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Challenges and Dilemmas in Making Values & Ideals

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Introduction

Several questions and dilemmas emerge when we discuss values education. What do we mean by the term 'values'? Are values private or public? Are they built subjectively or do they exist objectively? Furthermore, do we recognize values as absolute concepts or do they change relative to various circumstances, cultures, ages, nations, or other variables? The widely divergent answers to these questions reflect the fundamental philosophies, schools of thought, and worldviews of the men and women who author them. In "Values and Values Education in Schools", J.M. Halstead argues that Western societies, mainly influenced by individualism and positivism, often side with subjectivity and relativism.[1]

It is, nonetheless, vital to note that the Western approach is not a single coherent school of thought. Numerous approaches have emerged in the West to deal with values education. It is even difficult to find an inclusive list of these approaches. The liberal democratic model[2], Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development[3], character education[4], the post-modern approach[5] and religious moral education[6] are only a few examples of theories in values education. Superka and his colleagues in an older study have provided another list of other approaches in values education.

Their typology includes inculcation, analysis, clarification, and action learning as the current approaches in values education[7]. Even a brief discussion of these varying approaches requires an independent study, and clearly falls beyond the present one. These approaches are presented to show the difficulty of entering the domain of values education as an avenue for self-development.

Societies with idealistic or realistic, secular or religious approaches follow other perspectives. Answers then are not formulated in an either/or dichotomy. They depend on our philosophy of life and the way we

view the world of human beings and how they relate to the universe.

Despite the explicit disagreement of scholars over the definition of the term “values”, I prefer to quote Halstead. His definition, I suppose, is closer to what Ayatollah Sadr has envisaged in his values discussion. Halstead states:

“Values refer to principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or actions and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity”.[8]

Sadr also refers to values[9] as directing ideals which derive from our worldviews and influence our life’s goals through their impact on our thinking and decision-making discourses[10]. Values in this view are regarded as the criteria of our entity both in the present and future. This is, as Desaulniers states, because values are ontological in their nature. They refer to “what one will be, instead of merely what one will have”[11].

Regardless of differences in the domain of values, societies more or less follow a common pattern of values and standards of behaviour. Values education can be described, in my understanding, as a way to help individuals explore common standards and internalize them. Secularity and religiosity play an important role in determining common values.

The former simply prepares individuals for proper citizenship and active participation[12], while the latter advocates religious standards and ideals to facilitate self-construction. The result will influence people both in this life and the hereafter[13]. Sadr takes a religious approach in his discussion of values. He discovers a Qur’anic set of common values as a necessary requirement for self- development. He consults various Qur’anic verses to elaborate on the typology and formation of a human value system.

Ayatollah Sadr emphasizes that values education and individual self-development will lead to social change if they encompass the majority of the population in a given society. Their impact on only a few people is insufficient as a means of creating social change[14].

Values education then should play the central role in educating people overall. Education, of course, has a wider meaning than schooling. Various social elements must participate in values education. To bring about any significant change, educators must begin by identifying appropriate values and changing those that have become pathologically fixed. Sadr maintains that self- development begins with values and ideals change[15].

Values[16], ideals[17], myths[18], or gods and goddesses[19] are just some of the themes proposed by various thinkers in an attempt to show the inner influencing elements. Sam Keen asserts that the impact of unconscious myths in shaping our recent history is as important as the impact of conscious science.

Sigmund Freud’s theory of mythic struggles between the Ego and the Id within the individual psyche as

well as racial, national, religious, and political myths had tremendous impacts in creating sacred “isms” both in the East and in the West. Witnessing these values struggles as a part of the politics of modernity, humankind has become frustrated by the fear that history may end either with a bang or with a whimper[20]. Therefore it is crucial that we take a step backwards and try to include self-development in the process of social and economic development.

Values and ideals formation: a forgotten crucial task

Sometimes internalized myths and gods unconsciously influence our thinking and direct our behaviour. Sam Keen assigns an effective credit to living myths. He observes:

“The dominant myth that informs a person or a culture is like the “information” contained in DNA or the program in the system disk of a computer. Myth is the software, the cultural DNA, the unconscious information, the metaprogramme that governs the way we see “reality” and the way we behave”.[21]

This is why Sadr asserts that any self-development must begin with values and ideals; what Keen calls myths.[22] Myths and values can be creative or destructive, healthy or unhealthy. People need to be educated to handle them constructively. The challenge of matching gods and ideals with the ever-changing realities of life is another story. We invest our myths with a sacred character, giving them the same unquestioning credit we offer to the seasons of the year. This allows them to perform the same functions as gods.

