

In the Society: From Economics to Politics

Let us begin our discussion on social issues with the basic part of any society: work.

Work

There are two aspects to work:

1– Its value as a means: Products or results can only be achieved through work. There are no exceptions to that. If the simple-minded think that results can be obtained without effort or hard work, they are wrong.

2– Its value as a topic: Work, in nature, is valuable.

Some thinkers believe that work is merely a means, and has no certain value by itself. We must say that in relation to fatalistic reasons, work has no specific value, but in relation to man, work can affect man, for man consciously aims for a certain piece of work. Some people begin work as soon as the grounds for carrying it out are prepared; results are of no significance to them. The subject is important for them, so as long as there is a possibility to succeed, they will continue. Those who believe that the value of work lies solely in its results, always lose many opportunities, because they regard them as fruitless. This is why it is said that belief in work as a subject shows how alive the individual and the society is, and the least opportunity produces the best results.

The Definition of Work

Work consists of an action that has useful results and arises from conscious intention.

This definition can apply to all kinds of work. In business, for instance, it can be modified as, a conscious, effective action done on raw material in order to create positive change in man's living.

The Value of Work

There has been a great deal of effort throughout history aiming to prove the value and right to work. These efforts have basically been based upon two factors:

1– Those who put their physical and mental efforts into producing things were in fact endeavoring to prove the value of work. Group efforts, however, have begun since two centuries ago, for the labor class needed to be established first. Before that, workers did not attempt to defend their rights, because the products were not large-scale or general (it was the increase in factories and industries that made that possible) and also the fact was ignored that human life wears out gradually by work.

Furthermore, laborers had no cooperation or unity toward defending their rights. Man's culture greatly emphasizes that work is valuable, and cannot be accounted for by means of specific formulae, especially in cases in which workers are forced to work. Pioneer culture believes that the worker should be satisfied, and the real wages for his work should be paid to him, for many workers are too concerned with making the ends meet in their own lives to have time to think about the true value of work.

2– True anthropologists have always preached the importance and value of work. The fact that they have taught man that justice is the basis of social human life shows how important they wanted to show work is.

When discussing the value of work, we must always keep in mind the human aspect of values. If values are only considered as useful things, and man is omitted from their definition, that would not be accurate. The definition should be: Whatever is useful for man, and getting it calls for work or losing something important to man or society, is a value.

In the past, there were various forms of value of work. Feudalism, for instance included three kinds of trade and value of work:

- 1– Master and employee share the products
- 2– Receiving goods necessary for life as salary
- 3– Hard labor for which workers were paid too little

In other trade systems, the employer paid the apprentice in goods or money.

After developments in economics and business, salary and wage became important issues, and the value of work received more attention. The question was posed, “What is the value of work?”

Three issues are to be considered before we can answer the question:

- a) The scale and unit used for measuring work

b) The scale and unit used for measuring the value of work

c) The scale and unit used for measuring the prices

These units are either physically observable, like work and effects on materials and the prices paid for the work done, or are not, and involve an abstraction which clearly shows its origin.

Work is a phenomenon resulting from man's continual, unrepeatable vital and mental activities. Thus, if we are to have a unit for work, it would be a flow of human life and soul; it cannot be separate from man's life.

Since the phenomenon of life and soul cannot be mathematically measured, neither can work, particularly in the case of mental endeavors, which are extremely more complex than physical work, and can be measured by means of no scientific scale.

In the case of mental endeavor, it is more complicated, for what scientific scale or measurement unit can ever discover what the manager of a large system is guessing about how he can bring about his system's progress? Which scientific measurement scale can be used by a discoverer, an artist or a social pioneer to determine his route to success? Can we hope to have a scientific measurement someday for the emotional efforts made by man in order to achieve his highest goals? What precision tools can ever determine the measurement units for education and create a class which can create both the likes of Einstein and Planck and also savage tyrants? Can we expect to see mathematics, physics, physiology and psychology to join forces one day and determine the scientific measurement system that can measure the activities of a faithful soul, which is full of mental endeavor, or physical work that is filled with hope and character and aim for the highest of social goals and interpretation of the aim of life? Undoubtedly not.

The Domains of the Value of Work

The issues on work and value are not confined to an economic aspect; work and its value had better be studied in three domains:

1– The Purely Economic Domain: Economists deal with the observable effects of work, its usefulness, demand, production, etc. Man and human values and principles seldom show up in economists' discussions. Some economic schools of thought, like the physiocrats, consider issues concerning work as purely economic, and ignore human beings who do no work at all. They see economic effects similar to other physical issues; they even let the powerful to do as they please – with the excuse of enforcing social order – which actually allows them to also break any law they like, too.

2– The Socio-economic Domain: Here, dealing with issues on work and its value is more difficult, for the social factors of work, production and distribution and the need to prevent inflation and unemployment have a great influence on work and labor. In this domain, work and its value find a humane aspect, and

profiteering tendencies are decreased.

