourselves against that danger which threatens you from Allah as punishment for the (bad) actions you do out of free choice.

So, it became clear that taqwa is that very commitment towards the fulfillment of the duties with richer and more fruitful concepts. That is to say, in the concept of taqwa, both the spiritual source of taqwa which consists of fear of danger and the fact that the effects and emergence of these dangers and falls are in Allah's hands have been noticed. It is He Who can make this danger reach man, Who can descend torment upon him or keep him secure from those dangers. and since the man's fall in the hereafter is the torment in hell, sometimes fire and torment have been regarded as pertaining to taqwa:

..فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ..

“...Then fear the fire whose fuel is people and stones... (2:24).”

The like of the above ayah has also been employed from the root word “wiqayah”:

...أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا..

“...Save yourselves and your families from a fire... (66:6).”

The word “qu” (save) is from that very root word “wiqayah”. So, sometimes taqwa is attributed to the fire, torment and hell, due to the fact that it (taqwa) is the means which hinders man from fall. Also, on some occasions, taqwa is attributed to a time:

...وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا

“And be on your guard against a day when one soul shall not avail another in the least... (2:48, 123).”

Fear the day when no one rushes to the help of the other and no one suffices another one's cause. That day is the Qiyamah (Resurrection Day). Another point which should be taken into view in taqwa is that sometimes taqwa is regarded as the adjective of the verb itself and its application is meant to enjoin performing the prayers (and other religious duties) and to desist from the sins and sometimes too it is applied just to desist from the sins:

“No (good) action, if coupled with taqwa is little. [1](#)”

In the above riwayat, good action has been placed alongside taqwa, namely, fulfill good actions and do not commit sins. So, according to one probability, by taqwa in the above riwayat it is meant that if you want your good actions to be useful, you should also desist from bad actions, otherwise the bad actions cause the effects of the good actions to be destroyed, too. For example, if you collect money in a bag, but however because there is a hole in the bottom of the bag, though you have worked and taken trouble too, you have saved nothing.

According to a riwayat, the Holy Prophet (SA) of Islam said to his companions: "The one who utters At-Tasbihatul-Arba'ah (the four praises): 'subhanallahi wal-hamdu lillahi wa la ilahailallahu wallahu akbar', for each praise Allah grows a tree in Paradise for him." One of the Companions of the prophet (SA) remarked: "O the Prophet (SA) of Allah! So, we have plenty of trees in Paradise." The Holy Prophet (SA) of Islam replied: "If you do not send a fire to burn the trees." Good actions bear (good) fruits if they are accompanied by taqwa, namely, by desisting from sins.

Therefore, one of the cases of the application of taqwa is the very desisting from sins and its other application consists of that spiritual state which becomes the source of the fulfillment of duties and desisting from forbidden acts. Also, sometimes taqwa is applied to that state of fear which becomes the origin of this action and eventually another case of the application of taqwa is a spiritual Slate which is realized in man's soul.

This fixed spiritual quality which is called the well-grounded quality, is a fixed spiritual slate which is present in man's soul and which is not quickly given up. Those who during years of assiduity and practice, have acted according to their duties, a well-grounded quality develops in them so that automatically, anywhere a duty is to be performed, they immediately act.

In a broader definition and explanation it should be expressed that man's spiritual states are divided into two groups; one group consists of transient, changeable and unstable states which states, in the philosophical terminology is interpreted as "hal" (natural disposition) and the other group consists of

permanent, stable and well-grounded qualities in the soul which is interpreted as “malakuh” (fixed spiritual quality).

These states and qualities are propounded in the case of all the value behaviors of man. Chastity, modesty, self-sacrifice and the like, are sometimes in the form of a transient state and sometimes in the form of a constant spiritual quality and it exists in the form of a malakah in the soul.

In the traditional and classical ethics, the discussion is on malakat, namely, those constant and firm qualities which exist in individuals' souls, but in value concepts in the general meaning, individual and personal behaviors which stem from transient states should also be discussed.

That is, for the clarification of the value system of a school (of thought) it does not suffice that we just rely on the malakat, because eventually the question may arise as to what value does this behavior, which has not reached the level of malakah, have from the viewpoint of this system. Is it totally lacking in value? Certainly this is by no means the case.

So, the value of behaviors should also be discussed irrespective of malakat. Consider a youth who has just reached maturity (from the point of view of the religious duties). When he performs his actions with a divine motive, his deed is taqwa, even though malakah may not yet have come into existence in him. The expressions of the Holy Qur'an and the Infallible Imams (SA) too are mostly viewing the behavior and do not mean that one should necessarily have the malakah of taqwa. Because if a person religiously becomes mature just today, he is duty-bound to have taqwa.

Besides all these, basically the malakat, from two aspects, have direct and close relationship with actions and conducts, one that they (malakat) are themselves caused by behaviors, namely, they come into existence as a result of practice, assiduity and continued action and on the other hand, they are the cause of further actions. Therefore, taqwa, in the meaning of an abstract title conforms to actions, not just malakah and that spiritual quality which is discussed in ethics,

The other matter which should not be neglected in regard to taqwa is that when we say that in the value system of Islam no good action is outside taqwa, this imagination should not occur that just physical and perceptible action is meant; rather by action, it is meant here as a philosophical concept, that is, any kind of activity which stems from man's soul, whether it is in man's heart and the environment of the mind, or outside the body and on external matters, whether it be a physical action or a spiritual action.

When you are seated, your body is not in movement and you are not bringing about changes in external matters, but with thinking and meditating, you can fulfill an action which has value and which is rewarded in the hereafter or vice-versa, i.e., an action which is among severe and cardinal sins, such as unduly suspecting your faithful brothers.

Sometimes even refraining from an action becomes the proof of taqwa. Suppose a youth faces a situation which tempts the commitment of a sin, but he controls himself and does not commit that sin.

Here, apparently no action has been fulfilled, but in reality a great action has taken place and that is deciding to desist from the sin and in the terminology of fuqaha (the Islamic jurists), it is kaffun-nafs (controlling one's self), that is, a spiritual energy should be spent so that man can restrain himself from committing a sin.

Hence, taqwa includes the palpable, external and physical actions as well as the spiritual actions and even desisting from (sinful) actions, when it is with decision and out of consciousness. But if desisting from a sinful action is unconsciously and without intention, such as when a man is asleep and in this state no sin is committed by him, such a person has (in that condition) desisted from sin(s), but his action is not taqwa, rather it is utter negation and there is no affirmative aspect, nor spiritual activity in it, because neither spiritual energy has been spent, nor any decision has been taken for anything. So, those who imagine that taqwa is just desisting from sin(s) and thus keep aloof from the community so that no error and sin might be committed by them have in fact performed no action and are not muttaqi (possessed of taqwa, virtuous, pious). Taqwa requires spiritual activity.[2](#)

We give another example: In a scene of wrestling, two persons are busy wrestling at a gymnasium and around the scene; there are a number of spectators watching them. After some time of struggle, one of the two wrestlers falls on ground and as wrestlers call it becomes knocked down and the other wrestler who has not been knocked down will be declared as the winner. Well, as for those spectators who are seated around the scene and who have not been knocked down and who are also seated or standing erect, are they winners too?