If the root of inner change is values and ideals, then we must examine the ways in which these ideals are formed and how they change. Values and ideals, as Sadr points out, depend on our worldviews. They are, indeed, the outcome of our philosophy of life. This philosophy fashions the way we give meaning to life, ourselves, society, and the universe. The amount and the quality of psychological energy that pulls us towards the objectives of our lives result from our ideals and values[23]. As well as one’s worldview, the pattern of “humanology” that each person follows influences the values system and ideals.

By humanology I mean a selected pattern by which each person explains his/her humanity, included potentialities and the way to actualize them[24]. Our values system influences the goals of our lives and the methods that we choose to obtain them. The Qur’an calls these ideals and values “god/il□h or gods/□lihah.” People can choose various gods. The impact of gods and ideals in human life is so influential that like God they may direct our behaviour. Each of us may decide to follow God, a god, or gods.[25] The most important task is to consciously examine both gods and values. We must choose our myths if we are going to behave autonomously.

Quoting Santayana, Keen pushes us to compose a conscious, active feedback to our myths: “Those who do not remember history are condemned to repeat it.” Even though this statement originally referred to culture, Keen utilizes it to provoke awareness about choosing myths. Keen states:

“If we do not make the effort to become conscious of our personal myths gradually, we become dominated by what psychologists have variously called repetition compulsion, autonomous complexes, engrams routines, scripts, games …”.[26]

To go through this process, we should re-examine both our worldview and the specific elements that have motivated us to choose certain values and myths. At this point people may build their relationship with God. Other myths and gods function limitedly. They urge us to engage in a continuous revision. I argue that even personal, consciously selected myths, as Keen proposes, are not good tools for building co-existence. We need commonalities and common values if we are to get rid of personalism and relativism.

However, Postman holds that when choosing gods, we choose them as metanarratives that convey sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable us to organize our lives around them. We have all witnessed, heard or read narratives about communism, fascism, and Nazism in modern life as gods and myths which have called their adherents to fight for the establishment of a heaven on earth. Several other gods have captured the hearts and minds of many other people.[27]

Interestingly, Postman introduces us as the god-making species.[28] At this point we should note that the Qur’an warns us not to be too caught up in the gods we produce ourselves.[29] Innately we look for gods and metanarratives that give meaning to our lives and guide us to a more prosperous future. This process must be accomplished through an explanatory method, but we build our gods all the same. God, the Creator, can be the true ideal in our lives though we choose to follow the created god or gods.

Although the production of gods happens inside us, it reflects the realities of the concrete life represented to us by major thinkers. In the age of the discovery of inductive science, figures such as Descartes, Bacon, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton pioneered ideas that transformed human perceptions of God from a sacred religious God to a scientist God. This narrative was then replaced by the science-god which proved to be more beneficial, as it gave people a measure of power and control over their lives.

It was nevertheless revealed as inadequate to explain any knowledge other than that of the present. It does not provide satisfactory answers for the beginning and the end of our existence. Science gave birth to a supposedly paradise-making son known as technology.[30]

Science and technology promised human progress if we proved to be a technological species. The problem then was that science and technology, produced to serve people, enslaved them instead. The result of this frustration was a psychological polytheism. One god is not and cannot be enough. We then look for multiple gods. Democracy, cultural pluralism, and multiculturalism are other solutions which attempt to resolve the problem of the present generation of Western intellectuals[31].

Yet the question remains: In a non-melting-pot society which provokes the co-existence of people with various cultures, myths and gods, what will give meaning to life and motivate people towards a

promising future? The cultural and values borderlines that divide us will continue to do so unless human beings arrive at one God, the unifying and absolute ideal. This is what Sadr calls it al-mathal al-a'l (the highest ideal) in comparison with other invented ideals[32]. The following section describes his explanation about human values and ideals making. He aims at providing two lines of pathological and normal ideal making.

Sadr's typology of human values & ideals-making

Human beings are values and ideals makers[33]. They never stop making values. They cannot live without values. Sadr argues that we have to learn to qualitatively deal with values. He provides his own typology of human values-making in a tripartite model. For him, the provisions of this typology of values-making helps people know how they choose values and how they can recognize its vulnerable points. Sadr's model functions as a pathological instrument in the process of values and ideals formation.

Values are the most meaningful and the most effective ideals of our past. Values are metacognitions which are consciously constructed by us. They give meaning to our present lives and influence our goals in the future. In his evaluation of the quality of human values and ideals, Sadr attempts to go deeply into the roots of this process. He proposes the three possible ways that people follow in making values and ideals: contextualism, absolutization, and transcendental values-making. He then emphasizes the role of prophets in educating people to create healthy and stable ideals.

