

What Does Whitehead Tell Us? A Critique of a Book

Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1948) is one of the greatest intellectuals of our time. He and Bertrand Russell co-wrote the famous 3-volume *Mathematical Principia*. Whitehead did not confine himself to abstract issues in philosophy; his ideas cover a vast range including culture, civilization, aesthetics, art, moral ethics and social issues. He wrote *The Adventures of Ideas* in 1932. “The book, in fact,” he said, “is a study of the concept of civilization and an effort toward understanding

how developed beings develop. Along with *Science and the Modern World* and *Process and Reality*, it endeavors to understand the nature of objects and show how such a way of understanding can be illustrated by means of studying the developments of human experience.”

Whitehead is one of the greatest thinkers the West has ever seen. His ideas are greatly profound. Whitehead had a vast knowledge of the history of human thoughts. His information on Islam, unfortunately, is insufficient, which is probably why he fell into wrong ideas about it.

However, Whitehead had profound thoughts on the supernatural, which is quite rare for a scholar of mathematics, logic and physics. His thoughts in the fields of anthropology and human development are also quite significant. One of his great qualities is that he does not limit himself to theoretical wisdom, and considered acquiring philosophy as highly important in providing man with knowledge about himself and the universe. His “chaste, elegant writing style,” was another quality of Whitehead's that contrasted with Russell.

Unlike other Western philosophers like Hume, Freud, Sartre, and Camus whose ideas on mankind were incorrect, many of Whitehead's ideas are quite correct.

If we regard some of the Western ideas as the errors of civilization, Whitehead's ideas – this book in particular – provide the right answers.”

Now let us take into consideration some of the issues we disagree with Whitehead concerning the

history of thought, philosophy, the truth, God, religion, the ultimate reason, man, moral ethics, freedom, art, human civilization and Islam.

The History of Ideas

Whitehead believes that the history of ideas has had a dual progress, for it has been influenced both by the fatalistic factors of history and also man's self-conscious ideals. Barbarians of the ancient times and the steam engines of modern ages, he states, "were unintelligent factors of their own era that made civilizations deviate from the order they had inherited from their predecessors."

On the other hand, he writes that Christianity and democracy "arose out of ideals compiled self-consciously, quite in conflict with the religions and beliefs their ancestors made and their societies protected."

The history of thoughts is dual in nature – man's physical and mental effects – but whereas Whitehead does

not provide the criterion for the dual aspects, Allamah Ja'fari believes that the criterion is actually man's dual nature itself. Man has a material, natural aspect which makes him try to continue his life; on the other hand, he also has a spiritual aspect, which aims for greatness, for perfection. Some historical phenomena arise from man's purely natural life, while some others originate from his perfectionist aspect. Prophets of God and true men of wisdom and philosophy have endeavored to adjust and improve the former aspect – man's natural life.

Whitehead emphasizes that historians always present their own point of view of history. He believes that Gibbon's history of the world is in fact Gibbon's side of the story. Indeed, historians are influenced by their own mental states and tendencies when analyzing history. In other words, historians study history as they wish. If they believe that some phenomena are caused by certain reasons, they think other people have the same idea, too. For example, if a historian believes that selfishness is the most important factor influencing man's actions, his historical analyses will also tend to show everything as a result of selfishness.

"The history of our ideas," Whitehead writes, "arises out of our beliefs about history; it is a result of our own mental viewpoints."

This is not generally correct, for then all history books would be worthless, merely describing their authors' character or viewpoints. It is the duty of historians and historical analysts to record history as it happened, and present their analyses separate from the facts; report and interpretation should not be mixed. Some historians have, in fact, done just that.

One of the points that Whitehead emphasizes is, "Oversimplifying is a great hazard in the history of ideas."

We also agree that not all philosophical or scientific issues of high importance can be oversimplified so that everyone may understand them. Supreme perception cannot be degraded for everyone to enjoy; in fact, attempts toward simplifying supreme truths is not only impossible, but also harmful.

Philosophy and the Truth

Whitehead considers several results and advantages for philosophical thoughts when discussing philosophy and the truth.