The answer is quite clear. They have not taken part in this event so that a case for winning and losing would come forth. Taqwa is when a man draws sword against Satan and against one's soul and succeeds to guard himself from evil and commit no sins. Taqwa is an affirmative action and a positive activity, be it in one's soul or in his body. Of course the physical actions after all stem from spiritual activity and arise out of will-power and determination.

Stages of Taqwa

The other point which concerns Taqwa is that Taqwa has certain stages and it is not such that we could say it exists or it does not exist. Rather it is a matter with stages and these stages are innumerable and have no definite limits and extents either. In the ayah of the Holy Qur'an,

..إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ..

“...Surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty)... (49: 13).”

The word (atqa), meaning the most honorable is in the superlative degree. This meaning is applied in a

case where one thing has different stages, being little or in excess and/or intensity and weakness. For example, the one who performs the (obligatory) prayers so that he will be immune from Allah's torment and would not go to hell, has attained one degree of taqwa and relation with Allah, but this is a low stage and a weak relation.

A better stage and a stronger relationship with Allah belongs to the one who performs the wajib salawat not only for the sake of immunity from Allah's retribution, but also because he wishes to enter the sphere of Allah's mercy and to enjoy His eternal blessings.

Such a person, besides performing the wajib (obligatory) salawat is also attentive of the mustahab (recommended but not obligatory) salawat and tries to perform more and more mustahab acts. The loftiest stage and degree belongs to the awliya' (Allah's friends), that is, even if they know that in spite of fulfilling this religious obligation (the salawat), still Allah will take them to Hell, but He is pleased with them, they still recite salawat in order to acquire Allah's pleasure and love.

The same is also the case (with them), if they know that even there is no hell and paradise. In some supplications of the Infallible Imams (AS), it has appeared that they say (to Allah): *"O Allah! If you take me to hell and burn me for thousands of years, your love will not come out of my heart and if I know that your pleasure is, that I burn in the fire of Hell for ever, that fire will be desirable for me."*

Of course this supposition (that Allah might take the Infallible Imams (AS) to hell...) is contrary to the truth and there is no room for the probability of such a thing, but this is the spiritual state of such persons (The Infallible Imams (AS) and all other Allah's friends) .

They do not demand paradise and hell and seek only Allah's meeting and pleasure. The following words are well-known from Amirul-Mu'mineen (The Commander of the Faithful) Al-Imam 'Ali (AS) who says: *"O Allah! I do not worship You out of fear of torment and desire for paradise, rather I worship You because you are lovable and worthy of being worshipped."*

Anyhow, taqwa has different stages and naturally, that nearness to Allah (pleasing Allah, winning Allah's favor) which is attained due to taqwa will have different degrees. Examples of that too, sometimes in our time, are witnessed in the combatant brothers and in their last wills. Sometimes they write and sometimes it comes to their tongue that: *"O Allah, we have not come to the warfront to be rewarded with Al-hurul-'in (the pure beautiful mates in paradise), we have not come for jihad to just be released of the torment of hell, rather since we love You and seek Your pleasure and meeting, we sacrifice our unworthy lives."*

The above points were a brief description about the concepts which are propounded about taqwa and this word by itself denotes all these delicate and precise concepts and hence it becomes clear why in the Islamic culture this word (taqwa) has been so much emphasized:

So, taking in to consideration the ayah of the Holy Qur'an,

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“...Surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty)... (49: 13).”

it becomes quite clear that the most general and overall value regarding moral (permanent) dispositions and behavior is taqwa and any other thing which has value will be one of the proofs of taqwa, If justice and seeking the truth have value, it is because they are of the proofs of taqwa. If the acquisition of knowledge is of value, it is because in the Islamic culture, it is regarded as one of the proofs of taqwa; likewise, the other values, such as self-sacrifice.

The Relationship of Taqwa with At-Tawhid

As for the relationship of taqwa with At-Tawhid, what is of significance and should be paid attention to, is that in the value system of Islam, taqwa, without relationship with Allah has no value and it is directly or indirectly related to Allah. Even this it is said:

... النَّارَ فَاتَّقُوا

“...Then fear the fire... (2:24).”

The fire is to be feared because it is “Allah’s torment”; or

...وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا...

“And guard yourselves against a day... (2:281).”

The qiyamah (resurrection day), too, is to be guarded against because it is the day of Allah’s judgment and the day of Allah’s reward and punishment and taqwa becomes related and associated with it. In other words, since taqwa includes fear and the fear desired in Islam is the fear of Allah, so this concept includes a relationship with Allah and so long as we do not know Allah and do not know Him as the Possessor of all perfections and powers, no room will be found for having taqwa towards Him (for fearing Him).

The more significant relationship which At-Tawhid has with taqwa is from the viewpoint of acquiring taqwa, in the way that when we learned that taqwa is a general value and the malakah of taqwa is one of the most excellent malakat with which man is related, we should know how this malakah is acquired. One general way common to all malakat is practice, that is, anyone who wants to acquire a permanent spiritual disposition should practice and repeat the actions related to it so that that malakah will emerge out of him.

As for the malakah of taqwa (so that it will emerge in mu'minin as a permanent spiritual disposition and lifts them to the most excellent of values), the main condition is paying attention to Allah, in the way that the greater man's attention is to Allah, the better he is able to fulfill his duties and provide the ground for the emergence of malakah of taqwa in his soul.

It is true that many people perform some actions without paying attention to Allah or desist from some actions, but these kinds of conducts are not the source of that value attached to taqwa which is propounded in Islam. These provide a ground for perfection and have imperfect causality. This cause reaches its true effect and acquires perfect causality when it has a relationship with Allah, then it can be regarded as a means for man's getting near to Allah, winning Allah's pleasure and favor and for his eventual perfection and be fulfilled for the sake of its very being a means (towards winning Allah's pleasure), not out of other motives.

Suppose in a society in which theft and treachery is regarded indecent, a person avoids committing theft so that his social value will not decrease or his reputation will not be damaged, such a person has desisted from a sin, but never attains that value which is propounded in the Islamic taqwa, because a voluntary action has value when it is fulfilled for the sake of that eventual desired goal behind it. If desisting from sin is for the sake of Allah, it has that eventual value, but if it is because of fear of the people and fear of legal torment and persecution, it will no longer have that value. So, all value action of ours should be in relation to Allah and take place for the sake of getting near to Allah, winning His pleasure, favor and mercy and immunity from His torment.

In the following ayah of the Holy Qur'an,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“O you who believe! fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do. And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors (59: 18–19).”

These two basic points have been mentioned for the acquisition of taqwa; one to be attentive to the fact that the Almighty Allah is always present and conscious and that we are in His presence and the other is that the Almighty Allah spares the reward and the punishment for no action and that He returns the result of all our actions to ourselves. Paying attention to these matters causes man to, with the fulfillment of the duties, attain divine taqwa.

The point which is contrary to taqwa, namely, that which is propounded as anti-value, is fisq (evil-doing) and fujur (wickedness or debauchery); and fasiq (evil-doer) and fajir (the debauchee) is the one who does not reckon any danger (neither apparent and material dangers nor the dangers which damage his

humanity), and accepts no border for his own life and who, waywardly and licentiously moves in any direction he chooses to. Although, in the Holy Qur'an, taqwa is sometimes applied in the face of fujur and sometimes in the face of fisq, but its proof is the same.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

“And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it (91:7-8).”

and/or:

...أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ...

“...Or shall We make those who guard (against evil) like the wicked? (38:28).”