Contextualism

According to Sadr, some people choose their values from the existing context of their lives. The Qur'an narrates examples of this values selection. The reaction of most people in past generations to the invitations of the prophets has been: Let us follow what our ancestors have done.[34]

In his analysis of this type of ideals-making, Sadr concludes that people usually follow this model when they tend to be sense-centred and pragmatic. This values-making process happens through a pragmaticality. People are happy with a values system that helps them enjoy the present situation. They are reluctant to change values supporting the existing social pattern. These people are stuck with their present context and cannot get rid of it. They find it difficult to think of another situation and therefore do not see beyond the present context.

These values and ideals are extracted from the existing social context and are returned to it to direct their followers to the future. Therefore, they are repeated ideals. The future here is nothing more than a repetition of the present and past[35]. This repetitious process of values making will lead to a pathological values system and brings about values disease.

Roots of contextuality in values-making

An important task of prophetic education is to educate people to exchange their gods for one God. Two main parameters, psychological and political, usually intervene in this process. When society becomes accustomed to ideals and values that they have lived with, they internalize those values, which then become a part of their personality The difficulty to change intensifies if they are formed within a luxurious and pleasing environment[36]. People think that chosen gods and values are effective. There is no reason to change effective gods.

Moreover, values which are derived from a god or gods make human life repetitious. In this case, certain gods may wish to appear with absoluteness. Since gods have a limited capacity to attract people, they are finite in nature. People must change to give them newness and maintain their permanent effectiveness. People must then change the form of values and repeatedly follow them. New cycles will lead people to the same starting point. Despite the apparent newness of gods and ideals, a single essence is repeated through various forms.

Sadr also holds that social forces and the impact of power holders is another element in refuting prophetic values instruction. To keep the top-down pattern of social structure, the power holders create gods and ideals. They attempt to impose decisions on people or sometimes make decisions for them, both actions that shape their value system. Sometimes power holders themselves become the god and ideal of a society. The Qur'an uses Pharaoh as an example of someone who claims godliness[37].

Sadr calls this a political element which influences the social values system. Besides these two psychological and political elements there are other factors. Socio-political forces are not, I believe, limited to political elements. Propaganda, mass media, written culture, social celebrations, and above all, the formal educational system in each society are among the other influential factors. They tend to be misused by power holders to foster a preferred type of values system.

Sadr observes that gods and ideals may play the role of religion and claim for themselves some kind of sacredness, as the Qur'an calls them gods (ilihah).[38] Because of their sacredness, people are reluctant to set them aside. The sacred ideals are usually taken as gods and are worshipped. To Sadr, religion is nothing more than the relationship between a worshiper and the worshipped. In addition to revealed religions, there are also man-made religions. These religions are elaborated from internalized gods and ideals. Since these gods and ideals are not absolute or self-generating, they do not last forever.

They are, in fact, expressions of the realities in human life and cannot direct him/her towards horizons beyond. To show the difference between these two types of religions, Sadr maintains that monotheistic religions are a uniting force since they direct people towards one absolute ideal. Those religions, which are elaborated from the created gods, are disintegrative.

To Sadr it is impossible for human beings to create a god that directs them to a horizon beyond the

limitation of their understanding.[39] People replace them with new gods to provide meaning to their lives. Despite this continuous ideal renewal, the gods will lose their effectiveness at some point, and society will have to put them aside. It means that the society will lose its integrative ideal. When there is no such ideal, each individual concentrates on his or her own interest instead of concern for the greater society.[40]

A society with this type of problem in its ideals is vulnerable to one of the three following crises. The first crisis, Sadr indicates, is that society at this level is ideally diseased from within. He

believes that society in this situation is not real; rather, it is merely a shadow of society. Social disintegration is the first crisis that threatens a society with contextual values-making. If, for instance, the society faces an external threat, it will easily disintegrate and lose its integrity because such a society is not more than a combination of citizens, each striving for his/her own interests. The disintegration of Islamic civilization in the middle of the seventh century of the Islamic era, when Muslims interfaced the Mongol invasion, is an example. A similar disintegration happened at the beginning of the twentieth century when the Ottoman Empire could not guarantee the continuity of the Islamic civilization.

The second crisis could be a complete assimilation into a non- Islamic ideal when the society has lost its own identity. The third crisis is an inner attempt from those Muslim thinkers who still feel strongly about the effectiveness of Islam during various ages. They unsuccessfully attempted to renew those ideals. Many Muslim thinkers and reformists attempt to discover a version of Islamic ideals which can remain effective in the face of tremendous social changes. Explaining the second and the third possibilities, Sadr observes:

When Muslims confronted the age of colonialism, they reacted through two different ways. One avenue directed Muslim nations to assimilate themselves to a foreign (Western) ideal. Some of the Muslim rulers applied this policy in their countries. Reza Khan in Iran and Kemal Ataturk in Turkey attempted to apply the ideal and values of Europeans which had wined the campaigns in many aspects. When the Islamic ideals could not attract Muslims they applied an ideal which has proved to be effective.

