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Part Four: The Philosophy Refuting Nationalism

[The difference between Patriotism and Nationalism](#)

Patriotism and nationalism are two perfectly different concepts, the distinction between which is sometimes not understood.

Patriotism is a natural and instinctive human feeling, whereas nationalism is not a sentiment, but an ideology. The former is sentimental, whereas the latter is a pseudo-creed on which the instinct and sentiment are based.

The school of nationalism is built upon two animal instincts of man which he has in common with other creatures, namely the 'group instinct' and the 'love of home'. Nationalism begins with these two instincts, eventually ending in a pseudo-religion which causes these relatively innocent sentiments to become dangerously fanatical.

[Nationalism based on man's animal instinct](#)

The group-feeling is a natural human instinct which has in common with some animals. Protozoa, ants, bees live in groups. When wild bulls sense danger, they push the cows and calves to the middle of the flock, and remain on the outskirts, ready for defense. When horses sense danger, they stand in a circle, face to face, pointing their heads to the center, and placing their rear legs outside the circle, ready for defense¹.

An attachment to 'land' and 'home', too, is also an animal instinct, innate in man. Cats and dogs love the house they live in. A pigeon is so attached to its cot that wherever it goes, it finally returns back to it.

Thus, the group feeling and attachment to the land are two of man's animal instincts.

What is the basis of group unity in human society?

In the course of history, ever since man stepped beyond wilderness and turned instinctively towards civilization and group-life, he has always been preoccupied with the question regarding the basis on which he should build his collective life: whether it should be on the basis of territory, blood and language, or on the basis of idea, belief, meditation and intellect. Animals which act by instincts solely, base their collective life on blood or land.

Since the beginning of history, there have existed two parallel lines. One line was that prophets and great religions which has based unity on belief and faith, the height of which was attained by Islam in establishing a nation of conviction called the Islamic Ummah. The other line was that of paganism which based unity on geographical boundaries, color, language, race and political organization. The primitive system of totemism, tribal system, ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, Iran, Caldea and Assyria, all sought their unity in the above factors.

The Quranic verses call it the line of satan. Satan bases his superiority on being created from fire which is the equivalent of race and blood; but Adam uses intellect and awareness as a basis of privilege, and it is for this reason, and not because of blood and race that he is prostrated before by the angels.

Why should man base unity on faith?

So far it has become clear that a unity based on land and blood is related to man's animal instinct which he shares with some animals, and not because of his distinctive characteristics which make him of a superior animal.

But should land and blood be man's only basis of unity, or is there some other factors? To answer this question, it would first be necessary to understand man's peculiar nature.

According to the Quran, man is an animal endowed with a divine (i.e. beyond animal) spirit. Consequently, there are two inherent tendencies or inclinations which characterize man's nature: an animal tendency which makes him similar to other animals, and a human tendency which distinguishes him from them.

The tendencies he has in common with other animals are his instincts. According to Freud and McDougal, instinct is a mysterious force which acts through bodily organs of all living creatures and makes them do things without awareness and thinking.

In man, these instincts originate from his animal nature. They include desire for food, the sexual urge, fighting, attachment to land, blood, wealth etc. Of course, according to his superior nature, man's instincts from a biological viewpoint are weaker and more flexible than those of the animal and his acts and behaviors unlike those of animals, are not solely instinctive, but are motivated by other higher

sources too.

These superior inclinations are what distinguish man from the animal and make him superior to it. They are his intellect, intelligence, self-awareness and belief, faculties which are unique to him and also the desire for perfection, knowledge and the ideal.

The motive force behind men's behavior in life are these higher inclinations which make him superior to and distinct from the animal. That is why we see that ideals, thought and reasonings which have risen higher in human beings than in animals, are so effective that they transform all instinctive needs. The similarities and differences between individuals and human societies do not directly originate from instincts, but from awareness, reasoning and reflection.

We see here where the school of nationalism deviates and errs. It regards land and blood as the main controlling factors of man's behavior, and how the school of communism mistakenly considers the belly as the main factor and the Freudian school which regards the sexual factor as being the motive force behind man's behavior. Considering these, we can then understand the difference between these schools and the school of the prophets. The former schools stress on instincts which do not make man a superior animal and disregard man's higher qualities or undermine them.

In the school of the prophets, the determining factor and criterion has nothing to do with territory, blood, food or sex; but it is rather man's belief, ideology and ideals which originate from his awareness, intellect and knowledge, which give him an exalted position among creatures and enable him to dominate the world. So long as he is bonded to such things as land and blood, he remains at the animal level, but once he steps higher towards belief and ideology, he attains the human level. Instinctive factors on which nationalism and other Western 'isms' rely are improper and futile since they degrade man to the animal level, and from a scientific viewpoint they are wrong since man's unique quality is his awareness, explaining his weak instincts. Human sacrifices all the way through history on grounds of conviction, show that a vision of life based on instinct is defective.

Man is a human being, not an ass or a crow. He must adopt belief as the basis of unity and a determining factor of life and reject attachment to territory, race, gold, and force.

That is why we reject nationalism, communism and all other futile 'isms' and turn to a divine school which is based on belief, a search for perfection and man's unique quality.

Nationalism is based on the accident of nature

In nationalism, nationality is only an accident of nature. Whereas in Islam, it is the choice and conscious will of the individual that determines his destiny. The bases of nationalism are the co-existence of a special group in a particular land, or attachment to a particular race or language; all of which are accidental factors without any connection with the human will.

How can an individual belonging to a particular race, color or language liberate himself from these instinctive attachments? Adopting the 'accident of nature' reasoning as the test and main criterion of man's social and political life will mean degrading his rank and position, whereas his superiority over other living creatures lies in his free will and choice. Nationalism denigrates him to the extent of his confinement to the four walls of his birth-place.

Nationalism also negates man's free will in other respects, which fact is clearly illustrated by the Nazi rule in Germany. Hitler's nationalism stressed that whoever is of the Aryan race and has German as his mother tongue is German, whether he wants it or not. The consequences of this nationalism were the forceful occupation of other territories on the excuse of a common race.

1. The Descent of Man, p. 14.

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