

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

Religious Inquiries

A Biannual Journal of the University of Religions and Denominations
Volume 6, Number 12, December 2017
ISSN: 2322-4894

- **Proprietor:** University of Religions and Denominations
- **Director in Charge:** Seyyed Abolhasan Navvab
- **Editor-in-Chief:** Mohsen Javadi
- **Executive Manager:** Ahmad Aqamohammadi Amid
- **Editorial Board**

Mohammad Taqi Diari Bidgoli

(Professor, University of Qom and University of Religions and Denominations, Iran)

Seyyed Hassan Eslami Ardakani

(Professor, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran)

Mohsen Javadi

(Professor, University of Qom, Iran)

Pierre Lory

(Professor, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Sorbonne, France)

Ahmadreza Meftah

(Associate Professor, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran)

Seyyed Abolhasan Navvab

(Associate Professor, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran)

Joseph A. Progler

(Professor, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan)

Hasan Qanbari

(Associate Professor, University of Tehran, and University of Religions and Denominations, Iran)

Mohammad Ali Shomali

(Associate Professor, Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, Iran)

Klaus Von Stosch

(Professor, University of Paderborn, Germany)

- **Copy Editors:** Hamed Fayazi, Shiraz Agha

Religious Inquiries is indexed in: Ministry of Science, Research and Technology as Scientific-Research Publication: No. 3/18/8760, 7 September 2013; and Islamic World Science Citation Database (ISC).

Address: P.O. Box 37185-178, Qom, Iran

Tel: +9825 32802610-13

Fax: +9825 32802627

Website: ri.urd.ac.ir

Email: ri@urd.ac.ir

Note

The journal of *Religious Inquiries* accepts papers on the comparative studies of the Western and Islamic theology, mysticism and ethics. The papers received will be published provided that they are written according to the house style of the journal. The authors will bear responsibility for their own papers.

Submission of Contributions

- Contributors are invited to submit their manuscripts by e-mail in Microsoft Word format (e.g. DOC, DOCX).
- Only one font should be used throughout the text, e.g. Arial or Times New Roman, the recent versions of which contain all the Arabic characters and specialist diacritics.
- The full name and postal address of the author should be included with the submission (but not visible anywhere on the manuscript). Articles submitted should include an abstract of 100-200.
- Articles should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Guidelines on Style

- Manuscripts are accepted in English. Any consistent spelling and punctuation styles may be used.
- Papers that are not written in excellent English will not be considered.
- Words which have not been assimilated into the English language should be italicized, except for proper nouns.
- Long quotations should be fully indented (e.g. quotes longer than 30 words). The first line of a new paragraph should be indented, except the paragraph following a heading. The tab-key may prove helpful here.
- Please use a comma before the final 'and' in a list. For example: 'one, two, and three' rather than 'one two and three'. Use one space after full-stops.
- Hijri years should be followed by 'AH,' unless it is clear what calendar is being used from the context. For the modern Iranian calendar use 'AH (solar)' or 'Sh.'

Referencing

Contributors should use the author-date method of referencing (also known as the 'Harvard' referencing system). When using the author-date method, citations should be made using the surname of the author and the year of publication of his/her work, as follows:

Sadr (2003, 69-71) discusses metaphorical and literal meaning in lesson ten of his *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*.

It is argued that Islamic social customs can only be fully appreciated when sympathy is given to the context within which they occur (Smith 1998).

Griffel (2009) is a study of the classical Islamic theologian, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. The study includes both biography and philosophical analysis.

'Ibid.' is not used in citations. Full details of all references cited should be listed at the end of the manuscript in the references section. If a number of works by the same author in the same year are cited a letter should be used to distinguish the different works (e.g. 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, and so forth). References should be formatted according to the examples below.

Books: Locke, John. 1975 [1690]. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Edited books: Clarke, P., ed. 1988. *Islam*. London: Routledge.

Translated books: Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn. 2003. *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*. Translated by Ali Quli Qara'i. London: ICAS Press.

Chapter in edited books: Gould, Glenn. "Streisand as Schwarzkopf." In *The Glenn Gould Reader*, edited by Tim Page, 308-11. New York: Vintage, 1984.

Articles in journals: Schmidt, Jochen. 2014. "Critical Virtue Ethics." *Religious Inquiries* 3(5): 35-47.

Webpage: Losensky, Paul. 2012. *Sa'di*. Accessed January 1, 2014. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sadi-sirazi>.

E-mail: Williamson, Brian. 2005. E-mail from Brian Williamson to Catharine White, "New Perspectives." (09:15, 1 January 1999).

CONTENT

- 5 Avicenna on the Angelological Relevance of Mystical Experience**
Maryam Zaeri Amirani, Enshaallah Rahmati, Mohsen Javadi
- 25 Reconsidering Hadith al-Iftiraq**
Seyyed Mohammad Reza Navvab, Ali Aqanoori
- 41 God and Man in Freudian Psychoanalysis: A Critical Examination of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion***
Ali Haghi
- 57 *Thinking* as Evidence for the Probability of the Existence of a God: An Argument from Unnaturalness for Necessity**
Javad Taheri
- 67 An Islamic Perspective on the Characteristics and Criteria of Good Management**
Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Sadat Chavoshian, Mohammad Hadi Mofatteh
- 85 Ways of Respecting Human Dignity in Islamic Law**
Sorayya Muniri, Mohammad Reza Kazimi Golvardi
- 103 Enlightenment and Islam in Iran: The Case of Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh**
Arash Tahmasb, Mojtaba Zarvani

Avicenna on the Angelological Relevance of Mystical Experience

Maryam Zaeri Amirani,¹ Enshaallah Rahmati,² Mohsen Javadi³

Received: 06-09-2017 / Accepted: 02-12-2017

Avicenna is a renowned peripatetic philosopher whose rationality continuously draws the attention of many scholars. In many of his works, he resorts to the hierarchy of intellects (angels) to explain the process of the emanation of the multiplicity from the One, as well as the emergence of beings. As these intellects are among the ontological causes of the human soul in the arc of descent, they also guide human individuals through the arc of ascent. Angels are of two types according to Avicenna: (1) the intellects who reveal themselves to human beings via mystical experience and endow them with all the necessary means of intellectual and spiritual transcendence and (2) the celestial or heavenly souls who serve them as an examples of vision and intuition. The manifestation of intellects plays a key role in the explanation of mystical experience, because they account for the rationality of mystical experience, on the one hand, and provide a typology of mystical experiences, on the other hand, based on human existential status. Moreover, one can recognize and tackle the existing obstacles before pure vision and intuition via a study of Avicenna's ideas.

Keywords: Avicenna, mystical experience, intellects (archangels), celestial souls (heavenly angels).

1. PhD candidate in Philosophy of Religion and New Issues in Islamic Theology, Science and Research Branch of Islamic Azad University, Iran (Maryam.zaeri.a@gmail.com).
2. Associate Professor, Central Tehran Branch of Islamic Azad University, Iran (n.sophia1388@gmail.com), corresponding author.
3. Professor, Qom University, Iran (moh_javadi@yahoo.com)

Introduction

We seek to assay the place and function of intellects, as well as the role of the Active Intellect in mystical experiences according to the ideas of Avicenna, the Iranian Muslim theosopher and philosopher.

This essay is an effort to show that according to our Islamic intellectual tradition, mystical experience is not in contradiction with logic or discursive reason; rather, it happens in a rational domain. Of course, by rational in this context we do not refer to the rationality that is grounded in deduction, as Avicenna believes that mystical experience is not among the rational affairs that are attained through deduction (Badawi 1978, 44). Rather, it is an intellectual intuition beyond every perception, because perception is different from vision, and the vision of Truth is preceded by perception.

Resorting to the arch and celestial angels, Avicenna explains not only the subjective but also the objective efficient cause of these experiences. Having demonstrated the necessity of the existence of angels as Divine mediums and the reality of the super-sensible world, he argues that one can provide not only a historical and cultural but also a Divine explanation of mystical experience. One can simultaneously assay the impact of personal beliefs, emotions, and qualities on the emergence and variation of this kind of experience.

The Necessity of the Existence of Angels

We begin our discussion here with an outline of the ontology of angels and a discussion of the similarities between them and human beings, which leads to the emergence of mystical experience.

Among the difficulties that continuously haunt those philosophers who believe in a unique origin of the world is the explanation of the multiplicity in the world. The Necessary Being is unique from all respects, because He is absolutely indivisible and simple, and nothing would emerge from the One but one (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 402). Moreover, every corporeal entity is of a hylomorphic nature in the sense

that it consists of a form and a matter. In other words, a corporeal body requires to be originated by a compound entity of at least two separate aspects that will be essentially different from the Absolutely Simple Necessary Being. Therefore, the first effect effused from the Necessary is an intellectual entity not a corporeal one (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:154) called the First Intellect.

Because of its necessary and contingent aspects and its thinking of itself and the Necessary, the First Intellect becomes the origin of the Second Intellect and of the soul and body of the First Heaven. By the same token, the Second Intellect becomes the origin of another intellect and heaven, and this origination continues down to the Tenth Intellect and Ninth Heaven, whose existential weakness does not allow it to be the origin of another intellect or heaven. Thus, the Tenth Intellect endows the matter and form of worldly corporeal entities and produces their souls, and this is why it is called the Endower of Forms. Moreover, the human rational soul is also directly effused from the Tenth Intellect (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:279-81).

Here we have a series of heavenly intellects and souls, the first group of whom represents the *spiritual angels*, or in religious parlance, the *arch angels*, while the second group stands for the *celestial angels*.

On the ontology of heavens, one should say that in ancient astronomy, the number of stars was counted and their movements recorded, and whereas ancient astronomers did not believe in natural and compulsive movements, they considered the motions of celestial bodies as volitional and envisaged an agent who led them to their ends. However, pure intellects cannot be the origin of movements of celestial bodies as they are unchangeable and cannot imagine the particular entities; and since they are simple, they cannot be the mediating agents of corporeal celestial bodies (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 383).

Therefore, Avicenna believes in a set of souls who are the proximate motivators of heavens and mediate between bodies and intellects. All ten intellects and nine heavens are among the angels whose existence is necessary in Avicenna's cosmology. Avicenna not only proves the existential necessity of these angels in the arc of descent based on his ontology but also demonstrates their necessity in the arc of ascent, relying on the mystical principles of his philosophy of illumination.

The Significance of the Role of Angels in Mystical Experience

Intellects—including the Tenth Intellect, whom Avicenna calls the Arch Angel (Avicenna 1400 AH, 336)—are manifestations of divine Names. God's transcendent Nature is not an object of human knowledge, but it reveals itself through divine Effusion that emerges in the form of intellects, who uncover the Lord's Names and Attributes. He resides in his supersensible abode, which is beyond human reach and is only available via the intellects that have emerged from Him; they are mediators of His Effusion and can be known and experienced by human beings and used as mediums for ecstatic interaction with the Lord.

Furthermore, what makes the role of angels more fundamental in mystical experience is their, particularly the Active Intellect's, essential similarities with the human rational soul, on whom relies the very possibility of such intuition and experience as a whole. Man is the most honored creature in this worldly sphere and is more like angels (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 277). He owes his human form to his archetype, viz. the Active Intellect, and is able to communicate with his Creator. In the hierarchy of beings and the arc of descent, man immediately emerges from the Active Intellect; and in his arc of epistemic and spiritual ascent, it is this very Active Intellect who prevents him from egotism and error. In fact, the human form is emanated from the Active Intellect and the latter sustains him and is indeed his father. Thus, the Active Intellect is the most important company of man in his epistemic and spiritual transcendence.

In mystical experience, it is the rational soul's encounter with the angel that connects it to divine Grace and informs it of the mysteries of heaven and finally provides it with an interpretation of its existence. If the soul continuously pursues the Truth and avoids whatever is in contradiction with its essence, it will be homomorphous with the angels and be competent to communicate with them (Avicenna 1400 AH: 155).

However, besides the Active Intellect—one of the arch angels, the communion with whom makes the mystical experience possible for man—the celestial angels also play a role in this experience. The homogeneity and similarity that one finds between the body and soul of heavens and humans are of paramount importance in the discussion of mystical experience.

And what is revealed in the light of a kind of contemplation for the true pursuers of transcendent theosophy is the fact that there are some souls in a level after the incorporeal intellects, who have these intellects as their principles and are not printed on their bodies; rather, they use these bodies as a vehicle that brings them to their perfection. (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:432)

Avicenna's reference to *transcendent theosophy* in this context reflects his disagreement with peripatetic philosophers on the origin of the movements of heavens. Peripatetic philosophers believed that the form printed on the body of heaven, and not an incorporeal soul, is the corporeal origin of its movements. But Avicenna, in the wake of discursive and sapiential transcendent theosophy, believes that the mover of heaven is an incorporeal soul, who uses the body as a medium to reach its intended perfection.

As we mentioned before, from every one of the intellects, except the Tenth Intellect (Active Intellect), a celestial soul and body is effused. Avicenna maintains that every celestial soul moves the celestial body that is under its control to the delight of the intellect from whom it has been emanated. The main end of souls or celestial angels from moving the bodies is assimilating to the intellects or arch angels and acquiring

their paradigmatic perfections (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 183-85; 1351 Sh, 60).

In their assimilation to intellects and intellectual perfections and effusions, celestial angels are very similar to human souls; and, as it will be shown, they are the guiding light of human souls in mystical experience.

Our previous discussions showed the significance of intellects and their role in mystical experience. However, before turning to the study of the role of intellects in mystical experience, we need to assay human intellectual domain and the levels of intellect, as well as the quality of the relation between this domain and angels, who provide the grounds for intellectual intuition and mystical experience.

The Hierarchy of Intellects

Our preceding speculations on intellects in general and the Active Intellect in particular are in fact concerning entities which are existentially independent of man and subsist on their own, and this is why they are called separate intellects. But the intellect that is an existential feature of human beings and one of their cognitive faculties is in charge of understanding the universals.

The human soul has two faculties: (1) practical reason, whose main concern is moral and artificial affairs and distinguishes between the good and bad and between the beautiful and the ugly, and (2) theoretical reason, which is in charge of epistemic matters and the incorporeal forms are printed on it. Mystical experience occurs in a particular level of theoretical reason. To explain the occurrence of this experience, one needs to provide an outline of Avicenna's ideas on the typology of human intellect/reason. The quadruple levels of human reason are as follows:

1. *Material or potential intellect*, which exists in every human individual and contains only the potentiality of knowing various

forms of things and beings. It does not have any intelligible form and is mere potentiality.

2. *Habitual intellect* refers to a level of human intellectual development in which self-evident and primary truths are realized by the intellect. By primary truths is meant those realities whose truth is verified by themselves without any independent investigation, such as the fact that the whole is bigger than its parts.
3. *Actualized intellect* refers to the human intellectual capability for understanding the secondary intelligible facts based on the self-evident truths. Of course, intelligibles are not of actual and persistent presence in this level; rather, they turn actual upon human intellection.
4. *Acquired intellect* contains all intelligibles and acquired facts as well as self-evident truths in a constantly actual form, thanks to its connection with the Active Intellect (Avicenna 1379 Sh, 334-36; Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:411-14; Avicenna 1383a Sh, 24-27).

The human rational soul gradually becomes actualized in the process of knowing, and, after reaching the level of the acquired intellect, it is able to perceive the intelligibles in a distinct and clear form without any new effort. It is indeed the Active Intellect or Arch Angel who leads the human soul through these quadruple intellectual levels as the superhuman treasure of intelligibles (Avicenna 1400 AH, 57).

The Active Intellect, according to Avicenna, has a higher existential status than human beings and is a supersensible and unempirical source for acquiring knowledge and intuiting the intelligibles. Intelligible forms are endowed upon human beings via the Active Intellect, and it is through it that potential intelligibles become actualized:

Since intelligibles in the human soul are potential, we need something intellectual to bring them to actuality. And there is no

doubt that this intellectual entity has to be one of the intellects we talked about before, particularly the one that is nearer to this world, called the Active Intellect, who acts in our intellects so that they may come to actuality. (Avicenna 1383b Sh, 123)

This angel has an emanative relation with the human soul. We will soon discuss this relation in more details, but before that, we have to describe the role of the faculty of intuition in the course of human intellection.

Avicenna distinguishes between two movements in the process of human intellectual efforts to attain knowledge: “Sometimes one needs to make a set of intellectual efforts so as to be informed of the middle term by divine grace, while some other times one intuits the middle term by divine grace without taking other terms into consideration” (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 200). Then, there is a difference between intellection and intuition: intellection may miss its intended goal, while intuition is always on target. Moreover, human intellectual power may err in the synthesis of the premises; however, in intuition, which is a divine bounty, man is immune to all errors. In fact, intellection is weak, and when it becomes strong, it turns into intuition. This intuition receives divine affirmation when it gets enlightened enough to be divine.

The intensity of the faculty of intuition differs from one individual to another; and it is of a hierarchical nature, in the sense that whoever is of a stronger intuition, they are more competent to get connected to the Active Intellect. Some people are unable even to deal with the simplest questions, while others find the answers of all questions via intuition without any intellectual effort.

The uppermost level of intuition belongs to prophets, and it is called divine power; there are few humans who acquire knowledge without any intellectual efforts thanks to their divine power (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 107). A prophet is a man who is connected with the Active Intellect and

is endowed with a divine intellect that receives every piece of knowledge directly from the Active Intellect without any intellectual efforts. The prophetic soul is of an existential status that allows him to get connected to the other world. This is itself a miracle that is hard for ordinary people to understand. This connection opens up many intricacies for the prophetic soul.

The Role of Angels in Intellectual Vision

The intellectual level that is at stake here is that of intuition, which requires angelic grace. Vision is essentially similar to intuition, and one may say that it is a type of the latter, because it is cordial knowledge and does not require thinking. As we mentioned before, Avicenna believes that intuition is beyond perception, and one can reach intelligible forms with utmost certainty through connecting oneself to the sphere of universals and incorporeal intellects or angels. The human soul is the medium of this connection to the incorporeal and transcendent spheres of infinite light and grace (Avicenna 1360 Sh, 139). This connection is of a divine, intuitive, and spontaneous nature.

In his *Remarks and Admonitions*, Avicenna describes the mystic as "a person who is wholeheartedly devoted to the divine Presence and is continuously exposed to the heavenly illuminations of the divine Light" (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:400) and receives the eternal forms via the Active Intellect.

Thus, even in his description of mystics, Avicenna prefers to insist on intuition as an intellectual quality of human existence instead of heart or emotions. According to Avicenna, intellectual vision or intuition is a way that leads us to the knowledge of intelligible forms via the light of the Active Intellect.

The remarkable point in this regard is Avicenna's illuminative perspective that is reflected particularly in his visionary recitals. In some of his works, he speaks of the Active Intellect in a way as if it is a person who endows the forms upon man. He states, "The Active

Intellect is a glowing fire that enlightens the human rational faculty, and one clearly sees that he orally addresses him" (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 277).

In fact, man experiences a sense of individuality in such mystical vision of the Active Intellect that he finds the angel the object of his intuition. On the one hand, he is a manifestation of the transcendent and unknown nature of the Divine and familiar with the mysteries of the Unknown Sphere, and, on the other hand, he is somehow the father of the human soul and form and connects him with the Lord. It is just this arch angel who can realize man's dream of becoming an angel.

In the same way that illuminations and revelations are endowed upon man by the Active Intellect, heavenly illuminations are also inspired to celestial souls by the intellects that are their existential origins. This is why celestial souls long for intellects and seek to make themselves similar to them. Arch angels are regarded as the final causes of celestial movements, and in fact their eternal and continuous effusions instigate their fondness for assimilating to the arch angels into angelic entities.

