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Islam's Position towards Freedom and Social Assurance

Freedom According to Capitalism and Islam

We have come to know, from the above contents, that freedom is the central point in the capitalist thinking, and the concept of "insurance" (rather, assurance) is the basic revolving point in the socialist and communist systems. For this purpose we will be studying, comparatively, the position of Islam and capitalism from freedom, comparing thereafter between the "insurance" according to Islam and according to the Marxist creed. When we say "freedom", we mean thereby its general meaning; that is, rejection of others' domination, for this concept is the one which we can find in both civilizations, even when its frame and intellectual base vary in both¹.

When we start comparing freedom according to Islam with freedom according to the democratic capitalist system, basic differences appear to us between the freedom which has been lived by the capitalist society and advocated by capitalism, and the freedom whose banner Islam has borne and adopted by the society which Islam has created, providing its own experience on history's stage.

Each of these norms of freedom bears the stamp of civilization to which it belongs and with whose concepts of the cosmos and life it agrees, expressing the intellectual and psychological state which civilization created in history.

Freedom, in the capitalist civilization, has started as a bitterly overwhelming doubt, and this doubt changed, in its revolutionary expansion, into a doctrinal belief in freedom. Contrarily to this is freedom in the Islamic civilization, for here it is but an expression of a firm central conviction (i.e., belief in God) from which freedom derives its revolution.

According to the firmness of this conviction and the depth of its implication in man's life do the revolutionary powers in that freedom multiply. Capitalist freedom has a positive connotation. It considers

man to possess his own self, faring with it as he pleases, without surrendering in that to any external authority.

For this purpose, all social institutions, which affect man's life, derive their legal right to control every individual from the individuals themselves. Freedom, according to Islam, maintains the revolutionary aspect of freedom: man's emancipation from the slavery of idol's control, all idols from whose yoke humanity has been suffering throughout history. But it erects this great task of liberation on the basis of a submission purely for Allah, and for Allah alone.

Therefore, man's submission to God in Islam (instead of possessing his own self, according to capitalism) is the tool through which man breaks all other norms of submission or slavery, for this sort of submission, in its sublime meaning, makes him feel that he, together with all other sorts of power with which he coexists, stands on the same grounds before one Lord.

Therefore, no power on earth has the right to fare with his destiny as it pleases or to control his existence and life. Freedom, according to the precepts of capitalist civilization, is a natural right for man, and he may give his right up whenever he pleases. But it is not so according to Islam. Freedom according to Islam is essentially tied to submission to Allah. Islam does not permit man to yield, to be enslaved or to give up his freedom:

Do not be a slave of others, since Allah created you free.[2](#)

Man, according to Islam, is to account for the use of his freedom, and freedom is not a state of irresponsibility. This is the difference between both norms of freedom in their general characteristics. Now we are going to explain this concept with more details:

Freedom According to the Capitalist Civilization

Freedom was initiated in the capitalist civilization under the shades of an overwhelmingly bitter doubt which dominated the mainstreams of the entire European thought as a result of the intellectual revolutions which succeeded each other at the dawn of modern Europe, shaking all the Western intellectual pillars.

The idols of European thinking started falling down one after the other due to the revolutionary discoveries in the world of science which cast their light at the western man with new concepts of the world and life, and with theories completely in contradiction to the accepted precepts of the past, those which formed the cornerstone of his intellectual entity, intellectual and religious life.

Western man started, across those successive intellectual revolutions, to look at the cosmos through new eyes, and at the intellectual heritage humanity had left him since the dawn of history with looks of doubt and suspicion. He started to feel that the world of Copernicus, who proved that the earth is but a planet of the sun, differs a great deal from the conventional world which Ptolemy spoke of, and that

nature, which started revealing its secrets to Galileo and his peers among the scientists, is a new thing compared to the portrait inherited down from the saints and former thinkers like Saint Thomas Aquinas, Dante and others.

Thus does he suddenly, and with a trembling hand, throw his former precepts, trying to be relieved of the frame in which he lived thousands of years? In its escalating revolutionary torrent, doubt did not stop there. Rather, it wiped out all values and precepts common to humanity and on which it depended to check behaviour and regulate relationships.