In the above ayat of the Holy Qur'an, taqwa has been propounded as a general value and fujur has been propounded as an anti-value. The same is true of the ayah mentioned before.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors (59: 19).”

These verses first emphasize taqwa:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who believe! fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do (59: 18).”

Then, it (the Holy Qur'an) mentions the point opposite to it:

...أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“...These it is that are the transgressors (59: 19).”

The term fujur, in the root of the word, means impudicity and license and fisq, as the etymologists have mentioned is that something comes out of its natural shell, for example, if a date comes out of its natural

shell, about it is said: “fisquttamr”, Also man’s existence has been surrounded by a natural border which is called the border of ‘ubudiyyah’ (worship to Allah).

If man comes out of this shell and transgresses that limit which Allah has ordained for him, he has committed fisq, just as taqwa is the observance of that very natural and godly border. Anyhow, the most general concept of value which has positive value is taqwa, and the most general anti-value or concept which has negative value is fisq and fujur.

Ibadah (worship to Allah)

One of the other value concepts of Islam, which is particular to the (monotheistic and godly cultures and communities, is worshipping Allah and serving Him, for, all world communities more or less accept the concept of taqwa, yet they consider its proofs to be the things which are probably different from our Islamic attitude.

For more explanation of this concept, which is particular to the monotheistic cultures, we present an introduction. We said that the fulfillment of the duties and being bound over the responsibilities is a general value. Now let us see what these responsibilities are and who is the one who calls to account for these responsibilities?

Usually, the responsibilities are divided into three groups, of which two groups have universal acceptance and one group is particular to the religious and theist communities. As for the responsibilities which have been accepted in all human communities, one is responsibility towards the community, so that if individuals do not fulfill them, they will be called to account, and the other is towards the conscience of the individual himself, namely, everybody has certain duties towards his conscience which he should fulfill even if the society does not call him to account. In the midst of this, there is another kind of responsibility, too, which is just accepted in godly communities and that is the responsibility towards Allah and naturally those people submit to it who believes in Allah.

But if we view the matter with a wider outlook, we will see that we (on the basis of the divine outlook in Islam) have just one kind of responsibility and that is just towards Allah, of which the cases are however different, not that there are numerous ones who call to account for them. It is Allah, Who has created man’s existence, has granted him the blessings and has endowed him with social life, intellect and conscience.

So, the true caller to account is Allah and all responsibilities are towards Him, but their cases are different. Sometimes Allah calls to account for the duties which He Himself has ordained as ‘ibadah (acts of worship), for example, He calls a person to account and asks him why he has not performed the wajib salawat or why he has not fulfilled the other act(s) of worship.

Also, sometimes Allah calls one to account for the duties He has ordered regarding His (other) servants,

for example, he asks: *"Why did not you observe My command regarding the poor?"* Hence, the poor or the community themselves have no right upon the others and cannot call the others to account, unless Allah has permitted it.

The case of one kind of responsibilities is the individual himself, not that the individuals call one to account for it, e.g., Allah asks: *"Why did you oppress yourself?"* If a person attempts a suicide or any other action which is a proof of oppression to one's self, Allah calls the person to account for the same and asks him: *"Why did you oppress yourself?"* again the one who calls to account and who holds responsible is Allah. So, on the basis of At-Tawhid (monotheistic) view, all responsibilities are basically towards the Almighty Allah.

The Basis of Responsibility

Taking into consideration the above matters, the question arises as to what is the basis of responsibility and how is it that Allah calls us to account? This is a technical discussion which should be propounded in the philosophy of ethics and in the philosophy of law. But here, we will just point out the secret of the solution of this matter.

Basically, the caller to account can be the one who is the owner of the case for which someone is to be called to account. If someone enters another one's house (without being permitted), the inmate of house can call the newly entered person to account in case the former is the owner of the house. As for the public properties of the society, too, because all are owners (of the same) to some proportion, they have the right to call to account. So, man can call to account when he has a right towards something and owns something.

As for us men, the same is the case, namely, the one who calls us to account should be the one who is the owner of us and the owner of the things which are at our disposal and who can say: *"Why, I granted you being and endowed you with a healthy body, why did you oppress this body?"*; *"Why, I gave you the power of meditation and intellect, why did not you use it in the proper way?"*; *"Why, I put clean air at your disposal, Why did you pollute it?"* And all such accounts are called to by the one who is the owner; otherwise, there would be no right for calling to account.

Therefore, true ownership belongs to Allah and it is just He Who has the right to call to account, to ordain duties and hold responsible and Whom we are truly owned by, so that this being owned is never negated, contrary to nominal cases of being owned which are negotiable and transferable, such as the house, the car or the dress which you own, but which on selling them, you no longer own them.

This is a nominal ownership which is both vanish-able and transferable and among the things which the Almighty Allah cannot do, one is this very fact that He cannot release His servants from servitude (to Him)! Because it is an impossible matter. Allah cannot drive any being out of being His creatures and say: You are no longer owned by me and neither are you My creature. As long as anything exists in the

world, us being are the same as being the creature of/and owned by Allah and coming out of being owned means to become nothing.

Creational and Divine Legislative 'Ibadah

Taking into consideration this outlook which takes form on the basis of At-Tawhid, each movement of the creatures is the emergence of an effect from servitude to Allah, because its being in existence is the same as being owned (by Allah). The heat and the light which emanate from the sun, the breeze which blows, the rain which falls, the plant which grows and the flowers and fruits which appear on the trees are effects of all these beings being owned and are indicators that the manner of creation and planning are of the same.

Hence, all the movements of the beings can be regarded as a creational 'ibadah (a creational servitude to Allah); that is, any being, willy-nilly, whatever effect emerges out of it, has manifested a sign of it being owned by – and its servitude to – the Almighty Allah. In the Holy Qur'an, it has been said that all beings praise Allah and there are even a number of suwar which begin with the following sentences:

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah... (64:1).”

In other verses of the Holy Qur'an, it has been said that all things make sajdah (prostration) to Allah, even the shadows which fall on the ground:

... مِنْ شَيْءٍ يَتَفَيَّأُ ظِلَالُهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ ..

“...Its (very) shadows return from right and left, making obeisance to Allah... (16:48).”

More delicate than these, the Holy Qur'an says that the sound of the thunder and the song of nightingales and the twitter of sweet-singing birds are all praise of Allah:

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ..

“And the thunder declares His glory with His praise, and the angels too are in awe of Him... (13:13).”

And finally, the most general ayah of the Holy Qur'an in this connection is the following:

... وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ...

their glorification... (17:44).”

One of the interpretations made for this group of ayat is that they mean creational ‘ibadah (worship), creational tasbih (praising, glorifying) and creational sujud (prostration); all the movements and the effects of their existence are signs of them being servants of and owned by the Almighty Allah which on one hand they manifest Allah’s qualities of beauty and perfection and on the other hand, declare Allah’s being free from defects, destruction, naught, and the negative qualities (the qualities which Allah is devoid of and which can never be attributed to Him).

That aspect which is demonstrative of the qualities of perfection (of Allah) is called hamd (praising Allah’s qualities), and that aspect which is indicative of and which establishes transcendence of Allah from defects is called tasbih (praising Allah’s transcendence over all defects) which is a creational ‘ibadah (servitude) to Allah. The limbs of our bodies have this ‘ibadah too. Our hands, without our will–power, praise Allah, our feet, without our will–power praise Allah, the same is true also of the other limbs and parts of our bodies. Yet, there is also a divine legislative and voluntary ‘ibadah which is particular to men.

