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Man and Freedoms

First, we must clearly distinguish the three basic terms involved in discussions on freedom – free will, release, and freedom and define each:

1- Release:The state of release can be defined as the elimination of all restrictions or barriers preventing man's will toward doing anything. For instance, when a person is in exile, he is forced to stay there. Whenever this restriction is removed, the person is totally free.

2- Freedom:can be divided into two levels:

a) Natural freedom involves the selection of a particular end or means out of various ends and goals before us. This level of freedom is higher than being released, which only conveys the omission of all limitations, and prevents the flow of human will.

b) Elevated freedom includes the domination of human character over the positive and negative extremes of an action. Thus, the more control man has over the positive and negative poles, his freedom will be greater, and vice versa.

3- Free Will : consists of the character's supervision and control over the positive and negative poles of an action, or deservingly giving up an option in order to accomplish perfection.

Both of the above-mentioned levels of freedom are quite distinct from release; with freedom, man's personality aids him in his actions.

Let us consider how freedom and free will differ:

a) The notion of merit-based selections and aiming for perfection provides the point of distinction between free will and freedom, for freedom is not concerned with the fact whether the action is merit-based or leading to perfection or not.

b) With freedom, doing or not doing something is enjoyable, for the feeling of freedom arises from two side products which are both ideal to man:

● firstly, the absence of any kind of restrictions limiting man's will, and

● second, the feeling of being able to select ends or means out of infinite possibilities.

Feeling free causes the most delightful of emotional states in man, as the feeling of being alive itself does. With free will, on the other hand, not only does man not seek the enjoyment of being alive, but even makes man perform the hardest of tasks in order to achieve perfection. Nevertheless, carrying out tasks with the aim of reaching perfection refreshes and elevates the soul, which is totally incomparable with natural pleasure.

c) With free will, the human will, decisions and actions fall into the domain of meritorious deeds, whereas actions performed or refused out of pure freedom results in a natural merit incomparable to values.

The Right to Freedom and the Right to Free Will

At any level, freedom is capable of spiritually and mentally developing mankind, provided it fulfills these two conditions. Elevated freedom, however, is more effective.

Condition 1 : Freedom, whether purely natural or elevated, should not prevent man from moving towards free will and evolutionary development. In other words, the pleasant feeling of freedom should not block our path toward an intelligible life.

Condition 2 : One's freedom should in no case disturb that others' freedom or free will. Man should thoughtfully attempt to develop his freedom and potentials from purely natural to elevated. Even when achieving so, he should not stop, and strive for reaching a level of free will that can be named intelligible freedom on the path toward intelligible life. Freedom and free will are significant enough to be considered human rights, just as important as the right to live.

The Classifications of Freedom

We can classify freedom into six different types:

1– Freedom of belief: can be considered from three aspects:

Aspect One: the essence of belief – is man free to believe or not? Can man live with no belief at all if he wishes to? Every human being must believe in something, and it is impossible to find somebody who does not have faith in anything at all, for every human being accounts for his life in some way. Even claiming to live with no faith or belief at all is a kind of belief itself.

Aspect Two: are people free to live with one sole belief throughout their lives? Are they free to abandon their beliefs or not? Generally, most people seldom undergo a change of belief, except in cases of upheavals in their mental and psychological states, which makes them find faith in something else. Of

course, if the change of faith lies in divine realities, it can be a sign of man's spiritual growth.

Aspect Three: what man actually believes in, which can include:

● Facts about the components of the universe, such as the order and harmony in its creation,

● Facts about the universe as a whole, like the aim of the creation of the universe,

● Facts about man, like human anatomy,

● Facts about human existence in general, for example the fact that man is capable of developing himself into divine greatness,

● Facts about human proper virtues and merits, such as man's elevation through purifying his soul.

Since man cannot exist without some kind of faith, it is not possible to ignore all of the above in the name of freedom of belief, for his life would be inexplicably futile.

2- Freedom of thought: cannot be denied. Hundreds of verses of the Qur'an point out the necessity of thought. If man were not free to think about the realities of humanity and the universe, God would never order him to do so. As freedom of belief should not be so inordinate as to make human life lose all accountability, freedom of thought should also prevent falling into complete negligence toward life, or hinder man's mental or psychological activities.