So long as the new cosmos contradicts the old concepts of the world, and as long as man keeps looking at his reality and environment from a scientific angle, rather than from mythology, then there has to be a reassessment of the religious concept and likewise of all goals and principles man has lived before his new outlook of himself and his world crystallizes.

On this basis has the religion of Western man faced the dilemma of "modern" doubt, and it does not really hinge except on an emotional basis which soon started drying up because of the church's tyranny and might. It was natural, then, that all of these ethical bases melted at the conclusion of this defeat.

So were the principles and ideals which check man's behaviour and tolerate his extremism, for ethics have always been linked to religion throughout humanity's existence. When they lose their religious source which provides them with true values and links them to the world of the unknown and of the rewards, they become an empty ruin and an unjustifiable tax. History always highlights this fact.

Greek advocates of sophistry disbelieved in deism because of their dependence on a "sophisticated" doubt, so they rejected the ethical restrictions, rebelling against them, and Western man repeated the story anew when "modern" doubt engulfed his religious creed. He revolted against all sorts of disciplinary manners and ethical codes. Such manners and ethics seemed to him to be linked to an ancient phase of man's history.

Western man set out as he willed to behave as he liked, filling his lungs with the fresh air in which "modern" doubt occupied the position of principles and standards, when they used to restrict the internal inclination of man and his behaviour. Here were the ideas of the intellectual freedom and the personal liberty born: The idea of intellectual freedom has come as a result of a revolutionary doubt and a mental disturbance which blew up all intellectual precepts.

So much so that there remain no more sublime facts the denial of which is not permissible, as long as doubt extends itself to all spheres. And the idea of personal liberty comes as an expression of the negative results reached by "modern" doubt in its intellectual combat against faith and ethics, for it is natural that the man who conquers his own faith and ethics is to believe in his own personal liberty and reject any authority to check his behaviour and control his will.

According to such a sequence, modern man reaches doubt, intellectual freedom and finally "personal

liberty". Here comes the role of economic freedom to form a new series of this "civilized" sequence: Having believed in his personal liberty, modern man starts placing his goals and criteria on this basis.

Having practically disbelieved in the religious outlook of life and the cosmos, and their respective relationship to the Creator and to whatever reward or punishment man awaits, life starts to him to seem as a chance to win the largest possible portion of pleasure and materialistic enjoyment which cannot be achieved except through wealth. Therefore, wealth returns as the magic key and the goal towards which modern man labours, the man who enjoys complete freedom in his behaviour.

It becomes necessary to establish the basis of economic freedom and open all fields before this free being to work for the achievement of this new goal: wealth, which Western civilization puts up as a new idol for mankind and every sacrifice mankind offers in this respect, is now an honest deed and an accepted scapegoat.

The economic motive becomes dominating as long as the march of modern civilization becomes more distant from the spiritual and intellectual principles which he has refused in the beginning of the march. The mania for wealth increases to dominate the situation, and the precepts of goodness, virtue and religion disappear, so much so that Marxism, during one of the Western civilization's dilemmas, imagines that the economic motive is the impetus which directs the human history in all ages.

It is not possible that the idea of economic freedom can be separate from another idea which is: the idea of political freedom, for the essential condition for practising a free activity on the economic stage is the removal of the political obstacles and the conquest of the difficulties put forth by the ruling authority through the possession and nationalization of the governing apparatus, so that the individual may rest assured that there is no power which can separate him from his achievements and desired goals.

Thus were the general outlooks or basic series, of which Western man composed his civilization, completed. He worked sincerely to establish his life on their basis and adopt a world call of them. In this light can we clearly see this "civilization" in its characteristics to which we have pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, for it is a civilized phenomenon which started as a bitter and disturbing doubt and ended as a doctrinal belief in freedom.

It is an expression of the belief of Western man in his control over himself and his possession of his will after he had refused to submit to any authority. Freedom, according to capitalist democracy, does not only mean the denial of others' control; rather, it means much more than this: It means man's control over himself and the practical separation between himself and his own Creator and destiny.

As for Islam, its position from freedom essentially differs from that of Western civilization, for it takes care of freedom in its negative implication or, rather, in its revolutionary output which liberates mankind from others' control, breaking the chains and shackles which handcuffs him. It considers the achievement of this negative implication of freedom as one of the greatest goals of the Divine Message Itself:

وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ

And He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are on them... (Qur'an, 7: 157).