- 1- Evaluating the truth
- 2- Continuing one's visions and insights on the future
- 3- The feeling of the value of life
- 4- Feeling the crucial significance of endeavors for civilization
- 5- Reaching life

He believes that :

“philosophy is the study of possibilities and comparing them with facts. It evaluates the truth, theories, various alternatives, and ideals altogether. Clairvoyance, being future-looking, and the feeling about the value of life are positive aspects of history; in a word, the feeling of importance that gives life to all endeavors about civilization.”

Philosophy can fulfill the third and fifth items; i.e. it cannot show man the feeling of the value of life or how to reach it, for philosophy only describes man and the universe as it is. It only describes values; it does not evaluate them or speak of how they should be.

On the issue of values, he believes,

“Philosophy usually describes values, rather than evaluating them or discussing how they should be. Such a significant job falls into domains based on wisdom, not philosophies arising from predetermined principles or accepting 'what there is' without studying or evaluating them.”

Whitehead has a particular point of view concerning human intellect, too. He believes that human intellect cannot choose what is best for man. To make the correct choice, man must use wisdom.

“Our actions arise from our knowledge. We wake up, and – eagerly or hatefully, actively amplifying or weakening – get involved in a process, or begin setting new goals. I call the former flow – the presumption of self-consciousness – instinct. It is an experience arising directly out of individual or environmental inheritance. Furthermore, after our instincts and intellect have done their part, our

decisions determine how the two of them combine. That I call wisdom, which moderates the intellect and provides certain results for each kind of circumstances.”

Thus, Whitehead regards wisdom as much higher than intellect or philosophy. We believe that if theoretical intelligence alone could lead man to his goals, there would never be so much debate and disagreement among various doctrines and schools of thought. Wisdom involves moving from the elementary toward results. Philosophy concerns man and the universe as they are, whereas wisdom also pays attention to the factors that can guide man toward development and perfection.

Wisdom consists of knowledge about objective life in an objective universe and acting according to that knowledge, which considers man as a part of the entire harmony of the universe; thus, every moment of man's life is suitable and appropriate, for he is heading for greatness and perfection.

Whitehead regards instinct, intellect and wisdom as three vital, inseparable factors. Without wisdom, he sees a disastrous end for mankind.

About the truth, Whitehead believes that for a certain issue, being interesting is more important than being true:

“The appeal and attraction of an issue is more important than its truth... however, truth can add to its appeal.”

This idea of Whitehead's calls for revision and reconsideration. The truth is definitely more valuable than being interesting, particularly since Whitehead believes that, “What we are seeking is the bare truth.” Perhaps Whitehead meant that the public look for issues that are interesting to them, and the truth underlying it is sometimes not significant to them.

The point is the appeal factor, which depends upon the mental and psychological state of the individual. Since this differs in people, issues are interesting to them in different ways and degrees, too. What man needs is to learn the logic of reality. He must know which facts are vitally important. A phenomenon may seem fabulous, but prove after analysis and study to be filthy and inappropriate.

For example, someone we like may win a match, and it may seem wonderful to us at first, but then we learn that he won by cheating. Since fraud and cruelty are not compatible with the laws of human life, his victory should not be too enjoyable to us. Appeal, in fact, should not be the primary issue; rather, man should learn that the most important thing is the truth.

We will now analyze the “bare truth” Whitehead speaks of:

1- What is the bare truth?

2- Can man face the purely bare truth during his whole life?

3- Why does man avoid the bare truth?

4- What are the consequences of veiling the truth?

The Laws of Nature

As we know, there are four theories about the laws of nature:

1- The “innate” theory

2- The “instructional, fake” theory

3- The descriptive theory

4- The conventional theory

White agrees with the first theory, in which laws exist deep inside all components of nature. The problem here is that the question why each object is different is left unanswered; it is unclear why phenomenon A has characteristics A but phenomenon B has characteristics B.

We approve of the second theory, which believes there is no continuous rope pulling all phenomena behind itself in this world. Nature and all its phenomena and effects is changing, and that is due to the divine blessings God provides from the supernatural world. Thus, the orderly flow in nature is not innate; it originates from a world much higher than nature. We also criticize David Hume's theory of innate order, for there is no order outside the universe, and the order and harmony of nature is what founds laws.