Muslim thinkers at the beginning of the colonial age and at the end of the disintegrating age (awﷺkhir al-fatrah) which was prior to the age of colonialism strove to apply the third alternative. They wanted to give a new life to Islam. They attempted to provide the Islamic ideals in a new language and to renew Islamic ideals in a way that could meet the new needs of Islamic societies. A shadowy nation interfaces one of these three alternatives.[41]

Absolutization

Sadr then proposes the second possible way people follow in making values and ideals. For some people, values-making is a process which must fit in with their future needs. Such people are able to see beyond their existing circumstances, and choose ideals and values which can direct them to a

better, more promising future. They can foretell future needs, and are not overwhelmed by their existing context.

The problem, nonetheless, is that human cognition is limited. People cannot foresee all aspects of their future and are unable to conceive of the absolute ideal. We usually perceive a dimension of that absolute ideal. A hidden vulnerability in human cognition is the fact that people never consider a limited fact as limited. They attribute absoluteness to what they have perceived. Generalization and absolutization[42] are psychological mechanisms that people use to enlarge the limited gods and ideals. These mechanisms are nonetheless psychological and only realities can challenge them.

As a result, the absolutized gods will become inadequate in practice. Since people constantly moving towards a true type of perfection and these limited ideals cannot provide that answer, these ideals will become an obstacle. They will become the ideals of the first type when they lose their functionality for the future.[43]

Sadr asserts that two kinds of invalid generalizations usually take place when people choose the second type of values or ideals. People who are concerned about their future usually form ideals that meet future needs. Since these ideals are related to the future, they are more inclusive than those ideals which are taken from existing situations. They nonetheless convey only some aspects of the values people look for.

Overwhelmed by the Church authorities' insistence on certain religious and erroneous scientific ideas and exhausted by an oppressive economic system that had stratified society into the elite and workers, Westerners, for instance, chose to follow the ideal of freedom and democracy. This ideal selection was partly the result of the religious Reformation which took place in the Western Church in the sixteenth century. Although the Reformation began as a religious movement, it had political, social, and economic overtones as well[44]. People who were tired of the intolerable pressures of the owners of wealth, power, and authority refused to follow the authoritative patterns of social order. Sadr describes this situation as follows:

Europeans who pioneered the age of the Renaissance and Reformation wanted to be free from all traps, including those of Church and of feudalism. They wanted to be free to do what they wished. They wanted to think with their own minds and not with the minds of others. They wanted to have their own concerns. They did not want to have stereotypes that others produced for them[45].

The Renaissance and the Enlightenment were especially associated with ideals and values which included a recrediting of human individual freedom[46]. People could no longer tolerate the existing socio-political and economic context of that period. Freedom was a value that promised a better future for all citizens. However, Sadr states that the problem was that they took the instrument as their goal. Democracy and freedom can create an environment where people have a voice. But freedom is not the ultimate end; it must be used to go further.

Although recognizing individual freedom is one step towards the future after having been stuck with present and past burdens, it is not the ultimate ideal. The future is more extensive even than this ideal. Sadr calls this “horizontal generalization.” By this, he means that people may choose freedom or other ideals to rid themselves of oppressing and unsatisfactory existing circumstances.

Freedom however cannot be the absolute ideal. Although freedom is undoubtedly a prerequisite for human development, it is not the whole story. Freedom is without any content or ultimate ideal. To develop themselves, people need not only freedom, but a goal, an ideal, and a safe path toward that absolute ideal. If people cannot choose an everlasting ideal, they will be self- alienated. Freedom provides a good context, but people need a motivating goal and a meaningful content. This goal cannot be something limited as people innately look for everlasting absolute ideals.

Sadr contests that the problem in Western values selection is that people who favour it have forgotten the needed goal and content in their free and democratic context.[47] Islamic societies therefore should enjoy freedom and democracy, but they should treat them as a means not as an end, that is they should move towards their sacred ideals.

The above-mentioned pathological generalization has occasionally happened in all nations. Sadr alludes to another type of generalization which may be traced from the beginning of human history right up to the present time. This invalid generalization that has affected people throughout history is to base ideals on humanity as a whole. Sadr maintains that human social life began with the nuclear family. It has been extended to tribes, clans, groups, and nations. During each period, people have sided with a particular ideal related to that specific stage.