Thought should serve the purpose of intelligible life, not censoring oneself. Thinking about the world and the natural aspects of humanity is perfectly allowed – provided the fact that it does not lead to damages to mankind. There should be a law on the topics suitable for thought about human identity and his values, virtues and merits, for ideals, taste and also social and cultural conditions influence what man may choose to think about. In order to prevent any disorder in people's thoughts and their falling into dangerous speculations, we need a rule: the aim is discovering and understanding man's intelligible life in an objective, intelligible world.

3- The Freedom of Expression: should be intelligible. In the West, this kind of freedom is absolutely unlimited. As Voltaire said:

"I disagree with what you say, but I am willing to sacrifice myself in order to let you say it freely."

I wonder how much Voltaire valued his own self, or if he would still be willing to sacrifice himself and allow such a volcanic eruption of mental and psychological brainwash affect all of mankind if his objections were to the benefit of the rights of all of mankind – including the right to freedom?

Expressing what is logical and intelligible is quite acceptable, but expressing unintelligible things has these harmful effects:

a) Emphasis on the expression regardless of what the content may be;

b) Useless, irrelevant speeches being sympathetically delivered to people only because the speaker considers them important;

c) A chance for people to use futile speeches for their own personal aggrandizement;

d) Interesting, amazing information given without having any effect on the reader.

Expressing realities useful to man – whether physically or spiritually – is not only free, but refusing to express them can be a crime. Freedom of expression faults only when it causes disorder in all true human principles and values and misguides minds. If man were so mentally developed that he would not only tell only the truth, and provide both the speaker and the listener with effective information and sufficient expressions, there would be no problem at all with the absolute freedom of speech – but is it truly so?

Are today's Eastern speakers, listeners, and researchers all as great as Abu-Reihan Biruni, Avicenna and Farabi in philosophy, or Muhammad Mehdi Naraqi and Sheikh Morteza Ansari in human Gnostics and knowledge, who never spoke a word without prior study, research and thought, and did the same with what they heard from others? And are Western speakers, listeners and researchers nowadays like Aristotle, Socrates, Augustine, Descartes, Hegel, Kant, Whitehead, and Saint Hiller, who spoke out of a vast background of study, research and calculation?

After a long and deep research on freedom of speech in the Qur'an, we come to the following conclusions:

a) Those who know certain facts or the truth are obliged to share them with others, for God has made those who know vow to spread their knowledge.

b) Any kind of knowledge which is harmless and useful to man – whether physically or spiritually – should be expressed.

c) Apart from making those who know responsible for expressing what they know, God also obliged those who do not know to seek knowledge.

d) Knowledge should not be taught to those who do not deserve it. On the other hand, those who do deserve it should never be deprived of knowledge.

e) Those that spread any kind of knowledge useful to mankind will be rewarded.

f) Those that know but do not share the truth with others will severely be punished on Judgment Day.

All in all, logical freedom of speech should be supported. However, the reasonability does not lie in the freedom itself, for the meaning of freedom conveys being free to commit or reject an action, regardless

of its merit or harm.

Any kind of freedom of speech, thought or opinion physically or spiritually harmful to human beings is considered illogical freedom. When not all people are allowed to comment on things lie medicine or medical treatment, which requires much research and study, the humanities, which determine man's fate, is certainly also thus. Anybody who comments on medical issues with no prior knowledge and only based on illogical freedom, is considered a criminal; now if someone attempts to write, speak and repeat his ideas about various aspects of humanity without any previous thought, study or research, and even try to brainwash people with his attractive, deceiving words, will it not be a problem?

Intelligible freedom of speech should be used in accordance with these two principles:

a) As far as physical nature is concerned, there is complete freedom of speech, thought and opinion, whether our knowledge is based on concrete evidence, probability, or deduction.

b) In domains of the humanities and general philosophy, which deal with mankind, “what there is,” and “what there should be,” the supervision and expertise of the learned is essential.