God

Whitehead's theory on the relationship between God and time is another point of criticism. He believes that:

“God's eternal nature, which is free of time from one point of view and time-dependent from another, may make intense, hostile contact with the soul.”

Whitehead ignores the fact that time is caused by movement, which in turn originates from matter and the world of nature. Something far beyond matter can never possibly be fit into a framework of time.

It seems Whitehead has also fallen for the impossible task of abstracting absolutely God from time. He, like other thinkers, does not realize that time is basically the result of the movement and continuity felt innately – internally and externally – and this mental extension called time is so general that even when recognizing God, the human mind cannot do so without going through the path of time. Unless, of course, Whitehead means the visible consequences of God's qualities, like giving and taking life and other acts of God seen in nature, all of which flow through time.

Whitehead, like many other Western thinkers, cannot solve the problem of belonging and depending upon God:

“The concept of impossibility that even God cannot overcome has for many centuries been on theologians' minds.”

This shows how little Whitehead knows of the great and detailed principles of theology. He does not realize the fact that power never applies to impossible acts.

Another thing is how Whitehead analyzes Plato's viewpoint about God:

“Plato's religion is based upon what he imagines about what God may be a God originating from Plato's fascination about eternal beauty.”

As Whitehead interprets Plato's thoughts, God is a being “staring at forms of eternal beauty.” We must disagree, for God, the most comprehensive of all greatness and perfection, does not only see eternal beauty; all the glory and beauty of the universe are also watching Him. The more important problem here is using the term “staring” about God, for nothing in the universe can surprise God and make Him stare at it. We also disagree with the idea of God's joy used by Avicenna. We can say that perhaps Whitehead is referring to Plato's fascination, not God's fascination about eternal beauty.

Whitehead also mentions, when discussing Plato's thoughts on science and philosophy, that:

“Plato also had in mind the lack of order and harmony in nature. He openly defies an absolute power as the creator of the universe. The influence and dominance of thoughts are always encouraging, but merely leads to the possible harmonies, even though Plato is unsteady about this, and sometimes writes in a way that it seems he considers the creator of the universe as having order and harmony due to His supreme will.”

We disagree with this interpretation; for – first of all – defying the order and harmony of the universe contradicts Plato's other thoughts. Plato believes that this world is a shadow of another world, which has order and harmony, so its shadow must also be orderly and harmonious. Furthermore, Plato's defiance of an absolute creating power leads to another contradiction, for he accepts God's will, and uses it to describe the systematic order of the world. Power is one of the factors of will; how can one who accepts will defy power?

Religion

Whitehead has a quite positive viewpoint on religion, and all in all, there are quite few occasions where we should criticize his thoughts on religion. One of Whitehead's positive points on religion is:

“But the ultimate ideals that religions safeguard are strong criticisms of current habits.”

This viewpoint on religion is acceptable, for Whitehead does not associate abuse of religion with religion itself, and considers religion as having a quite effective role in man's life. Whitehead has, of course, distinguished religion itself from religious institutions, for the latter have generally been supporters of social customs and habits.

Whitehead believes that religion sees the events and occurrences in the universe as repeatable, and everything will reoccur many times until the end of the world.

"Mystical religion says that shadows are passing by, but man's experience whispers that they will come again and again. 'Calm down,' religion adds, 'for there is an end to all this repetition."

Islam and all divine religions in general, all facts and events in the universe and various aspects of man's life which are dependant upon God's will and wisdom know that their occurrence in the universe is based on rules and principles; no phenomenon or event is repeatable. The superficial similarity phenomena and events have should not be mistaken. As the Holy Qur'an says,

يسئله من فى السموات و الارض كل يوم هو فى شان

"Whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth implore Him; every day He is upon some labor."
55:29)

Another statement of Whitehead's which we must criticize is:

"Religion has always fluctuated between the two concepts of brotherhood among humans and the relationship between God and his creations, like the relationship between a master and his servants."

The problem here is that Islam sees all human beings as respectable in nature, and all humans moving on the path to perfection and development are brothers.