In the coming section, we will explain how the similarity between the human soul's relation with the Active Intellect and the celestial souls' relation with intellects can lead to human transcendence.

The Soul's Transcendence

The significant point of mystical experience is that it leads to the human soul's transformation and transcendence. If we take Avicenna's views on the value and status of human intellectual power into consideration, we can make sense of the transcendence and transformation that he expects of mystical experience and intellectual vision.

Avicenna praises God as the Endower of intellect to man (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 277) and glorifies the intellectual side of existence. He believes that "the human soul in fact has its particular perfection in

becoming an intellectual world that contains all the intelligible forms of beings, and its comprehension of these beings from transcendent intellects to incorporeal angels is seamless and perfect" (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 425).

Thus, the soul's perfection, transcendence, and bliss are all contingent upon the degree of the actuality of human intellect and practice based on the exemplary pattern of the intellectual sphere of angels. This is why he says, "Knowledge elevates the one who is not elevated" (Ra'ufi Mehr 1385 Sh). According to Avicenna, it is the intellectual side of human existence that is capable of being connected with the world of the unknown, intuition, and revelation, not its emotional side that is mostly represented by the human heart. Intellect or reason is a level of the soul that is capable of being in touch with supreme substances and intellects, through whom it reaches the true pleasure, perfection, and light (Badawi 1978, 41).

The ultimate goal of the soul is complete realization, meeting with the inner soul, returning to the Higher Spiritual Realm, and knowing God. This goal is not achieved but through angelic education that activates theoretical reason or intellect. Angelic education is fulfilled via human encounter with the Active Intellect, in whose company one becomes united with the Truth (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:420).

Here, the Active Intellect plays an educational role besides his epistemic function, without withholding any assistance in this path: "I asked him to teach me how to go on the journey that he is used to go ... the Master [i.e., the Active Intellect] said, ... "Whenever you are mirthful enough to go on this journey, call me; I will join you mirthfully" (Avicenna 1400 AH, 134). Thus, anyone who keeps his company benefits from the intellects in general, and becomes united with the Active Intellect or the Supreme Intellect in particular. Intellect is essentially fond of the Truth and has the latter and knowledge as its goal. In fact, intellect is a faculty that is connected with the higher

realms and is continuously exposed to divine illuminations, which enable it to perceive the universals.

However, the remarkable point in this regard is that after meeting the angel, man has to continue his path. Avicenna invites the wayfarer to accompany the Active Intellect and benefit from his angelic education: “You have to know that if I am addressing you or trying to awake you, I do all of this so as to make myself nearer to the king; otherwise, I have other issues to deal with. If you want to join me, follow my steps” (Avicenna 1400 AH, 141).

The human soul is of a luminous and intellectual origin although it is entrapped in the body. The soul continuously struggles to return to the unknown abode of light and the inner soul that lies somewhere beyond this world. It is this inner soul that is nostalgically recollected by Avicenna in his couplet *al-Ayniyyah*, which has documented the philosopher's scorching enthusiasm for the spiritual sphere of intellects. The main issue is the quality of this return. The soul's movement toward the sphere of intellect is not possible but with the aid and guidance of angels, who are its guides in this course and are in charge of human intellectual guidance. The soul is enthusiastically attracted to the intellect from whom she has been effused, and this enthusiasm and attraction reawakens her into the primordial domain of inwardness.

Furthermore, the soul's assimilation to the Active Intellect reveals the significance of heavenly souls or celestial angels. As these souls are entrapped in the corporeality of their heavens and continuously motivate the heavens to emulate the intellects so as to find a way out of the darkness of corporeality, the human soul can take these heavenly souls as its example and devote itself to the emulation of the Active Intellect. According to Avicenna, in the same way that the human soul is illuminated in the course of the supplication of the Active Intellect (Living Son of the Awake), the heaven's movement instigated by its innermost enthusiasm for intellect is a kind of heavenly devotion:

“Celestial movement does not essentially refer to a physical movement; rather, it seems to be a kind of angelic or celestial devotion” (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 391).

This devotedness leads to heavenly souls' transcendence and perfection. The human soul has to follow the steps of celestial souls in this path so as to reach the pure and true good. Beholding the celestial angels, man can realize his primordial potentiality for angelhood and embark upon the infinite path of perfection and righteousness that leads to the vision of the Lord, who has the intellects as His deputies.

The Role of the Imaginal Faculty in Mystical Vision

The imaginal faculty, which is included by Avicenna among human inner faculties, can synthesize imagined forms and create new notions. In most cases, the imagined forms that have their origin in sensory perception pave the ground for acquiring intellectual forms by the assistance of the Active Intellect. Avicenna writes: “Intelligible forms are preceded by sensory and imaginary forms. However, there are also intelligible entities that are not preceded by any sensory or imaginary forms, such as the Lord God, to whom belong all praise, and the Active Intellect” (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 53). Or in his *Annotations*, he writes: “Whatever becomes an object of the soul's intellection is already in imagination” (Avicenna 1351 Sh, 101).

As we mentioned before, intelligibles could be immediately transferred to the soul via the Active Intellect, and this process is called *intellectual vision*. However, the remarkable point in this regard is the quality of the comprehension of these forms. Avicenna writes: “When our souls become connected with the Active Intellect, some intellectual forms are endowed upon them according to their inner potentiality and aptitude” (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2: 423).

The Active Intellect's relation with the human soul is an illumination-and-effusion-based relation, and this effusion has its particular criteria, according to which the intellectual forms are

endowed upon souls based on their potentialities. One's illusions and imaginations are among those potentialities that qualify him for receiving the incorporeal intellectual forms from the Active Intellect (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:426).

In fact, the individual apprehension of the angel Active Intellect and understanding the intelligibles effused from him are not possible but by the assistance of the imaginal faculty. Since the angel is incorporeal and formless, he is depicted as the Living Son of the Awake or the Deputy of the King in Avicenna's mystical recitals. In Corbin's words, "[t]he lovers could believe in the cult for the same intelligence-sophia and at the same time perceiving his figure-archetype under the traits of one figure which was every time different" (Corbin 2005, 312).

The imaginal faculty manipulates the intelligibles and creates imaginary forms for them, and this is one of its main functions. This interference is of paramount significance in mystical experience. One of the major signs of the intelligible is its universality and formlessness that can reveal itself to human soul via an imaginary form. What is inspired or revealed to man by intellects is embodied in personal imaginations and illusions. Avicenna writes:

A soul is prepared for the reception of intellectual forms effused by the Active Intellect when its intellectual faculties are conscious of the whole content of imagination. This consciousness makes the soul's ideas and feelings that decide the quality of effusion" (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 369).

Then, the total body of our ideas and feelings is of crucial influence in the preparation of the soul for the reception of the Active Intellect's effusion. Intellectual vision is impossible without imagination, according to Avicenna, and the more powerful one's soul is the more accurate and certain are the intelligibles he perceives. However, Avicenna believes that every individual's imagination, which is normally affected by numerous worldly objective and subjective

factors, such as ideas, judgments, hopes, and even spatial, temporal and physical conditions, depicts the intelligibles and truths effused from the divine realm in his own personal way. Thus, these experiences, despite having a unique cause, are of a remarkable variety.

Moreover, since imagination can easily change a form into its opposite, it could be a source of error in intuition. Avicenna writes, "False forms have their origin in the necessity of imagination, and after one's death and the disappearance of the Imaginal faculty, only true forms are effused from the soul" (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 56).

It is noteworthy that Avicenna believes that celestial souls or angels also have imaginations and illusions: "These affections are in the form of imaginations and not purely intellectual, although they have a partial relation with the intellects proportionate to the physical powers that secure them as imaginations" (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:193).

Basically, wherever an incorporeal soul is at stake, regardless of whether it is human or celestial, there is also an arena for imagination. Of course, there is a difference between celestial and human souls in this regard. The imaginations of celestial souls are always true: "And all these imaginations and semi-imaginings of the celestial soul are true, like what we do based on our practical reason" (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 378).

Emanation and Its Obstacles

One of the issues regarding the role of the Active Intellect in mystical experience is that of emanation:

The rational soul is an entity that requires bodily means to reach perfection; and through the application of its bodily means, it also receives effusions from the higher principles that assist it in the path of perfection. (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:283)

It is the Active Intellect that illuminates souls with intelligible forms and assists them. The human soul is a mirror that reflects divine forms

when it turns to the sphere of divinity; and when it changes its direction, these forms disappear (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:368).

Thus, if man is not exposed to divine radiations of the Active Intellect, he will miss intelligible forms. Although potential intellect is continuously exposed to these divine effusions, this is just a passive encounter. Of course, this passive encounter does not close the door of emanation. The Active Intellect is not something that appears and disappears; rather, it is always present. It is us who make it disappear when we lose our sight of it and make it appear when we turn to it (Badawi 1978, 95).

Therefore, the soul does not abstract anything; rather, it receives the angelic effusion of the Active Intellect. The obstacles to divine emanation exist in the object, not in the subject:

We say that the human soul is susceptible to receiving knowledge from intellectual substances and celestial souls, and it is not as such the source of obscurity, but this obscurity has its origin in the object; and by the disappearance of this factor, the soul receives divine effusions of knowledge. (Avicenna 1383a Sh, 68)

Therefore, the major obstacle to intellectual vision is inside human beings and can be traced back to human illusions and carnal desires. This is why Avicenna insists on self-refinement as a condition of perfect understanding: "To understand higher spiritual pleasure, one needs to purify his soul of anger, carnality, and mean properties" (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 426).

In his discussion on the difference between thinking and intuition, Avicenna suggests that intuition requires inner purity, which prepares one to get connected with the Active Intellect as the eternal source of secure knowledge; while thinking has its origin in the soul's impurity, which deprives man from divine Presence (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 107).

In his *Living the Son of the Awake*, Avicenna speaks of bad companions of the soul, whose company separates it from the angel of

intellect; and whenever the soul leaves their company, it is addressed by the angel. Likewise, in the allegory of *Salaman va Absaal*, Salaman's wife is an example of the negligence of the mystic who has become a captive of anger and carnal desires.

As we know, an action that is done based on lust and anger stands in contrast with an action carried out based on practical reason. If we pursue our ideas and actions in the light of practical reason, we will never lose our touch with angels and intellects and their heavenly bounties. However, since human actions are not always grounded in reason, sometimes his thoughts and imaginations fail to be true. This is not the case with the celestial or heavenly soul, Avicenna argues, because it is not affected by anger or lust, and this is why it continuously instigates the movement of celestial bodies and keeps the company of divine intellects.

Thus, if the human soul takes the celestial soul as his example and fixes his eyes on the intellect from whom he has been effused, he will break the bondage of anger and lust once and for all and will have his angelhood and intellectuality flourished.

In all of his works, Avicenna highlights the possibility of intellectual initiation and insists on the necessity of purifying oneself from the taints of lust and anger as the obstacles to spirituality. This kind of initiation is beyond mere rational reasoning and leads to intellectual vision, because reasoning and proof alone do not open the ways of heaven and the Orient. When one overcomes sensory obstacles, he finds the opportunity to connect himself to the realm of divinity, “returns to the sphere of purity, and finally becomes a close companion of the Active Intellect; a title that could be attributed only to the chosen prophets of God” (Avicenna 1383c Sh, 29).

Conclusion

The conclusions of this research are as follows:

- The necessity of the existence of intellects in Avicenna's ontology is a basis for explaining the object of mystical experience, and the cause of these experiences is not reduced to human subjective modes that do not have any concrete references.
- One of the difficulties of the description and explanation of mystical experiences, particularly in monotheistic religions, is the quality of knowing the unknowable and transcendent nature of God. According to Avicenna, intellects (arch angels), as manifestation of divine Names and Attributes, make such experiences possible, and celestial souls (celestial angels) are patterns of these experiences.
- Mystical experience, in the sense that was meant in this research, does not occur as an emotional or sensational phenomenon; rather, it is a kind of inspiration and vision.
- Mystical experience, in Avicenna's viewpoint, is not only in harmony with reason and logic but is itself a kind of intellectual intuition.
- Avicenna offers an alternative understanding of reason, according to which reason is in harmony with intuition and vision in its realized state. This makes the discussion of cordial intuition pointless here.
- The intellect that leads man to intuition is not the autonomous and limited reason that is blind to prophecy and revelation and only relies on proofs and reasoning, because logical reasoning is a human activity and does not lead to the realm of spirituality; rather, it is a divine intellect whose perfection lies in its connection with the Active Intellect and supersensible sphere.

- Since this kind of experience is realized with the assistance of an arch angel, who is the manifestation of divine Names, and also a pattern of celestial angels, it contains a sign of the sphere of divinity and leads to the mystic's existential elevation.
- Regarding the reason behind the differences between mystical experiences, Avicenna refers to the souls' aptitude for receiving divine emanations and also the interference of the imaginal faculty in the comprehension of experiences. Although he believes that our imaginations, illusions, and mental notions do not play a causal role in the formation of intuitions and that the efficient cause of the latter is the Active Intellect, he maintains that intuitions are affected by one's culture and personal conditions.
- The main obstacles to intuitions and mystical experiences are carnal desires and neglecting the intellectual side of existence. This is to say that if man breaks the bondage of anger and lust, like celestial souls, he can be eternally in touch with the intellects and heavenly entities.

References

- Avicenna. 1400 AH. *Avicenna's Essays*. Qom: Bidar Publications.
- . 1360 Sh. *Avicenna's Essays*. Translated by Ziauddin Durri. Tehran: Markazi Publications.
- . 1362a Sh. *Theology of Shifa*. Edited by Ibrahim Madkur. Qom: Mar'ashi.
- . 1362b Sh. *Philosophical Essays*. Tehran: Ilmi Publications.
- . 1404 AH. *Annotations*. Edited by Abdurrahman Badawi. Tehran: Maktab al-Alam al-Islami.
- . 1363 Sh. *The Origin and the Return*. Edited by Abdullah Nuri. Tehran: Mu'assasah Mutala'at Eslami publication.
- . 1371 Sh. *Discourses*. Edited by Mohammad Bidarfar. Qom: Bidar Publications.

———. 1379 Sh. *Al-Najat*. Edited by Muhammad Taqi Daneshpažuh, Tehran University Publication.

———. 1383a Sh. *Kitab al-Nafs*. Edited by Mousa Amid. Hamadan: Bu Ali University Publications.

———. 1383b Sh. *Danishnama-yi 'Alai*. Edited and annotated by Muhammad Meshka. Hamadan: Bu Ali University Publications.

———. 1383c Sh. *A Treatise on the Truth and Quality of the Hierarchy of Beings and Concatenation of Causes and Effects*. Edited by Mousa Amid. Hamadan: Bu Ali University Publications.

———. 1384 Sh. *Remarks and Admonitions*. Edited by Karim Feyzi. Qom: Matbu'at Dini.

Badawi. 1978. *Aristotle of Arabs*. Kuwait: Al-Matbu'at.

Corbin, Henri. 2005. *Avicenne et le recit visionnaire*. Tehran: Islamic Publications.

Raufimehr. 1385 Sh. "Translation of Avicenna's Couplet Known as al-'Ayniyah." *Hafez Journal* 35.

Reconsidering Hadith al-Iftiraq

Seyyed Mohammad Reza Navvab,¹ Ali Aqanoori²

Received: 15-08-2017 / Accepted: 02-12-2017

Hadith al-Iftiraq is a famous hadith attributed to Prophet Muhammad (s) in many Shi'i and Sunni hadith collections, as well as in heresiographical sources. Among many books written by contemporary heresiographers, few have failed to mention this hadith in their writings. Many Shi'i and Sunni traditionists have collected the traditions that deal with the future of the Muslim ummah under such titles as the hadith of *fitan* (tribulations), *iftiraq al-ummah* (division of ummah), or *ittiba' sunan man mada* (lit., following the ways of those who have passed). However, it seems that none of the above traditions have been more welcomed by heresiographers and apologists than the *hadith iftiraq al-ummah*. This article will analyze this hadith and its different versions and various interpretations, especially the identity of the only sect that, according to the hadith, will be saved in the Hereafter.

Keywords: hadith, heresiography, sect, sectarianism.

Introduction

Although Hadith al-Iftiraq has been cited by a great number of Muslim scholars, it has not been cited by some famous heresiographers such as Nawbakhti and al-Ash'ari; some scholars, such as Ibn Hazm, even held

-
1. PhD Candidate in Shiite Studies, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran (rezanavab@urd.ac.ir), Corresponding Author.
 2. Associate Professor, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran (aghanoori@urd.ac.ir)

that the hadith was unreliable (Ibn Hazm 1416 AH, 3:293). However, according to some other scholars, particularly considering the frequency of its quotation in various sources, the hadith is not only *mashhur* (well-known) but also *mutawatir* (frequently narrated) (Ibn Tawus 1400 AH, 1:200; 2:381-562). Although frequent quotation of this hadith in various works cannot be counted as a strong reason for its authenticity, its effect has made some to consider it reliable. Therefore, the efforts of many who have studied this hadith have been mainly focused on justification, explanation, and examination of its content and theological impacts.¹ Reconsidering this hadith seems quite necessary, as it has been used to promote sectarianism and claim a monopoly on salvation.

1. Differences in Reports

This hadith has been reported with different wordings. Although some of these differences are insignificant, some others, particularly those related to the identity of the saved sect, are clearly contradictory.

Overall, diverse reports and interpretations of this hadith can be examined in three parts: the opening part, the middle part, and final part.

A. Differences in the Opening and Middle Parts of the Hadith

Some reports only deal with the classification of sects and their number in the past nations (Jews, Christians, and also Zoroastrians as cited in one tradition), as well as Muslims, and there is no mention of the salvation or destruction of a particular group or groups. As compared to other traditions, these traditions are fewer in number. At the end of the chain of narrators of these traditions in Sunni sources, we see the name of Abu Hurayra mostly. Notably, in some reports, the numbers start from seventy, instead of seventy-one; some of them use the word *milla*

1. See, for example, Shatibi (1418 AH, 459 ff.), al-Shaykh al-Tusi (1366 Sh, 127), and Hakimi (1410 AH, 5 ff.). For a study of the hadith's Sunni chains of narrators, see Ibn Abi 'Asim (1419 AH, 1:75-81), Ajluni (1352 AH, 169-70), and Haythami (1402 AH, 7:511-16).

(nation) instead of *firqa* (sect) and Israelites instead of the Jews or *ahl al-kitab* (People of the Book); and, in some cases, there is no mention of Christians. Moreover, rather than citing the number of Muslim sects, some reports use such phrases as “more than that in my nation” and/or “my nation similar to Israelites and Christians.”¹ Another report considers the time of the formation of these sects during apocalypse (MMI 1428 AH, 1:39). Furthermore, some other reports point out the division of the Muslim nation into two-fold, three-fold, or even four-fold categories (Majlisi 1403 AH, 28:10-16, 17, 22; Shatibi 1418 AH, 506).

In another category, which constitutes a large part of the reports of this hadith, not only is the idea of the division of the followers of the previous religions and of Islam cited but it is mentioned that only some of these sects will be saved. These reports convey that from among seventy-one Jewish sects, seventy-two Christian sects, and seventy-three Muslim sects, all—except for one sect—are misguided and destined to hell. Based on another tradition, these misguided sects are *ahl al-ahwa'* (people of desires) (Ibn Abi 'Asim 1419 AH, 1:79). Although there are different interpretations for these traditions, they all share the idea that only some sects will be saved, and the others are misguided and doomed to hell.² Another tradition, however, considers three sects, from among seventy-three sects, to be salvable (Ibn Abi 'Asim 1419 AH, 1:79; Shatibi 1418 AH, 506).