However, some intellectuals interpret the society in a way to pay less attention to the value of man; they see the society as a set of individuals who are absolutely free, and should only be careful not to disturb others. From such a viewpoint, social laws only serve to provide mutual coexistence. These thinkers do not realize that man's selfish, advantage-seeking nature cannot be corrected with mere social laws; the highest of human values and supernatural principles must dominate man's life in order to control his selfishness.

3– The Human-economic Domain: This domain is related to intelligible life – that is, the type of life based on divine principles and values. Man's mental and physical forces are not at the service of the power-greedy and the selfish, who tend to use them as buyers of their cleverly advertised – but in fact harmful and intoxicating – goods and increase their own riches. In this domain, work and economic endeavor does not move toward stupefying people and adding to the wealth of the minority of the selfish. Rather, it serves to fulfill man's real needs and uphold social justice.

Various Kinds and Aspects of Human Work

A preliminary classification of human work can be:

- a) Mental efforts and positive mental work
- b) Physical work

Mental work can be classified into these groups:

- 1– Purely mental work: such as mathematical, logical or philosophical thoughts. Purely mental efforts may lead to physically observable results. However, one out of every thousand mental endeavors may lead to such effects only.
- 2– Mental work as a preliminary for physically observable work: Such mental efforts serve as the preliminary to administer things like designing or engineering activities.
- 3– Mental work in order to continue with the natural flow of an issue: For example, thoughts on medicine in order to diagnose an illness or cure a disease, or legal mental effort aiming to destroy atrocity and help the oppressed, which may all lead to social justice.
- 4– Mental work serving to elevate man's individual life and build a desirable social life: Actions taken with educational aims are examples of this category. Such forms of work help human potentials and talents flourish.
- 5– Artistic mental work: Some forms of artistic work are imitative, and can be regarded as professions. Others, which are innovative, are exploratory, mental activities. Mental artistic work can be categorized

into three groups:

- a) Artistic work materialized upon useful material which makes the material look beautiful. The artistic work both fulfills the individual's needs and saturates his aesthetic tendencies.
- b) Artistic work that motivates man to achieve intelligible life: A beautiful painting or an exquisitely meaningful poem can activate man's feelings to gain an intelligible life.
- c) Artistic work that merely shows the artist's brainchild: This form of work depicts the pinnacle of the artist's imagination, like abstract works of art that are irrelevant to reality.

6– Political mental effort: This kind of work involves a series of logical thoughts aiming to make social intelligible life go on.

7– Exploratory mental effort: The six forms mentioned above follow logical rules, but this form of work goes far beyond logic. This is why most discoverers are not professional logic scholars. Edison was not an expert on logic, and neither were Mendeleyev or Roentgen. Some forms of mental work may serve merely to satisfy our curiosity, whereas they possess great value to economy and standard of living.

From a humanistic/economic point of view, work is highly significant, for it relates to man's intelligible life.

Physical work: Let us further elaborate physical work by considering it from three aspects:

1– The internal aspect: Any muscular work is accompanied by a series of internal factors, some of which are the causes for the work, some others occur at the same time as the piece of work is produced, and some others occur after the final product is created. The factors that serve as the cause for the work and begin functioning prior to the work are:

- The necessary information for the work
- The willingness, determination and will power to do the work
- The will power to receive and understand parts of the work

In kinds of work that are created by free will, the dominance of the character upon positive and negative poles and the quality and characteristics are also important, for they manage the internal factors.

The factors mentioned above are related to these four issues:

- a) The information and experience about the work
- b) The eagerness, reluctance, force or emergency to do the work
- c) The quality of managing the factors and internal phenomena concerning the work

d) The ideological viewpoints concerning the work

Many kinds of work – mental and physical – have been carried out by means of ideological motives throughout history.

The internal factors that are simultaneous with the work are using mental and muscular energy, continuous awareness about doing the work and readiness to prevent inhibiting factors.

Some of the mental and spiritual phenomena that occur subsequent to the work are: new experiences, the joy of having completed the work, or the feeling of sadness or frustration of having done something we are forced to do, or we do reluctantly.

2– The external aspect: Man's muscular movement in order to carry out the work.

3– The aspect of picturing work in the material: Here, by picturing we mean the various shapes and qualities that materialize upon the materials used as a result of the work, and a product is made.

The Relationship between Work and Human Life

As we know, in order to gain complete knowledge about a phenomenon, we must study it in relation to all other phenomena it pertains to. For instance, if we want to study a tree leaf, we usually remove a green leaf from a tree and study it in the lab by means of sophisticated equipment. In such research, we are considering the general leaf separate from the branch, tree, water, the sun rays and the material it gets from the tree. Such a study will be incomplete, for the leaf we are studying has no relation with them.

Likewise, when studying human work and activities, again we must identify all affairs and issues related to work, especially man's own life, which has the most fundamental relationship with work. Work, in return, is the most significant factor in man's development. Throughout various stages of human life, man uses up his energy on mental or physical work.

Values

Various definitions have been presented for value, but the point they have in common is usefulness; i.e, man makes something useful and gives it away in return for another useful thing. We do not agree with such a definition; each kind of value calls for a separate, specific definition:

1– Usage value: This form of value consists of the most useful materials that turn into goods by means of work:

This form of value, which changes certain materials into goods by means of work, involves the usefulness of the materials, due to their physical and/or chemical qualities. With these qualities, the

valuable subject fulfills man's needs and wishes.