But it does not link this concept to its positive implication according to the concepts of Western civilization, for it does not consider man's right to be liberated from other's control and standing by their side on par as a result of man's control over himself and his right to determine his behaviour and conduct in life; that is, what we would label "the positive implication of freedom according to the concepts of Western civilization".

Rather, it links freedom and liberation from all idols and artificial shackles to sincere submission to Allah. Man, after all, is a servant of Allah Who does not recognize any submission except to Him, or he yields to any idolatrous relationship of any colour or shape. Instead, he stands on equal footing in his own sincere submission to Allah with the rest of cosmic creation. The essential basis of freedom in Islam, therefore, is unity and belief in sincere submission to Allah before Whose hands all idolatrous powers are crushed, the powers which trampled on man's dignity throughout history.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

Say: "O People of the Book (Christians and Jews)! Come to common terms between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we install none, from among ourselves, as lords and patrons other than Allah." (Qur'an, 3:64).

قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ، وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

He said: "Do you worship that which you have (yourselves) carved?! But Allah has created you and your handiwork." (Qur'an, 37:95-96).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ

Verily those whom you call on besides Allah are servants like unto you. (Qur'an, 7:194).

أَأَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

Are many lords differing among themselves better, or the one Allah, Supreme and Irresistible?

(Qur'an, 12:39).

Thus does Islam base the liberation from all kinds of slavery on the principle of admitting an absolute submission to Allah, making the relationship between man and his Lord the firmly rooted basis for his liberation in dealing with all people and with all natural things in the cosmos? Islam and Western civilization, although both practicing the operation of man's liberation, differ in the intellectual basis on which this liberation stands.

Islam bases it on the belief in man alone and in his control over himself which has doubted all principles and facts that are lying behind the materialistic dimensions of man's existence. For this purpose has the idea of freedom in Islam been rendered to a believing doctrine which believes in the Unity of God, and to a firm conviction in His control over the cosmos.

The deeper this belief goes into the Muslim's heart, and the more centralized his unifying outlook to Allah is, the more elevated his soul will be and the deeper his feeling of dignity and liberty, and the more stiff his will to stand in the face of tyranny, corruption and enslavement by others:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ

And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves. (Qur'an, 42:39).

Contrarily to this is the idea of freedom according to Western civilization: This is the product of doubt, unbelief and the result of disturbance and rebellion, not of conviction or stability, as we have already come to know. We can classify the democratic capitalist norms of freedom, for the purpose of comparing them with Islam, into two kinds:

1. One of them is freedom in the personal sphere of man, which is what democracy labels "Personal Freedom".
2. The other is freedom in the social sphere. This includes the intellectual, political and economic norms of freedom.

Personal freedom treats man's conduct as an individual, albeit if he lives independently or as part of the society. As for the three other norms of freedom, these treat man as an individual living among the group, permitting him to voice his ideas to others as he likes and granting him the right to choose the kind of ruling authority which he prefers, opening before him the way to all different kinds of economic activity according to his capacity and inclination.

Freedom in the Personal Sphere

Modern Western civilization has tried hard to get the largest possible share of freedom for each individual in his/her personal conduct, the share which does not harm other people's freedom. It is not important, after making this freedom available for all individuals, how they would use it, the outcomes resulting there from, the psychological and intellectual reactions thereof, as long as each individual is free in his/her behaviour and conduct, capable of executing his/her own will in all personal spheres.

The drunkard, for example, is allowed to drink as much liquor as he wants and sacrifice the last particle of his consciousness and awareness as long as he does not bother others or become a menace to their lives in one way or another. Mankind has become intoxicated with the tones of this "freedom" and slept therein for sometime, feeling for the first time that he has broken all the chains and that this giant, who has been suppressed within his depths for thousands of years, has set out for the first time and has been permitted to do whatever he willed in the light, without fear or worry.

But this sweet dream did not last long. Man started waking up slowly to gradually realize that he is disturbed, that this freedom has chained him with huge chains, destroying his hopes for a free humane setting out. He found himself being pushed in a carriage running on a planned path without being able to change or improve its course.