المؤمنون كاعضا جسد واحد اذ اشتكى منه عضو اشتكى منه الاخر

God's relationship with his creations is not a master-servant one. as the Qur'an says:

نحن اقرب اليه من حبل الوريد

"God is closer to man than even his veins."

Man's relationship with God is one of worship, and by worshipping God man can be attracted by divinity and achieve perfection and development.

On Christianity, Whitehead says that Jesus has said, "Leave Caesar's affairs to Caesar and God's affairs to God." Whitehead believes this statement was said in the era of Tiberious' rule.

Jesus could not have said something like that, despite all the historians that have quoted it. Such a statement contradicts with the philosophy of the sending of the prophets. All prophets were sent by God to guide man toward individual, social, physical and spiritual prosperity. The Qur'an also states one of the tasks of the prophets as upholding justice and equality, and that cannot be achieved if Caesar's affairs and God's are separated.

Furthermore, if a prophet like Jesus really made such a distinction, he would never have gotten into a conflict with the men of power of his time. All prophets, in fact, not only Jesus, fought the wealthy and the cruel, which shows they did not intend to leave Caesar and God to their own, separate affairs.

Defying the Ultimate Reason

In his book, Whitehead sometimes speaks of the ultimate reason in a way that it seems he does not accept it, or even sees belief in it as a barrier against logical thought:

"Logical ways of thought has been deteriorated and ruined ever since ancient Greece up to our times by the incorrect basic concept called the dogmatic theory of the ultimate reason. Such errors are not limited to religious beliefs, either; they have contaminated all fields and majors. They have always dominated the atmosphere with the ultimate reason. Such emphasis has been wrong. Its dogmatic side is, therefore, incorrect, too."

Again, we must disagree with Whitehead here, for defying the ultimate reason first calls for us to believe that the universe has arisen out of coincidence, and that there is no supreme philosophy and wisdom above it at all. But divine wisdom requires that the universe have an ultimate reason. Secondly, if there is no ultimate reason for the universe, all moral ethics and values are nothing but hallucinations; as the Iranian poet Nasser Khusro says:

روزگار و چرخ و انجم سربه سر بازیستی گرنه این روز دراز دهر را فرداستی

(All this world and time and the stars are ultimately mortal; someday, all this will come to an end, and the real world will be revealed.)

Whitehead is an advocate of moral ethics and values; how can he now defy the ultimate reason? The dispute among theological thinkers on determining the ultimate reason of the universe has caused some like Whitehead to be doubtful or defiant of the ultimate reason.

Man

Whitehead's interpretation of man sees man as having an extremely complicated nature:

“The human nature is so complex that in a politician's eyes, social plans put on paper are not even worth the paper they are written on.”

This point of Whitehead's is one of his most significant.

Whitehead believes that destroying human evil is not simple.

Some believe that social re-organization can be effective, but he says that “there is no known way to eradicate social evil except presenting worse evil.”

Evil still exists in human societies because social and ideological leaders have neglected religion and moral ethics and have done nothing to improve man's nature. Also, the lack of developmental plans in human societies – despite what Whitehead thinks – is not because the human nature is complex, but due to the fact that the human nature tends to both be selfish and greedy and also peer-loving and unselfish.

If the negative aspects of man's existence are controlled by means of religion and moral ethics, man can achieve a reasonable life.

Man cannot abandon slavery and exploitation without having deep love for his fellow beings. Those thinkers who do not believe so will fall into contradiction when defending human rights. Thinkers like Huxley and Hume, who have expressed their hatred of slavery, cannot logically justify their defiance of slavery from an anthropological aspect.

Sometimes Whitehead speaks about man as if he sees man as a descendant of apes. He says:

“Many years ago, the pressure of living in jungles forced some mammals to climb up trees and become apes; then, in the following era, after a long time, the pressure of the jungles being destroyed man the same species come down the trees and become human beings.”

We must disagree with the theory that man is a kind of evolved animal, for there is no scientific reason to prove it; the above theory is more like a comparison, the base of which cannot be proven.

On the end of life, Whitehead discusses man's perfection, a perfection caused by social measures:

“Life can be recognized only as aiming for the level of perfection that environmental conditions allow. The goal, however, is always far beyond facts available. The goal is achieving a kind of perfection and greatness, even if it proves to be degraded and animal-like.”