This kind of value has three basic aspects:

- a) Useful observable facts in materials, like physical or chemical characteristics.
- b) Limited things that have useful qualities. Things like air, sunrays, water and other plentiful natural objects, though useful and valuable, do not change into price or value.
- c) The human aspect; materials and goods find value with regard to man. Social leaders should make efforts to separate and distinguish true, original values from those based on desires, whims and wishes. They should reinforce what is useful to human life so that greedy opportunists cannot produce goods that serve only to fulfill man's desires and wishes.

2- Exchange value involves the price paid in return for work or goods received. This form of value is created with regard to factors such as demand, production, competition among producers, financial issues and other social matters, all of which cause fluctuations in the values of work and goods.

3- Innately justifying values: This form of value pertains to work people do in order to account for and justify themselves on their paths to achieve their individual or social goals. These values can be categorized into two groups:

- a) Mental values – whether scientific, philosophical, artistic or ideological – that are necessary for adjusting the goals and ideals of the society, or cause evolutionary progress in the society.
- b) Values justifying or accounting for compulsory affairs, such as education, group management or social activities.

4- Ultra-exchange value such as the value of mental work and activities done in order to make great human ideals and goals a reality. These values cannot be assessed with money. Many great endeavors have been made throughout history with the aim of making human values come true, without the people making the effort expecting any money in return .

Ownership

The phenomenon called ownership is one of the forms of man's relationship with objects. It can neither be observed externally nor by imagination. The most important element in the relationship of ownership is the free will and authority regarding the thing man owns. In other words, man must have the right to do as he pleases with his belongings. Two factors, however, limit man's authority in defining his authority. First, natural forbiddances, and second, legal limitations, like man is not allowed to use weapons in order to destroy others.

Ownership is one of the phenomena that is not confined to fulfill man's needs. In other words, man does

not regard it as merely a requirement–fulfilling phenomenon; it is one that can cast doubt and disorder in many principles. Sometimes ownership makes man's authority and free will regarding an object become absolute, and even eliminate others' authority and free will. Such affairs occur by means of the law. Nowadays, legal powers take some people's authority away and exploit them.

The Natural Roots of Ownership

Personal ownership arises out of four main roots:

1– Instinctive roots: Some thinkers believe that ownership is deeply rooted in man's instincts, and cannot be removed. In other words, man has “the tendency to gain power, authority and free will in progressing the life he desires or get total authority to gain the things or material he wants.”

2– Purely mental roots: Some people believe that man's possession over his belongings is a side–effect of his possession over himself. When man owns something, he feels it is part of him, and those who believe man's mental possession over things is equal to his possession over himself are making a big mistake, for on one hand, possession of external objects is something conventional which occurs based on social credit, and on the other hand, any observable or non–observable thing man possesses can be transferred to others, whereas the human character cannot be transacted or traded.

The thing in common between man's possession over himself and over things is that since both take place due to God's will, God has set certain instructions for making use of things and ourselves. For example, with regard to his possession over himself, man must adjust his own character and avoid ruining it. Man must not oppose his own or others' characters; he must not disturb others' personalities. About possession of things, man has been ordered not to become enslaved by the things he possesses.

3– Purely natural roots: Some believe that man has to gain certain things and materials and use them in order to survive. He cannot use natural materials without making effort, and when he uses his physical or mental strength to do so, he feels he owns the materials.

4– The necessity for realizing and identifying situations: If man does not have ownership over things, his relationship with them will wither, and no individual's standing in the society can be strengthened.

Possession is an instinctive issue, and by instinct here we mean man's tendency toward gaining authority and freedom in order to achieve an intelligible life. Man innately feels that he has to make effort and endeavor in order to survive and go on with his life. Thus, the first and third of the reasons mentioned above are in fact the same, and the fourth is nullified.

In fact, the tendency to gain power and authority and the freedom to use it is deeply rooted in man. Many thinkers have also emphasized on this point; however, they have not realized that such a tendency is two–sided – there is no certain, clear–cut factor in man that can create the same effect in all circumstances. In fact, this tendency pertains to man himself. In other words, the effects this tendency

can make are related to the two contradictory selves (egos) in man – the natural and the ideal.

If a desired life is regarded as solely being accounted for according to the “natural self,” the above mentioned tendency will be moving toward gaining better possessions for the purely natural life. Not only possession, but even thought, reasoning and all of man's external and internal activities will be at the service of the natural ego.

When making use of power and authority in regard to natural life, man faces two kinds of activities:

- a) activities that pertain only to man – personal activities. One may use his power and free will to become a good poet, for example. He will drown in his own thoughts and imaginations, and his poetry will only serve to satisfy his natural ego.
- b) kind of activities pertains to others; they may even endanger the life or freedom of other people, like using power and authority in order to dominate others.