On the other extreme, according to a hadith, all the seventy-three Muslim sects—except for the Zanadiqa identified in a prophetic hadith as the Qadriyya—will be saved and go to heaven ('Asqalani 1407 AH, 3:291, 6:56; Dhahabi 1382 AH, 2:430).

1. Cf. Ibn Abi 'Asim (1419 AH, 1:77), Abu Dawud (n.d., 4:198), Ibn Majah (1419 AH, 4:394), Ajluni (1352 AH, 1:369), and Zayla'i (n.d., 1:447-50).

2. See also Muttaqi al-Hindi (1413 AH, 1:209-13; 11:114-16).

Some scholars believe that the hadith is authentic except for the part which declares all the sects doomed to hell except for one (Shawkani 1382 AH). However, other scholars maintain that not only is this part authentic but it has positively motivated Muslims to search for the truth (Farghal 1972, 57-58).

B. Differences and Contradictions in the Features and Names of the Saved and Doomed Sects

In some reports, not only is the number of the saved and doomed sects mentioned but also their names have been specified. In some of these reports, the saved and doomed sects among Jews and Christians are also specified (Shaykh al-Tusi 1384 Sh, 552, 554; Abu l-Ma‘ali 1376 Sh, 23). However, most heresiographers have only cited the versions that confirm their ideologies; theologians and traditionists have also tried to substantiate their religious or theological beliefs by referring to the versions that suit their agenda.

Before discussing these differences, it is noteworthy that, according to some reports, the Prophet (s) identified the saved sects with certain appellatives, including *ahl al-Islam wa jama‘atuhum* (the people of Islam and their community), *al-jama‘ah* (the community), “that which my companions and I maintain,” *al-sawad al-a‘zam* (the greater mass of people),¹ *ahl al-sunnah wa l-jama‘ah* (the people of the tradition and community) (Shahrastani 1363 SH, 21; A. Razi 1957, 252), “those who follow the unlettered Prophet (s)” (Shahrastani 1363 SH, 21; A. Razi 1957, 252), “those who maintain what you [i.e., Imam ‘Ali] and your companions maintain,” and “what my family and I follow today” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 28:2, 3, 13; 30:337; 36:336).

On the other hand, different sects have used this hadith to attack their opponents by appealing to its concluding part. Such reports as “the

1. See Muttaqi al-Hindi (1413 AH, 1:209-13). The terms “jama‘a” and “that which my companions and I maintain today” are more often found in Sunni sources and more referred to by Sunni heresiographers.

worst of them are the Shi‘a” (Ibn Abi ‘Asim 1419 AH, 1:71; ‘Iraqi 1961, 30) or “those who make *qiyas* (analogy) by declaring halal what is actually haram and vice-versa” (Muttaqi al-Hindi 1413 AH, 1:210) can be seen in this context. For instance, in his *al-Fisal*, Ibn Hazm takes the standard version of the hadith (which talks about the misguided sects going to hell) to be fake and unreliable, but in his book on jurisprudence *al-Muhalla*, where he criticizes *qiyas* (analogy), he refers to a version of the hadith that states: “The sect which will cause the greatest tribulation for my nation is the one that makes *qiyas*” (Ibn Hazm n.d., 1:62).

2. The Sectarian and Theological Consequences of Hadith al-Iftiraq

The hadith has played an important role in theological discussions and sectarian controversies, particularly in the development of Islamic heresiography. On the other hand, it has been misused by some groups. After citing this hadith, the author of *Tabsirat al-‘ulum* writes, “Know that each of these sects say that they are the saved one and the rest are all misguided infidels who will spend the eternity in hell ... but there is a public consensus that when these sects admit to *shahadatain*, the Creator, the prophets, and the principles of shariah, their blood, property, wives, and children are preserved... if anyone says otherwise, it is because of their bias and impiety” (‘Alam al-Huda 1313 Sh, 28). Although, as this writer states, the teachings of the Qur’an and sunnah do not consider the path to salvation and Paradise so narrow and rarely accessible, those Muslim historians who were supposed to report the beliefs and thoughts of Islamic sects objectively used this hadith to promote their own religious affiliation and attack and even excommunicate the others.¹ Of course, there is no problem in fairly

1. See, for instance, Malati (1993, 29), Ibn Murtada (1988, 26), Ibn Hazm (1416 AH, 2:275; 5:43, 46, 50, 62), ‘Iraqi (1961, 6-8), and ‘Alam al-Huda (1313 Sh, 41).

critiquing other people's beliefs, but it is not acceptable to exclude other sects from the ummah¹ relying only on this hadith.

It is quite difficult to address the theological, jurisprudential, and possibly political applications of this hadith by different groups; therefore, in this article, we only focus on one of the most important historical outcomes of this hadith, reflected in many works of heresiography, which is trying to match the actual number of Muslim sects with the numbers given in the hadith.

In order to match the numbers, heresiographers sometimes made up imaginary sects and sometimes disregarded the real ones; whereas, even if the hadith was authentic, it would be possible to interpret it allegorically—especially considering the fact that some early and well-known figures of heresiography, such as al-Nawbakhti and Abu l-Hasan al-Ash'ari did not cite this hadith and did not try to match their classifications of Muslim sects with it.

Moreover, it should be noted that even some scholars who were not practically committed to match their classification with the numbers given in the hadith accepted it in one way or another. The author of the book *Masa'il al-Imamiyya*, one of the earliest sources of heresiography available to us from the 4th/10th century, takes the situation of Muslim sects at his time to be evidence for the reliability of *hadith al-iftiraq* (Nashi al-Akbar 1971, 20). In his book *I'tiqadat firaq al-muslimin*, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi did not clearly cite this hadith either and did not try to match his classification of Muslim sects with it, but in an answer to the question why his list of Muslim sects exceeds the number seventy-three, he said that the Prophet's (s) remark was concerned only with the main sects (F. Razi 1363 Sh, 75-76).

1. See Naysaburi (1363 Sh, 4, 7).

However, al-Malati, Abu l-Ma‘ali, al-Baghdadi, al-Isfarayini, and al-Shahrastani have tried so hard to list exactly seventy-three Muslim sects in order to match the number given in the most widely cited versions of the hadith. This effort is also undertaken by some contemporary writers, who have selectively listed seventy-three Muslim sects in order to preserve the authenticity of the hadith (Hakimi 1410 AH).¹ It is notable that most of these authors do not mention any divisions for the branch to which they belong, but they count the divisions of the other branches excessively.

Of course, there have been several factors for the chaotic state of heresiography in Islam, including the lack of a clear definition for what counts as a sect, failing to provide evidence for the existence of certain sects, and sectarian animosities; however, the strive to make a list that matches the details given in Hadith al-Iftiraq has played a significant role.

3. A Content Analysis of the Hadith

Based on the aforementioned issues, it can be said that Hadith al-Iftiraq, according to its more common versions, insinuates three messages: (1) that the Muslim community will be divided more than Jews and Christians were divided, (2) that all Muslim sects will go astray and end up in hell except for one sect, and (3) specification of the saved sect.

As indicated earlier, given the multiplicity of the hadith’s versions, some have regarded the weakness in its chains of transmitters unimportant. On the other hand, doubting the prophecy of the Prophet (s) or the truth of his prophecies are not based on solid theological foundations, nor do they match the traditional and historical evidence. Nevertheless, several questions can be raised as regards this hadith,

1. Despite considering Wahhabism as a sect and briefly mentioning their doctrines and beliefs, Hakimi does not include Wahhabism in the seventy-three sects so that he can preserve the number.

answering which can help remove many confusions in heresiographical studies, defend the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and hopefully bring Muslim sects closer together. The questions are as follow:

1. Which of the mentioned versions—with all the differences and discrepancies between them—is meant by those scholars who claim that the hadith is not only well-known but also massively transmitted or accepted by consensus? It should be noted that a hadith does not become well-known only when it is reported by a significant number of narrators or issued at various occasions for a large group of people; it is likely that some hadiths have become well-known only as a result of sectarian incentives or because their narrators often appealed to them to prove their own beliefs. Therefore, just because a tradition is famous among people or even among scholars, it does not mean that it is authentic. Although the current study does not aim to discuss the authenticity of the various versions of the hadith,¹ it should not be forgotten that some Muslim narrators of hadith unfortunately distorted or made up hadiths with sound chains of transmitters where it suited their agendas.²

Those who appeal to Hadith al-Iftiraq have dismissed the fact that the number seventy-three in the hadith may have been simply an expression of plurality, not a reference to the actual number of Muslim sects. They have disregarded the fact that

1. For a study of the authenticity of the hadith, see Haythami (1402 AH, 7:511-16), 'Ajluni (1352 AH, 1:369), Ibn al-Wazir (1406 AH, 3: 170-72), Zayla'i (n.d., 1: 447-50), Subhani (1411 AH, 1: 24-26). In the latter work, the author mentions the Sunni critique of the authenticity of the hadith, and considers the two versions of the hadith quoted by al-Shaykh al-Saduq inauthentic. Nevertheless, he writes: "The multiplicity of the reports of this hadith in Shi'i and Sunni hadith collections nullifies the weakness of its chains of transmitters" (Subhani 1411 AH, 2: 1366).

2. See, for instance, 'Iraqi (1961, 43), 'Alam al-Huda (1313 Sh, 46), Isfara'ini (n.d., 21), and Subhani (1411 AH, 3:124).

the number given in the hadith is incompatible with the historical facts of the emergence of sects in the past religions. None has mentioned any definitions for a sect, nor have they mentioned at what point in history the seventy-three sects will appear. In the hadith itself, no timing is given, and the time has not come to an end, so why should it be assumed that the seventy-three sects are the ones that were formed in the first three centuries of the history of Islam?¹ It may be said that the secret behind inattention to such issues is the fact that the hadith is useful in the profession of heresiography and polemics against the rival sects.

2. Obviously, the primary purpose of the Prophet (s) was to guide and establish a faith-based community relying on the teachings of the Qur'an. Although warning was necessary, the Prophet was essentially a mercy for the world and a bearer of glad tidings, who founded his mission upon giving hope, good news, and happiness.² Now, the question is how the Prophet of mercy (s) could tell his newly-based community—described in the Qur'an as the “best” (Qur'an 3:110) and “moderate” (2:143) community—that they were doomed to such a devastating division and that the majority of them would be condemned to hell?³ Does any farmer take pride in his products that are

1. For more information on such questions and doubts, see Subhani (1411 AH, 1:24-27).

2. In the Qur'an, the attribute *mubashshir* (bearer of glad tidings) precedes the attribute *nadhir* (warner). Although one of the missions of the Qur'an and the Prophet (s) was warning, this was not meant to disappoint people but to preserve them from going astray. To show a well to someone and warning them against falling into it is one thing, and to inform someone that they will definitely fall into a well is another thing; each has a different objective (See Qur'an 2:119; 5:19; 34:28; 35:45; 17:105; 33:45; 53:56; 13:7).

3. For traditions on the characteristics and superiority of the Muslim community as regards guidance and salvation, see Qummi (1428 AH, 3:3 ff.) and Ibn

devastated by pests, or does any father take pride in his children most of whom are wicked? And would not such statement from the Prophet (s) be regarded by people as a declaration of failure for his mission? As a matter of fact, we are not concerned with what occurred during the Islamic history, but we certainly doubt that the Prophet (s) himself announced such news to people.

At any rate, the manifest meaning of the hadith and the way it has usually been interpreted have left more negative consequences than positive results—unless the ending part of the hadith is considered fabricated, in which case it can be said that the Prophet (s) predicted the division of his community without judging it. Division itself is not necessarily an evil phenomenon; rather, the division of the Muslim ummah is a blessing caused by the plurality of Muslim communities and the richness of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, of which the Prophet (s) was fully aware.

However, the aforementioned justification is not supported by the manifest meaning of the hadith. Controversies and divisions among the past nations have been mentioned in the Qur'an as caused by impiety and disobedience, and the believers are warned against following their steps.

3. There is no doubt that the Prophet (s) strived tirelessly, according to his universal mission, to guide people towards salvation. Introducing the Qur'an and his family (*ahl al-bayt*) as two precious things (*thaqalayn*), whose guidance guarantees salvation for his followers, and likening the *ahl al-bayt* to Noah's ark and stars of guidance are among the measures the

Kathir (1402 AH, 1:391-97; 2:80-85). The late Allamah Tabataba'i also affirms the superiority of the Muslim ummah over other nations (Tabataba'i 1393 AH, 3:376-77).

Prophet (s) took to preserve his followers from going astray after him. A question raised here is how the Prophet (s) could make these efforts and, at the same time, announce that most of his followers will go astray and end up in hell. Would it be wise for someone to strive so much for a purpose and, at the same time, announce that he will fail in achieving it? Of course, this is not to deny the facts that took place after the Prophet (s), but an indication that it is unlikely for the Prophet (s) to have made such a statement.

4. Moreover, the Prophet (s) and *ahl al-bayt* (a) have instructed us repeatedly to check the sayings attributed to them with the teachings of the Qur'an.¹ Indeed, it is quite difficult to unravel the spiritual nature of the teachings of the Qur'an; however, one may ask whether there are any verses in the Qur'an that give disappointing news regarding the future of the Muslim community. The scholars consider one aspect of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an to be its prediction of the future events. Although there are only a few such cases and the teachings of the Qur'an are not based on them, these few examples of prediction clarify the fact that these verses are mainly hope-inspiring and pursue educational goals; they are not disappointing statements to rebuke anyone. Therefore, the Prophet (s), who was a complete manifestation of Qur'anic teachings and values and considered the authenticity of the words attributed to him to depend on their accordance with the letter and spirit of Qur'an, would never say a word that would not solve a spiritual or social problem for the Muslim community, let alone words that give rise to chaos, frustration, and disappointment. We should note, in particular, that the

1. See, for instance, Kulayni (1401 AH, 1: 69 ff.) and Hurr al-'Amili (1403 AH, 18:86 ff.).

Muslim community was newly established at the time of the Prophet (s), and its fundamental need was the reinforcement of the religious spirit, as well as submission to the truths of revelation.

5. Finally, it is not possible to prove important, fundamental, and decisive topics associated with ideological and theological matters, the acceptance of which requires certainty, by resorting to a hadith whose authenticity is not clear (Fadlallah 1405 AH, 1:11).

Influenced by such Qur'anic and traditional teachings, great Muslim leaders such as Imam Khomeini considered the Hereafter to be founded upon God's infinite mercy; there, they believed, the righteousness of each person will be judged individually and in accordance with the context and circumstances of his life and his capabilities (Khomeini 1387 Sh, 485). Not only do they believe that the majority of Muslims, regardless of their denominational affiliation, will be saved; they also maintain that the majority of the followers of other religions will be saved, because most people bear no animosity towards the truth, and they will follow the Right Path if they recognize it (Khomeini 1368 Sh, 1:33; Mutahhari 1368 Sh, 1:272 ff.; Kirmnashahi 1370 Sh, 2:398).

References

- Abu Dawud, Sulayman b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani. n.d. *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Edited by *Muhammad Muhyi l-Din 'Abd al-Hamid*. Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Asriyyah.
- Abu l-Ma'ali, Muhammad. 1376 Sh. *Bayan al-adyan*. Edited by S. M. Dabir Siyaqi. Tehran: Rowzaneh.
- 'Ajluni, Isma'il b. Muḥammad. 1352 AH. *Kashf al-khifa' wa muzil al-ilbas*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsi.
- 'Alam al-Huda, Murtada b. Da'i. 1313 Sh. *Tabsirat al-'awamm fi ma'rifat maqalat al-anam*. Edited by Abbas Iqbal. Tehran: Matba'ah-yi Majlis.

- Ash‘ari, Abu l-Hasan al-. 1405 AH. *Maqalat al-islamiyyin wa ikhtilaf al-musallin*. Edited by Muhammad Muhyi al-Din ‘Abd al-Hamid. Al-Saqqaf.
- ‘Asqalani, Ibn Hajar al-. 1407 AH. *Lisan al-mizan*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Dhahabi, Shams al-Din Muhammad al-. 1382 AH. *Mizan al-i‘tidal*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah.
- Fadlallah, Mohammad Hossein. 1405 AH. *Min wahy al-Qur‘an*. Beirut: Dar al-Zahra’.
- Farghal, Yahya. 1972. *‘Awamil wa ahdaf nash‘at ‘ilm al-kalam fi l-Islam*. Majma‘ al-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah.
- Hakimi, Muhammad Reza. 1410 AH. *Bidayat al-firaq wa nihayat al-muluk*. Beirut: Dar al-Firdaws.
- Haythami, Ali b. Abi Bakr al-. 1402 AH. *Majma‘ al-zawa‘id wa manba‘ al-fawa‘id*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabi.
- Hurr al-‘Amili, Muhammad. 1403 AH. *Wasa‘il al-Shi‘ah*. Edited by A. Rabbani Shirazi. Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi.
- Ibn Abi ‘Asim, Ahmad b. ‘Amr. 1419 AH. *Al-Sanad*. Edited by Basim b. Faysal. Riyadh: Dar al-Sumay‘i.
- Ibn Hazm, ‘Ali b. Ahmad. 1416 AH. *Al-Fisal fi al-milal wa al-ahwa‘ wa al-nihal*. Edited by Muhammad Ibrahim Nasr and ‘Abd al-Rahman Amira. Beirut: Dar Jayl.
- . n.d. *Al-Muhalla bi l-athar*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Ibn Kathir, Isma‘il. 1402 AH. *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-‘azim*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifh.
- Ibn Majah, Muhammad b. Yazid. *Sunan Ibn Majah*. Edited by Mahmud Muhammad Mahmud. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Imiyyah.
- Ibn Murtada. 1988. *Al-Maniyyah wa al-amal*. Mu‘assasat al-Kitab al-Thiqafiyyah.
- Ibn Tawus, Ali ibn Musa. 1400 AH. *al-Tara‘if fi ma‘rifat mazhab al-tawa‘if*. Qom: Matba‘at al-Khayyam.
- Ibn al-Wazir, Muḥammad b. Ibrahim. 1406 AH. *Al-‘Awasim wa al-qawasim fi al-dhabb ‘an sunnat Abi l-Qasim*. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risalah.