Indeed, man must make objective effort toward perfection, but it is incorrect to claim that development and perfection depends on the environment. Some other thinkers also believe that human life is heading for an environmentally defined form of perfection. If environmental conditions mean people's normal wishes and thoughts on the path of purely natural life, they cannot be regarded as perfection any more.

In fact, man will achieve no perfection unless he steps beyond his normal desires. Whitehead's main problem is his emphasis on the flow of man's normal, natural life, whereas he has frequently mentioned in his works that the current trend of life in human societies is not compatible with supreme human ideals and realities.

Another basic problem is Whitehead's ignorance toward the law of natural self-preservation. In our categorization of man's life, we have divided into two parts: the preservation of the natural aspect and the evolutionary aspect. Man's survival lies in paying attention to the latter:

Throughout this significant book, in which Whitehead has discussed some very important issues, I see no detailed discussion of the law of self-preservation, apart from a few brief statements, which will do no good to cure the pains deviation from self-preservation brings about.

Moral Ethics

When discussing the greatness of Christianity and other religions, Whitehead says:

“The greatness of Christianity or any other religion lies in its temporary morals.”

However, divine religions, Islam in particular, involve eternal morals, for moral ethics mean the activation and flourish of man's positive potentials, and moral values can adjust man's social life. As the Holy Prophet of Islam has described his mission:

بعثت لاتمم مكارم الاخلاق

“I have been sent to complete moral virtues.”

Despite his emphasis upon moral principles, Whitehead starts a contradiction concerning morals:

“There is a contradiction concerning moral ethics that must be added to the contradiction in the arts. Moral issues seek an ideal in their goals, and fight against being degraded to lower levels, even when they are at their lowest level. Thus, stagnancy is the lethal enemy of moral ethics. Yet, in human societies, heroes of morals are generally archenemies of new ideals.”

Great thinkers of moral issues have never opposed new ideals. Only professional heroes, who see moral issues as a mere series of principles, fight against change and new ideals. Great thinkers of moral

ethics, however, see morals as dependent upon God, which can therefore never be rigid or stagnant. Moral ethics are based upon man's reasonable life, which is not stagnant. Man's relationship with nature and his fellow beings undergoes many changes, which cannot be left ignored in a system of moral ideals. The fundamental principles of moral ethics are fixed, of course, for they originate from man's nature, intellect and conscience; the changes that occur are changes in subject or man's viewpoint of facts. In brief, morals are based on reasonable life, and their aim is to evolve man's life – the supreme product of the universe. The moral values that dominate reasonable life can save man from stagnancy.

All in all, Whitehead strongly believes in moral values:

“The only way to understand a society is to find out what kind of men rule it.”

Identifying the officials and leaders of a society can to some extent show us what the goal of the members of such a society is, and how freedom is in their society.

Freedom

We must put more emphasis upon mental freedom, which is the fundamental elixir of man's life and other forms of freedom. Mental freedom is not possible, however, without “practical, reasonable freedom.” When such a freedom becomes a reality, man can use his positive potentials to the benefit of others. As Allamah Ja’fari believes, true freedom can exist in human societies only if the rulers of human societies admit and accept the greatness of human life.

Whitehead believes that the concept of freedom nowadays has become hollow:

“Alas, the concept of freedom has become hollow, due to the literary aspect given to it. Literary figures and artists have displayed the impact of new thoughts on traditional ones in their symphonies of imaginations and visual hallucinations.”

The important point Whitehead is conveying here is that some literary figures and artists have damaged traditions and customs with their hallucinations presented in the name of novel thoughts. Novel thoughts, which are new and to some extent interesting have brought about the destruction of some traditions that are deeply rooted in man's mind and soul. One of the reasons why the last century was riddled with self-alienation is damaging original traditions.

From Whitehead's point of view, limited freedom does not only arise out of hostility and animosity toward one's fellow beings. Many other factors, such as the rigid rules of nature and the rules dominating man's life also limit freedom. Whitehead also emphasizes the important point that “the true core of freedom is the possibility to reach ultimate human freedom. Man has suffered most due to his failure to reach his real goals.”