If man's life becomes gaining possession of everything – in other words, if the ideal of his natural self is set as expanding his belongings – he will endanger others' lives and freedom. If man has an ideal self (ego), however, all of his external or internal activities will become the means instead of being the end; for such a man, ownership will only serve as the means to gain his requirements in life. Those who focus upon ownership as the goal are not owners; in fact, ***they are enslaved by what they possess.***

The Limitation of Personal Ownership

There are three reasons why personal ownership is limited:

- 1– God has created whatever there is in the universe for man, and has also instructed man how to make use of it. Of course, what God has created belongs to all people, and man can learn to use it only through work and effort. And since each individual's work and effort is limited, man's possession will also be limited.
- 2– Not only does the principle of work and endeavor prove that man's ownership is limited, even if man or a society succeeds in possessing all the usable material in the world, it would require some people to stay alive and some others to die, or the lives of some to be at the mercy of few others, which leaves no choice but to accept limited ownership.
- 3– Religious commands ordering man not to disturb others' lives, avoid co emption or being usurious, prohibit the production or trade of harmful goods, prohibit monopoly, avoid making a corner in gold or silver, and control the society's economy.

Also, the Qur'an tells us to safeguard values from absolute destruction, whether regarding work or goods; this again shows that possession is limited.

“Do not decrease the value people's work really has.” (11:85, 7:85, 26:83)

Unity among People

Unity among mankind is one of the most significant issues of the humanities and the arts. If these two fields do not take any action on this issue, they will not have done anything for mankind at all. On the other hand, Thomas Hobbes has said, Men are like wolves to each other.” He saw no unity among human beings at all. But knowledge of man's various aspects and positive and negative talents and potentials makes the humanities and the arts to “make effort toward creating the sacred feeling of intelligible unity and harmony among human beings.

One of the duties of various arts, especially literature in the form of prose and poetry, is paving the path toward achieving human unity. Man has attempted to reach unity among mankind by means of religion and reason; now it is the arts' turn to take serious action, and use its various forms in order to motivate people's feelings on the path toward creating unity between human beings.

If unity is to be achieved, we must first make people realize the necessity of unity among people. Artists can use their works to serve this cause, and show how people are affected by each other's joys or sorrows, thus proving the need for harmony and mutual sympathy. Artists can show others the heartfelt tranquility the people who help others relieve their pains and suffering feel. They can also motivate people toward taking steps toward elevating each other by showing the relation between actions and reactions in their works. As Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi) says:

این جهان کوه است و فعل ما ندا سوی ما آید نداها را صدا

(This world is like a mountain, and our actions like the shouting toward that mountain; they are echoed back to us.)

Not even a single step can be taken toward making people realize the necessity of unity among people – and then creating that unity – unless the anti-human thoughts of figures like Machiavelli, Hobbes, Nietzsche and Freud are disregarded and nullified.

The Various Forms of Unity

There different kinds of unity are:

1– Numerical Unity: Such a form of unity cannot acceptably be applied to human beings, for man is far beyond a numerical unit.

2- Natural Unity: There are two forms of natural unity:

a) Human beings' natural characteristics: All human beings have forces and aspects such as reason, intelligence, imagination and abstraction, which provide a form of unity among them with regard to these natural characteristics. But this kind of unity is incapable of bringing people together, for throughout history, people have been aware of these points they have in common, but they have still shown a great deal of brutal atrocities toward each other.

b) Unity in issues such as race, natural environments, social life and history: This form of unity is more effective than the former in attracting people toward unity. For example, ethnic unity has been able to bring people from the same ethnic background closer to each other, sometimes even making them ready to fight other races for their lives.

Most of such forms of unity are abused, and they are often put to use destructively.

3- Self-preservation: Sometimes people unite in order to save their own lives or get rid of disturbances. This form of harmony is merely due to fear of harm, and is thus unstable. It has no innate value, for this harmony lies in the need to escape harm and gain advantage, like when conquerors attack.

4- The Factor that Saturates Emotions: Some people see the origin of unity lying in seeing the pains of others, and feeling sympathy for them. Such a feeling, if raw and undeveloped, will wane when we see the atrocities some other people commit; if the feeling arises out of supreme understanding and pure reason and intelligence, however, it will prove extremely valuable.

5- The Law of Actions and Reactions: The fact that any action leads to a reaction can be a factor helping to arouse unity among human beings. Many Iranian poets have put this concept under emphasis in their works. As Nasser Khusro says:

عيسى به رهي ديد يكي كشته فتاده حيران شد و بگرفت به دندان سر انگشت

گفتا كه كه را كشتي؟ تا كشته شدي زار تا باز كجا كشته شود آن كه تو را كشت

انگشت مكن رنجه به دركوفتن كس تا كس نكند رنجه به دركوفتن مشت

(One day, Jesus saw a dead man lying on the ground. Shocked, Jesus bit his finger and said, 'who did you kill that made someone else kill you, and now I wonder how your killer will be killed. Indeed, never raise a finger to hurt someone, or someone else will raise his fist to hurt you in return.')