- ‘Iraqi, ‘Uthman b. ‘Abdullah. 1961 *Al-Firaq al-muftariqah bayn ahl al-zaygh wa al-zandaqah*. Edited by Quqluy. Ankara.
- Isfarayini, Abu l-Muzaffar. *Al-Tabsir fi al-din*. Edited by Kamal Yusef al-Hut. Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub.
- Khomeini, Ruhollah. 1368 Sh. *Al-Makasib al-muharramah*. Qom: Isma‘ilian.
- . 1387 Sh. *Sharh chihil hadith*. Tehran: Mu’assassa Nashr Athar Imam Khomeini.
- Kirmanshahi, Muhammad ‘Ali. 1370 Sh. *Khayratiyya*. Qom: Ansarian.
- Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub al-. 1401 AH. *Usul al-Kafi*. Edited by ‘Ali Akbar Ghaffari. Beirut: Dar Sa‘b.
- Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. 1403 AH. *Bihar al-anwar*. Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi.
- Malati, Abu l-Husayn. 1993. *Al-Tanbih wa al-radd ‘ala al-ahwa’ wa al-bida’*. Edited by Muhammad Zinham. Cairo: Maktabah Madbuli.
- MMI (Mu’assasat Ma‘arif Islami). 1428 AH. *Mu’jam ahadith al-Mahdi*. Qom: MMI.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 1368 Sh. *Majmu‘a athar*. Qom: Sadra.
- Muttaqi al-Hindi, ‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ali al-. 1413 AH. *Kanz al-‘ummal fi sunan al-aqwal wa-al-af‘al*, Revised by Sheikh Safwah al-Saqqa’. Beirut: M’uassasat al-Risalah.
- Nashi al-Akbar, ‘Abd Allah al-. 1971. *Masa’il al-imamah*. Edited by J. van Ess. Beirut.
- Nawbakhti, al-Hasan b. Musa al-. 1355 AH. *Firaq al-Shi‘a*. Tehran: Maktabah Murtadawiyyah.
- Naysaburi, Fadl b. Shadhan al-. 1363 Sh. *Al-Idah*. Edited by J. H. Irmawi. Tehran: University of Tehran Press.
- Qummi, ‘Ali b. Ibrahim al-. 1428 AH. *Tafsir al-Qummi*. Edited by M. Salihi Andimishki. Qom: Dhawi l-Qurba.
- Razi, Abu Hatim al-. 1957. *Kitab al-Zinah (Part III)*. Revised by Abdullah Salum al-Samirra’i. Cairo.
- Razi, Fakhr al-Din al-. 1993. *I’tiqadat firaq al-muslimin wa l-mushrikin*. Edited by Muhammad Zinham. Cairo: Maktabah Madbuli.

- Subhani, Ja'far. 1411 AH. *Buhuth fi al-milal wa al-nihal*. Beirut: Dar al-Islamiyyah.
- Shahrastani, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-. 1363 Sh. *Kitab al-Milal wa al-nihal*. Edited by Muhammad b. Fathallah Badran. 3rd edition. Qom: Sharif Razi Publications.
- Shatibi, Ibrahim b. Musa al-. 1418 AH. *Al-I'tisam*. Edited by M. T. al-Halabi. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Shawkani, Muhammad al-. 1382 AH. *Fath al-qadir*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Shaykh al-Tusi, Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-. 1366 Sh. *Al-Ras'il al-'ashr*. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islamiyyah.
- . 1384 Sh. *Al-Amali*. Qom: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Tabataba'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. 1393 AH. *Al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami.
- Zayla'i, Muhammad. n.d. *Takhrij al-ahadith wa-l-athar*. Edited by Sultan Bin Fahd. Riyadh: Dar Ibn Khazimeh.

God and Man in Freudian Psychoanalysis: A Critical Examination of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*

Ali Haghi¹

Received: 01-10-2017 / Accepted: 02-12-2017

In this article, we have attempted to scrutinize Freud's psychological analysis of man and God. Four different interpretations of this Freudian analysis have been examined hereunder. Freud believes that religion is the outcome of wishful thinking or fear. Freud's views on the origin of religion have been stated in a detailed fashion in his works on psychoanalysis. His *The Future of an Illusion* is the focus of our study of his views on God and man in this article. Freud held that the idea of God is simply a subjective illusion, since theism is only the product of father-complex. He suggested that every child is helpless, and for this reason depends upon his human father. As the child grows up, he finds that he cannot depend on his father for protection from a hostile and intolerable world. Therefore, he concocts an idea of a divine being and projects his image of his father unto a cosmic scale. He then turns to this figment of his imagination for security and comfort.

Keywords: God, human being, psychoanalysis, wishful thinking.

1. Assistant Professor, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran
(Haghi@ferdowsi.um.ac.ir).

Introduction

Sigmund Freud explicitly expresses his doubts about the veracity of religion by the following words:

We shall tell ourselves that it would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent providence, and if there were a moral order in the universe and an after-life; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be. And it would be more remarkable still if our wretched, ignorant and downtrodden ancestors had succeeded in solving all these difficult riddles of the universe. (Freud 1961)

In Freud's opinion, religion is merely an illusion,¹ a belief which is based on a wish fulfillment and which has no base in reality. In *The Future of an Illusion*, published in 1927 and first translated into English in 1928, Freud expounded upon this view and, in the end, advocated the complete abolition of religion.

Quite predictably, the religious response to this book was unfavorable and late. One may only speculate about the reasons for this delay. I believe, it must have been related, to some extent, to the fact that religious communities did not want to draw too much attention to this book. Yet, as the book and its author became more widely known, religious figures (both clerical and academic) ceased to remain silent. Nevertheless, a critical examination of *The Future of an Illusion* and the responses of several religious critics will show, perhaps surprisingly to some, that they did succeed in raising many logical and rational (as opposed to purely emotional) objections to Freud's book.

Let us begin with a detailed summary of Freud's arguments. He starts with a thorough explanation of the rise of civilization. According to Freud, "the principal task of civilization, its actual *raison d'être*, is to defend us against nature" (1961, 15). Yet, in order to coexist peacefully with his fellow humans and to carry out successfully the

1. This is not to be confused with "delusion," which lies in direct contradiction to reality.

work upon which a society depends, man had to control his instinctual impulses. However, this created a problem: the instincts of the masses cannot be controlled by their intellects; that is, by logic and reason (1961, 7). Freud thus concludes that:

There are two widespread human characteristics which are responsible for the fact that the regulations of civilization can only be maintained by a certain degree of coercion—namely, that men are not spontaneously fond of work and that arguments are of no avail against their passions. (1961, 8)

As a result of these two superior forces (i.e., nature and civilization), man was left with a feeling of helplessness. Seeking to rob nature of its terrors and to console himself for the sacrifices demanded by civilization, man projected his wishes for a Lord and protector onto the cosmos. He thus succeeded in creating a God, a sort of universal father, born from man's need to make his helplessness tolerable and built up from the material of memories of the helplessness of his own childhood and the childhood of the human race (1961, 18). This God was invested with the powers to control both nature and society. Man, therefore, loved God and came to believe that nature is not cruel and callous, that his life does have a purpose, and that in the end, there is an after-life in which he will be compensated justly for the hardship he has endured. Yet, man also feared God, for he possesses the power to punish man with death or with other natural catastrophes. Freud believes that, as a result of man's ambivalent feelings towards God, religion grew out of the Oedipus complex—that is, out the child's need to establish a harmonious relationship with his father (1961, 43).

Freud concludes that God is the result solely of this wish for an omnipotent father and is thus an illusion. He argues that if the concept of God were rooted in reality, then the truth of God's existence could somehow definitely be confirmed. He provides an analogy with the town Constance, which, it is said, lies on the Bodensee. If we wanted to

confirm this geographical truth, we could visit Constance, and we would undoubtedly agree that it does lie on the Bodensee (1961, 25). Yet, when we ask for evidence of the truth of religion, says Freud, we are given the following three answers: “Firstly, these teachings ... were already believed by our primal ancestors; secondly, we possess proofs which have been handed down to us from those same primeval times; it is forbidden to raise the question of their authentication at all” (1961, 26). Freud then dismisses these arguments rather quickly. In answer to the first, he says that our ancestors believed many things which are found unacceptable today and that the possibility exists that religion also falls into this category. He maintains that the proofs mentioned in the second argument are untrustworthy and therefore useless. Also, the third argument merely proves the insecurity of religions’ claim to reality (1961, 26-27). He concludes by saying:

Thus we arrive at the singular conclusion that of all the information provided by our cultural assets it is precisely the elements which might be of the greatest importance to us and which have the tasks of solving the riddles of the universe and of reconciling us to the suffering of life—it is precisely those elements that are the least well authenticated of any. (1961, 27)

Freud then draws the analogy between religion and an obsessional neurosis. Childhood neuroses occur because children, their intellects not yet having fully developed, must be taught by effective means to control their instinctual impulses. Thus, because children cannot control their instincts rationally, they must control them by means of repression. As children grow, most of these neuroses are overcome spontaneously, but those that are not develop into neurosis, which can later be cured by psychoanalysis. This neurosis is recognized and identified by the obsessive actions which are their result. Similarly, in times when man’s intelligence was much weaker than his instincts, instinctual renunciation could only be effected through purely effective forces. As a result, something like repression occurred in humanity as a

whole. Freud concludes that “[r]eligion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father” (1961, 43). Freud adds that this analogy is consistent with the fact that very few devout believers are stricken with neuroses, for “their acceptance of the universal neurosis spares them the task of constructing a personal one” (1961, 26-44).

Finally, by conceding that religion has in the past “performed great services for human civilization” (1961, 37), Freud argues that, in the same way that psychoanalysis replaces “the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect,” so is it time for us to replace the (effective) precepts of civilization based on religion by those based on the rational workings of the intellects (1961, 44). In such a case,

laws would lose their rigidity and unchangeableness as well. People could understand that they are made, not so much to rule them as, on the contrary, to serve their interests; and they would adopt a friendlier attitude to them, and instead of aiming at their abolition, would aim only at their improvement. This would be an important advance along the road which leads to becoming reconciled to the burden of civilization. (1961, 41)

In addition, at the end of the book, Freud states that because science is based on observation and material evidence, it is rooted in reality to a much greater extent than religion. Therefore, in addition to abandoning religion as a source of laws on which to run society, we ought also to abandon religion as a source of knowledge about the external world altogether. In its place, we should put science, for “Science has given us evidence—by its numerous and important successes—that it is no illusion ... But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us can be found elsewhere” (1961, 55-56).

Such, then, are Freud's theories concerning the history and the future of religion. Freud was fully aware that this book would meet with much criticism: "The one person this publication may injure is I. I shall have to listen to the most disagreeable reproaches for my shallowness, narrow-mindedness, and lack of idealism or of understanding for the highest interest of mankind" (1961, 35-36). Yet, I believe Freud would be surprised at the high level of scholarship exhibited by those of the religious community who criticized this book. Indeed, the moralistic and idealistic arguments expected by Freud were the exception rather than the rule. A critical examination of the critiques of five religious figures, J. F. Mozley, J. E. Turner, Dale H. Moore, Atkinson Lee, and David Trueblood, will show that most, though certainly not all, of their arguments are logically sound, and many would leave Freud hard pressed for an answer.¹

Let us begin with the argument of Lee and Turner against Freud's first assertion—namely, that man created civilization to protect himself from nature. Both ask rhetorically whether nature and man are really in opposition (Turner 1931, 215; Lee 1934, 510). Turner goes on to say that these two forces may only be in opposition if Freud chooses to define nature in a narrow and antiquated fashion. Freud would justifiably answer this objection with a tone of annoyance, saying that he had made it clear that he was not necessarily referring to all of nature, but only to those destructive aspects such as earthquakes, floods, diseases, and death (Freud 1961, 15-16). He used the term *nature* merely for convenience.

Next, Turner attacks Freud's contention that a certain amount of coercion is necessary for any civilization. Turner writes:

We may agree that all human progress from the animal and savage level has been very largely due to certain small minorities. But to

1. The possible exception here is J. E. Turner, many of whose arguments seem unsound.

call their influence “coercive” is to verge on the ridiculous; quite plainly, on the contrary, their methods have consisted uniformly in persuasion and example, argument and exhortation. (Turner 1931, 213)

To this, Freud again rightly responds, “Show me, anywhere in history, a civilization, which has been able to exist wholly without coercion; which has been able to give the masses free reign to control their own instinctual drives by following the example of the upper class. Indeed you cannot, for no such civilization has ever existed” (Turner 1931, 215).

Here, Turner accuses Freud of inconsistency. For, on one other hand, Freud asserts that coercion by a minority is necessary for civilization (Freud 1961, 7-8); while, on the other hand, he states, “We came together and created civilization ... to defend us against nature” (1961, 15). Turner maintains that “[i]t is patent that these two theories are hopelessly irreconcilable, since if mankind ‘united together and created culture’ there can never have existed the asserted minority externally coercing the larger mass” (Turner 1931, 215). Freud would reply that it is clear enough, even to the masses, that man must unite and guard himself against nature. Yet, such an undertaking could never succeed without the coercion of the minority, whose intellects were sufficiently well developed to control their passions.

The next point to come under attack is Freud’s assertion that man invented religion as a result of his helplessness when faced with the overwhelming powers of nature and society. This is analogous to the Oedipus complex, when a helpless child looks to his father for protection. Turner argues this point by contending that Freud has failed to recognize the difference between the *fact* of helplessness and the *consciousness* of helplessness. He agrees with Freud that both primitive man and children are indeed helpless. However, he maintains that neither is aware of his helplessness, as shown by the fact that small

children are observed “climbing ladders and fraternizing with large and fierce dogs,” while primitive man has been observed “habitually and unthinkingly facing perils and accepting risks to which civilized man would quickly succumb” (Turner 1931, 220). Therefore, since neither the child nor primitive man is aware of his state, neither need to seek protection from a father (1931, 220-21). Turner is thus simultaneously questioning the validity of the Oedipus complex as well as Freud’s theory of the origin of religion. Freud would respond by saying that he does not need to prove that children and primitive men are intellectually aware of their helplessness, for their seeking protection from a father is the result of their unconscious feeling of helplessness.

J. F. Mozley also attacks this point, but in a different way. He does not question the validity of the Oedipus complex, but rather the validity of the analogy between the Oedipus complex and the helplessness of primitive man, for, in the case of the child, the terrors of the external world are unfamiliar to him, and he turns to his father, who is indisputably real, for protection. On the other hand, primitive man faces terrors which are very real to him, and he turns for protection to a father who does not exist. Mozley comments that, “this (as Freud has described it) is to act not like a child, but like a neurotic (Mozley 1930, 50-51). Clearly, Mozley could not be stating here that primitive man was neurotic when he invented religion; rather, he is exposing a flaw in Freud’s analogy between the Oedipus complex and the origins of religion, with the purpose of showing that Freud’s account must be incorrect. It is Mozley’s implicit assumption that religion could not have resulted from a neurosis, because religion is a nearly universal belief, whereas neurosis implies abnormal psychical processes. Thus, by carrying through Freud’s analogy and arriving at a contradiction (a “universal abnormality”), Mozley has dealt a serious blow to it. Freud, however, does not agree with Mozley’s assumption, for Freud admits the possibility of a universal neurosis. Thus, we have here a

fundamental disagreement. Both men agree that Freud's analogy, as stated, leads to the conclusion that primitive men acted neurotically when they invented religion. Mozley takes this as proof that Freud's account of the origin of religion must be incorrect, for he believes that a universal neurosis is inherently impossible. Freud, on the other hand, sees this conclusion as proof that religion is an obsessional neurosis of which we ought to purge ourselves.

Mozley further attacks this analogy with two more valid points. First, he argues that, according to Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, the child feels nothing but love for his mother, while for his father, he feels both fear and love. Yet, man chose to create his god in the image of the father. Mozley thus poses the following question: "If we are inventing a god at all to guard us from the cruelties of life, why not invent one whom we can love without any admixture of fear?" (Mozley 1930, 50-51) I believe that Freud would be able to answer this question only with difficulty, though his answer would probably be that, in the eyes of the child, the mother signifies love, affection, and nourishment, while the father more deeply signifies the idea of protection, which is the primary goal of religion. It is only natural that man chose the father as the model for his god.

Secondly, Mozley points out that the analogy between God and the father is perfected only under monotheism. One would expect, then, that religion would be monotheistic from its inception. Yet this is known not to be the case, for "monotheism is a late and lofty stage of religious development" (Mozley 1930, 50-51). To this objection, I believe Freud would be hard pressed to formulate a logical and reasonable answer.

The next objection attacks Freud's contention that religion results solely from the projection of a wish-illusion onto the cosmos. Both Lee and Trueblood observe, however, that religion is often contrary to our wishes (Trueblood 1924, 458; Lee 1934, 511). Trueblood writes:

The reference to wishes was the keystone.... of the Freudian analysis.... if it could be shown that the religion experience of men is frequently *at variance with their wishes*, the teeth of the difficulty would be pulled. Now, as a matter of fact, so far as we *ever* know fact, this is the case. (Trueblood 1924, 258)

Freud would probably respond to this by saying that it is not a feature of religion itself which is contrary to men's wishes; rather, it is certain aspects of the forms which religion has taken since its origin.

Mozley, Moore, and Turner all maintain that the reasons provided by Freud for the acceptance of religion are erroneous. Turner's argument is rendered less effective by the following inane statement: "The more enlightened of Christianity have welcomed inquiry even if they have condemned and ... severely punished heresy" (Turner 1931, 218). To punish a person for reaching an unpopular conclusion is certainly not, logically speaking, to welcome inquiry. Moore, without actually revealing what is religions' claim to be believed, states, "To say that the only claims of religious truth to be believed lie in the traditional authority and the fear of open discussion is but to demonstrate an ignorance of religious conditions in the world today and a total misunderstanding of the motives of the religious individual in being religious" (Moore 1964, 170). It is Mozley who enlightens us about the true source of modern man's belief in God:

The final word is said by our own spirits. We claim that, when we weigh candidly all the facts of the world and all the power of the human mind, a hard materialism becomes impossible; we are driven to believe in God and spiritual forces.... Religion ... may well be one of those domains where insight and the hearing ear are more value than the mere tabulation of facts. (Mozley 1930, 55-56)

It is thus the religious experience of the individual on which religion lays its claim to be believed. Here, Freud would respond that religious experiences are merely examples of introspect and intuition, from which it is "merely an illusion to expect anything... It would be insolent

to let one's own arbitrary will step into the breach and, according to one's personal estimate, declare this or that part of the religious system to be less or more acceptable" (Freud 1961, 31-32). Freud would thus assert that a religious experience is caused by a (conscious or unconscious) belief in God, rather than the other way around.

Freud's second major analogy, comparing religion to an obsessional neurosis, is strongly attacked by Mozley. In his article, Mozley lists three similarities drawn by Freud between obsessional neurosis and the religiousness of persons. They are the following: first, both persons experience pangs of conscience if they omit the ritual; second, both isolate their rituals from all other activities; and third, both pay extremely close attention to detail (Mozley 1930, 48).¹ Mozley objects to this comparison on the following grounds:

The three likenesses, which he draws between religion and a neurotic compulsion, can be found in almost any pursuit where the devotee is in dead earnest. The first-class musician, for example, never omits his practice, is extremely conscientious over his exercises ... and he also isolates his music from the rest of his life. (Mozley 1930, 53)

To this criticism Freud would surely respond with disgust: "I suggest you turn the page, sir, and read about the fourth similarity which I draw between the religious man and the neurotic. There I state that obsessive acts, like religious rites, are, in all their details full of meaning... (That they are filled with) direct or... [Indirect] symbolic representation. This eliminates the first-class musician and any others you may have had in mind. Therefore, my analogy still holds" (Freud 1959, 2:28).