All his consolation and solace, while looking at his destiny on his planned path, is that there is someone who has said that this carriage is the carriage of freedom, in spite of these cuffs and chains in his hands. But when did freedom change into a chain? And how did setting out lead to those cuffs which pull the carriage along its planned destiny, and in the end man woke up to witness such bitter reality?

This, indeed, is what Islam had predicted fourteen centuries ago when it did not contend itself with providing such superficial meaning for freedom for humanity which has been inflicted with all these contradictions in the modern living experience of Western man. Rather, it went further and brought forth a much deeper concept of freedom.

It declared a revolution not only against the chains and shackles as they appear, but, rather, against their psychological and intellectual roots. Thus has it guaranteed man the highest and purest norms of freedom people have ever tasted across the passage of history? If freedom, according to Western civilization, starts from "liberation" to end in norms of slavery and chains, as we shall explain, then vast freedom, according to Islam, is quite the opposite, for this starts from pure submission to Allah Almighty to end with liberation from all norms of humiliating slavery.

Islam starts its operation to liberate man from the inner content of man himself, for it sees that granting man freedom is not by saying to him: "This is the path. We have cleared it for you; so, walk along it in peace." Rather, man becomes truly free when he can control his path and maintain for his humanity the right to determine his path and portray its characteristics and directions.

This depends, above all, on man's liberation from the slavery of the desires which occupy his mind so that the desire may turn into a tool which attracts man to what he likes, not a pushing power to exhaust man's will without being able to practice towards it any potential or ability, for if it has been so, man would have lost his freedom in the first place.

It does not change the reality when his hands are free as long as his mind and all his human concepts, which distinguish him from the animal kingdom, are chained and frozen. We all know that the essential thing which distinguishes man's freedom from that of the animals is generally the fact that, although they both act according to their respective will, animals' will is always subservient to their desires and instinctive inclinations.

As for man, he is equipped with the capacity to control his desires, using his mental logic in their respect. The secret of his freedom, as a human being, then, is confined within this capacity. If we freeze it within him, being satisfied with granting him the superficial freedom in his practical behaviour, providing him with all capabilities and temptations to respond favourably to his desires, as the "modern" Western civilization has already done, then we would gradually destroy his human freedom in exchange for the desires of the animal which is confined within his depths, making him a tool to satisfy those desires, so much so that when he looks at himself, during his passage, he will find himself the indicted one, rather than the indicting, one whose affairs and will are overcome.

Contrariwise: If we start with that capacity in which the secret of human freedom is confined, giving it growth and nourishment, remaking man as a human being, not as a beast, making him aware of the fact that his message in life is much more sublime than that abhorred beastly destiny driven to him by those desires, and that his high principle for the purpose of whose achievement he is created, is much, much more elevated than these trivial objectives and cheap gains which he gets through his materialistic pleasures.

I say: If we do all this until man is liberated from the slavery of his own desires, emancipating himself from their captivating influence, possessing his own will, the free man will then be created who can say "Yes" or "No" without his mouth being suppressed or hand chained by this temporary desire or that cheap thrill. This is exactly what the Qur'an has said when it put for the Muslim individual his particular spiritual stamp, developing his criteria and principles, pulling him out of earth and its limited goals to vaster horizons and more sublime objectives:

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ. قُلْ أُوْثِقْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ لِّلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ .

Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled

land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (to return to). Say: "Shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those?" For the righteous there are gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure (and holy) and the good pleasure of Allah, for Allah is well aware of (all) His servants. (Qur'an, 3:14–15).

This is but the war of liberation in its internal context of man, and it ultimately is the first basis and the head start to liberate mankind according to Islam. Without it, all norms of freedom would become falsehood and deception, and in the end captivity and chains. We see, in the light of this Qur'anic guidance, that the method the Qur'an uses to deliver mankind from the yoke of desires and the slavery of pleasures is the general method which Islam always uses to cultivate humanity in all fields: the method of Tawhid (Unity of God).

Islam, when it liberates man from worldly slavery and its vanishing pleasures, connects him with heavens and its gardens the similitude of which is the Pleasure of Allah, for Tawhid in Islam is the aid for man's inner liberation from all norms of slavery, and it is the aid for the human liberation in all fields.