If this extremely significant point of Whitehead's is ignored, a reasonable interpretation of freedom will

not be achieved. Nowadays, unfortunately, incorrect interpretations of freedom have led to man's supreme spiritual activities and heavenly ethics to be disabled. If Whitehead means by "the true core of freedom is the possibility to reach ultimate human freedom" the same as what the public mean by freedom – freedom is merely reaching their desires – however, we see it as a point deserving criticism. Some people set goals for themselves that are by no means elevated or supreme, so reaching them cannot be regarded as freedom.

Art

Whitehead says that art consists of:

"Art consists of juxtaposing effects with observable facts objectively. By objective juxtaposition, here we mean the ultimate that must be achieved with relative success. Such an ultimate, which refers to art, has two aspects – the truth and beauty. The pinnacle of art has only one ultimate, and that is 'beauty based on the truth.'"

Objectively juxtaposing effects with facts is not accurately the definition of art, for all of man's activities upon the contents of the world are objective. Every product or merchandise built, for example, has effects seen as some material phenomena in the world – a juxtaposition of the effects with the objective phenomena. And about the end of art, which Whitehead believes to be truth and beauty, we must say that the term "truth" here is not opposed to facts; rather, it refers to the "reality that deserves to exist," including the deserved existence of phenomena as they are and as they should be.

Art must flow on the path of man's reasonable life, and ignoring this fact can disable human principles and values by the artist and his works. Whitehead, who believes in Judgment Day, considers art as responsible for making it a reality. He believes that:

"The concept of Judgment Day is quite significant, but that day is always with us. Thus, arts are liable for providing us with that now, immediately, in this world, so art itself has the potential to lose some of its profound viewpoint in order to achieve the providing responsibility it has set as its goal. The duty of the arts is to give Judgment Day triumphant reality now."

Human Civilizations

In his analysis of civilization, Whitehead believes it to consist of "four elements:

- 1- Behavioral patterns
- 2- Emotional patterns
- 3- Patterns of belief

4- Technological patterns

“Though they influence each other, we can immediately omit technology, for it is irrelevant to our discussions. On the long run, patterns of behavior are preserved or moderated or modified by the patterns of belief and emotions. Religion's first duty is to focus upon emotions and beliefs.”

Although Whitehead pays little attention to the element of technology, patterns of behavior are related to technology. The influence of technology upon man's individual and social life is so intense that it actually plays a part in determining man's patterns of behavior. Technology is not a phenomenon separate from legal or moral principles. It is highly influential on public culture.

And in the hands of the power-greedy men of politics or business, it can heavily affect patterns of emotions and belief. Basically, technology makes people's social relationships very complicated, creating compulsory relationships that greatly influence various aspects of man's social life. Instead of ignoring technology, Whitehead should have advised it to be harnessed to serve human life.

The four elements mentioned above can only find harmony when the supreme aims of life and valuable ideals are presented. If man moves along the path of purely natural life instead of heading for reasonable life, they will never be harmonized. It is religion that can correct and logically adjust the four patterns.

Whitehead believes that the civilization of a society depends on the existence of five blessings: 1. the truth, 2. beauty, 3. endeavor and innovation, 4. art, 5. peace and tranquility.

He sees triumph in encouraging and convincing force to work are signs of a valuable civilization. However, the value of a civilization lies in “spiritually and mentally convincing human beings to a supreme state.”

Using force will make civilization inhibit the development of man's potentials. The mere convincing and satisfaction of the people is not enough to make a human civilization, for people are convinced and satisfied by factors in their life that cannot be regarded as ideal. For instance, some may be satisfied by hedonism; can that be considered as a human ideal? For years, people had accepted slavery, a form of content that no intellectual would approve of. Most people are generally ignorant of their own potentials and ideals, so people's satisfaction cannot be the correct criterion for evaluating a civilized society. A civilization whose points of strength root in original, stable human wishes will prevail. Passive, mortal desires cannot be regarded as the real advantages of a civilization.