Yet Mozley attacks this analogy further, justifiably labeling ridiculous Freud's assertion that religious men are usually spared personal neuroses, because they have succumbed to the universal one. Mozley points out that when psychoanalysis cures or prevents a

1. These similarities may be found in Freud (1959).

neurosis, Freud regards this as a “feather in his cap,” whereas when religion achieves this same goal, Freud takes this as evidence that religion is itself a neurosis (Mozley 1930, 54). Surely, Freud’s reasoning is twisted. Freud would probably respond (rather feebly) that psychoanalysis is the only proven technique for curing a neurosis, and that of all the possible explanations why religious men do not usually have neuroses, his is certainly plausible. Mozley further argues that the neurotic is unhappy, because he is aware of his obsessional symptoms but can do nothing about them. The religious man, on the other hand, “glories in his state” (Mozley 1930, 53). Freud would counter that this is further evidence for his view that religion is like a powerful narcotic, for men have become so dependent on religion that they will find it very difficult to discard (Freud 1961, 49). Finally, Mozley recalls Freud’s concession that religion has performed “great services” for mankind. He then asks, “But who was ever the better for a neurosis? How can goodness and contentment have been created by an utter fiction?” (Mozley 1930, 59) He then continues, agreeing that religion is not perfect, but stating that it ought to be perfected rather than abolished. He compares religion to the science of medicine, which, though once laughable by our standards, has “paved the way for the grander achievement of to-day” (Mozley 1930, 59). Here, Freud would probably respond by offering what he would consider a more appropriate analogy. He would compare religion to something like the Ptolemaic model of the universe, which for many centuries adequately predicated celestial events. Yet, as scientific knowledge grew, this model was replaced by the Copernican model, which was found to correspond more closely to reality. In the same way, Freud would argue, it is time to discard religion in favor of science and reason.

Mozley, Lee, Trueblood, and Turner all attack Freud’s basic view of science (Mozley 1930, 58; Lee 1934, 511-12; Trueblood 1924, 256-57; Turner 1931, 216). While comparing science and religion, Freud states, “We can now repeat that all [religious doctrines] are illusions and

insusceptible of proof Scientific work is the only road which can lead us to knowledge of reality outside ourselves" (Freud 1961, 31). At the end of his book, Freud states that "science has given us evidence by its numerous and important successes that it is no illusion" (1961, 55). Freud seems to be implying that science is a means for obtaining objective knowledge about external reality, liberated from the chains of human wishes and illusion. Yet, the four critics point out similarly that science is subject to the same wishes and illusions as religion. Trueblood writes:

If religion is illusory because it is desirable to believe in God, everything else in which men believe is illusory too. By the same procedure we should be forced to hold that science and art are likewise "projections." Man wants terribly to find order in the world rather than chaos, so [by Freud's reasoning] the great laws of natural sciences are merely formulations which are created to satisfy this desire. (Trueblood 1924, 256-57)

Thus, say the critics, religion may well be colored by human desires, but it certainly cannot be said that science is free from these influences. Freud would respond by repeating his analogy concerning the town of Constance. He would argue that certain truths (including scientific truths) can be easily confirmed, and in such a way that they will be evident to many different people at once. Religious truths, however, are largely products of the individual mind, and are thus not conducive to universal confirmation. Though none of the five critics comments on this aspect of the conformability of scientific truths, I would answer Freud by arguing that much of our scientific "knowledge" is based on beliefs which, up to now, have not been confirmed through experience. For example, the atomic theory is based on the belief that atoms exist, though no one has ever seen or isolated a single atom. I believe Freud would have difficulty arriving at a reasonable explanation of the qualitative difference between the belief in atoms and the belief in God.

Mozley attacks Freud's contention that man would benefit from the abolition of religion and the resulting primacy of the intellect. Mozley asks, "What ground is there for supposing that the basis of man's nature will ever be altered and that the emotions will cease to be the mainspring of our actions?" (Mozley 1930, 60). Here, Freud could only repeat his argument that as soon as the religious basis for the precepts of civilization is discarded, then men will become friendlier to society's laws. This will occur because men will understand that laws are meant to serve their interests rather than to control them. Yet, such reasoning is only speculative on Freud's part; he can provide no evidence that his prediction is a sound one.

And finally, in what may be the strongest argument of all, Moore and Trueblood point out that Freud has never actually proved that there is no God. Moore notes that "the observation of a parallel [with the Oedipus complex] does not justify one in drawing the conclusion 'that is *all* there is to religion'" (Trueblood 1924, 171). Trueblood takes the argument one step further, proposing a theory in which Freud's ideas are consistent with the existence of God. He writes:

[Freud's] explanation, it should be noted, is *consistent with* the notion that God is nonexistent, but it does not *prove* that God is nonexistent. . . . Even if his observations are correct, there is nothing in his argument to oppose the theory that it is this very emotional [childhood] disturbance which makes men sensitively aware of the objective presence of God. (Trueblood 1924, 254-55)

Therefore, Freud has not actually proved that God does not exist. He has shown only that such a view is consistent with his psychoanalytic theories.

Thus, we have seen the argument raised by five religious critics against Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*. Though Freud would probably have answered many of them much more skillfully and persuasively than I did, I believe that these critics succeeded in raising many valid objections, such as those involving the difficulties with the

Oedipus complex analogy, the obsessional neurosis analogy, and the role of wishes in science. On the whole, I believe that these six men displayed a remarkable amount of scholarship and intellectual honesty in discussing such an emotionally powerful issue as religion.

References

- Freud, Sigmund. 1959. *Collected Papers*. Translated by Joan Riviere. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- . 1961. *The Future of an Illusion*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Lee, Atkinson. 1934. "The Freudian Illusion." *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 159: 507-13.
- Moore, Dale H. 1941. "Freud and Religion." *The Personalist* 22: 169-73.
- Mozley, J. F. 1930. "Freud and Religion." *Church Quarterly Review* 111: 44-64.
- Trueblood, David. 1942. *The Logic of Belief*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers.
- Turner, J. E. 1931. "Freud and the Illusion of Religion." *Journal of Religion* 11: 212-21.

***Thinking* as Evidence for the Probability of the
Existence of a God:
An Argument from Unnaturalness for Necessity**

Javad Taheri ¹

Received: 30-08-2017 / Accepted: 02-12-2017

The objective of this article is to show that it is justified to assert that the existence of God is plausible, considering the fact that *thinking* itself is an immediate outcome (effect) of a thinker (cause). This idea may seem evident, but it is in fact challenged by certain claims of cognitive philosophers who aver that our knowledge of *necessity* and *causation* is, in the final analysis, bounded by our naturalness. That is to say, what we understand of necessity and causation is originally based on root-experiences we have had from the early moments of our birth onward or even before our birth.

This article tries to display that giving a model for a kind of necessity which is not essentially built upon the naturalness of human experiences can negate the universality of believing in the naturalness of human understanding. With this, one can prove the probability of the existence of a *Necessary Being*, whose necessity is different from the so-called embodied necessity. However, the Necessary Being is not equal to all conceptions of God, but it is equal to some of them. The article concludes that the probability of the existence of God (of a particular kind) is an inevitable outcome, even with the presupposition of cognitive philosophers.

Keywords: cognitive philosophy, causation, necessity, thinking, Necessary Being, God.

1. MA Graduate of Philosophy of Religion, Allameh Tabatabaei University, Tehran, Iran (javadtaheri1982@gmail.com).

Introduction

The title indicates that one is justified in saying that the existence of God is plausible, considering the fact that one's "thinking" is one's immediate effect. The article intends to shed light on a particular necessity, which, to my knowledge, is not addressed by cognitive philosophers, such as Mark Johnson, who try to prove that our knowledge of the concepts of necessity and causation is, in its final analysis, issued from our naturalness. According to this explanation, what we understand of necessity and causation is originally based on bodily experiences we have had from an early moment when our perception was activated.

However, there can be an example that opposes the universality of this kind of theoretical description of necessity, which is not essentially built upon the naturalness of human experiences, and can break the domination of believing in naturalness of human understanding. With this, one can prove the probability of the existence of a particular *Necessary Being*, which is different from the one mentioned by cognitivism. It is true that the Necessary Being is not equal to all conceptions of God, but since it is equal to one of them, it can be concluded that the plausibility of the existence of a specific conception of God is an inevitable outcome even based on the principles of cognitive philosophy.

Before analyzing the two competing perspectives toward causation and necessity, the related literature on the theoretical principles of cognitive philosophy is reviewed hereunder.

Embodied Cognition

Embodied Cognition Theory states that the only equipment we have for interacting with the external world is sensational perception. The theory implies that man's conceptual structure is embodied (Evans, Bergen, and Zinken 2006). Along with this idea, it can be alleged that perception and cognition are not fundamentally distinct.

According to the hypothesis of *embodiment*, man's conceptual system functions in a way in which our bodies and brains are the main players. The hypothesis demonstrates that we have an embodied mind, by which we can understand abstract concepts in terms of less abstract concepts by means of metaphorical processes. We cannot consciously monitor all of these processes; instead, the cognitive system performs many metaphorical processes unconsciously. Interestingly, it is alleged that even our thinking is mostly unconscious (Lakoff and Johnson 1999).

Our experiences and elementary concepts are interactional, rather than being merely abstractions. For illustration, consider typical experiences of pouring water into a glass or touching something, through which one in fact interacts with these objects by pouring or touching. Embodied experiences are the ways by which one interacts with world (Turner 1996). Interactions create image-based experiences, which in turn create our image-schematic patterns (image-schemata). Understanding and knowledge come after the acquisition of these kinds of schemata in our imagination. In fact, understanding is a function of metaphorical projections and relations between image-schemas. Embodied structures are universal in the sense that they are shared by humans (Johnson 1987)

Johnson describes image schemas as "concepts" (1987); however, to me, this nomination does not mean that image schemas are totally abstract. They can be called concepts as far as they are shared by humans, but they are images, which are the most concrete concepts we can possess.

Image schemas are rudimentary concepts that derive from embodied experiences of the world, which are pre-conceptual. Embodied experiences make it possible for us to conceptualize abstract concepts by means of spatial structure (concrete concepts). In other words, our

cognitive system maps (projects) spatial structure onto abstract concepts. These schemata are pre-conceptual patterns, because they are rooted in so-called sensory-motor experiences (Johnson 1987). Cognitive scholars allege that these pre-conceptual patterns have been produced even before the acquisition of language. For instance, Mandler states, “Basic, recurrent experiences of a child make its semantic architecture, before the child begins producing language” (1992).

The relation between reality and language has been shown by an allegation that image-schematic descriptions in language are analogous ways of representation of perceptions (Evans and Green 2006).

Analysis of Force-Schemata

Since image schemas are products of our direct experience of the world that surrounds us, they are common and familiar to us. For example, it is quite common to understand the meanings and instances of schemas such as motion along a path, bounded interior, containment, symmetry, and force-dynamic (Johnson 1987; Turner 1996).

Let us consider, for example, the role of containment in language. When it is said that one is in love or one is coming out of coma, prepositions *out* and *in* are significations for linguistic application of *container* schema (Evans and Green 2006; Lakoff 2006; Lakoff 1990). There are many things that we experience in terms of *containers*. Different kinds of dishes for cooking or serving food and drink are *containers* with three main elements: an exterior, an interior, and a boundary. Along with the aforementioned examples, our bodies are also good candidates for *containers* (Turner 1996).

Another schema is *motion along a path*; it is used to conceptualize some more abstract concepts in people’s lives, such as their love stories. When somebody says that they are in a dead-end relationship, they are describing a love relationship in terms of the *motion along a path* schema.

From what is explained, the familiarity and commonality of the mentioned schemas come from their ability to be experienced. Likewise, force-dynamic schemas are familiar, common, and pervasive. Analyzing schemas of force is necessary for our later discussion on causation and necessity.

There are a handful of schemata which represent force structures. Johnson (1987) introduces and explains the following seven most common force schemata that are at work in our experiences:

Compulsion: every person experiences the force of physical and environmental factors, such as gases, liquids, and solids. When, for instance, one's stomach is full of food or drink, one feels the pressure caused by what one has eaten or drunk on their stomach or intestine.

Blockage: we are familiar with obstacles that resist our forces when we are interacting with objects around us. Some obstacles resist our forces, and some others block us from applying our forces.

Removal of restraint can be understood easily when compared to the blockage schema. When an obstacle is removed, we are free to exert our forces.

Counterforce¹ is a force that is counter to another force.

Diversion² occurs when one force vector diverts another force vector. For instance, two moving objects can divert the direction of each other's movement when they clash.

Enablement: you experience the enablement schema when you feel you have (or lack) the power to do something.

-
1. Counterforce is a well-known subject in physics, especially in the third Newton's physics, according to which every force has a counterforce.
 2. Diversion is a common experience in our everyday life; for example, we usually experience it when hitting a moving object, and then we see that the direction of the movement changes because of the force we applied on the object.

Attraction is experienced when two things attract each other. For example, gravity is a kind of attraction, which pulls down our body.

The structure of force experiences is reflected in our natural language. This reflection can be shown by considering how modal verbs (modals), as lingual representations of force schemas, function in our language. Modals are categories of verbs that reflect our relation with things in the world. This relation can be necessary, actual, or possible, represented by modal verbs “must,” “may,” and “can” respectively (Johnson 1987).

Undoubtedly, “may” and “can” and the way in which our experiences shape the notions and schemas for these two crucial modal verbs is important, but since they are not central in the construction of the notions of causation and necessity, we just need here to focus on the modal verb “must,” which indicates the necessary relation.

It is claimed that image-schematic patterns of force are responsible for the advent of “must” in human language. Sweetser (1990) differentiates the “root” (deontic) meaning of the modal “must” from its epistemic meaning. She describes the root meaning of “must” as obligations we comprehend from our real-world experiences. Similarly, the epistemic meaning of the modal “must” is a meaning that denotes obligations in the reasoning processes of our cognitive system. We use meanings from the real world to reason for something in our epistemic world, and this is a metaphorical process. She asserts that children learn root meanings of modals before learning their epistemic meanings. Sweetser also points to a third kind of meaning for “must,” which can be seen in speech-acts—in the territory of language (Sweetser 1990).

Root meaning can derive from a physical force, or a moral force affecting the human will from a universal authority. Giving reasons, arguments, and theories belonging to our epistemic capability finds its ultimate place in our experiences of the root meaning of force. An interesting example is a logical argument, in which the conclusions

derive necessarily from the premises, not by themselves but by a kind of necessity that comes from our image-schematic experiences of force (Johnson 1987).

According to the aforementioned analysis of modality, all kinds of necessity are products of our bodily experiences. Even the necessity in the epistemic territory, such as logical necessity, is understood in terms of embodied images. In the same manner, causation is also understood in terms of force dynamic image schema. When a force of a thing pushes or pulls something else or forces it to move, it is said that the first thing causes the second one. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) write that the most important central feature of causality is object manipulation. They state: “Prototypical causation is the direct application of force resulting in motion or other physical change” (p. 177).

An Alternative to the Conceptual Causation and Necessity

Despite the large body of evidence in favor of conceptual analysis of necessity and causation, there should be a scrutiny of the very function of thinking and the mechanism by which it originates.

Consider, for instance, when you are thinking, and you are aware that you are thinking. In such a situation, you intuitively know that your thinking is stemming from you as a thinker (subject), even though you may not be a philosopher or may not know the terms “cause” and “effect.” In this case, one cannot talk about object manipulation, because there are not two sensible things one of which manipulates the other (an object); there is just one thing (you) which originates another imperceptible thing (thinking). So, this kind of causality lacks what has been already introduced as prototypical feature. This entails that there is one kind of causality which is not embodied in a sense defined based on the Embodiment Theory.

Moreover, when I start to think, my thinking necessarily begins. I use the word “necessarily,” because it is impossible for me to start to

think but the thinking does not come through. This is quite different from physical activities in which an agent sometimes can perform an action and sometimes she cannot because of some obstacles; there are no such obstacles in thinking.¹ Starting to think and thinking occur simultaneously without any gap between them. This means that their succession is not embodied, because, according to the Embodied Cognition Theory, we acquire image schemas from our bodily interaction with the environment; we interact with things repeatedly, and then we acquire the corresponding image schema. Even after the acquisition of an image schema (regarded as a concrete entity), our epistemic system begins to understand abstract concepts based on concrete entities via a process called metaphor, as it is learned from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 2003).

It can be concluded that not all kinds of necessity are embodied, as there is at least one kind of necessity² which is not bounded to our naturalness and bodily experiences. The reasons for this claim are as follows:

1. Unembodied necessity lacks the seven most common force structures necessary for understanding the meaning of embodied necessity, so to speak. In order to perceive, acquire, and understand these seven schemata (i.e., compulsion, blockage, removal of restraint, counterforce, diversion, enablement, and attraction), at least two things should exist: something that exerts a force and a second thing that receives that force.
2. Prototypical causation is the object manipulation that requires some sort of change or movement, which in turn requires at least two different occasions. Causation between the self and thinking, so to speak, does not require succession and movement.

1. Here, the common sense of the word “thinking” is meant and not a particular kind of thinking.

2. This necessity can be named Unembodied Necessity

Conclusion

According to the above-mentioned reasons, there must be at least one kind of necessity that is not embodied. This means that this kind of necessity is not bounded to human naturalness.

If there is unembodied necessity that is independent from our interaction with perceptible environment, it can be inferred that such necessity is not embodied; we are (or at least I am) aware of this necessity by introspection. I know intuitively that such necessity exists, because it is an indispensable outcome of me as a thinker. If such necessity ensues from thinking, then the thinker has it. Therefore, there is necessity which governs some actual realms of me and which deserves to be called necessary being. However, this necessary being may not be absolute, for if it was absolute, it would not be gone when thinking stops. Again, if there is necessity which has not been created by the external world and/or by our bodies (or an aspect of our embodiment), it should be spontaneous, even though temporary.

As a result, from the fact that there is a kind of necessity that comes to existence from unnaturalness (spontaneous necessary being), it can be inferred that the existence of an absolute Necessary Being is quite probable. The Absolute Necessary Being is a notion of God in some religions and schools of theology.

References

- Evans, Vyvyan, Benjamin K. Bergen, and Jörg Zinken. 2006. "The Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise: An Overview." In *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader*, edited by Vyvyan Evans. Equinox Publishing Company.
- Evans, Vyvyan, and Melanie Green. 2006. *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Johnson, Mark. 1987. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff George. 1990. "The Invariance Hypothesis: Is Abstract Reason Based on Image-Schemas?" *Cognitive Linguistics* 1 (1).

- . “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor.” In *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*, edited by Dirk Geeraerts. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 2003. *Metaphors We Live by*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Sweetser, Eve. 1990. *From Etymology to Pragmatics: Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, Mark. 1996. *The Literary Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

An Islamic Perspective on the Characteristics and Criteria of Good Management

Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Sadat Chavoshian,¹ Mohammad Hadi Mofatteh²

Received: 10-08-2017 / Accepted: 02-12-2017

This essay aims to examine the characteristics and criteria of good management as prescribed by the Qur'an and traditions, especially the sayings of Imam Ali (a) in *Nahj al-balaghah*. These have been recommended by the aforementioned sources with the intent of creating a prosperous society.

By "management" we mean the general sense of the word, which includes the management of organizations and other entities, as well as the leadership of society and the guidance of individuals in social communication. We believe that Islam is a comprehensive religion that gives importance to the rights of individuals and society. Furthermore, when it wants to make worldly, spiritual, or moral propositions, Islam always takes the purpose of man's existence into consideration. According to Islamic teachings, without proper leadership and management, society and its members will not be able to achieve prosperity and success.

Keywords: management, leadership, society, Islam.

1. PhD Candidate in Comparative Study of Women in Religions, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran (smh.chavoshiyan@gmail.com), Corresponding Author.
2. Assistant Professor, University of Qom, Iran (mhmofateh@qom.ac.ir).

Introduction

Sometimes “management” implies the management of an organization. However, it is often taken in a generic sense and includes all types of leadership and guidance at any level of society whatsoever, such as leadership, guidance, and Imamate. It is in this broad meaning of the term that the word “management” is used in this article.