Suffices us here to mention one example which we have left behind in a previous chapter, in order to know the glorious results of this liberation and the extent of the difference between the true freedom of the Qur'anic man and those artificial norms of freedom advocated by the modern nations of the Western civilization.

The nation the Qur'an liberated, when it called it in one word to renounce wine, has been able to say "No" to wine and erase it from its dictionary after it used to be part of its entity and an article of its necessities. It was in possession of its own will, free in facing its desires and animal impulses. In short, it enjoyed a true freedom which allowed it to control its conduct.

As for the nation which modern civilization has created, granting it its individual freedom according to its particular method, in spite of this artificial mask of freedom, it really does not possess any of its own will, nor can it control its own existence, for it has never liberated its inner content.

Rather, it yielded to its pleasures and desires under the cover of individual freedom until it lost its freedom while satisfying such desires and pleasures. The strongest propaganda campaign against liquor conducted by the government of the United States has not been able to liberate the American nation from the slavery to liquor, in spite of the huge materialistic and spiritual potentials the ruling authority and various social institutes used for this purpose.

This fearful failure is but the result of Western man losing his real freedom, for he cannot say "No", whenever convinced, as does the man of the Qur'an. Instead, he says the word which his desire forces him to articulate. For this reason, he has not been able to free himself from liquor's entanglement, for he has not, under the shade of the Western civilization, won a real emancipation within his spiritual and intellectual content.[3](#)

This internal emancipation, or inner-building of man's entity, is, according to Islam, the cornerstone in the establishment of a free and happy society. As long as man does not possess his will, is unable to control his inner situation or maintain his cultivated humanity in determining his conduct, he can never truly free himself socially in order to resist temptation, nor can he wage the battle of an external liberation with merits and bravery:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls). (Qur'an, 13:11).

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا

If We will to perish a village, We would order the rich in it who would make corruption therein; then it would be opportune for Our call, and we would totally ruin it. (Qur'an, 17: 16).

Freedom in the Social Sphere

While waging the war of humanity's inner liberation, Islam likewise wages another war to liberate man socially. It ruins, in the internal content of man, the idols of desire which rob him of his human freedom. It smashes, in the field of exchanged relationships among individuals, the social idols as well. It emancipates humanity from its slavery. It puts an end to man worshipping man:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

Say: "O People of the Book (Christians and Jews)! Come to common terms between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we install none, from among ourselves, as lords and patrons other than Allah." (Qur'an, 3:64).

Man's submission to Allah makes all people stand on equal footing before the Hands of the worshipped Creator; there is no nation that has the right to colonize and enslave another nation, nor is there a group of the society allowed to rob another group or violate its freedom, nor is there one human being who has the right to pose himself as an idol to be worshipped by others.

Once more do we find out that the second Qur'anic battlefield for the purpose of liberation uses the same method it used in the first, that is, the battle to liberate man internally from the control of his desires, and it is used in all other Islamic epics, which is: Tawhid. As long as man acknowledges submission to Allah

alone, he would naturally reject any idol or fake worship of any person or being.

He would lift his head up high with dignity, and he will not feel the humiliation of slavery and submissiveness to any power on earth or to any idol. The phenomenon of idol-worship in man's life has been initiated for two reasons: One of them is his slavery to his own desire which makes him surrender his freedom to the human idol which can satisfy and guarantee the fulfilment of that desire.

The other is his ignorance of the points of weakness and incapacity that lie behind those idolatrous masks professing deism. Islam has emancipated man from slavery to desire, as we have come to know above, and from the fakery of those deceitful idolatrous masks:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ

Those whom you call as gods other than Allah are but His servants like your own selves. (Qur'an, 7:194).

It naturally follows that he conquers idol-worship and wipes out from the Muslim minds idolatry in all its various shapes and colours. In the light of the bases on which the liberation of man from the slaveries of desire in the personal field stands, and his emancipation from idol-worship in the social, albeit if the idol is a nation, a group, or an individual, can we know the individual's sphere of practical conduct in Islam.

Islam is different from the modern Western civilizations which do not restrict this practical freedom of the individual but those of others. Islam takes care, first of all, as we have already come to know, of emancipating the individual from the slavery of desires and idols, allowing him to behave as he pleases as long as he does not go beyond Allah's limits. The Qur'an says:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

It is He Who has created for you all things that are on earth... (Qur'an, 2:29).