Although the free actions (the actions which we perform out of our own free will) in any form they might be, are also signs of servitude to Allah and are creational ‘ibadah, but in terms of divine legislation and the sphere of selection and free choice, ‘ibadah is applied to particular actions, A man, who is without ‘ibadah (without servitude), does not and will not exist in the world, because the reality of his existence is being possessed (being owned) and is dominated by the powers which have surrounded him and which have affected his effects and movements.

In this midst, if he recognizes the true Effective One (Allah), learns the way to reach Him and moves in that very direction, he has made ‘ibadah to Allah, but if he does not know Him (Allah) and does not step in His path, he has not fulfilled divine legislative ‘ibadah, Anyhow, man’s conduct is a conduct of ‘ibadah (a conduct of servitude), either ‘ibadah to Allah or ‘ibadah to the others; ‘ibadah to the Shaytan (satan), ‘ibadah to one’s self, ‘ibadah to the self–made idols or ‘ibadah to null beings which have no external reality at all.

In the Holy Qur’an, Allah says:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي ۚ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“Did I not charge you, O children of Adam! that you should not serve the shaitan? Surely he is your open enemy. And that you should serve Me; this is the right way (36:60–61).”

In the above verses of the Holy Qur’an, Allah says that man is on two paths, one is the way of ‘ibadah to Allah and the other is the way of ‘ibadah to shaytan and Allah has advised the people to choose the way of ‘ibadah to Him which leads to their felicity and perfection.

The point which is necessary to notice here is that the concept of 'ibadah in this sense is different from the meaning which is generally in our minds of 'ibadah and which is just applied to a series of acts of worship and values such as the wajib salawat, sawm and hajj (specified pilgrimage to Makkah according to the Islamic shari'ah). In the concept of 'ibadah in the extensive and general sense, all the free actions of man (all the actions which man fulfils out of free will) are 'ibadah.

Now, if such actions and conducts have favorable effects on man's felicity and perfection and are pleased at by Allah they become 'ibadah to Allah, but if they cause man's fall, decline and his getting away from the (divinely ordained) end, they will be 'ibadah to shaytan and are rated as an anti-value. But in any way, they (man's free actions) are 'ibadah and anyhow, we are not outside either of the two conditions, we are either in 'ibadah to Allah or in 'ibadah to shaytan.

The conclusion derived from these preliminaries is that worshipping Allah and 'ibadah to Him, too, have general and value-related concepts in the Islamic culture, as is the case with taqwa, so that an action fulfilled by an individual, a group, or a society has value when the title of taqwa and the title of worshipping Allah correspond to it. Even if an action is, in terms of the other value systems praise worthy and acceptable, but is not corresponded to by these two titles, in the value system of Islam it does not reach the necessary limit for value and is below the necessary limit. For example, helping the poor and the weak is a value which has been more or less accepted in all the ethical systems of the world but in the value system of Islam it has no value in the abstract form and is generally regarded as a good action.

Yet, (in the Islamic value system) such actions reach the necessary level of value when they stem from the individual's faith, are fulfilled out of divine motive (out of motive of winning Allah's pleasure) and in one word, it has goodness of action (in accordance with Allah's command) and goodness of the doer having free will (divine motive), otherwise if it is merely regarded as an emotional matter, it will not be of much value and will not reach the necessary level of value either, because such emotion more or less exists in animals too, particularly the motherly emotion and the emotion of supporting one's kind which is observed in, for example, ravens too; therefore, it cannot be the only criterion for value.

Criticism on a Theory

This matter is in fact a response to one of the great foundations of the philosophy of ethics which is today prevalent in Western countries and which due to our Islamic insight being not very strong, has unfortunately more or less spread and penetrated among some groups of our society too. Many of the philosophers of ethics in Western countries regard the criterion for value to be serving the others and love for the others and say if an action is performed for the sake of personal benefit and with individual motive, it has no value and/or it is anti-value, but if it is performed with the motive of loving the others it will be desirable and of value.

Some of our intellectuals too who have had discussions and writings in the field of ethics, have sought

the relationship of At-Tawhid with the philosophy of ethics just here and have imagined that At-Tawhid means that man melts himself in the society and instead of “I” always says “We” and always takes “We” into consideration.

This matter is objectionable in the Islamic outlook from numerous viewpoints:

The first objection: The first objection is that At-Tawhid has no concern with the social "I" and "We". In the previous discussions we have fully clarified that At-Tawhid, as an Islamic concept, means belief in the One God in the dimension of creativity, creational Lordship, Divine Legislative Lordship and in (Allah's) Being the (Only) Worshipped. At-Tawhid is not a sociological and psychological concept; rather it is a theological and philosophical concept, that is to know God as One and Only and to believe in His Oneness and to put this belief into effect in action. So, man's melting or not melting himself in the society has nothing to do with At-Tawhid as an Islamic concept.

The second objection: It is that the criterion for value is not just love for the others, Many of our actions are performed with individual motive and yet are of very high value. That faithful servant (of Allah) who gets up at mid-night in winters from the warm bed and engages in 'ibadah to Allah on the cold and coarse carpet of the Mosque and starts supplicating and praying to Allah, is his action individual or social? Is this action performed out of the motive of serving the society or for attaining the good of the hereafter and spiritual and eternal good of the individual himself? Whereas the Holy Qur'an cites such persons with a very exalted interpretation and at the loftiest level of value and says:

... فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ

“So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes... (32: 17).”

No one knows what felicity and joy the Almighty Allah has provided for such persons. Allah will give them such a great reward that no man's mind can think of. So, it is not the case that values are confined to serving the others or, as there is a famous saying “‘ibadah is nothing but serving Allah's creatures.”

The third objection: It is that not every love for others is valuable and at least it does not have the necessary amount for value. We have already expressed that caring for others is also observed among ravens, monkeys and in many other animals. But it is not the case that the emotion of care for the others is by itself sufficient for man's action and man's soul to attain value, rather they will be of value if they are with divine motive and this is not exclusive to emotion either. The satisfaction of instincts, with divine motive is 'ibadah to Allah too.

Eating, drinking and even sexual intercourse, if fulfilled with divine motive, are also 'ibadah. So, the only criterion (according to Islam) is that firstly, the action is to be approved by Allah (be in accordance with Allah's commands) and secondly, to be with a divine motive and the intention of getting close to Allah (winning Allah's pleasure). In one of the stages already expressed: fear of punishment, covet for reward

and hope for meeting Allah and winning His pleasure.

Clarification of the Ethical Theory of Islam

A significant matter to be noticed here and to be reasonably and philosophically clarified and justified is how human behavior and permanent qualities become possessed of value through 'ibadah to Allah and perfect obedience and humbling oneself before Allah? In this regard, from the outlook of Islam and the ayat of the Holy Qur'an and the riwayat, we have no doubt, for the Almighty Allah says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship Me (51:56).”

The only aim of creation of man and of jinn who from the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an are two kinds of responsible (entrusted with duties) beings is just (their) serving the One God (Allah – The One and Only). Of course taking into consideration other ayat (of the Holy Qur'an) we come to realize that this is not the final goal, this very 'ibadah for Allah in another ayah of the Holy Qur'an, has been propounded as the right way.