Those living at a certain period make and accept values and ideals that are from that period. Tribalism, racism, fascism, and belligerent nationalism are examples of this type of values- making which have taken place in various periods of human history. These ideals were then passed on to subsequent generations.[48]

Sadr believes that the major problem in our values-making is that we are usually narrow-sighted. It is therefore incorrect for us to form values and ideals that are disintegrated from prophetic education. If we stand in a vast field or desert and try to see the farthest horizons, we achieve only a limited view. We must not forget that what we actually see is not the end of the world. The same problem overwhelms us when we try to choose values and ideals. Values and ideals are the horizons of human life. By choosing a limited ideal, we assume that this will be an everlasting and ever-motivating one. Sadr argues that seemingly everlasting horizons cannot be values and ideals; they are only finite horizons[49].

Considering this limitation, Misbah Yazdi provides a supporting argument. He states that because of the complexity and multidimensionality of human potentialities, the deep interactions between these potentialities, and above all else (since life in this world is an introduction to a person’s permanent life in the hereafter), Muslim moral educators must insist on the necessity of using the content of revelation as

another tool in understanding and determining a values system[50].

Revelation is a complementary tool when people are ambiguous about the impact of their behaviour in this world and in the hereafter. A believer is assured that the revealed religions provide him/her with a secure lifestyle which will lead to the development of a perfect person (ins□n-i k□mil). This is because the content of revelation is from God, the creator of humankind.

If a reader approaches the Qur'an from this angle, he or she will find out that the Qur'an warns us that all the gods we internalize and replace with the True God are only empty names. These created gods are nothing but figments of our imaginations. Although both God and gods are known to us through mental forms, the former represents a real being. Created gods are nothing but mental forms. They do not convey a true meaning but rather encourage humankind to chase after a mirage. When we reach it we find it is a nonentity[51].

Other verses provide other metaphors. They warn us that submission to gods and ideals other than God is like dwelling in a spider's web. This is undoubtedly a pleasing dwelling for a spider but a dangerous one for human beings[52]. The resemblance is because gods and man-made values cannot give a reliable lasting meaning to human life.

The Qur'an considers ideals and values replaced by God as mirages, erroneous perceptions of reality, and as spiders' webs if people take refuge in them[53]. Usually these ideals develop into the first type, contextual ideals, when they are interrelated with a positive, easy-going lifestyle. They will become an enjoyable part of real life[54]. At this stage people again go back to the present and past and keep the associated ideals and values.

Transcendental ideals and values-making

The third type of ideals and values-making is what Sadr calls transcendental. This type is centred around a core element: Allah. Values and ideals must be unlimited and everlasting. What we create inside us is overwhelmed by the limitations which govern our existence and our cognitive narrowness. The Islamic values system is based on a worldview which relates human beings to an absolute ideal: Allah. People relate their limited being to an unlimited ideal if they choose Allah as their final ideal. Allah is not the product of our minds. He is an absolute being outside of us but related to us. He is introduced by the monotheist religions as the source of absolute power, knowledge, justice, and beauty.[55]

An essential conflict will be resolved if we decide to follow this absolute ideal. Although as Muslims we always create ideals in our minds, what we worship and take as the highest ideal is Allah. Allah is an independent ideal beyond our conception. Worship and self-development is towards Allah, not towards what we create in ourselves. Personal self-conception is a tool to direct us toward a real independent God.

There is a difference between a humanely invented name, a mental form, or an image that we create as an ideal in our mind and an ideal which exists beyond us. In Islamic ideology, we are encouraged to distinguish between our mental form of God and the real independent God.[56]

The Qur'an warns us not to choose names as values and ideals[57]. Submission must be directed to the real God. Among ourselves, we have a name (in Arabic, ism) and a named (in Arabic, musamm□). Our mental forms ascribed to God are nothing more than names. Names and imaginations always represent an external reality. God's names and the named (god) are characterized by two attributes. Names are limited but the named is absolute. This absolute being is our ultimate ideal[58].

Conscious or unconscious inevitable journey

Human beings are willingly and unwillingly moving towards God. The Qur'an says:

"O you humankind! Verily you are ever toiling on toward your Lord – painfully toiling, – and you shall meet Him* (*84:6*)."***

Sadr comments that this verse informs us of an inevitable, exhausting progress towards God with no respite from humankind. This journey is both continuous and infinite. People, nonetheless, proceed along this road differently. Some are conscious of the progress and undertakes their journey responsibly. Believers and worshipers of God are among this group[59].

They try to get close to God. Believers behave in their lives as God's responsible vicegerents on earth. Muslim moral educators believe that nearness is the ultimate goal of prophetic values education. The universe, including human beings, is ontologically related to God. Human beings exist because God has given them the light of existence. This nearness is the result of a divine conscious intuition of this link and can be obtained through faith and corresponding religious actions[60].