The Factors Influencing Unity in Intelligible Life

The five factors mentioned above provide the preliminary background necessary for gaining knowledge and realizing the necessity of unity among human beings. Achieving unity calls for higher motives so that human beings feel united in their intelligible life. These factors are:

- 1– Sound sense and reason: If common sense and reason are free of short-mindedness and advantage-seeking, human beings can realize how valuable unity, equality and brotherhood among them can be.
- 2– Morals: High human moral ethics can also help people reach unity and brotherhood.
- 3– The delicate feeling that is beyond obligation: There is very delicate feeling inside pure human beings which is far superior to moral factors and makes man see human life from a much more elevated viewpoint, and consider respecting it as totally necessary. Iranian literature shows this feeling in various ways. As the renowned Iranian poet, Sa'adi says,

به جان زنده دلان سعدیا که ملک وجود نیرزد آن که دلی را ز خود بیازاری

(I swear, O Sa'adi, on the lives of all the pure-hearted, that this worldly life is not worth you hurting others.)

- 4– Religion: When following religion, man has the attraction toward divine evolution, and has an extreme feeling of unity for his fellow human beings. With religion, man's inside is purified of all immoral, so he can understand other human beings' joys and sorrows, and achieve greater human unity. As religion sees it, there are twelve different forms of unity among people that can help build up extreme unity among them. They are:

- a) Unity and equality in relationship with the Creator: All human beings have been created by one God. (The Greeks, 30:40)
- b) Unity in God's will which created man to worship Him. (The Scatterers, 51:56)
- c) Unity and equality among people in the fact that they all deserve to have divinity breathed into them. (Muhammad, 32:9)
- d) Unity in the material man is created of: all human beings are created out of earth. (El-Hijr, 15:26)
- e) Unity in the origin of creation: All human beings come from the same ancestors. (Women, 4:1)
- f) Unity in innate greatness and dignity: God has created human beings in a way that they all have innate dignity. (The Night Journey, 17:70)

g) Unity among people in gaining merit-based dignity: All human beings are capable of gaining great dignity by means of piety. (The Apartments, 49: 13)

h) Unity in human characteristics and qualities: All of mankind has reason, intelligence, conscience, etc. (The Resurrection, 75:2)

i) Unity in natural aims and goals: The goals people have in their lives either pertain to their natural lives or their desired ones; the axis to both is self-preservation.

j) Unity in the basics of divine religions: All divine religions are based upon man's innate tendency and disposition toward God, and have many points in common.

k) Unity in having the seeds of knowledge and mysticism inside. (The Cow, 2:31)

l) Unity in setting natural, descriptive or any other laws needed for adjusting man's natural or mental life. If man is to achieve unity, he must consider the grounds that can make unity a reality. The principles and facts common between man and the universe mentioned above are of the most important of the grounds needed.

Furthermore, three other significant points must also be kept in mind:

- We must increase people's knowledge to such an extent that they understand what supreme unity means. Unfortunately, only the most elementary of steps have been taken so far in order to achieve supreme unity among human souls.
- People must be taught that although man has the potential to make this unity come true deep in his innate, activating and flourishing it calls for freeing oneself from the natural self and entering intelligible life, which is feasible through gaining divine manners and morals.
- Arts contribute to making this come true. Poetry can motivate people. If responsible artists make endeavors toward motivating unity, not only will art itself become more valuable, but also social and political evolution will occur.

Differences among People

The differences and disagreements people have can be categorized into two main groups:

1– Natural differences and disagreements

2– Artificial differences and disagreements

There are three kinds of natural differences and disagreements:

a) Natural differences between people in understanding and realizing realities: For example, people may

make errors in using their senses and misunderstand realities. Such disagreements lie in differences in their sensory and mental structures. Hereditary factors can also lead to such differences.

b) Differences and disagreements due to environmental conditions and man's approach to them.

c) Differences and disagreements due to scientific knowledge: People differ in their acquisition of knowledge and experiences.

The three forms of differences and disagreements mentioned above are natural and necessary, cause no disturbance for man's individual or social life. If considered in a logical and calculated fashion, they can help human evolution and development; otherwise, however, they will lead to thoughts like those of Epicurus, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes and Nietzsche, which conflict with intelligible human life.

Artificial differences and disagreements can be categorized as:

a) Differences and disagreements due to lack of control on self-opportunism and advantage-seeking: Although advantage-seeking has natural roots, it can endanger human life if it gets out of hand. If people do not harness and control their desires and wishes, there will be a harmful, artificial difference or disagreement.

b) Differences and disagreements due to social classifications: Ethnic and national differences among peoples are examples of this. Social leaders can make use of these differences in the most atrocious of ways, or in the best and most educating fashion, too.

If man succeeds in correctly developing and educating his own mind and soul, he will see disputes as owing to merely seeing different colors and shapes instead of seeing the real truth. Some thinkers, including Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi believe that all disputes and disagreements are due to man's own stubbornness and spiritual deviation from the right path:

در معانی اختلاف و در صور روز و شب بین خار و گل سنگ و گهر

تا ز زهر و از شکر درنگذری کی تو از گلزار وحدت بوبری

وحدت اندر وحدت است این مثنوی از سمک رو تا سماک ای معنوی

(Differences occur both in meanings and in appearances. For instance, consider the how day differs from night, or how worthless pebbles are different from gems and diamonds. You will never be able to appreciate the unity existent in the universe unless you step beyond apparent things like bitter and sweet... the Mathnavi you see is filled with unity and harmony – it bonds truths – O mystic man, with this

book you can rise from the earth and reach the heavens.)