Various sociological and philosophical schools of thought admit that man’s social subsistence depends upon good leaders and managers. Without them, there would be no success in their social affairs. The only difference between these schools of thought is on the characters of leaders and the methods by which they are selected. History affirms the important role of leaders and managers. In fact, some historians are of the opinion that all of the victories and defeats that we see in history stem from proper or improper leadership. They hold that there is nothing more effective in the felicity or wretchedness of man than leadership and management.

In Islam, management and leadership are considered to be vital and necessary requirements for the subsistence of human life. In the Qur’an and Islamic traditions, godly and satanic forms of management have both been discussed. Man’s destiny depends upon who he obeys, a leader who invites him to the truth or one that tempts him to follow falsehood.

It should be noted that in this article, we do not seek to present a detailed outline of Islamic management. Rather, we simply want to state some of the characteristics of good management and social communication that have been emphasized in reliable Islamic sources such as the Qur’an, *Nahj al-balagah*, and the conduct of the Imams (a).

1. The Importance of Management

Islam acknowledges the fact that management is vital in the organization of society. This is because proper management introduces solutions for the challenges that society faces. Various verses of the

Qur'an and traditions have mentioned the importance of management and the need for a leader in society: "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth'" (Qur'an 2:30). According to this verse, even before the creation of mankind, Adam was selected to be God's caliph and representative, and this indicates the importance of leadership and management in the Qur'an (Makarim Shirazi 1377 Sh). In addition, Prophet Muhammad (s) emphasized the importance of management in the following hadith: "Whenever the number of travelers reaches three, they should make one of them the leader of the group" (Jasbi 1369 Sh).

In a society whose members seek to communicate with one another properly, management is an unavoidable element. Every community needs a leader that understands the goal good enough in order to apply the proper methods to achieve that goal. The Prophet (s) was also appointed by God to relieve the burdens of people by means of his proper management (Jokar and Dehkurdi 1386 Sh).

2. The Characteristics of Values in Islam

In contrast to values in some schools of thought, Islamic values are not relative in nature. They do not change with the change of time and place. This is because the one who has delineated Islamic values is not a fallible being, but the Almighty and All-Knowing God. The values that Islam promotes are related to the individual as well as to society as a whole. There are social values that everyone should observe. These values can be related to large societies or limited and select societies. The various categories of values will not be discussed in this paper; rather, we will only discuss social values. Social values are primarily based upon two things: ideas and tendencies. When these two are combined, they give birth to a value. A value falls between a belief and a tendency. Here, by "idea" we mean our knowledge of reality, and by "tendency" we mean that which arises from these ideas in the form of propensities. Values are the roots of the choices we make. That is to

say, when a man adopts certain values, he only selects those actions that are in line with them. Hence, values are what directs our actions.

In Islam, social values are based upon three principles: The first principle is the belief in the idea that all human beings are God's servants. When man believes that other people, like himself, are God's creatures and that God is merciful to them, he becomes interested in knowing His Creator and feels happiness when he acquires this knowledge. When he views the world in this way, a theist comes to feel a special affection for all humans. This is a principle that stems from a specific view of man. As was mentioned, every value stems from an outlook, and the monotheistic vision gives rise to solidarity with other human beings.

The second principle is the belief that all human beings have the same parents, Adam and Eve. According to this belief, one comes to believe that other human beings are his sisters and brothers and that together they make up a large family. This insight leads to social affection. Thus, he becomes fond of all those who are related to himself in this way. This is a natural affection that exists in all human beings.

The third principle is religious brotherhood. According to Islamic teachings, there is a firm spiritual bond between all Muslims, which makes their spirits closely connected to each other: "The believers are but a single brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers" (Qur'an 49:10).

3. Education and Management

Education is an effort to increase one's knowledge. It encourages a person to acquire new information, which leads to a change in his habits, behavior, and outlook on the universe, as well as his ultimate destiny. Education changes the static facets of a person. It allows a person to improve his abilities, skills, outlook on life, and social behavior. In other words, when one is educated, he is taught a series of methods to fulfill his needs and the needs of others.

Some scholars emphasize the importance of the innate ability to manage. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that with the advancement of technology and the development of the means of communication, every manager should also have sufficient information about the scientific fields that are related to his job. He must implement the knowledge he has about these matters until he is finally able to enjoy a relative domination over his area of expertise and achieve a detailed knowledge of the issues related to management.

Notwithstanding, some scholars consider the management of education as the most important organizational action. They believe that in programs of education the effort that individuals exert, as well as their patterns of behavior, should be documented.

As many managers have discovered, when they educate their employees in different fields, the quality of the work increases and so does the satisfaction of the employees. As a result, the organization will react more quickly to the changing markets they are catering to.

In Islamic traditions, it has been emphasized that one should be educated and efficient with respect to the task one is assigned to. In *Nahj al-balaghah*, Imam Ali (a) says: "O people! Verily, the most deserving of all people to the caliphate is the one who is the most competent and who knows God's commands concerning it" (sermon 172).

In addition, in the propagation of culture, there are many other issues that must be taken into account. For example, without forethought, no organization will be able to achieve its goals. Before beginning any project, all aspects of the project should be taken into consideration and the possible results predicted. The managers who think about matters before doing them and see what they need to accomplish will be able to make better decisions and to drastically increase the chances of their success and effectiveness (Khidmati 1384 Sh). The Prophet (s) said: "I

advise you to think about the outcome of an action before deciding to undertake it. If you find that it will lead to progress, do it; but if it is an aberration, do not do it” (Kulayni 1388 Sh, 2:149).

In fact, according to Islamic sources, knowledge and practice are complementary to each other. The most important thing that leads to progress and development is the application of what one knows, and the knowledge that is not used is regarded as only a burden. On the other hand, people who undertake tasks without proper knowledge will not be successful. In the education system of Islam, we find many traditions that advise people to exchange ideas with one another and to increase each other’s knowledge.

4. The Features of Good Management According to Islam

The features of a good manager in Islam include certain necessary qualities, such as education and experience, which ensure the manager’s success. There are also some necessary qualities for a good manager with regard to his communication with others. For example, he should respect the rights of other people, be in a good mood when dealing with them, possess good social morals, and so forth. The following are some of the most important features of good management from an Islamic perspective.

4.1 Trustworthiness

Every person, in whatever position he is in, should be trustworthy. He should try to protect the properties and prestige of others. Imam Ali (a) advised Malik al-Ashtar to consider the trustworthiness of the person he wants to choose as his agent. This is to be done by examining their previous actions (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 35). In another letter to one of his agents, Imam Ali (a) writes: “The person who does not like to be trustworthy and purify himself and his character from deceit will open the door of ignominy in this world to himself, and in the hereafter he will be even more ignominious” (Dilshad Tehrani 1377 Sh).

4.2 Meticulously Preserving the Rights of People

One of the most important goals of a manager is preserving the rights of others. He should strive to secure people's rights and make this a hallmark of his general plan of action. Preserving the rights of people is an axis around which the government and statesmanship should revolve. It is the only way that political power can be stabilized. In addition to this, preserving the rights of people should be a principle that rules over all governmental programs and proceedings. No government can carry out its programs of reform without the support and participation of its citizens. Undoubtedly, when a manager seeks to observe the rights of people and strengthens his plans and actions in this way, he will enjoy the grace of God and also gain popular support. In connection with this, Imam Ali (a) says: "When rights are observed, support will be strengthened" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 62).

4.3 Forgiveness

Another positive feature of all good managers is that they forgive others and do not remind them of their faults. This quality attracts people and secures their loyalty. As a result, they will be drawn to the organization and system of management. In his advice to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (a) advised him to select for key positions those who magnanimously accept people's apologies. Also, in another part of the same letter, Imam Ali (a) says the following: "Befriend the generous and chose them to be your agents" (Quchani 1374 Sh).

4.4 Attraction and Repulsion

Managers and leaders should be able to attract a large number of people, and, if necessary, reject and take them out of their organizations. It is clear that a manager's power of attraction should be stronger than his power of repulsion. Those managers who, for various reasons, are aggressive, uncompromising, and unable to restrain their emotions cannot be successful. Imam Ali (s) says: "The weakest person is he who is not able to find a good friend. And weaker

than him is the one who easily loses a friend he has found” (Aqajani 1385 Sh).

4.5 Good Experience

The good experience of a manager is a source of encouragement for the authorities that select him as a manager. A manager should be well-known and should have achieved a level of relative success in the tasks he had been assigned to.

4.6 Love and Affection for the Masses

The Qur’an states,

It is part of the mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from thee: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah’s) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of the moment). (Qur’an 3:159)

Here, the Qur’an describes Prophet Muhammad (s) as being tolerant in his task of guiding people. In this way, the barriers are eliminated and problems are solved. As a whole, this leads to people’s spiritual and material development. Sociologically speaking, the power of love is very effective, and the best society is the one that is controlled by the power of love.

A statesman’s love for his subjects and their love for him are an important cause of the stability and continuance of his power. Without affection, leaders cannot lead the community or educate people with justice and equality. When people see that a statesman is affectionate towards them, they are naturally drawn to him. It is this attraction that compels them to follow him and obey his orders (Mutahhari 1341 Sh).

4.7 Patience in the Face of Hardships

Another important feature of good management is patience. Actually, nothing substantial can be achieved without it. Imam Hasan (a) was once asked about the nature of patience. The Imam (a) replied, “To suppress (literally, “eat”) one’s anger” (Harrani 1383 Sh). In Islamic

management, anger should be displayed only at its proper time, such as to remove the barriers that hinder people from attaining their worldly and other worldly felicity.

Another necessary part of good management, which is only acquired by patience, is justice. A person who is not patient cannot be just; he will be unable to preserve the rights of others and stand up for them. In his advice to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (a) says, “Fulfill your duties towards God, the people, your tribe, and yourself. Be fair to those who are kind to you. If there is someone who has the ability to undertake a task, he should maintain it” (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53). In another letter, the Imam (a) says, “Be fair when you look at, point at, or greet people. In this way, the powerful will not become arrogant, and the weak will not become hopeless” (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 46).

Also, if justice did not exist in a society, its members would not feel safe and would always be agitated. Imam Sajjad (a) said that the ruler and the people both have rights which are tied up with one another: “Therefore, they [i.e., the rulers] should be just and try to be like a father or mother to the people. They should forgive their faults and should not be quick to punish them” (Shahykh al-Saduq 1413 AH, 2:214). Imam Ali (a) also said the following to Muhammad b. Abi Bakr: “Be tolerant with people. Look at all of them in the same manner and observe the rights of friends and strangers equally” (Harrani 1383 Sh, 119).

4.8 Fulfilling Promises

Fulfilling one’s promise is one of the main qualities of good management. This is because all healthy social, economic, and political relations are founded on the fulfillment of promises. If promises are not kept, these relations will become unstable. Distrust should be replaced with trust, chaos with order, and weakness with stability. The Qur’an states in this regard: “Fulfill (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the day of reckoning)” (Qur’an 17:34).

When people fail to live up to their promises, the trust between managers and their employees is broken. This is because fulfilling one's promise is a sign of truthfulness. When one fulfills one's promise, it has an effect on the hearts and minds of others. In his advice to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (a) says, "When you promise the people something, do not break your promise. This is because breaking one's promise leads to God's anger" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

4.9 Being Open to Criticism

When a community is healthy and properly managed, its members will be able to criticize one another freely. This leads to the discovery of disorganization, irregularity, and weakness, and thus positive qualities increase and capabilities blossom. This characteristic prevents deviation and closes the door to flattery and betrayal. In his advice to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (a) says: "The best one is the one who tells you the truth—even though it may be bitter—and who does not unnecessarily praise you—even though this may displease you. Befriend the ascetic, and do not allow people to praise you ... as praise makes a man selfish and arrogant" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

Managers have been advised to be kind to all people, even if they are financially weak or socially inept, and to try to solve their problems. Also, they are instructed to behave decisively towards those with power. In *Nahj al-Balagah*, Imam Ali (a) says, "So, for important and imperative matters, select a soldier of your army that is kind to the weak and forceful to the strong" (letter 53).

5. The Challenges of Management

A manager is usually faced with different challenges. A successful manager will always attempt to first distinguish the nature of the problem and only then take measures to solve it. The term, "pathology of management" refers to the knowledge of the problems that one encounters when managing political or social affairs (Nassaji Zavare 1387 Sh). Below, we will discuss some of the challenges of management.

5.1 Arrogance and Selfishness

The primary cause of a manager's failure is arrogance and selfishness. This is a malady that is often seen in managers who are given too much power. If one is able to overcome his selfishness and arrogance when he is given a high position, he can do great good for others. It is for this reason that Imam Ali (a) advised Malik al-Ashtar and all managers to shun arrogance and selfishness: "Do not be arrogant, and do not tell others about your good deeds. Avoid being praised by others. This is because arrogance and selfishness are ways in which Satan ruins the good deeds of truthful men" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

Accordingly, arrogance and selfishness are the greatest threats to good management. They drag statesmen and administrators towards dictatorship. In the end, they can only lead to abjection and abasement. Therefore, in the Islamic system, the authorities should not be plagued with meanness, satanic temptation, arrogance, or selfishness.

5.2 Inaccessibility

When managers and those who wield power distance themselves from the people, it leads to their deviation. When statesmen are separated from the people, they are not able to properly implement the solutions in their management. As a result, the connection between the statesmen and people weakens. Imam Ali (a) emphasized the fact that a good manager should always be connected to the people, and they should be able to speak to him frankly without any fear:

Do not hide yourself from the people for long periods of time, because when you do so, you will not know what is going on in the government, and the affairs of the state will be damaged. Thus, some important issues become unimportant and vice versa. Also, good deeds will appear to be bad and vice versa. What is more, truth and falsehood will be confused. (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

5.3 Neglecting the Poor

Another factor that ruins proper management is not paying attention to the poor and the weak classes of society. Imam Ali (a) advises the

managers and agents to pay more attention to the poor and to provide for their needs. He writes to Malik al-Ashtar: “Do not allow the glory of your power to entrap you. Do not allow your preoccupation with important affairs to take you away from less significant ones. Always think about the problems of the people. Do not forsake them. Also, check on the poor and humble people, since they do not have access to you” (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53). Further on in the letter, the Imam (a) mentions that he heard the following from the Holy Prophet (s): “The nation that does not take back the rights from the oppressor [and hand them over to the oppressed] will never be blessed” (letter 53). Therefore, a good manager should try to provide for the basic needs of his people. He should try to make up for the rights that have been trampled, and he is responsible to eliminate the illegitimate accumulation and misuse of wealth (Javadi Amuli 1366 Sh).

5.4 Monopolization

Here, the word “monopoly” means giving power and privileges to one’s relatives or friends even though they may not deserve them, and thus unjustly depriving others of those advantages. Imam Ali (a) advised Malik al-Ashtar to avoid the monopolization of goods and instructed him to avoid oppressing others by giving preference to friends and relatives. He also advised him to avoid gaining an advantage over others by means of his friends or family (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

One should also avoid using public properties for one’s personal interests. A good manager should avoid such misuses of power, since it is not in their best interest and will only lead to humiliation in this world and the hereafter.

5.5 Cooperation with the Rich

When those in authority distance themselves from their subjects, they gradually lose their power and fail in achieving their political and social goals. One of the greatest achievements of Islam was that from its beginning, it was able to remove unfit people from power and make them

conform to justice. From the beginning of his prophecy till his demise, Prophet Muhammad (s) abstained from avarice and never sought to amass wealth for himself or his family. What is more, he was never biased in his dealings with others. When addressing the task of collecting taxes, Imam Ali (a) said: “When you reach a group of people from whom you want to take the tax, only stay at their watering place and do not enter their homes. Then go to them maintaining your dignity and prestige and when you are in their midst, wish them peace and blessings of Allah and show due respect to them” (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 25).

5.6 Lack of Prioritization

The failure of administration is often caused by a lack of prioritization and not knowing what should be accomplished first. Turning oneself to the performance of administrative tasks without prioritizing them beforehand can only lead to confusion. Also, when one preoccupies oneself with unnecessary and unimportant tasks, the performance of important tasks is delayed. Imam Ali (a) acknowledges the fact that the secret of successful management lies in not paying attention to negligible matters and concentrating on important ones. He says the following regarding this matter:

Concentrate on important issues and avoid being confused [as to what should be done first and foremost]. This is because the forgoing of inconsequential tasks allows the important tasks to be accomplished. Undoubtedly, weakness, negligence, and a lack of priorities will only lead to ruin and destruction. This is one of the most important principles of good management. (Muhammadi-Rayshari 1377 Sh)

Therefore, it is necessary for managers to forgo unnecessary issues and to prioritize what they must do based upon their importance. With concentration, tasks will be fulfilled more quickly and meticulously. The most important tasks are to be given priority. Also, when there is a good plan, it is possible to properly manage organizations. Thus, they rapidly move towards their goals.

5.7 Inconsistency and Incompatibility

When management in an organization is inconsistent, the efforts of human resources are neutralized, resources are wasted, and the organization will fail to attain its goals. It is not possible for one to create a compatible, concentrated, and compatible system without compatible and sympathetic managers. Thus, when the agents in a social system are sympathetic to it, this will lead to a systematic social structure in which everyone moves towards a common goal. In his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (a) advises him to create a network of devoted, compatible, and responsible people. He says that his governors should help the soldiers of their army (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

5.8 Lack of Supervision

When a leader does not supervise or control the actions of an individual or a group working under him, this can create grave problems. We believe that Islam is a perfect and complete religion. If this is true, it must encourage organizations within its total political system to be just and to meticulously supervise their workers. This is because the health and success of any organization depend upon proper supervision. Prophet Muhammad (s) and Imam Ali (a) used to delegate agents to supervise the actions of the officials (Dilshad Tehrani 1373 Sh).

In fact, this is one of the most vital dimensions of good management in Islam and what makes it direct and effective. It is not enough for one to hire healthy and eligible people. Rather, one must also supervise them and to check if they actually perform their tasks properly. This is necessary so that they do not forgo their responsibilities. In his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (a) said in this regard: “Supervise the work of agents by sending truthful and loyal officers to inspect them. This is because continuous and hidden supervision motivates them and makes them trustworthy and patient with those they supervise” (*Nahj al-balaghah*, letter 53).

In his rule, Imam Ali (a) supervised his agents and their actions very carefully from afar. He wrote letters to his representatives and operatives in different cities and provinces, recounting to them their strengths and weaknesses. This implies that the Imam (a) had assigned people to secretly observe their actions and then report them to him.

5.9 Social Injustice

The last thing that can corrupt management is social injustice. Injustice irretrievably damages social values. When the needs of a society are not met in a fair manner, it results in problems that cannot be easily corrected. When we observe the life of the Prophet (s), we see that he was always moderate and just in his dealings with people. In his treaty with Amr ibn al-Hazm he says the following:

When a person of a high position committed an act of theft, he was left unpunished, but when a person of a lower position committed the same act, he was executed. I swear to God that if my daughter Fatima stole something, I would cut off her hand. (Ibn Hisham 1371 Sh)

One of the salient features of Imam Ali's character was that he constantly fought against oppression and sought to establish justice. This was something that was not limited to the time period in which he had political authority; rather, this was true even before it. The Imam (a) advised Malik al-Ashtar to behave justly and to avoid oppression and discrimination: "Establishing justice in society and attracting people's love are the best things that can please governors" (*Nahj al-balagah*, letter 53).

Therefore, people in administrative positions should never favor themselves or their relatives over others. They should not try to use their power for personal interests or to further their social status. If a manager is not just and oppresses others, his popularity will wane amongst the people. It is nothing but injustice that leads to the general discontent of the masses. In this way, the foundation of a leader's strength gradually diminishes.