Unbelievers are negligent or pretend to be so. They feel no responsibility towards God, even though they are also proceeding towards Him. Sadr notes that this process is not a geographical or a physical journey towards God. It is an ontological journey. Nor is Allah, like a geographical goal, a final point at the end of that voyage. When we travel, we aim to reach a specific point. This is because we are performing a geographical journey. However, Allah is with us at all times during our spiritual journey. This is because He is absolute and our journey is existential. In this journey we strengthen our being. Although He is the aim and the final ideal, He is with us at every stage of our lives[61].

Sadr maintains that an important difference between a person who chooses God as an ideal and the one who submits to other values and ideals is that the former choice changes our movements and behaviours both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative consequence makes our journey infinite. While our ultimate ideal is Allah, we never reach a stopping point. Sadr maintains that the continuous challenge between monotheistic religions and other gods and ideals is an expression of humankind's

attempts at relating to an absolute ideal.

Qualitative change is identical with a feeling of responsibility if the absolute ideal is consciously chosen. Due to a bipolar construction, namely the soul and the body, human beings are all involved in an inner conflict. Our bodies direct us toward earthly desires but our souls invite us to reach for heavenly attributes, such as absolute knowledge, power, justice, compassion, generosity, and revenge. This conflict will be resolved only when human beings feel responsible before God[62].

Responsibility is real only when we have to bear it before someone who has the right to ask us about our behaviour. God is an ideal beyond us who has created us and has sent prophets to teach us the true way of life. We therefore feel responsible towards an independent ideal who can ask us about His gifts. The ideals and values which we create inside us do not have the same impact. We consciously or unconsciously know that they are our products. People avoid self-invented values if they can find ways to escape them. Evidence for this distinction is to be found in the sacrifices recorded in the history of prophecy. In this history, we never find a single example of a prophet who felt weary or doubtful of his mission. This is because the impact of an absolute external ideal directed them in their purpose[63].

The link between values systems and Islamic worldviews

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, a values system, according to Sadr, is influenced by one's worldview. In the above section he distinguished between two ways of proceeding in an inevitable journey. For him a conscious and responsible journey is possible when we are equipped with a clear and energetic worldview. A worldview is a pattern that people use to give a specific meaning to what they perceive.

Sadr makes a distinction between God and other ideals based on the feeling of responsibility. Here, he verifies the link between the values system and worldview. He points out that choosing Allah as an ideal implies belief in a monotheistic ideology. This ideology is comprised of three main elements. Muslims have chosen Allah as the highest ideal if they rise from a cognitive stage to a belief in one God. The latter is the result of cooperation between the mind and heart.[64]

There is a difference between knowing God and having faith in Him. The latter is a choice that happens both in mind and heart. Faith in God implies faith in His attributes. Since God is chosen as the highest ideal, believers attempt to proceed towards Him. This means that they attempt to become conscious of their inevitable ontological journey towards Him. Nearness (Qurb) to God requires a process of self-development from us which makes us resemble Him in terms of our own characteristics.

Belief in God and His attributes within Islamic ideology is completely different from the worldview found in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophers view God's attributes and more precisely the world of ideas[65] as independent facts lying beyond us in the metaphysical world[66]. Islamic ideology has an educational message when it invites us to resemble God.[67] Belief in God and our conscious efforts helps us

overcome the inner conflict inside us.

Yet we need a certain psychological energy and a sense of responsibility. Belief in the hereafter is the second element of the Islamic worldview which produces this energy. If we believe in the day of resurrection, we have realized that our lifespan is not limited to this world. We are creating a new life in the hereafter by behaving either correctly or incorrectly in this world. This realization links our life in this world to the permanent life in the hereafter. Belief in the hereafter functions as a supporting and guaranteeing element. People therefore behave, as they are responsible for their behaviour. This is because they have realized that they are not entitled to behave as they wish.

Prophethood is the third functioning element which facilitates our divine education. Prophets teach us to know God (the absolute ideal), our inevitable journey, and our destiny. They watch out for us and direct us so that we do not lose our way by teaching us to choose correct and ever-lasting ideals and values. Prophets function as mediators between belief in God and belief in the hereafter as the final destiny[68].

As history reveals[69], prophets were never entirely successful in directing their followers to the absolute ideal. There were challenges and conflicts between prophets and those who supported other misleading ideals. Prophets were often forced to act as imams as well and to lead campaigns against oppressors. For Sadr, the prophets were always both prophets and imams from the time of the Prophet Noah onwards. Imamate, in Sadr's view, stands for leading a prophetic campaign for the establishment of social justice. After the Prophet Muhammad, according to Shi'i Im□mi belief, this institution was looked after by the twelve imams.