وَأَنِ اعْبُدُونِي ۚ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“And that you should serve Me; this is the right way (36:61).”

Worship Allah, this is the right way. The same thing which in the former ayah (56:51) had been mentioned as the aim or creation, has been introduced as the right way in the latter (6:36), meaning that 'ibadah is a medium goal and above it there is another goal. That very act of 'ibadah itself has been considered for a higher goal and that is attaining nearness to the Almighty Allah (attaining Allah's pleasure) in which all human virtues and perfections are summed up.

But for this theory to be presentable and defensible in the face of the other ethical and value theories of the world and particularly so that our educated youth will be able to defend the righteous position of Islam before other schools of thought, it is necessary to clarify this theory on the basis of intellectual reasons and philosophical proofs. The principles which are necessary for the clarification of this matter are three basic principles.

The First Principle

It is that the criterion for the goodness and value of the action is the effect which a free conduct has on man's spiritual and intellectual perfection. For the clarification of this basic principle which is of the significant matters of the philosophy of ethics in the scientific and philosophical circles of the world, we

express an analysis on the concept of value and anti-value and their equivalent in the Islamic culture, namely, “good” and “evil”.

We regard certain things as good and also accept certain things as evil. For instance, all of us regard health to be good, rate knowledge, power and ability as good and opposite to them, regard sickness, being malformed, being ignorant, disabled and powerless to be evil. Philosophers have conducted a wise analysis on this concept and have come to the conclusion that the common aspect among all these goods consists of the perfection of the being and the common aspect among all these evils consists of the imperfection of the being.

For instance, when we compare an ignorant man with a learned man, we observe that the learned man has a perfection which the ignorant man lacks. So, the being of the learned man is more perfect than the being of the ignorant man, and/or since a sick man does not have the power to defend against diseases and cannot confront aggressive microbes and loses his body's balance, his being is imperfect compared to a healthy person.

A brave man, in various phases, can achieve his goals, but a timid and cowardice cannot. Then they (the philosophers) have gone further and with a more careful analysis have come to the conclusion that perfection is a stage of being and imperfection is a stage of non-being and is a matter of non-being. Hence, we can regard being (existence) as equal to good, since it is being (existence) and regard non-being (non-existence) to be evil, since it is non-being (non-existence). Therefore, the good of every being is its perfection and the evil of every being is its imperfection.

Sometimes the perfection of a being causes the imperfection of another being. The burning effect of the fire is the perfection of the fire, but if it falls into a harvest, it causes the destruction of the harvest. The cutting effect of knives and swords is their perfection, but when they come into contact with the body of an innocent man, they cause his death.

A microbe has perfection since it is a living being, but this very microbe, when it enters our bodies, it may afflict us with diseases and cause an imperfection for us. Maulawi, the great gnostic and poet has famous poems in which it is said that poison is good for the snake itself, but bad for the one who is stung by the snake.

Also sometimes the opposite is the case, A matter may be a non-existence, imperfection and in itself evil, but becomes good and the cause of perfection for another thing. You enter a garden and see a gardener cutting of the branches and leaves of a tree, but if you are not aware of the gardening works, you will think that the gardener is doing work which is bad, cutting off the branches and leaves of the tree which are apparently being and perfection for the tree.

But if you are aware of the matters related to gardening, you know that the gardener cuts off some of the extra branches (which hinder the growth of the tree) so that the tree will grow more. Here, the non-existence of these branches is an imperfection and non-existence matter, but for the tree it is considered

to be good and causes the tree to grow better.

Now let us see what the superiority of perfections depend on?

We start this matter from plants. In your opinion, in comparison, which one is more perfect, a walnut tree or a plain tree? You certainly think a walnut tree is more perfect. Why? Because a walnut tree has something more than the plain tree and that is the fruit it (the walnut tree) bears. Therefore, since it has more effects of existence, it is more perfect. Comparison is in the same manner between two walnut trees.

That walnut tree is more perfect of which the final result and fruit is more, and the same is true of the walnut tree which is of less size but which gives more fruit, compared to the walnut tree which occupies more size, but has little fruit. Now let us compare an animal with a tree. Can the criterion for superiority be regarded to be the size of the animal? If it were so, a plain tree would be a thousand times more perfect than a nightingale.

But it definitely is not so. Because a nightingale has something's more than a plant (something's which a plant lacks), namely, besides its physical growth, it has senses and (the ability of) voluntary movement. It is the nightingale which on seeing a flower starts twittering and in which a feeling and sense emerge, a sense which a plain tree will never have.

So the criterion for the superiority of a nightingale to a tree is not bigger for either being. But if we also compare two animals with each other, that animal which has more sense and stronger understanding is more perfect, not that one which is bigger in size, like an Arabian horse and a rhinoceros. An Arabian horse has more wits, has better leaping, is capable of performing more useful work and is more loyal than a rhinoceros, but a rhinoceros is just big in size.

Now let us consider a man. If we want to compare a man with trees and animals, what should we consider his superiority to be? Which one is more perfect, a man or a plain tree? Is a man more perfect or an elephant? Man's superiority to plants and animals is not in having more bodily growth, more physical power, more passions (carnal desires), greater power of defense and/or even more animal perceptions; these do not contribute to human perfection. If these were the criterion, then animals would be by far ahead of us and is this not selfish of us that since we regard ourselves more perfect, we should look for another criterion! This is a truly philosophical matter).

Rather what makes man superior to and more perfect than the animals and other beings is that human and divine soul of his which constitutes the proof for the following ayat of the Holy Qur'an:

... وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي ..

“...And I breathed into him of My spirit... (15:29 and 38:72).”

and,

...فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ...

“...So blessed be Allah, the best of the creators (23: 14).”

The question which is raised here is that, is the value just in the superiority of man's spiritual perfections or are plant and animal perfections also of value?

Let us consider an apple tree. In an apple tree, taking root, turning green, bearing branches, leaves and even blossoms are considered perfection insofar as they cause bearing fruit, otherwise they will not be of value. These kinds of perfections are preliminary perfections which are not of value in themselves, rather they are preliminaries for eventual and genuine perfection, and value is acquired through them.

In man it is also true. If a growth emerges in the body by itself and does not cause that main, basic and eventual growth, it is an animal growth and will not be of any value for man from the viewpoint that he is man. A healthy body is valuable for man in case he uses it for his spiritual and intellectual progress, not if he misuses his health – using it for hurting others.

The same is true of other qualities too. For example, bravery is desirable from the Islamic viewpoint when it is used in the way of man's spiritual and intellectual perfection and in the way of getting near to the Almighty Allah (winning Allah's pleasure and favor), otherwise 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wadd (the great (notorious) enemy of Islam) and some others like him were also brave and had this animal value.

The superiority of a brave man, apart from his spiritual goal and perfection to another man is like the superiority of a rhinoceros to a horse and the superiority of an elephant to a gazelle. This preliminary perfection will be of value when it is used in the way of attaining that eventual human perfection, when it has been achieved for that and used in the way of attaining it (eventual human perfection). Justice, too, which in today's world culture has absolute value, in the view of the Holy Qur'an, it is valuable since it is a preliminary stage for getting closer to taqwa:

...اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى....

“...Act equitably, that is nearer to piety... (5:8).”