Conclusion

In this article, an attempt was made to present the principles of good management and proper social communication. This was done using the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and his family (a), especially the words of Imam Ali (a) in *Nahj al-balaghah*. The criterion for good management is the dignity that a manager gives to those who work under him and the preservation of their rights by him. The leader of society also has to try to establish justice and preserve the rights of all people, especially the rights of the lower classes of society.

The means of communication in societies is progressing at a rapid rate, and management has changed as a result. However, according to the Islamic vision, a manager must always have a divine perspective and objective in his management. This is something that must never change, and always the aim has to be achieving perfection in the light of divine revelation.

The Qur'an states: "For we assuredly sent amongst every people a messenger, (with the command), 'Serve Allah, and eschew evil'" (Qur'an 3:36). In fact, the reason why the Prophet (s) was sent to people was to manage their affairs so that he could lead them to their felicity in this world and the next. He wanted to guide them to the worship of God and to protect them against the things that deviated from divine values and morals.

Therefore, managers should be aware of the distinction between Islamic management and secular management. In the latter, more than anything else, management is focused on the betterment of the material life. This is while Islam simultaneously respects both the material and spiritual dimensions of existence in all areas.

References

- Aqajani, Arash. 1385 Sh. “*Tabyin wijagha-yi mudiran az didgah-i Hadrat Ali (a) dar Nahj al-balaghah.*” *Andishe Sadegh* 24.
- Dilshad Tehrani, Mustafa. 1373 Sh. *Prophetic*. Ministry of Culture Publications.
- . 1377 Sh. *Dawlat-i aftar*. Tehran: Young Thought.
- Harrani, al-Hassan al-. 1383 Sh. *Tuhaf al-‘uqul*. Habl al-Matin Publications.
- Ibn Hisham. 1371 Sh. *Sirah of the Prophet of Islam*. Kharazmi Publications.
- Jasbi, Abdullah. 1369 Sh. “Necessity and Importance of Management Based on Islam.” *Economic and Management Journal* 6.
- Javadi Amuli, Abdullah. 1360 Sh. *Moral Agents*. Raja Publications.
- Jokar, Lutfullah, and Furuzandeh Dehkordi. 1386 Sh. *Islamic Management and Its Models*. Payam-i Nur University Publication.
- Khidmati, Abu Talib. 1381 Sh. *Mudiriyyat-i alavi*. Qom: Research Institute of Hawzah and University.
- Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya’qub. 1388 Sh. *Al-Kafi*. Dar Al-Kitab al-Islami.
- Makarim Shirazi, Nasir. 1377 Sh. *Tafsir Namunah*. Vol. 1. Dar Al-Kitab Islami.
- Muhammadi-Rayshari, Muhammad. 1377 Sh. *Mizan al-hikmah*. Dar al-Hadith Publication.
- Mutahhari, Murtada 1347 Sh. *Imam Ali: Attraction and Repulsion*. Husayniyya Irshad Publication.
- Nahj al-Balaghah*. Translated by Muhammad Dashti.
- Nassaji Zavare, Ismael. 1387 Sh. “Asib shinasi mudiriyyat.” *Journal of Pasdari Islam* 321.
- Quchani, Mahmud. 1374 Sh. *Decree on the Management*. State Management Training Center Publication.
- The Quran. Translated by Yusuf Ali.
- Shaykh Saduq, Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-. 1413 AH. *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*. Islamic publications Institute.

Ways of Respecting Human Dignity in Islamic Law

Sorayya Muniri,¹ Mohammad Reza Kazimi Golvardi²

Received: 01-01-2017 / Accepted: 20-02-2017

Qur'anic verses and hadiths certify that Allah has bestowed dignity upon mankind. Therefore, man essentially deserves respect. Islamic law has primarily made use of two ways to safeguard human dignity. First, there are prohibitions in Islamic law that safeguard man's dignity. Second, the penal laws of Islam restrict punishments to those cases where they are absolutely necessary. In this article, we will briefly examine these two ways.

Keywords: human dignity, Islamic law, penal law, prohibitions.

Introduction

Today, various schools of thought and international organizations advocate the respect of mankind and human rights. On the other hand, currently, a world-wide ideological assault upon Islam is being conducted, and this religion is being portrayed as a religion that encroaches upon human rights. This is leading to the misconception that Islam does not respect human dignity. In the context of such an

1. Lecturer, Islamic Azad University, Iran (sorayyamoniri12@gmail.com), corresponding author.

2. Assistant Professor, Islamic Azad University, Iran (mr_kazemigolvardi@yahoo.com).

ideological attack, the following question may be asked: how does Islam preserve human dignity?

Actually, there is not a lot of literature on this subject. Nevertheless, a few writers have preoccupied themselves with it. A text that discusses human dignity is Ayatollah Javadi Amuli's *Karamat dar Qur'an (Dignity in the Qur'an)*. This book emphasizes a mystical interpretation of dignity. Another one is Dr. Ismail Rahiminijaad's *Karamat-i insan dar ahkam-i kayfari (The Nobility of Man as Manifested in the Punishments of Islamic Law)*, in which some positive laws receive critical appraisal. A considerable number of papers have also discussed this topic of human dignity from the perspective of the Qur'an and hadiths. Also, the proceedings of a conference on Imam Khomeini and the realm of religion contains some valuable information on this subject. However, the present study is an analytical-cum-descriptive study that shows in detail the ways in which Islam values and focuses on human dignity. The question arises regarding the ways that Islam has safeguarded human dignity. Keeping this question in mind, some Muslim scholars have studied the various ways in which Islam respects human dignity. However, it has seldom been the case that a single work studied all of the ways that Islam has respected human dignity—a void the present work tries to fill.

The Meaning of *Karamah* (Dignity)

Arab lexicographers provide various definitions for this word, a few of which we will point to hereunder. Sometimes they say that it denotes the honor and respect that lies in the essence of the entity concerned. In his book *al-Tahqiq*, Mustafawi puts it thus: "*Karamah* (dignity) is the opposite of *hawan* (meanness), in the same way that *'izzah* (honor) is the opposite of *dhillah* (baseness) Hence, *karamah* signifies the essential sublimity of an entity. So, *karamah* is far from *isti'la'* (regarding oneself superior to others). Therefore, characteristics such as generosity, forgiveness, and honor are just some markers of dignity" (Mustafawi 1360 Sh, 46-47). In other words, dignity entails being free

from meanness and baseness; therefore, one who has dignity is the one who is absolutely free from any meanness. Hence, karamah is a lofty ethical and spiritual value. In this regard, Javadi Amuli regards dignity as an essential trait. It is not as a relative quality attributable to a person only in comparison to someone else (Javadi Amuli 1366 Sh, 21-22). Rather, a person possesses karamah even if no other human being exists. However, generosity is a relative quality, since a person is generous when he gives to others. This is because a person may be destitute but dignified. Based on the aforementioned discussion, karamah pertains to the kind of value and status that all people have due to the effect of the divine Spirit that is breathed into all of them. Hence, it is prior to religion, denomination, skin color, nationality, and so forth. So, due to this essential dignity, all people stand on a par with one another, and their respect and value derive from it.¹

Safeguarding Man's Dignity in the Islamic Code of Law

As the final and most complete religion, Islam recognizes and safeguards the dignity of mankind in its codes of law. This is practically achieved in two distinct ways.

Safeguarding Human Dignity in the Laws That Pertain to the Spiritual Dignity of the Man

Islam has some prohibitions that manifest its respect for human dignity. Below, some of them will be discussed:

1. It should be noted that here the word "essential" does not imply something inseparable from the individual, as it does when used in philosophy. Rather, what is meant is that every individual has essential dignity. His dignity is not acquired by him, and he carries his essential dignity unless he commits an act that infringes upon it. It is only in such cases that Islam regards the perpetrator entitled to receive a due punishment. This is essentially to protect the spiritual/material well-being of other people, as well as the community as a whole. Even when someone commits something detestable, the person does not lose his essential dignity. The matters that have been mentioned in this article are related to the kind of dignity that was just explained—that is, inherent dignity, not acquired dignity.

A. Prohibition of Accusing Someone of Adultery or Any Crime That Violates a Person's Reputation (*Qadhf*)

The author of *al-Wasilah* maintains that any act that harms another person's reputation (Tusi 1408 AH, 408). As such, *qadhf* consists of accusing someone of adultery or sodomy even while the accuser is well aware of the sense of the accusation but irrespective of whether the accuser is aware of the sense implied or not. Such an accusation brings about eighty strikes of lashes, a punishment endorsed by jurists (Najafi 1404 AH, 41:402-18). The reason for this is that Islam has prohibited defaming people in general and the attribution of *qadhf* in particular. Hence, it stresses respecting human dignity and it attempts to protect the honor of man from all sorts of harms. Regarding the crime of *qadhf*, the 4th verse of surah al-Nur refers to *qadhf* as *ramy* (literally, shooting) in the sense of accusing people of some crime and abusing them with such an accusation, as it is like shooting an arrow at them. In such cases, God has stipulated that in order to prove the crime, one must present four witnesses. This is while, in the case of manslaughter, only two witnesses are required. The reason why four witnesses are required is that usually people tend to accuse one another, intentionally or unintentionally, when there is no reason to do so. In addition, the one who commits such a crime must receive a severe punishment. He will receive eighty lashes, the accused will be absolved of the crime, and the accuser's future testimonies will not be accepted. Also, he will be cursed by God in this world and the next. The rationale behind such an Islamic verdict is obviously respecting people's dignity, and this shows that one of the essential goals of the Islamic code of law is protecting people's dignity and self-esteem. Another reason is to stop the spread of social and moral corruption that will negatively affect the Muslim community. When corrupt people are free to abuse others and accuse them of improper acts without being taken to account, the honor and dignity of people would always be liable to being destroyed. A husband would always suspect his wife of indecency and doubt in the legitimacy of his child. This argument is also supported by a reliable report in

which Imam Ali al-Rida (a) answered a question raised by Muhammad ibn al-Sinan (Shaykh al-Saduq 1386 AH, 2:480). In this report, Imam Rida (a) says that the reason that qadhif has been prohibited is that it brings about corruption in the land, a person's descending from his father is called into question, inheritance becomes problematic, parents become reluctant to educate their children, and so forth. It follows that such crimes must receive severe punishment owing to the corruption they lead to. In short, Islam places a high degree of value on people's reputation, dignity, and self-esteem and respects these things to the utmost degree.

B. Prohibition of Backbiting

Backbiting is the disclosure of people's covert vices in a way that they would not like. Backbiting can be done by words or deeds, such as pointing to someone or imitating them. The reason why backbiting is forbidden is that it harms man's reputation and dignity. Since backbiting leads to someone's reputation being harmed, it is categorically prohibited in Islam (Karaki 1414 AH, 27). This is because God has regarded harming a believer's reputation as abominable and as detestable as eating his flesh. For this reason, preserving a believer's reputation is as essential as safeguarding his life. According to Ayatullah Khu'i, the believer's reputation has been compared to his flesh as both of them can be harmed; reputation is harmed by backbiting and flesh by being eaten. Nobody would want to eat his brother's flesh. The basic sense of decency that all human beings have does not permit such an atrocious act. Likewise, the human intellect rejects backbiting, because it entails harming a believer's reputation (Khu'i n.d., 1:319). In an annotated version of the *Kitab al-Makasib*, it has been mentioned that the dignity of the believer has been symbolically said to be equal to his flesh, and we can conclude from this expression that nothing should harm his dignity in the same way that his body must not be harmed by anything (Ansari 1410 AH, 3:307).

In addition, there are some other striking instances in the Islamic traditions that show the high degree of value that Islam places on people's dignity. Muhammad ibn al-Fazl related from Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Rida (a) that he instructed the former not to reveal anything that would harm the dignity of his brother in faith, for, upon infringing upon this divine rule, he (and by extension, anybody else who commits this action) would be considered as those who intend to spread obscenities in the community of believers. These are people who definitely deserve the harsh divine punishment (Majlisi n.d., 72:215). All of these anecdotes signify that the laws of Islam stress the safeguarding of people's dignity and status.

However, there are instances in which it is permissible to reveal people's secret vices or misdeeds. In such exceptional cases, the limit concerns the vices that are well-known. Hence, the vices that are known by everyone mark the limit for the permissibility of such a revelation, but it is absolutely forbidden to disclose his real character in the place wherein he is not known (Khu'i n.d., 341-42). It is also permissible to talk about the vices that a person commits in public (Khomeini n.d., 1: 422). There are also other cases where it is permitted to reveal the vices of other people: when one must testify to someone's crime, when one must give someone advice with regards to an issue, and so forth.

C. Prohibition of Probing into People's Personal Affairs

Another modus operandi devised by Islam is the prohibition of probing into people's personal and private affairs. Hence, probing into people's private affairs is strictly prohibited due to obvious religious and rational reasons (Qur'an 49:12; 24:19; Shaykh al-Saduq 1413 AH, 3:38; *Nahj al-balaghah*, Letter 53).

When we evaluate the reasons for the prohibition of spying on people's private affairs, we see that in order for a person to live a healthy life, it is necessary for him to enjoy dignity and respect.

Therefore, damaging a person's dignity and prestige is tantamount to harming his life. It follows that Islamic law never permits anybody to defame someone else by means of probing into their private life and disclosing their secrets.

Although probing into the private affairs of people is strictly forbidden, its prohibition would not be annulled when a bigger threat jeopardizes individual lives or the Muslim community in general. It is evident that stopping such threats is more important. It is in the light of this importance that Shaykh Ansari maintains that backbiting is forbidden due to the harm the other party receives; however, if there is a greater concern, more important than preserving a person's reputation, it must be given the priority (Ansari 1415 AH, 1:342). It must be noted that this prohibition only makes sense with respect to people who wish to hide their defects. Hence, in the case where the person does not wish to hide their own defects, the prohibition is removed (Shirazi n.d., 3: 80). In other words, the prohibition of uncovering one's sins is only effective when covering them is necessary and crucial. Thus, Muslim scholars say that explicit sins must be prohibited. Therefore, as a general rule, the police are not allowed to conduct secret investigations into the private lives of people (Mawardi n.d., 252).

2. Ways in Which the Dignity of Human Beings Has Been Preserved in the Laws of Islam

Islamic laws have envisaged several ways to maintain people's dignity even when an attempt is being made to prove that someone is guilty of a crime or someone is being punished. Here are a few of these methods:

A. Removal of Punishment by Means of the Slightest Misgiving

This is one of the ways by means of which punishment is averted from the suspect. In Islamic law, there is a rule that states that a punishment must be averted when some serious suspicion exists. It implies that the Islamic penal code tries to avert the punishment with the emergence of the slightest doubt, and it follows that the execution of a punishment

requires very strong proofs. The result of this method is the safeguarding of the dignity of human beings as one of man's basic rights.

The abovementioned methodology of the Islamic penal code is supported by several accounts reported by both Sunni and Shiite sources. There is a hadith in which the Prophet (s) declared the following: "Ward off punishment by means of doubts" (Shaykh al-Saduq 1413 AH, 4:74; Hurr al-'Amili 1409 AH, 18:363). Elsewhere it is asserted that punishments must be warded off from Muslims as far as possible, for if a judge makes a mistake, it would be much better than punishing an innocent person (Tirmidhi 1403 AH, 2:438; 4:33). When we look at the conduct of the Infallibles, we see similar cases in which such matters have been emphasized (Nuri 1407 AH, 18:44). Muslim jurists have also made references to such cases. If a thief claims that some property had been given to him as a present or that the original owner had given him the right to use it or that it had belonged to him but the original owner claims otherwise, then the punishment will be raised. From a judicial perspective, the denial of the owner takes precedence. However, the thief will not be punished, for the benefit of the doubt (Najafi 1404 AH, 41:494; Shahid al-Thani 1426 AH, 3:457).

In his book *Shara'i' al-Islam*, Muhaqiq al-Hilli holds that if an unmarried woman gets pregnant, she is not to be punished, unless she confesses four times that she had been involved in an act of adultery. Explaining this view, Najafi, the author of *Jawahir al-kalam*, indicates that the woman might have got pregnant owing to a simple mistake; hence, merely getting pregnant does not necessarily indicate fornication. This stands in stark opposition to the view of Malik who regards that such a woman must definitely be punished. Najafi holds that the woman cannot be interrogated either (Najafi 1404 AH, 41:295).

B. Strict Measures to Prove a Crime

One of the ways of safeguarding people's dignity in Islam is the application of strict measures for proving the actual perpetration of

crimes. In the beginning, it is necessary to consider some instances of such strict measures.

1. The Limits of Probing into a Crime in Penal Procedures

There are stark differences between the manner in which a crime is proven in the Islamic penal procedures and the other secular codes of law. Islam does not allow the use of certain methods to prove a crime. For example, there is a famous dictum that states, “There is no oath-taking with respect to punishment,” and a rule that states, “The claimant must bring forth evidence, and the denier just takes an oath.” However, such rules are not used in the Islamic penal system. Thus, when the claimant fails to prove his claim, the verdict would be issued in favor of the defendant. This is due to the principle of the legal principle mentioned above. In his *Tahrir al-wasilah*, Imam Khomeini says that taking an oath has no effect on the execution of a punishment. Rather, punishment can only be proven by means of substantial evidence or a confession. They are not proven by oaths. In this regard, it makes little difference whether the punishment pertains to a divine right, such as adultery, or it is a right that is shared between the people and God, such as qadhf. Taking an oath is legally reliable only at the request of the claimant. However, one cannot, for instance, rely on it in the case of the cutting off of a burglar's hand, which is a divine right (Khomeini n.d., 2:429-30).

2. No Verdict Can Be Passed Against an Accused Person Who Is Absent

A great number of sins are related to infringing upon divine rights. However, they are related to people's dignity. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to deter issuing a verdict about them until they are physically present. In this way, they would be able to defend themselves and in the meantime, the judge would be able to collect more evidence. In such cases, the general Islamic policy is that no verdict can be issued against a person who is absent (Najafi 1404 AH, 40:222-24; Muhaqqiq al-Hilli 1408 AH, 4:77).

3. Marginal Witnesses Cannot Impose a Religious Punishment

Marginal witnesses with regard to the cases where a divine right is concerned or the cases midway between those of the divine right and people's right are not acceptable as testimony in the court of Islamic law (Shahid al-Thani 1426 AH, 1:531).

4. The Judge's Prevention of Confession in the Case of the Divine Right

While jurists do not recognize the judge's intervention in obtaining confession from the suspect, they regard it highly recommended (*mustahab*) for the suspect not to confess the sins that involve divine rights (Najafi 1404 AH, 41:129). Moreover, they regard it permissible to cast doubt into the soundness of the confession made (Muhaddiq al-Hilli 1408 AH, 4:70). This is because in the case of divine rights, God favors His servants' repentance. This is because the repulsiveness of the sins concerned should not be modified through an act of confession. When someone confessed to a sin, the Imams (a) used to question whether the sin had actually been committed. In other words, they would make excuses for the person who confessed to a sin so that he stops confessing. In order to clarify the aforementioned rule, an anecdote must be related. Once a man by called Ma'iz went to the Prophet (s) and confessed that he had committed fornication. Upon receiving such a confession, the Prophet (s) said that perhaps it had not been fornication; rather, it had just been a kiss or a touch, or perhaps the person had just looked at the other party (Sajistani 1410 AH, 2:345). It has been related from Imam Sadiq (a) that once a man confessed to Imam Ali (a) that he had committed sodomy with a young man and requested to be morally cleaned of the sin. Imam Ali (a) replied that perhaps he had been hallucinating and had not really committed such an act (Hurr al-'Amili 1409 AH, 25:161-62).