Then there is the attribute of justice, an attribute emphasized in Shi'i ideology. Although justice is included in God's attributes, it is of particular importance in Shi'i thought since it carries a tremendous social impact. Social development is in need of social justice. Belief in justice, Sadr agues, implies an important educational message. If the society is proceeding towards a just ideal, this ontological nearness necessitates the application of social justice in a Muslim society. God's attributes, including justice, must not be viewed only as a handful of metaphysical facts which are disconnected from human life.[70]

This explanation could be what Sadr means when he speaks about the assumed relationship between values systems and worldviews. In this way Sadr attempts to correlate the five principles of the Islamic (Shi'i) worldview with the selection of an absolute ideal.

Misbah Yazdi maintains that the main difference between an Islamic moral values system and a non-Islamic moral system is that the former depends on its worldview in determining them. The belief in one God as the only creator, owner, and educator, and belief in the hereafter and its impact on our present life, direct us to have a distinctive religious values system[71]. It may also be the reason why Muslims believe in an ideology that consists of three pillars[72]: belief in the unity of God, belief in the day of resurrection, and belief in prophecy. In a Muslim society, Allah is elevated to the centre of all ideals.

Sadr asserts that throughout history, secular ideals and values has led to striking calamities. Although people may make their values individually, this affects their social life as well. The emergence of Hitler and the Nazi movement and the consequent problems of modern times reflect the results of a values system derived from a god or gods. These ideals disconnected human beings from the one absolute God. A more recent example is reflected in the experiences recorded in the former Soviet Union. Marxism and communism ruled the country for decades. The disintegration of the USSR indicates the end of one ideology and one god. Other countries that have believed in this god are also looking for an alternative.

This is the reason why prophets throughout history attempted to replace gods with the true God. The centre point in Islamic values system is God. Values beneath or around that core are formed through prophetic values education. Prophets educate people to learn to relate to God, to themselves, to nature, and to society. These relationships are influenced by internalized values. These values are all God-centered. Sadr maintains that God is absolute and that values related to Him create new horizons for human life. These values direct human behaviour to resemble God's attributes as much as possible[73].

Concluding Remarks

Inspired by certain Qur'anic verses[74] which discuss the roots of social change, Sadr invites us to see the existing link between social- and self-development. As in the natural and physical domain, the socio-historical aspects of human life are normative. The more we are familiar with societal norms, the easier and more active our treatment of a particular domain will be. The Qur'an teaches us the norms which govern our social and individual lives in order to facilitate a conscious and active way of living.

Ayatollah Sadr points out that social reconstruction in each society begins with the development of values.. Values and ideals are inner elements that influence our consciously selected goals. Our values system will have an impact on the goals we aim at and on the amount of psychological energy which motivates us to attain those goals. According to the Qur'an, values will be more effective and more sufficient only when they derive from a worldview which links us, in heart, to our Creator. Self-alienation, pathological and repetitious ideal-making, compulsory absolutisation, and social disintegration are a few examples of how people fail to construct a divine worldview and a reliable values system.

Sadr examines the false process of values-making which has engaged minds and hearts throughout history. He concludes that prophetic education is a way to help people construct a functioning values system. Sadr provides a theory of inner conflict as the foundation of human values-making. This theory suggests that unless we overcome our inner conflict, we will project it at the social level in forms of unjust oppressive social patterns.

Prophetic teachings play a complementary role in helping people solve their inner conflicts. Class tensions, national and international clashes, gender conflicts, and other types of social dilemmas are expressions of an unresolved inner conflict. Prophetic education simultaneously aims at the

establishment of social justice and self-development. The roots, however, extend towards individual purification.

This is derived from the prophetic teachings which are contained in the Holy Scripture. Despite this theoretical values and ideals discussion, Sadr speaks of the failure of those who followed the Islamic model. Among the three types of ideal-making, only the transcendental type, according to Sadr, can foster social and self- development.

He nonetheless maintains that there are historical examples of Muslim collapse. This aspect goes back to the choices made by Muslims and do not contradict what Sadr attempts to propose at the theoretical level. When Muslims distance themselves from the absolute ideal and its implications or they side with other ideals and gods, they become disintegrated. As Sadr puts it, at this moment they are but a shadow of a Muslim nation.