Otherwise, this sense is found in some animals like the honey-bee, termite and some others too. This is not an absolute human value. In the value system of Islam, justice is of value when it is in the way of Allah and for attaining a loftier goal and moves man towards that point of peak (that highest point of perfection).

The point which is necessary to be paid attention here is, the relationship between the philosophical good and the ethical good, but before clarifying this relationship, we will somewhat discuss about the good and the evil and their criterion.

Clarification of the Criterion for the Good and the Bad

One of the most disputed human matters in the course of the history of man's life has been the issue of the criterion for a good and bad action and good and evil. Today, many of the world's philosophical schools which have the great universities of the Western World under their domination, including the Positivists maintain that good and bad are subjects to the persons' taste and inclination and that there is no reality beyond this like and dislike. In the Greek moral philosophy it was said that the criterion for value is moderation of three powers; the power of passion, the power of anger and the power of intellect.

But the question remains to be answered as to who says that moderation should be the criterion for goodness and badness. Eventually, the highest ethical school which the West presented was the ethics of Kant. Kant maintained moral axioms and stated that they are unquestionable; telling the truth is absolutely good and there is no condition for it either, it is a criterion itself. When asked in case telling the truth causes an innocent man to be killed, should one still tell the truth?" Kant replied: *"One should tell the truth, this is an absolute value."* This is the zenith of the Western thinking in the clarification of the philosophy of ethics. But Islam says: *"Basically, action is a means not an end."*

A free action is performed for an end and receives its value from that end. In the philosophy of the morality of Islam, good is an action which drives man towards his eventual perfection, namely getting near Allah and bad is an action which drives man away from that end (i.e., from attaining nearness to Allah) and from this it becomes clear why in Islam so much emphasis is laid on niyyah (intention); well, in fact it is man's niyyah which gives direction to his action.

As for the relationship between philosophical good and ethical good, ethical good is propounded in relation to man's free conducts and actions and there is a good which is a means, because it is a quality for action and the nature of action is a means for the result and the end; but as for the desired result, it is not an ethical concept, rather it is a philosophical topic.

So, the ethical good is in one sense other than philosophical good, but is however not separate from it either and there is a cause and effect relationship between these two, and in other words, ethical good is preamble for philosophical good, Therefore, when we say that good action causes perfection for man's soul, the goodness of the action is an ethical concept, but the perfection of the soul is a philosophical concept.

The Second Principle

In the clarification of the criterion for the evaluation of actions is the fact that perfection of the soul which man should attain through (good) free actions is nearness to Allah (winning Allah's pleasure and favor).

About the meaning and concept of this qurb (nearness) to Allah, various statements and views have been expressed about each one of which we will give some explanation to the extent necessary.

Various Meanings and Cases of the Application of Qurb

The first concept which in common conversations is applied about 'qurb' is qurb in terms of place. For example, as when two persons are seated near or in proximity to each other, 'this person is near that person and/or this person is away from that person'. Is man's being near to Allah in this sense? where (in the Holy Qur'an) Asiyah – the wife of Fir'awn (pharaoh) says:

...رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ...

“...My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the garden... (66: 11).”

Did she (by saying so) mean that a faithful person attains nearness of a place with Allah in Paradise? Those who know even the fundamentals of the Islamic beliefs will know that nearness to Allah is definitely not in this sense, because nearness of a place is imagined among objects and Allah is not an object to have a place, to Whom another object becomes near or from Whom another object gets away. So, getting near to Allah does not mean nearness of a place.

One of the other cases (of the application) of qurb in our conversations is the nearness in terms of time. About two persons living in a time close to each other it is said that they are qaribul-'asr (near in terms of time), vis-a-vis two beings, two individuals and/or two societies which have great time distance, one has been living thousands of years ago and the other is living today, about them it is said that they are away from each other.

It is obvious that man's getting near Allah is not in terms of time either, because firstly Allah does not have a time, rather He encompasses all times, just as He has no place and is available at all places. Besides, being near and/or being away in terms of time and place in themselves do not create any perfection. Anyhow, nearness in terms of place and time is impossible with regard to the Almighty Allah and getting near Him in these two definitions is false. So, how is man to get near Allah?

One other kind of qurb which we have in common conversations is that two things are compared with each other in respect of resemblance in specifications, perfections and characteristics apart from time and place. In this sense can it be said that man gets near Allah? Does qurb to Allah mean that more resemblance to Allah is achieved? Some have attempted to interpret qurb to Allah in this way, but in reality this sense is incorrect too. because firstly, Allah does not resemble anything, (as the Holy Qur'an says):

... لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ...

“...Nothing is like a likeness of Him... (42: 11).”

and that sometimes the interpretation of "being like God" is applied, is a neglectful interpretation. Secondly, this comparison is where two beings are independent of each other. For example, when we compare two learned men with each other and say that the knowledge of this learned man is near that of the other learned man, none of these is dependent on and/or the way of the other, rather each one of them is independent of the other, this learned man has a knowledge for himself and the other learned man has a knowledge for himself, we compare these two knowledge together and say this one is near that one.

Such a comparison between man and Allah is not proper, because man has nothing independent of Allah and all he has is from Allah. Thirdly, Allah's perfection is infinite and each being, at least in the stage of existence has a phase of finiteness and limitation, and never the finite is comparable with the infinite. If you consider a line with a length of one meter and ask what proportion does this one meter line have with an infinite line, those who are even a little conversant with mathematics know that the answer to this question is that there is no proportion between the finite and the infinite.

Now if Instead of a one meter line a two-meter line is put, again the answer is "nothing" and even if we draw a line as long as the distance between the earth and the sun, and it is asked that what proportion does this line have to an infinite line, again the answer will be "nothing". No matter how much man attains perfection, he is after all limited and is not a party in proportion to Allah's infinite perfections, to be said about him that he has now got some what nearer to Allah.

Therefore, that some imagine that when man's perfection becomes more, his difference with Allah becomes less and in this sense he gets nearer to Allah, is due to short-sightedness in knowing Allah. Such comparisons can be assumed between objects and the beings which are independent of each other which do not have relation of existence with each other and one of which is not of the stages of the other and is not its effect, but between the existence-giving Cause and the effect such a comparison is totally wrong.

Also some have imagined that by qurb, it is meant just what the following verse of the Holy Qur'an refers to:

...وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ...

“...And We are nearer to him than his life-vein (50: 16).”

namely, Allah is nearer to man than his life-vein.

Though this matter is true and no firmer and closer relationship between this (relation) can be assumed between Allah and His creatures, it is clear that this qurb and nearness is not particular to the believers

and that it exists not only for all men, whether believers, or the disbelievers, the pious, the lewd, but it also exists for all creatures and all creatures have this relationship with Allah.

Sometimes qurb is also applied in the sense of honor and formality. For example, we say that such and such a person is near to such and such a minister and is favored by him, that is, they have friendly relations with each other and if the former has a request, the latter will not reject it and will listen to him. About man's qurb to Allah, too, sometimes interpretation is made in this way, that man gets so near to Allah in the sense that Allah heeds his words, pays attention to his requests and hears his prayers.

Among these five meanings, only the last-mentioned meaning conforms to qurb of Allah, a qurb which is attained through worship and obedience to the Almighty Allah, as is said in a hadithun-qudsiyy.