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ

And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth. (Qur'an, 45:13).

Hence, Islam puts the cosmos in its entirety at the disposal of man of his freedom, but it restricts freedom to the limits which make it congenial with his internal liberation from the slavery of desire and his external liberation from the slavery of idols. As regarding practical freedom in adoring the desire and clinging to earth and all what this implies, renouncing human freedom in its true meaning.

As regarding practical freedom in remaining silent about injustice and relinquishing right, worshipping idols and getting closer to them, pursuing their own interests and giving up the real great and true message of man in this life, all of this is not permitted in Islam: It is nothing but the destruction of the deepest meanings of freedom in man. Instead, Islam understands it to be part of a perfect intellectual and spiritual program on the basis of which humanity must stand.

When we highlight this liberating and revolutionary aspect of Islam in the social sphere, we do not imply thereby that it agrees with the democratic social norms of freedom in their particular Western framework. While differing from the Western civilization in its concept of personal liberty, as we have come to know a short while ago, Islam also differs from it in its concept of the political, economic and intellectual freedom.

The Western concept of political freedom expresses the basic idea of the Western civilization which claims that man possesses himself, and nobody has the right to give him directions. Political freedom has been a result of practicing such basic idea in the political field, for as long as the structure, colour and laws of the social life directly affect all members of the society, then everybody has to participate in the operation of social construction as he pleases, and no individual may force another to do what he does not like or subject him by force to a system which he does not accept.

Political freedom starts conflicting with the basic idea as soon as it faces the reality of life, for it is quite natural that the society contains numerous different opinion, and adopting some people's opinion means depriving others of their right to have their own will and control their own destiny. Here has the idea to adopt the majority's opinion come as collaboration between the basic idea and political freedom.

But it is an incomplete collaboration because the minority enjoys its rights of freedom and self-will similarly to the majority, and the majority's opinion deprives it of using its right; therefore, the principle of the majority is not more than a system through which one group plays havoc with another group's rights, with only a numerical difference.

We do not deny that the majority principle maybe one accepted by all people; therefore, the minority tries hard to execute the viewpoint of the majority as being the one with more followers, even though it spontaneously believes in another viewpoint and tries to attract the majority to it.

But this is an assumption the validity of which cannot be ascertained in all societies. There are many minorities that do not accept any viewpoint other than their own even if such a viewpoint opposes that of the majority.

From this we can come to this summary: The basic idea of the Western civilization, as soon as it functions in the political field, starts contradicting itself and facing the reality, turning to a norm of despotism and individualism in government shown in the best way by the majority ruling the minority.

Islam does not believe in this "basic idea" of the Western civilization, for it is based on man worshipping Allah, and that Allah alone is man's Master and Sustainer, the only One Who has the right to arrange his life-style:

أَرْبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ؟ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءُ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

Are many lords differing among themselves better or the One God, Supreme and Irresistible? The Command is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you should worship none but Him... (Qur'an, 12:39-40).

And it blames those individuals who yield to others, granting them the right of Imamate in life and Divine upbringing:

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

They take their priests and anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah. (Qur'an, 9:31).

Therefore, neither the individual nor all the individuals combined have the right to monopolize authority other than Allah, directing the social life and establishing curricula and constitutions, etc. Among the outcomes of such "equality" in this life we come to know that man's political liberation is based on the belief in the equality of all society members to bear the burdens of the Divine Trust and their cooperation in enacting Almighty Allah's commandments: "Everyone of you is in charge and is responsible for those of whom he is in charge." Political equality in Islam differs in shape from its Western counterpart: It is equality in bearing responsibility, not in ruling.

Among the results of this equality is man's emancipation in the political field from the control of others and the eradication of all norms of political exploitation, individualistic and class government.

For this reason do we find the Glorious Qur'an renouncing Pharaoh's rule as well as the society whom he ruled, for he symbolized the control of the individual over the government and the domination of one class over all others:

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضَعِفُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ

Truly Pharaoh elevated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections, depressing a small group among them... (Qur'an, 28:4).