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1. Halstead 1996, pp. 4-6.
2. Halstead 1996.
3. Morris 1994.
4. Lickona 1993a.
5. Tappan & Brown 1996.
6. Moran 1989.
7. Superka et al., 1975.
8. Halstead 1996, 5.
9. Although Sadr prefers to use the term ideals (al-muthul) instead of values (al- qiyam), his explanation and the characteristics he attributes to ideals approach (see the previous footnote) Halstead's definition of values. Therefore in my opinion the discussion of ideals in Sadr's theory is identical with the discussion of values. This understanding is supported by Sadr's intermingling of ideals to values in his discussion of typology of ideals. (See Sadr 1979, p. 166).
10. Sadr 1979, 146.
11. Morris 1994, p. XIX, quoting from Desaulniers 1982.
12. Halstead 1996, pp. 8-9.
13. Misbah Yazd 1997, vol. 1, pp. 100-2.
14. Sadr 1979, pp. 141-42.
15. Sadr 1979, 145.
16. Halstead 1996.
17. Sadr 1979.
18. Keen & Valley-Fox 1989.
19. Keen 1989 & Postman 1995.
20. Keen 1989, p. X.
21. Keen 1989, p. XII.
22. It seems that Keen attributes an unconscious role to myths. This role distances myths from ideals and values which are usually conscious. The significant impact of myths, nonetheless, motivated me to place them in the same basket where values and ideals are found. My major concern in this discussion is to review those influencing inner elements.
23. Sadr 1979, pp. 145-46.
24. SAMT 1995, p. 518.
25. Sadr 1979, pp. 147.
26. Keen 1989, p. xiv.
27. Postman 1995, p. 6.
28. Postman 1995, p. 7.
29. See Q. 37:95 & 7:71.
30. Postman 1995, pp. 8-10.

31. Postman 1995, pp. 13–17.
32. 1979, pp. 145–7.
33. I have already mentioned that in Sadr's theory ideals are almost identical with values. In this section these two terms have been used interchangeably.
34. Sadr 1979, 148–9. See, e. g., Q. 2:170, 5:104, 10:78, 11:62, 14:10 and 43:22.
35. Sadr 1979, pp. 148–50.
36. Sadr 1979, pp. 148–9.
37. See Q. 28:30. Sadr 1979, pp. 151–52.
38. See e.g., Q. 18:15.
39. Sadr 1979, pp. 155–59.
40. Sadr 1979, pp. 158–61.
41. 1979, p. 163.
42. Absolutization is my proposed translation for Sadr's explanation of a process of false generalization. As I have discussed in this section, people sometimes consider a limited ideal as absolute. A limited value or ideal may be deemed as something absolute and self-generating. Sadr argues that this psychological willingness to derive absolute ideals from a limited fact could be a type of false generalization. Absolutization and generalization, in my view, are interchangeable in this context. They represent a process in which we consider a limited fact as an absolute or general.
43. Sadr 1979, pp. 164–6.
44. Enc. Britannica, vol. 19, 1970, p. 37.
45. 1979, p. 167.
46. Schaeffer 1968, p. 33.
47. Sadr 1979, pp. 166–68.
48. Sadr 1979, pp. 168–9.
49. Sadr 1979, pp. 168–70.
50. Misbah 1997, vol. 1, p. 105.
51. See, Q. 53:23 & 24:39.
52. See Q. 29:41.
53. See Q. 24:39 & 29:41.
54. Sadr 1979, p. 171.
55. Sadr 1979, p. 176.
56. Sadr 1979, pp. 176–7.
57. See Q. 53:23.
58. Sadr 1979, p. 177.
59. Worshipping God in Islamic jurisprudence is indeed a responsible and conscious process of this path when the believers are consciously related to the absolute ideal (Sadr 1979, 181).
60. SAMT 1995, p. 519.
61. Sadr 1979, pp. 181–83.
62. Sadr 1979, pp. 184–9.
63. Sadr 1979, pp. 186–88.
64. Misbah 1997, vol. 1, pp. 171–2.
65. Augustine, one of the fathers of Roman Catholic Church called Plato's notion about the world of ideas as the World of God. (See Ozmon & Craver 1995, 5).
66. See Ozmon & Craver 1995, chapter 1 "Idealism and Education".
67. Sadr 1979, pp. 192–3.
68. Sadr 1979, pp. 194–5.
69. Periodizing human history from a Qur'anic point of view, Sadr divides it into three major periods: the Custodial period (dawr al-hid□nah), when Adam and Eve were in heaven under the special care of angels; the period of unity and integration (dawr al-wahdah), when the early generations of human beings were living cooperatively; and the period of

disintegration and conflict (dawr al-tashatut wa al-ikhtil□f), when they contested on earth for obtaining more benefits. From this period which, according to Sadr, must have begun from the time of the Prophet Noah when human co-existence was jeopardized.

The conflict was so harsh that humanity needed a social leader who could resolve conflicts even by leading huge campaigns. Sadr proposes an Islamic theory which explains the formation and the characteristics of each of these periods. The Imamate is accordingly a position that belongs to the third period of human history when there have been unsolved conflicts (Sadr 1979, 241 & 1982a, 151-80).

70. Sadr 1979, pp. 195-7.
71. Misbah 1997, vol. 1, pp. 100-2.
72. The two other pillars, namely, justice and imamate, are only ascribed to by the Shi'a.
73. Sadr 1979, pp. 148-9.
74. E.g., 8:53 & 12:11.

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