“A servant (of Allah) owing to servitude (to Allah) attains such a position where the Almighty Allah becomes his hearing ears, his seeing eyes and his mighty hands.”³

A servant (of Allah) owing to servitude (to Allah) attains such a position that in accordance with the interpretation of the above hadith, the Almighty Allah becomes his hearing ear, his seeing eye and his capable hand and it is clear that the prayer of such a servant (of Allah) will be heard (by Allah) and that the Almighty Allah will secure his needs and wants.

But the question (which may be raised here) is that is such a position just an honorary and formal position or is it an existential and true perfection? And our reply is that this position of qurb to Allah is a true perfection for human soul and that to become mustajabud-du'wah (one whose prayer is heard by Allah) and even the acceptance of one's intercession for the others with Allah are of the effects of this spiritual perfection, not that they are merely a credit and an agreement and in other words, the true meaning of qurb to Allah is the sixth meaning which we will now explain to the extent the situation demands.

For the clarification of this meaning, we should point out two noble philosophical matters, the details of which should be sought in their own place and in the related books.

The first matter

The existence of each creature has a relation between itself and the Creator and no creature has any independence of the existence-giving Creator and this is a matter of clarification which is rated among the honors of the great Islamic expert Sadrul-Muta'allihin Ash-Shirazi and the philosophical expression of the fourth meaning of the above-mentioned meanings is also based on this very matter, that is, the reason why the Almighty Allah is nearer to each being than any other thing is the very fact that the existence of each creature has a relation itself to and dependence on Him (the Creator) and if this relation is cut off, it will no longer have any existence; it can be said that the existence of each creature in relation to the Almighty Allah is like the existence of a subjective figure for man which if set aside, will have no existence any longer and certainly the relation of the beings with the Almighty Allah is by far

stronger than this example.

The second matter

It is that the existence of the soul is of the category of the existence of science and in other words; just as the requisite for each physical existence is “extension”, the requisite for each abstract existence is also “knowledge” which requisite is of course not anything outside the existence of the soul.

Taking into consideration these two matters, we conclude that whenever the existence of man’s soul becomes more perfect, his knowledge will become more perfect. The first stage of the perfection of the soul is attaining “self-awareness” and when one’s self-awareness becomes perfect, he will find the reality of his existence which is the same as relation, belonging to and dependence on the Almighty Allah, namely, he will attain “self-awareness” and it is for this reason that in the Islamic culture “self-awareness” and “God-awareness” are coupled together. On the one hand, it has been said that:

“Anybody who knew himself knew his Lord.”

and on the other hand, the Holy Qur’an says:

...نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ...

“...Those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls... (59: 19).”

Those who forsook themselves become afflicted with Allah’s forsaking.

So, an inseparable relation exists between knowing one’s self and knowing Allah and also between forsaking one’s self and Allah’s forsaking. The reality of “forsaking oneself” and “self-alienation” in the Islamic culture is this very matter that a person forgets his human identity and his attention is so diverted to this world’s luxuries and pleasures that he forsakes his reality and his human perfection and felicity, namely, he forgets about his relation to and dependence on the Almighty Allah.

The conclusion is this, that true perfection of man’s soul is God-awareness (awareness of Allah) which has innumerable stages and the more man’s celestial soul becomes perfect, the more his awareness of Allah will increase and this awareness of one’s self and of one’s God is the same as the existence of the soul.

Therefore, man’s eventual perfection is his attaining perfect awareness and his innate and intuitive knowledge (knowledge acquired not through the five senses, but through illumination of one’s heart) about the Almighty Allah and this awareness about Allah is the very true qurb to Allah which should be attained through efforts and endeavors. Therefore the true meaning of qurb to Allah as an acquired perfection for man’s soul consists of intuitive and inner qurb, and the realization of this fact that man’s existence is nothing but relation and attachment to the Almighty Allah, and that it is not merely

knowledge and acquired learning which are attained through concepts and by way of intellectual reasoning.

The Third Principle

The clarification of the moral and value theory of Islam says that this perfection and qurb to Allah is attained just in the light of the conducts the general title of which is 'ibadah, worshipping Allah, and virtuousness. To prove this principle from the philosophical point of view, too, requires a technical and complicated expression which does not suit this discussion. However, we will try to explain, with a simple expression this principle, too.

We came to know that the Almighty Allah is not a physical and place-occupying being whom we could get near to with the movement of the body and traversing material distance and that no kind of physical action and reaction and body change and development can in itself have any role in changing man's relation to the Almighty Allah and that the truth of man's qurb to Allah is inner and intuitive nearness and attaining man's existential relationship with Him.

Taking into consideration these points it can easily be accepted that what plays the main role in man's getting near to the Almighty Allah is that very man's power of perceiving and witnessing, namely, the truth of his soul which in many cases is called "heart" and the free (voluntary) relationship which is established between man's heart and the Almighty Allah is by means of attention (to Allah), this very attention itself is termed "dhikr (remembrance of Allah) of the heart" and when this attention and remembrance become the source of performance of an action and a conduct, it is rated as the niyyah (intention) and motive for the action, and since the perfection of man's soul and spirit is attained by means of free actions and each kind of conducts can have a role in the promotion or regression of the soul in one of its dimensions, therefore we conclude that man's all-sided perfection is attained when all distinguished conducts are fulfilled with divine motive, and the main stimulant and the giver of direction to conduct is attention to Allah (SWT).

In other words, just as physical forces determine the direction of the movement of the objects, so also psychic motives which stem from attention to and remembrance of Allah are spiritual forces which determine the spiritual direction of man's actions and conducts and which give value to them and as already explained, such conducts have two general terms in the Islamic culture: one is taqwa in its general sense and the other 'ibadah in its general sense.

The conclusion is that each free action to the extent it enjoys divine intention and motive will have a positive value; and to the extent it stems from ungodly, egoistic and polytheistic intention it will have a negative value. Thus, the role of At- Tawhid in the value system of Islam becomes clear.

Quranic Expressions about the Philosophy of Morality

So far, we have explained the theory of Islam in the philosophy of morality and values with the simplest rational expressions which were possible for us. Now we cite some examples of Quranic expressions concerning the principles of this theory:

In Suratush-Shams (Surah 91 of the Holy Qur'an) in the wake of a number of ayat in which the Almighty Allah swears by the sun, by the moon, by the night, by the day and the like, He says:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, Then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it; He will indeed be successful who purifies it, And he will indeed fail who corrupts it (91:7-10).”

Of the many points inferred from these ayat, we content ourselves with citing three points:

The First Point: is that Allah swears by human soul, the soul which Allah has made and delivered well and among all creatures man has a particular privilege to determine his destiny with his own free will: to choose either the way of felicity and salvation or the way of adversity and corruption and certainly Allah's goal of the creation of man is that he attains felicity and salvation, but since human felicity is a matter to be attained by the way of man's own will-power and free choice, so there should necessarily exist another point in the face of it too towards which would retrogress of his own ill-choice anybody who chooses to.

The Second Point: is that selection of either of the two points – exaltation and perfection or fall and retrogression demands recognition. Because it is obvious that without awareness and recognition proper selection and choice does not take place. Hence, the Almighty Allah has made two general ways known to man: one the way of taqwa and the other the way of fujur, and from this very interpretation it is inferred that the criterion for the positive conduct values is “taqwa” and the criterion for the negative moral values is fujur, as was already explained in the foregoing expressions.