Any political structure which allows an individual or class to exploit and subjugate other individuals or

classes is not accepted by Islam, for it opposes the equality among the society members in bearing responsibility in their absolute submission to Allah Almighty.

As for the economic freedom, it is, in its capitalist concept, only a freedom in appearance which may be summarized thus: allowing every individual to behave as he pleases in the economic field without the interference or pressure of the ruling apparatus. Having permitted the individual to behave as he pleases, capitalism is not further concerned about securing anything he wants.

In other words, it is not concerned with allowing him to want anything. For this purpose do not we find out that economic freedom, in its materialistic concept, does not bear any meaning to those who were not allowed by opportunities to live, nor were the circumstances of competition and economic racing prepared for them.

Thus does freedom become merely a mirage without being able to grant these people of its meaning except according to the amount of freedom it grants the individuals who are incapable of, say, swimming when we say to them: "You are free to swim as you please, wherever you like."

If we really want to let them swim freely as they choose, giving them a chance to enjoy this sport as those who can swim enjoy it, we would have secured their safety during that and asked the expert swimmers to protect them, watch over them and not abandon them while swimming else they should get drowned; hence, we would have really promoted true freedom and the ability to swim for all in reality, even though we may have restricted a little bit the activity of the expert swimmers for the sake of protecting the life of others.

This is exactly what Islam has done in the economic field: It called for both economic freedom and assurance, incorporating them into a unified structure, for all are free in the economic field, but within certain limits. The individual is not free when the security of other individuals and the maintenance of the general welfare demand that he gives up some of his freedom. Thus have the ideas of freedom and security been coordinated in Islam.[4](#)

As for intellectual freedom, this, according to Western civilization, is permitting any individual to think, declare and propagate his ideas as he pleases, as long as he does not harm the concept of freedom and the bases on which it hinges. For this reason, democratic societies try hard to oppose fascist ideas, limiting their freedom or annihilating them altogether, for such ideas fight the very same basic idea and intellectual premise on which the concept of freedom and the democratic bases stand.

Islam differs from democratic capitalism in this situation as a result of its being different from it in the nature of the intellectual base it adopts which is Tawhid and linking the cosmos to One Lord. It allows the human mind to set out and declare itself as long as it does not revolt against its intellectual base which is the true basis of the availability of freedom for mankind according to Islam, granting him his free and glorious character which does not dissolve before temptations, nor does it kneel down before idols.

Both Western civilization and Islam allow intellectual freedom as long as there is no danger resulting from it against the essential base and freedom itself. Among the fruits of the intellectual freedom in Islam is the war it wages against imitation and stagnant thinking, against mental submission to myths or to ideas of others without consciousness or scrutinizing. Islam aims thereby at creating an analytical mind or an experimental one in man.

It is not enough to establish the free mind in man by just saying to him: "You may think as you please", as has the Western civilization done, for this expansion of freedom will be at the expense of freedom itself, and it quite often leads to hues of intellectual slavery symbolized in imitation, fanaticism and the glorification of superstitions.

Rather, in order to create the free mind, according to Islam, man has to nurture the analytical or experimental mind which does not accept an idea without scrutinizing, nor does it believe in a doctrine unless it is proved, so that this conscious mind may ensure the intellectual freedom and protect man from misusing it because of imitation, fanaticism or scruples. In fact, this is but the share of the Islamic struggle for the internal liberation of man.

Just as it emancipated man's will from the slavery of temptation, as we have already come to know, so has it liberated the human consciousness from the slavery of imitation, fanaticism and superstition. In both this and that has man become free indeed in his mind and will.

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

So announce the good tidings to My servants, those who listen to the word, and follow the best (meaning) of it. Those are they whom Allah has guided; those are men of reason. (Qur'an, 39: 17–18).

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that you may explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought. (Qur'an, 16:44).

تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ؛ قُلْ: هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

These are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if you are truthful." (Qur'an, 2:111).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say: "Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers." What?! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?! (Qur'an, 2:170).

Insurance in Islam vs. Marxism

Insurance in Islam differs from socialist insurance which is based on the Marxist principles in many respects due to the difference between the two systems of insurance in the foundations, frameworks and objectives.

We cannot attempt here except to display some aspects of such differences, having been satisfied with our detailed study of them in our book *Iqtisaduna* (Our Economy).