When discovering issues dealing with the humanities and ideology, it is necessary to both deeply understand the original fundamentals and principles, and have the required honesty, clarity, purity and eagerness to seek the truth, for this is where one's pre-determined principles and ideals proves actually influential. Therefore, any theory or research done on the above-mentioned topics must be presented to learned, impartial experts who will carefully study them and present the results considering the quality, quantity, clarity of confirmation or rejection, and the needed mental and psychological modifications for the public.

Thus, first of all, researchers on the humanities should have two qualifications: continuous, relentless effort and endeavor to discover the truth, and the sincerity and purity that makes the light of divinity shine upon hearts, clarifying man's knowledge. Secondly, the results of the research must be handed to scholars of the humanities who possess the needed knowledge, expertise and justice, so that they can study them carefully before their release. Some may claim that such a method in anthropology will lead discoveries to stagnancy. All research in other fields also, such as medicine or pharmacology, is thoroughly discussed prior to public release.

The above-mentioned suggestions also replaces selfish rivalries with positive competition, for not only does it engage knowledgeable, fair scholars of the humanities responsible for studying novel ideas in the fields of anthropology and ideology in scientific competition, but also invites others experts to discuss them, thus guiding constructive scientific competitions into an intelligible path.

4- Freedom of Behavior:This form of freedom is totally unconditional in the West, and is thus defined: “Do whatever you want, just don't bother anyone.” Such freedom of behavior calls for reconsideration, for human desires and wishes do not always obey wisdom and reality. Thousands of the crimes,

betrayals, and atrocities in history have been committed because of man's wishes. The provision about not bothering others is ineffective in confining man's freedom unless his desires and wishes are brought under control. How can one who does not believe himself to have any rights or value be expected to respect others' rights? When corrupted internally, he will never be able to consider others as having the right to live, be great or free, for none of these terms mean anything to him, let alone respecting them.

As we did with freedom of speech, we can also categorize freedom of behavior into two kinds – intelligible and unintelligible. Unintelligible behavior does not follow any law, principle or natural tendency at all; intelligible human behavior, however, is based on certain laws, rules or will-power arising from lawful, natural tendencies. Defining freedom of behavior as "Do whatever you want, just don't bother others" is a result of incorrectly isolating religion, ethics, law and politics from each other.

5- Freedom of Slavery in Any Form: Slavery arose thousands of years ago, and intellectuals like Plato and Aristotle considered it as an original social law. It had deep roots throughout history, and fighting it has always been difficult. This is the reason why Islam took a gradual approach to eradicate slavery. Had he decided not to battle it with full force, all the social and economic foundations of the society of his era would have fallen apart. The methods Islam used to gradually fight slavery were:

a) He made no exceptions between slaves and free people in regards to moral virtues and vice.

b) In Islamic societies, slaves found the chance to reach higher positions by showing themselves worthy of it.

c) If a man's bondmaid bore him a child, she would be freed as "mother to the child."

d) Slaves could work to free themselves; through an agreement with their masters, they worked to earn the money required and freed themselves.

e) In many of his (and also the subsequent Imams') *hadith*, the Holy Prophet emphasized that freeing slaves is a greatly rewarded deed, which prepared the grounds for more and more slaves to be freed and slavery to slowly fade away.

f) Teaching people that freeing slaves would compensate for many of the sins they had done.

g) Uprooting the main event that included taking people as slaves – wars. The occupation of Mecca resulted in all the slaves being freed.

h) The prisoners the Muslims took in their battles would be freed provided that they taught Muslims their knowledge and skills.

i) Many Islamic *hadith* regard slavery as an unnatural side-effect in man's social life. They emphasize that human freedom is of primary importance in Islam. All human beings are considered in Islam as being born free and entitled to dying free.

j) The Holy Prophet objected to slavery in Africa, Asia and all around the world, stating all humanity to be free people.

6- Political Freedom: Two principles concerning political freedom are:

- Every human being has his own free will.
- No one can dominate another human being's free will.

According to the former principle, each human being has free will about his/her own lifestyle, provided that it is not legally prohibited, like bringing harm to himself/herself or to others.

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