The Third Point: is that to traverse the way of taqwa is the very “purification of the soul” and its result is the growth and perfection of the soul, just as to traverse the way of fujur is the very pollution of the soul, the result of which is the fall and destruction of the soul itself. So man, by selecting the way of taqwa, gives growth and perfection to his soul and by selecting the way of fujur and license pollutes and destroys his own soul.

Therefore, the result of man's free conducts, be they in the direction of growth and perfection or in the direction of fall and retrogression, will accrue to man himself, and from here it can well be inferred that

the value conducts have true effect on the perfection and imperfection of the soul, and that the positive or negative value criterion is this very perfection and imperfection of man's soul and this is that very first principle in the expression of the logical reason we referred to previously.

From another set of the ayat of the Holy Qur'an it is inferred that man's eternal felicity and adversity is the result of his own faith and infidelity and praiseworthy and indecent actions:

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

“And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for (53:39).”

... لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ...

“...For it, what it has earned, and against it what it has incurred... (2:286).”

..وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ..

“...And every soul is paid of whatever it has earned (3:25).”

...يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا

“The day when every soul shall find present what it has done of good... (3:30).”

And there are tens of other ayat in the Holy Qur'an indicating that the blessings and torments in the Hereafter are the result of the actions which man has himself fulfilled in this world, rather they are those very actions of his which would in the hereafter world appear in the form of blessing or torment.

Of course the language of most of the ayat of the Holy Qur'an is that the blessings or torments in the Hereafter are the reward or punishment for the conducts in this world. With our mind having got acquainted with the concepts of reward and punishment, it might at first be imagined that the relation of good and bad actions with their hereafterly results is a nominal and conventional relation, but taking into view the cited ayat of the Holy Qur'an it becomes clear that beyond these nominal concepts a series of creational facts and true and real relations are hidden, though our knowledge is not sufficient for the discovery of these true relations, because we have no experience of such relations.

Included among the ayat to be considered in this discussion are the ayat which have mentioned about spiritual light and darkness, which terms have been largely applied with regard to truth and falsehood, moral and value, good and evil and with regard to the affairs related to them in the Holy Qur'an and also

in the sayings of the Holy Prophet (SA) of Islam and the Infallible Imams (AS) and which have a particular position in Islamic culture.

On one hand, the Holy Qur'an introduces the Almighty Allah as "nur (the light) of the heavens and the earth" and it is obvious that by this light, the generally known physical light is not meant and on the other hand, the Holy prophet (SA) of Islam has been introduced (by the Holy Quran) as:

..سِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا

"...A light-giving torch (33:46)."

and on the other hand the Holy Qur'an has itself been named "nur" (light):

...قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ

"...There has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah (5: 15)."

And also the aim of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (SA) of Islam has been considered (by the Holy Qur'an) to be taking the people out of darkness and bringing them into the "light":

..لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ..

"...that you may bring forth men, by their Lord's permission from utter darkness into light... (14: 1)."

Also, the believers have been introduced (by the Holy Qur'an) as those who in this world are possessed of light (nur), versus the infidels and those who are disobedient to Allah's commands who have sunk into darkness:

...أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأُحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا

"Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?... (6: 122)."

Finally, among the descriptions of the Resurrection Day, the Holy Qur'an says:

...يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ

“On that day you will see the faithful men and the faithful women-- their light running before them and on their right hand--... (57: 12).”

...يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا

“On the day when the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women will say to those who believe: Wait for us, that we may have light from your light; it shall be said: Turn back and seek a light (hinting that for seeking light you should return to the world which is impossible)... (57: 13).”

And the most comprehensive ayat in this connection are ayat 35 to 40 of Suratul-Nur (Chapter 24) of the Holy Qur'an which start with this sentence:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ..

“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth... (24:35).”

And ends with this sentence:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ...

“...And to whomsoever Allah does not give light, he has no light (24:40).”

Here, we do not have the time to completely interpret and explain these ayat, but for the clarification of their relationship with the present discussion, we have to give a brief explanation:

In these ayat, after the Almighty Allah has been introduced as the light of the heavens and of the earth (the light of the worlds), a parable has been given for His light in ayah 35 of surah 24.

“...A likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, (and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western... (24:35).”

(Hinting that the sun shines from all its sides perfectly and no unripe fruit remains in it). Such oil is so susceptible for being inflamed that it is as if it automatically is lit without any fire reaching it.

About this parable many sayings have been expressed by the exegetists who we are unable to survey here. One of such commentaries is that the proof of this torch which is; ready to be kindled is the heart

of a mu'min person which has the perfect aptitude for a relationship with the Almighty Allah and is enjoying the divine light. The other ayat confirm this view:

فِي بُيُوتٍ أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ... رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings, men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah... (24:36–37).”

In fact, it is the remembrance of Allah which makes their (godly men's) lives lit and luminous and which gives value to all their conducts and deeds.

On the opposite side of these, there are the disbelievers. who due to forgetting Allah have sunk into darkness and whose actions have become null and valueless. And in the two last-mentioned verses, two parables have been cited for the actions of the disbelievers; The first parable is:

“...The mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full... (24:39).”

That is, the disbelievers engage in efforts and endeavor in hope of felicity and attach their hearts to their own deeds, but when they should derive benefit from these efforts (in the Hereafter), they see no useful thing and the Almighty Allah will make it clear to them that they have done no useful work for their felicity.

The second parable for the disbeliever and the value of their deeds is:

“...Utter darkness in the deep sea: there covers it a wave above which is another wave, above which is a cloud, (layers of) utter darkness one above another; when he holds out his hand, he is almost unable to see it... (24:40).”

The above ayah ends with the following sentence:

...وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ

“...And to whomsoever Allah does not give light, he has no light (24:40).”

Whatever ambiguity, if any, might exist about the reality (the true meaning) of “misbah” (lamp), “zujajah” (glass) and “mishkat” (niche) (the expressions applied in surah 24 of the Holy Qur'an, in ayah 35 referred to) and whatever discussion, if any, might be made regarding the sea, the waves and the clouds

surrounding it, there is no room for any doubt and ambiguity about this matter that these ayat regard the men of Allah (the believers) to be those who are blessed with light and felicity, who through their remembrance of Allah and heart-fell attention to the Creator make their lives valuable and that the disbelievers, through forgetting Allah, destroy the value of their deeds and will finally be afflicted with darkness and adversity.

So, the criterion for good, felicity, light and true value is the relation with the original source of light which is attained by means of faith in Allah and the attention of one's heart to Him and the criterion for evil, adversity, darkness, valueless and futility is the lack of relationship and connection with the original source of light which develop as a result of disbelief (in Allah), forgetting Allah and turning away from His remembrance, like an electric light which on connection with the electricity-generating system is lit and on disconnection is extinguished. And these are the purports of those very principles to which in the last expression of logical reason we referred and thus the conformity of the expression of logical reason with the Quranic expressions becomes manifest.

Here, we end our discussion and beseech the Almighty Allah to deliver all of us from the various kinds of darkness's, to strengthen our relation and connection with the origin of Light, to protect all of us against any sort of deviation and unsound judgment and to finally associate us with His worthy servants and the pure lights of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) The Infallible and the Purified.

May greetings and Allah's blessings and mercy be upon you all.

1. Al-'Usulul-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 75.

2. It has even been narrated that in the past some unaware persons had blinded or had closed their eyes so that they couldn't look at anything haram (forbidden by Islam).

3. Al-'Usulul-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 352.

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