We cannot not agree with Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi here, for on one hand, the sense of unity-seeking is one of the most important ideals of human life; it is this sense that has led to the birth of many philosophical schools of thought, and many philosophers have claimed to have considered unity of thought in their spiritual basics.

On the other hand, there is a great difference between the two facts “all disputes among human beings are baseless and there is unity above all schools of thought” and “from natural opposites we can extract a greater unit.”

On the whole, there are two forms of differences and disagreements that must be taken into consideration;

1- Differences on thoughts and ideas: If logically used, these disputes can prove quite useful.

2- Differences arising from one's interpretation of the truth about the universe: This is where various schools of thought and scholars differ.

The Principle of the Mutual Necessity of Unity and Diversity

There is a principle in the humanities stating that first, no theorem can achieve total agreement without there being some points of disagreement on it. For instance, the issue that human life has two phenomena called joy and pain is generally agreed upon among thinkers; however, there is a great deal of debate upon what joy and pleasure is, what pain and suffering is, and what should be done when these two collide. Secondly, there will be no disagreement on an issue unless there are basics about it which are agreeable. For example, although there is dispute on whether members of the society have individual freedom or not, it is agreed that man has to live socially, and likes freedom.

This is called the principle of mutual necessity between unity and disagreement. Let us elaborate on it via the following points:

1- Man is not an individual; humanity consists of many people, who do not think the same about all issues.

2- The universe has numerous evolving creatures, and each human being can only reach a certain level of the truth about them.

3- No human being can achieve absolute knowledge of man and the universe. The universe always spreads a compound scene of light and dark before man's mind.

4- What develops human societies is the open path of identification and knowledge, which is feasible through great minds.

If everything were understandable immediately for all human beings, human life would be destroyed in its very early stages, for there would be no more contradicting ideas that could lead to human effort, and activate man's development. As Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi says,

قبله جان را چو پنهان کرده‌اند هر کسی رو جانبی آورده‌اند

(Since the main path and direction toward the truth – God – is hidden, people have taken various paths.)

5– And if the 'focus of life,' i.e. the absolute goal, were revealed to all, or if everyone had unified knowledge in order to choose their tools and means of reaching the goal, there would be no effort or endeavor toward the goal at all.

6– Nature is related with the supernatural. If we are to discover the former, we should unveil the latter. Only few can truly know nature, for its total discovery needs supernatural understanding.

Dispute among experts is one of the most common issues in knowledge. Diverse ideas and beliefs have always existed, and have even led to the development and evolution of thoughts. As far as such disputes do not cause any harm to the “basic common principles of belief,” they are quite necessary. The interpretation of some of the main and minor principles of the religion has in most cases added to the profundity of Islamic philosophical and scholastic studies. Generally, these disputes can be categorized into two groups:

1– Intelligible disputes: These disputes originate from the information relevant to various subjects, potentials and different perceptions, like disagreements in perceiving facts about the universe, which leads to various scientific and philosophical viewpoints. This is why great scholars of Islam, both Shiite and Sunnites, have produced treatises and criticisms of each other's' works. Mulla Ali Qushji, for instance, has added side notes to Khajeh Nasir's book *Tajreed-ol-e'teqad*, and Mulla Mohsen Fayz has done the same for Qazali's *Ehya-ol-uloom*. Intelligible disputes can help develop both theoretical and practical domains.

2– Unintelligible disputes: These disputes arise out of deviational, illegal factors, like disputes owing to desires and lusts. Throughout history, some people pretending to be advocates of freedom of thought – who were, in fact, greedy for fame or power – have presented ideas that have led to unintelligible disputes. Unintelligible disputes are passive and superficial, for they are based upon desires for fame or power.

The Various Forms of Unity

Several forms of unity can exist in the framework of religion:

1– Absolute unity: Agreement concerning all knowledge, religious decrees and beliefs. Taking into

consideration the freedom of thought and reasoning and the diversity in people's understanding potentials, such a unity is impossible. The disputes thinkers have in their ideas and information on various issues, and also their differences in intelligence, memory and comprehension contradict the concept of absolute unity.

2– Unity caused by external elements: This form of unity is a result of factors other than the truth and context of religion. Usually, when destructive, dangerous factors arise, the contradictions and disputes between various sects and religions are ignored, and unity somewhat forms between them. Such a unity is caused by compulsory factors other than religion, which if removed, the unity will also vanish.

3– Intelligible unity: Considering the freedom of thought and reasoning in implementing and choosing the reasons for the elements of religion, this form of unity is acceptable. It can be defined as: placing the general context of Abraham's religion for all societies to believe in, and removing personal, theoretical beliefs, local cultures and the characteristics and theories about the components of the religion which relate to reasoning and individual or group brainstorming.