By fulfilling encouragement, Whitehead most probably means activating original needs and their saturation, which exist in man's nature. But since being content and the continual outpour of original needs and wishes are relative, and on the other hand, having in mind the crucial importance of lack of content, which Whitehead sees as one of the motivating factors of history, we should interpret the concept of being content here as pleasing ideals, for there is a concept of stagnancy and stop in being

content that is in contrast with the concept of sacred, motivating lack of content.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, Whitehead also mentions public beliefs. Social life depends on people's common beliefs, so "if a society is not continually filled with current public belief, its civilization will be destroyed."

Whitehead considers several factors as effective in the rise or fall of a civilization:

1- Elevated goals protect a civilization; without them, a civilization will "gradually turn into a vain repetition, in which the intensity of emotions slowly fades away."

2- The natural fatalism dominating man's physical life that fulfills man's physical needs.

3- The compulsory dominance of man over man, to the extent that behaviors are harmonized toward social comfort.

4- Methods for fulfilling encouragement.

The four factors mentioned above are acceptable, but the fifth one requires criticism. Public beliefs are not without deviations and errors, so intellectual pioneers of societies should always study and criticize them. Public beliefs can be divided into two groups. Some originate from man's nature, and some others, though not based on man's nature, deposit into his nature. The latter cannot guide man toward development and perfection. Nowadays, mechanistic life is full of such public beliefs. They must be changed.

Whitehead thus assesses the Greek civilization:

"The Greek renaissance was caused by the factor of their ideal of perfection-seeking. This ideal brought them much greater progress and development than the other civilizations. It effectively made such a beautiful civilization that history had never seen in man before."

If Whitehead could only realize the glory and greatness of the Islamic civilization, he would never exaggerate like that about the Greek. The internal outpour and stable goals of the Islamic civilization were so great that the civilization was sustained and kept fresh for centuries. Whitehead admits that the Greek civilization lost its freshness to repetition in successive generations, whereas Islam, which believes that man always needs novelty and variety, and believes that man should be provided with a school of thought that prepares the grounds for man's thoughts and emotions to be refreshed and flourished, always inhibits man and his civilization from becoming stagnant and waning. In Islamic civilization, which is based on the existence of God, man is guided toward goals and ideals that root deep inside him.

Islam

Whitehead should be criticized on a few occasions for his lack of information about Islam. For instance, Whitehead has said that “Palestine has created the last religious ideology,” whereas religious ideology began with Noah, and continued with great prophets like Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, presenting the complete context of Abraham's religion in the form of an ideology.

Whitehead believes the scholars at the academies in Alexandria to have made a significant contribution to the rising of Islam and Christianity:

“Their work [the scholars at Alexandria] found a strong position in the rise of two great religious revolutions, Islam and Christianity. They provided both religions with philosophical theology and tools for innovation and dogmatic principles.”

It is absolutely unacceptable that the theological basis of Islam, or even Christianity, to have originated from Alexandria. Interaction of thoughts between scholars of various schools of thought and beliefs does not necessarily imply that one is based upon the other. Furthermore, Islamic theology is not founded upon innovations, or dogmatic methods, either.

According to Whitehead, slavery has been one of the issues in the past about which none of the scholars of different schools of thought took any serious action.

“People of Athens were kept slaves, but apparently, they humanized the basis of slavery. Plato was, both by family background and in belief, an aristocrat, and must have had some slaves, too. But one can hardly read some of his words without feeling upset about how he forces mankind into humiliation... neither the sympathetic slavers, nor the aware Plato or even other intellectual lawmakers did anything to fight slavery.”

Whitehead knew nothing about how Islam fought against slavery, even though it was quite well-established among Arabs, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad took realistic measures to eradicate it:

- 1-** Providing slaves with human rights
- 2-** Announcing the act of freeing slaves as a way to have one's sins forgiven
- 3-** Decreeing all slaves as free and slaving them prohibited after Mecca was occupied
- 4-** Allocating some *zakat* (alms) for freeing slaves
- 5-** Strong emphasis upon the merit of freeing slaves

His actions were so effective that in Umar ibn Abdul-aziz's era, slavery had vanished from Islamic lands, and the budget for freeing slaves was spent on freeing non-Muslim slaves, e.g. in Africa.

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