1) Social Security in Islam

It is one of the human rights enforced by Allah Almighty. As such, it does not differ according to circumstances or social levels. As for insurance according to Marxism, it is the right of the machine, rather than of man. When the producing machine reaches a particular point, social security becomes an essential condition for its growth and increase of production. Unless the producing powers reach this point, the idea of insurance does not make any sense. For this reason, Marxism considers insurance to belong to particular societies during a limited period of their history.

2) Islamic Concept of Practising Social Security

It is the result of fraternal sympathy which prevails in the Islamic society. Islamic brotherhood is the frame which does the role of insurance therein. The hadith says:

"The Muslim is the brother of every Muslim; he neither does him injustice, nor does he abstain from his rescue. He does not deprive him. Therefore, Muslims have to persevere, visit each other, cooperate with each other and console those who are in need."

As for Marxism, it regards social security as nothing but the result of a huge and bitter struggle which must be sparked and widened, so that when the class struggle starts, and one class victoriously wipes out the other, only then shall social security prevail. Insurance according to Marxism is but an expression of a tight unity and overwhelming fraternity; it hinges but on a polar contradiction and a destructive struggle.

3) Insurance, as a Human Right According to Islam

It does not concern one group rather than another. It covers even those who are incapable of participating in the general production at all. They are, however, insured in the shade of the Islamic society, and the State has to make available for them all means of livelihood. As for Marxist insurance, it derives

its existence from the class struggle between the working class and the capitalist class the result of which is a victory for the working class (proletariat) and its cooperation with and participation in that wealth.

For this purpose, there is no Marxist explanation for the insurance of the life of those disabled who live far away from the class struggle because of their affiliation with the working class rather than with the capitalist class, since they have no right to take any gain from the struggle and its booties.

4) Insurance According to Marxism

It is the responsibility of the State alone. In Islam, it is the responsibility of both individuals and State; therefore, Islam has set two principles: one of them is the principle of general cooperation, and the other is the principle of social security. The principle of cooperation means that each Muslim individual is responsible for ensuring the livelihood of others according to his capacity.

Muslims should practice this principle even during the cases when they lose the State which practices the legislative injunctions. The hadith states that:

"Any believer who denies another believer the use of something which he needs, while he or someone else is able to let him do so, then Allah will resurrect him on the Day of Judgement with a black face, blue eyes, his hands tied up to his neck. It will be said: 'This is a traitor who betrayed Allah and His Messenger'; then he will be thrown into Hell-fire."

The principle of social security determines the responsibility of the State in this respect. It has to ensure a level of honourable prosperity for all citizens from the State and general sources of income, and also from its treasury.⁵ For the clarification of this principle, the hadith says:

"The ruler receives wealth and distributes it, according to the Commandments of Allah, to eight shares: to the poor, the destitute, the tax-collectors, those who do not mind helping Muslims, the slaves, those incapable of paying their debts, in the Way of Allah and to the wayfarers who are unable to buy their journey back home."

Eight shares he distributes among them, each according to his need, without stringency or fear.

Whatever remains will be turned back to the ruler. Whatever lacks, and people do not have enough, the State has to finance their need from its own budget according to their need, so that they will all have enough."

¹ For this reason, the word "freedom", when used in its general sense in genuine Islamic texts, cannot be charged of being influenced by the precepts of the Western civilization. The Commander of the Faithful 'Ali, peace be with him, is quoted as saying, "Do not be a slave to others since Allah has created you free." Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq, peace be with him, has said "There are five virtues, one who is without them does not really have much of any interest. The first is faithfulness; the second is good management; the third is shyness (modesty); the fourth is good manners; and the fifth, which combines all of these virtues together, is freedom."

[2.](#) Nahj al-balaghah by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, sermon 195, and Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p.214.

[3.](#) See my article “Freedom in the Qur'an” published in the series titled “Ikhtarna Laka” (Dar az-Zahra', Beirut, 1395/ 1975, pp. 43 – 54).

[4.](#) For the purpose of elaboration, notice our study of capitalist democracy in Iqtisaduna, pp. 247 –269.

[5.](#) For detailed information, see Iqtisaduna (the chapter on “Economical Problems as Islam sees them and their solutions”), p.328 and following pages.

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