This is the kind of unity great scholars of both groups of religious scholars have emphasized, not the one caused by external elements, which is quite baseless. In order to achieve intelligible unity, it is essential to make the viewpoints of Islamic thinkers vaster, and free them of the framework of illogical prejudices. Great thinkers like Farabi, Avicenna, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Muskuyeh, Ibn Heisam, Zachariah Razi, Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi), Mirdamad and Mollasadra have had such vastness of point of views, and that is why they never fell for destructive disturbances and contradictions.

Social Order and Cooperation

Any sound mind and aware conscience would approve of the necessity of order and discipline in individual and social life. Societies that lack an original culture, but follow order and discipline in various economic, political, legal and cultural aspects, enjoy more luxury and progress than societies that do not have order and discipline, even though they may have an original culture and economic, political, legal and cultural laws and principles.

The problems that arise in the absence of social order and discipline are:

- a) No individual or group will know where they stand socially.
- b) Everyone would seek their own benefit, considering others as both the means and the end.
- c) Nobody would pay any attention to what is to the society's benefit.
- d) People would not be content with their legal rights.
- e) In such societies, human conscience heads for doom.

The Principles of Social Order and Cooperation

Religious, moral, political, and legal basics are the most important motives for social participation.

Pioneer culture has put a great deal of emphasis upon people's social harmony and participation. The reasons we find for this in the Qur'an are:

- 1- Verses in the Qur'an that invite people to socially cooperate and create the proper grounds for social life, like (The Table, 5:2).
- 2- Verses that condemn disharmony and lack of unity, and emphasize the importance of collaboration and cooperation, like (The House of Imran, 3: 103).
- 3- There are also many hadith on the necessity and effect of social participation.

يدالله مع الجماعة

"God's hand is with the public unity."

- 4- Other *hadith* show the importance of the community.

من أصبح و لم يهتم بامور المسلمين فليس بمسلم

"He who wakes up in the morning without caring about the lives of other Muslims is not a Muslim."

Moral ethics are another basic factor in social harmony and participation. Moral ethics makes people observe social law and order for the sake of human values rather than force. If these two points are taken into consideration, moral virtues will be regarded as pillars of social harmony:

- 1- Knowledge of how great man is, and how valuable it is to help solve people's problems.
- 2- The will and determination to do proper deeds that the conscience also approves of.

If people's cooperation and participation does not aim to make social benefits come true, eliminate factors disturbing social life which is based upon religion and divine conscience, it will not be different from the cooperation seen in ants and bees.

Without making effort toward cooperation and physically and mentally endeavoring to adjust a social life based upon religion and divine conscience, it will not be considered valuable, even if it does produce outstanding results in providing advantages and benefits for the society; bees and ants also cooperate and work hard together, but that arises out of their specifically compulsory animal instinct, and has no value.

Power and Right

Right: Generally all necessary or useful realities that have innate or clear poles are called right. The realities about the world outside and the essential rules governing it are part of rights. So are all values useful to man, like justice, freedom, development, the sense of responsibility and social laws. Anything that causes corruption or destruction, on the other hand, is the opposite of righteousness. Each right has two poles:

1– The obvious, clear pole: Realities that are necessary and useful to man. They really exist, regardless of how man makes contact with them, like the realities and facts about the universe. The obvious, clear pole includes all the laws and properness man needs for an intelligible life.

2– The innate pole: By “innate” here we mean man's existence against inhuman realities; in other words, we are referring to the human side of righteousness. This pole must always accompany the former one.

Studying the verses in the Qur'an can guide us to these conclusions on righteousness:

- The foundation of the universe is right. Righteousness depends upon God's will, which no one can ever destroy. If man, in a balanced, sound state of mind, understands the meaning of righteousness, he will have respect for it.
- Rights are stable and sustainable; evil and wrong, however, fade away like foam on water.
- Righteousness is the cornerstone of the universe, and using it calls for human effort; man must reach evolution based upon righteous principles. By means of intelligence and reason, conscience, prophets and men of wisdom, God shows us what the right is.
- Tendency toward righteousness and acting thus requires upbringing and education. Righteousness cannot be provided to people automatically; human beings should consciously, voluntarily aim to follow righteousness as their evolutionary goal.
- Man should not rush for achieving righteousness. They should not imagine that the right is at all times achievable.
- Man must realize that any kind of effort aiming to uphold and bring about righteousness is a part of the right, and the greater the effort made is, the more man makes progress in the direction of righteousness.
- Man needs to make serious effort if he is to reach righteousness and perform actions based on what is right; he must realize that the right-based realities of the universe do not obey we human beings' lusts and desires. Righteousness, the factor that promotes human evolution, needs action and effort on man's behalf.
- God's will tends toward the wrong and evil being destroyed and the right prevailing successfully. The

lust–infatuated cannot defeat righteousness.

Power: Power is the factor causing motion and change in various forms. Power is one of the realities of the universe which influences man and the universe both, for power is the natural changer and acting factor effecting man and the universe in various forms. Thus, power is an example of righteousness.

Now the question comes up: power or righteousness – which is the dominant conqueror? There are two theories in response:

1– Some people believe that righteousness will always succeed, and the powerful will never be able to defeat it. They believe that man's intelligible life has appropriate and valuable elements that are righteous. Responsibility, freedom and moderating selfishness are real, and they are right.

2– Some others believe that power is the winner; righteousness, they believe, is a mental ideal that cannot withstand power. History also provides many cases in which power overcomes righteousness.

Righteousness never confronts power at all. Power is itself one of the rights that motivate the universe and mankind. The question whether power will overcome or righteousness is a trivial, illogical one.

Righteousness shows how false, improper and worthless the wrong is rather than conflict with power which is right itself. When man gains power, he can change it into a constructive factor or abuse it and use it destructively. Men's deviation from righteousness makes power – a factor necessary for development and construction – be misused.

Power is the unconscious reality that is – from the aspect that it is the basic cause for all changes and movements – an example of righteousness; thus, it neither wins nor loses, for when power unconsciously destroys the resistance of a creature, it does not feel joy by hearing the creature fall and break. It does not regard this as a victory. It is man, however, who abuses power; man even treats his own mere existence as a plaything, too.

The most lethal factor endangering power is the feeling of absolute, independent power. Accompanied with imagination and induction, this feeling prevents power from gaining a logical, accurate calculation, and eventually brings about the powerful person's demise. Absolute power leads to inflatedness and rebelling against realities. This is why it is the feeling of absolute power and all its imaginations that the Qur'an condemns, not power itself. (96:6)

The power–greedy, who lust for controlling people's lives, had better realize that they are in fact drinking a cup of poison. Those who become playthings in the hands of the powerful and oppress the weak are no different, either. Losing one's right to live at the hands of the powerful has been, however, one of the most painful phenomena history has witnessed. The powerful have always tended to create such a corrupt state of minds in those they have crushed that these poor downtrodden souls regard them as saviors.

In fact, those people who surrender to the powerful have downtrodden their own character; no power can defeat man unless he himself breaks his own character first. The human character is a forbidden zone into which only God and man himself can find a way into; no one else is able to enter it.

As we have already mentioned, righteousness is far superior to success or failure. Power is a reality that may fall in the hands of righteousness or selfish people. Now let us see what will happen in either case:

Power in the hands of selfish man

If power falls into the hands of those who have been overwhelmed by their selfishness, the consequences are:

- 1– Since the identity of the power itself is unaware and aimless, its attraction will destroy the power-greedy.
- 2– Those intoxicated with power lose all their freedom and free will, for power is the motive that, by means of its false promises of absolute freedom, presses every element of the character of the power-greedy person inside his aimless, ignorant nature, and every change he undergoes will be merely going through one fatalistic phase into another.
- 3– The power-greedy defy others in order to establish their own existence.
- 4– The power-greedy attempt to make everyone else their slaves in order to saturate their authoritarian desires; if they do not find anyone to do so, they will feel despair.
- 5– When the power-greedy face each other, they neutralize their potentials and add to the darkness of their beings instead of becoming aware of their hidden potentials and being guided to the path of intelligible life.
- 6– The power-greedy are too selfish to take unexpected, uncalculated events into consideration, and that is why they are destroyed, just like Napoleon was destroyed by a black cloud at Waterloo.
- 7– The greed for power is not sweet enough to compensate for the bitterness of its demise. When one drowns into the attraction of power, all of his logical calculations disappear, so the power he acquires will be no more than an inflated natural self. The joys of the power-greedy are not original or pure; when power gradually falls, a tremendous bitterness will engulf him.

When power arises, it pours baseless hallucinations and illusions into the personality of the power-greedy person, and inflates it; when power goes, all the elements of his character are awoken, and they make him see how futile power was. This is why we can say that there is no fall as painful in this world as the fall of the powerful. The mental suffering they undergo when their power disappears is truly unimaginable.

8– The power-greedy consider power – an unconscious picture of unconscious phenomena and facts – as the authentic image of awareness, freedom and law. They see the criteria for any good or evil in power.

9– The power-greedy ignore the relativity of power. They do not realize that power may be influenced by time or unexpected events.

10– The power-greedy are slaves of power; thus, they always think that they can preserve their power with awareness and will.

Power in developed man

If power and authority is given to human beings who have overcome their selfishness, the consequences will be:

1– These human beings know that they should increase their awareness. They feel it necessary to have more knowledge and alertness if they want to fulfill their responsibilities flawlessly.

2– Though having power and authority, developed characters always feel themselves incapable, for they know that God is the absolute owner of life, so even the slightest mistake of theirs is considered by them as an unforgivable sin.

3– Since developed man has self-control, he seldom falls under the compulsory pressures of authority.

4– If developed man makes a mistake using his authority, he will feel deep sorrow and repentance.

5– Since developed man takes intellectual and conscientious calculations into consideration in order to use his power and authority, he has no fear of unexpected events. His high aim helps him avoid misusing his power. Such a human being sees power as a means to create harmony, order and an intelligible life. He knows well that power is not so absolute as to keep him safe from fall or doom.

6– If such a man loses his power, he will not feel sorry or upset at all.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/mystery-life-muhammad-taqi-jafari/society-economics-politics#comment-0>