5. Continuous Justice until the Issuing of the Verdict

If two witnesses testify but then their unreliability is proven, the verdict of punishment cannot be upheld. This is because in the case of divine rights, the general trend is toward mitigation of punishment as soon as the least doubt arises (Shahid al-Thani 1413 AH, 14:294).

6. Restrictedness of Evidence Used to Punish Suspects

In Islamic legal and penal procedures, reliable evidence is so strict, restricted, and conditional that it is very difficult to prove that someone is actually guilty. This is much more difficult in the case of sexual sins, which shows that God does not want to disclose such sins; rather, He wants to preserve the dignity and respect of people.

7. Rejection of Unrighteous Witnesses

The testimony given by someone who is known for his irreligious deeds, such as drinking wine, fornication, and so forth, as well as someone who is subject to an accusation by means of his testimony is not acceptable (Shahid al-Thani 1426 AH, 3:150).

3. Preserving People's Dignity and the Strict Measures for Proving Sins

Islam places special emphasis on people's dignity and tries to preserve it so long as feasible. In this way, it makes it very difficult to prove a crime so that the accused person's dignity may not be harmed. By doing so, the crime that may actually have taken place is not disclosed, and this helps people preserve their innate human dignity. What is more, in this way, crime stories would not spread among people by being passed from one person to the next. Hasan al-Najafi, the author of *Jawahir al-kalam*, holds that the reason why Islam demands that four just people testify to a sin like fornication is to preserve people's dignity and to keep such sins hidden from the general populous (Najafi 1404 AH, 29:155).

In *Rawa'i' al-bayan*, Sabuni declares that the rationale of the lawgivers is to prevent accusing the feeble out of malice or for any other trivial reason (Sabuni 1401 AH, 2:46). He holds that Muslim investigators must cover the faults of other Muslims so as to consider their dignity (Sabuni 1401 AH, 2:74). Similar treatments can be found in the Qur'anic verses and the hadiths of the Infallibles (a) (Majlisi n.d., 72:215). This account illustrates the standpoint of Islam with respect to the safeguarding of people's dignity and status. There are severe and

strict measures to prove that someone has committed a crime so that people's prestige is not harmed. Hence, it seeks to prevent punishing people for any and every trivial reason. This is because, if not anything, these punishments lead to the punished person's sense of inferiority. In effect, this is an attack against the person's dignity. The gist of this point is the wisdom of what Imam Ali (a) mentioned in his letter to his elder son, Imam al-Hasan (a): "Keep yourself far above any condemnation [that might be leveled against you]" (Nahj al-balaghah, Letter 31).

4. Popularization of Detestable Deeds and Strictness in Proving the Guilt of the Accused:

Another reason why Islam has strict rules for proving that a crime has actually been committed is because it does not want the inclination to commit misdeeds to spread throughout society. Preventing a public tendency to commit sins is a legitimate ground for calling the existence of such sins into doubt. If the majority of the populous begins leaning towards sin, this will be a serious spiritual threat for the community as a whole. It is for this purpose that recounting the details of sins committed is strictly prohibited in Islam. The Qur'an is explicit in this regard: "Indeed those who want indecency to spread among the faithful, there is a painful punishment for them in this world and in the Hereafter" (Qur'an 24:19). In this regard, Allamah Tabatabai holds that the term "indecency" pertains to all detestable deeds (Tabatabai, 1417 AH, 17:93). Any kind of detestable or indecent act that circulates in society falls under the jurisdiction of this concept (Makarim Shirazi 1374 Sh, 14:402). Thus, repeated punishment will destroy the wrongdoer's dignity and lead him to commit the detestable act repeatedly. This would eventually turn him into a completely vile and evil person. In fact, an undervalued person would never rebuke himself or herself for committing sins. Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi says: "Never make it a habit to rebuke people, for it brings about obscenity and makes the individual inclined to commit the acts being prohibited. This is because man is inclined to practice whatever he is being prohibited from doing" (Tusi 1364 Sh, 224).

5. Removal of Punishment by Repentance

Another way to remove punishment is repentance. Since a major goal of prophets is the education of people, punishment of criminals is always considered a last resort. This is because punishment goes against human dignity. Hence, it cannot educate the person being punished. In the light of this principle, Islam favors concealing sin through enacting repentance. The conduct of the Infallibles (a) and the common practice of Muslim scholars affirm that they put an emphasis on the concealment of the sins committed. When we look at the conduct of the Infallibles (a), we see that when someone came to them and confessed to a sin, they encouraged them to repent. They also encouraged people to confess to their sins in private. What is more, they rarely accepted that a sin being confessed to was actually committed (Bukhari n.d., 4:178; Kulayni 1367 Sh, 7:188; Hurr al-‘Amili 1409 AH, 28:37). According to religious scholars, repentance is always better than confession. In his book *al-Mabsut*, al-Shaykh al-Tusi states that crimes that infringe upon the divine right are of two categories. The first are those that are covert and about which people are unaware. The second are those that are widely known. Tusi also states that a covert sin should be concealed by the person who has committed it (Tusi 1387 AH, 8:177). Although he initially indicates that due punishment must be applied in the case of a sinner, later on he declares that it is more desirable not to confess but to lean towards repentance (Tusi 1387 AH, 8:41-42). Ghazzali says that when a grave sin is committed, such as drinking or fornication, it is not necessary for the person to declare it before any authority; rather, he must keep it a secret (Ghazzali 1319 Sh, 767). Tusi also explains that one of the reasons for preferring repentance over punishment is that a wrongdoer may later on be subject to further rebukes; hence, it is logically acceptable to avoid another nuisance (i.e., being rebuked) (Tusi 1364 AH, 691-92). One can conclude from this discussion that the Islamic judicial procedure seeks to educate people and teach them to repent at the time of committing of a sin. It is in the light of such an

aim that in crimes the popularization of which affects the public atmosphere, repentance is an escape so long as the aftermaths of those hidden crimes are not more severe. In other words, repentance guarantees that the accused person finds an opportunity to repent and his dignity and that of his family are not harmed.

It deserves to be mentioned that repentance must be in proportion to the gravity of the crime concerned. It follows that the mechanism and procedure of repentance is never the same for all kinds of crimes. Hence, the harm that the crime has caused must be adequately compensated for by means of a practical form of repentance. For instance, in the case where someone has accused someone of adultery, the accuser should openly announce that he has made a mistake and that his accusation was untrue. According to the fourth and fifth verses of surah al-Nur, from here onwards, such a person's testimony is devoid of all value in the court of law. However, if such a person confesses that the accusation he had made was baseless, then his testimony shall be acceptable. In the case where someone has made an armed revolt against the government, repentance can nullify the punishment. In this regard, it deserves to be mentioned that there are two types of penalties at work here. The first is a penalty related to the public right that brings about punishment in proportion to attempt to revolt. The second is a penalty vis-à-vis the individual or individuals that were harmed in the course of the revolt. The first category is termed the divine right, and the second one is called the public right. Hence, the rebel's repentance would nullify the punishment related to the divine right, not the public right (Shahid al-Thani 1413 AH, 15: 14; Muqaddas Ardabili n.d., 665). The reason goes back to a relevant Quranic verse. The rebel must turn himself over to the police. This is because practical repentance must be proportionate to the attempt made to rebel against the government. This is enough to nullify the due punishment.

D. The Infallible Imam's Pardon of the Transgression on the Right of God and Human Dignity

Another instance of the respect given to human dignity in Islam is the Infallible Imam's pardon of the accused person. This rule applies to a person who is accused of a crime, yet he has not come to the court. Once he confesses to his crime, the Infallible Imam gives him another opportunity if he repents. In this case, the Infallible Imam can decide whether to forgive the accused person if it is in the interests of both the sinner and the community. The motif behind this pardon is manifold: the sinner finds himself on the threshold of being severely punished, he sincerely repents, and he is shown respect and is forgiven. This respect, which is shown to all human beings, even sinners, is a principle that is capable of being observed in all religious rulings.

The conduct of the Infallible Imams conveys this very educative trend. Their conduct is replete with displays of respect that they used to show to each and every individual. They never thought of disrespecting anybody; rather, they always reinforced the innate human dignity that all partake of. For example, once, a young man confessed before Imam Ali (a) that he had stolen something. Upon hearing this confession, Imam Ali (a) replied that he deemed the young man worthy of being pardoned, because he could recite surah al-Baqarah. In this way, the Imam (a) helped the young man preserve his innate human dignity (Hurr al-'Amili 1409 AH, 28:41).

Moreover, in the case where a sexual crime is committed, if the culprit confesses the crime and then repents, the Imam is free to pardon or punish him, regardless of whether the punishment is stoning or execution, because if repentance can nullify a harsh punishment, it can obviously nullify a milder one (Shahid al-Thani 1426 AH, 3:420).

As for denial after confession, it is said that confession imposes punishment, and a denial of an earlier confession has no effect on it.

However, the denial of a confession that has imposed punishment such as stoning to death nullifies it, though lashing or other punishment may still apply. It follows that although confession proves the sin committed, denial is just a pretext for not executing the due punishment. This is grounds for averting the punishment of stoning, since it harms the dignity and reputation of the individual concerned. This applies to the case of an individual who commits fornication.

In the case of discretionary punishment (*ta'zir*), when the sin is related to divine rights, the Prophet (s) or the Imam (a) may pardon the person. In this way, the person may not acquire the habit of performing the sin. In other words, punishing the culprit or not punishing him is bound up to what the Infallible deems is more prudent. However, the judge cannot neglect the rights of the public that have been trampled upon. At any rate, pardoning the culprit is a decision that the Imam can make.

Conclusion

The Islamic legal system (Shariah) emphasizes human dignity. Islamic prohibitions aim to reinforce human dignity. The removal of punishments at the discretion of the Imam and as a result of repentance, which has in effect been placed as a proof for the committing of a crime, have all been canonized for the purpose of safeguarding the human dignity of the criminal. This is while, in many other cases, the rationale has been to preserve some benefits that the society as a whole may enjoy. This is in addition to the application of very strict measures to prove the guilt of the suspect. All of these are ways in which the human dignity of the suspect is respected. It follows that the judicial system must pass laws in which the dignity of the individual is respected and considered. In the same way, very strict measures must be applied when attempting to prove the guilt of the suspect.

References

- Ansari, Murtada. 1410 AH. *Kitab al-Makasib*. Annotated by various scholars. Qom: Dar al-Kitab.
- . 1415 AH. *Kitab al-Makasib al-muharramah wa al-bay' wa al-khiyarat*. Qom: Shaykh Ansari Congress.
- Bukhari, Muhammad b. Isma'il. n.d. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Ghazzali, Abu Hamed Muhammad. 1319 Sh. *Kimiya-yi Sa'adat*. Markazi Press.
- Hurr al-'Amili, Muhammad. 1409 AH. *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*. Qom.
- Javadi Amuli, Abd Allah. 1366 Sh. *Karamat dar Qur'an*. Raja.
- Karaki, Ali b. al-Husayn. 1414 AH. *Jami' al-maqasid fi sharh al-qawaid*. Qom: Al al-Bayt.
- Khomeini, Ruhullah. n.d. *Tahrir al-wasilah*. Qom: Dar al-'Ilm.
- Khu'i, Abu al-Qasim. n.d. *Misbah al-faqih*. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami.
- Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-. 1367 AH. *Al-Furu' min al-Kafi*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Majlisi, Muhammad-Baqir. n.d. *Bihar al-anwar*. Tehran: Islamiyyah.
- Makarim Shirazi, Naser. 1374 Sh. *Tafsir nimunah*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Mawardi, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad Habib. n.d. *Al-Ahkam al-sultaniyyah wa al-wilayat al-diniyyah*, Qom: Daftar Tablighat Islami.
- Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, Najm al-Din Ja'far b. al-Hasan al-. 1408 AH. *Shara'i' al-Islam fi masa'il al-halal wa al-haram*. Qom: Ismailian Press.
- Muqaddas Ardabili, Ahmad b, Muhammad. n.d. *Zubdat al-bayan fi ahkam al-Quran*. Tehran: al-Murtadawiyah.
- Mustafawi, Hasan. 1360 Sh. *Al-Tahqiq fi kalimat al-Quran al-karim*. Tehran: Bongah Tarjomeh va Nashr Kitab.
- Nahj al-balaghah*. Edited by Subhi Salih.
- Najafi, Muhammad Hasan. 1404 AH. *Jawahir al-kalam*. Beirut.

- Nuri, Husayn. 1408 AH. *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*. Beirut: Al al-Bayt (a).
- Sabuni, Muhammad Ali al-. 1401 AH. *Rawa'i' al-bayan fi tafsir ayat al-ahkam min al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Manahil al-'Irfan.
- Shahid al-Thani, Zayn al-Din b. Ali al-. 1413 AH. *Masalik al-afham ila tanqih shara'i' al-Islam*. Qom: Ma'arif Islammiyyah.
- Sajistani, Abu al-Ash'ath. 1410 AH. *Sunan Abi Dawud*. Dar al-Fikr.
- . 1426 AH. *Al-Rawdah al-bahiyyah fi sharh al-lum'ah al-dimashqiyyah*. Qom: Arghavan-e Danesh.
- Shaykh al-Saduq, Muhammad al-. 1413 AH. *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*. Qom: Daftar Tablighat Islami.
- . 1386 AH. *'Ilal al-shara'i'*. Qom: Davari.
- Shirazi, Muhammad Husayn. n.d. *Isal al-talib ila al-Makasib*. Tehran: A'lami.
- Tabataba'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. 1417 AH. *Al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an*. Qom: Intesharat Islami.
- The Qur'an. Translated to Persian by Fuladvand.
- Tirmidhi, Muhammad b. 'Isa al-. 1403 AH. *Sunan Tirmidhi*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Tusi, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan. 1387 AH. *al-Mabsut*. Tehran: al-Murtadawiyah.
- Tusi, Khwaja Nasir al-Din. 1364 Sh. *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*. Mojtaba Minavi. Tehran: Khwarazmi.
- Tusi, Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Hamzah. 1408 AH. *Al-Wasilah ila nayl al-fadilah*. Qom: Mar'ashi.

Enlightenment and Islam in Iran: The Case of Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh

Arash Tahmasb,¹ Mojtaba Zarvani²

Received: 16-08-2017 / Accepted: 02-12-2017

Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh is considered one of the most important and influential personalities in the religious-social life of contemporary Iran. He began his cultural activities writing dramas and criticizing the religious-social situation of the society he lived in. He said that this resembled Protestantism. In addition to this, he also dealt theoretically with the criticism of religion and issues related to it.

This article is an attempt to survey the basic features of his intellectual system and his main objections to religion—in particular the religion of Islam—as they are reflected in his major works. Hence, a comprehensive view of his life as well the events that influenced his ideas have been presented herein.

Keywords: Akhundzadeh, Protestantism, Criticism of Religion, Islam.

Introduction

The new confrontation with religion in Iran was not based upon religious research and not by means of any scientific or academic

1. Independent Scholar (a.tahmasb@protonmail.com).

2. Associate Professor, University of Tehran, Iran (zurvani@ut.ac.ir),
Corresponding author.

methods or approaches. Historical documents reveal that the first objections to religion were more or less influenced by the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment and those of Western critics of religion.

Akhundzadeh was one of the first and most important people to have seriously confronted religion in general and Islam in particular in Iran. Also, he was the first person in contemporary Iran to have criticized the prevailing religious system. He criticized the various aspects of religion after he had familiarized himself with the ideas of major thinkers of the modern era in the West.

A casual glance at the criticisms of Islam made in Iran and other Muslim countries shows that most of them are the repetition or explanation of the objections put forth by Akhundzadeh. However, they do take on a more methodical and systematic form after him.

In this article, an attempt has been made to present the main intellectual features of Akhundzadeh from the perspective of religious knowledge. In this way, we will be able to respond to the following questions:

1. What are the main sources that he used in his confrontation with religion?
2. What are his main and most outstanding anti-religious views?
3. What strategies and tactics did he use to destroy religion?

1. Biography

Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh (Akhundov) was born in Nukha in 1812. During his youth, he got familiar with Khachatur Abovian, a well renowned anti-church author. Then, through Abovian, he got familiar with many thinkers of the modern west and also became acquainted with the general atmosphere of the Russian literature: “The study of Russian literature and philosophy and in particular the works of revolutionary democrats has a noticeable role in the formation of the

philosophical beliefs of Akhundov. His notes in the margin of works by Blinsky and Pisarev, which are available in his library, confirm this claim” (Jafarov 1962, 22).

Researchers believe that Akhundzadeh familiarized himself with the works of many European philosophers and famous authors such as Spinoza, Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, Russo, Holbach, Mill, Buckle, Renan, Homer, Petrarch, Moliere, Hume, Helvétius. and others (мустафаев 2013, 222; Jafarov 1962, 21). Also in his personal library, books from many Western scientists, such as Darwin, Huxley, Faraday, Schleiden (Мамедов 1978, 36), as well as the famous book by Renan, *Life of Jesus*, were found (Мамедов 1978, 37).

During his lifetime, Akhundzadeh produced six comedies and one story. The names of his works are as follows: *Molla Ebrahim Khalil: The Alchemist*, *Mousier Jourdan* and *Darvish Mast Ali Shah the Famous Magician*, *Vazir-e khan-e sarab*, *Quldurbasan Bear*, *A Miserable Man*, *Dispute Lawyers*, and *Betrayed Stars* or *Yusof Shah-e Seraj* (which is his only story).

Because of these plays, he is considered to be the founder of realistic comedies in Azerbaijanian literature (Мамедов 1982, 4). Also “with the translation of some of the works of Mirza Fath Ali into Russian, French, German, English, and Norwegian, he became so famous that some began calling him ‘the oriental Molière,’ ‘Caucasian Gogol,’ or ‘the Moliere of Azerbaijan’” (Malekpour 1385 Sh, 1:132; Brands 1986, 1:332).

Akhundzadeh’s remaining works are letters and treatises, which have been written separately and have been collected in different collections and published in Persian under the two titles of *New Alphabet* and *Articles*. However, *Letters of Kamal al-Dawlah*, which is without a doubt one of his most important works, has not been published in Persian. The publication of this work, according to

Ajudani, marked the beginning of his adventure of prevention (Ajudani 1382 Sh, 33-35).¹

After many years of tireless efforts to explicitly remove religion and traditional ideas from the society, Akhundzadeh died on 10 March 1878, at the age of sixty-six (Jafarov 1962, 27). Algar believes that the reason of his death was a heart disease (Algar 1985, 1:739). The translator of the book *The Tale of a Miserable Man* mentions the place of his burial to be the Muslim graveyard in Tbilisi (Akhundov 1971, VIII).

2. Ideas

2.1 Intellectual Periods

The course of Akhundzadeh's beliefs can be divided into three periods: The first period is concurrent with his childhood and youth. During this period, Akhundzadeh was a follower of the traditional religion. The second period starts from his youth when his mind changes and he moves towards the criticism of religion within the framework of Islamic Protestantism. In the third period, his various criticisms of religion lead him to abandon religion altogether.

In the first period, we find Akhundzadeh as a child busy with studying the prevailing sciences of his age, Persian and Arabic languages, the Islamic, sciences, and Persian literary works. According to the desire of his father and his guardian (Akhund Molla Asghar), he was supposed to become a Muslim cleric, but as he himself says, "another event took place which caused me to change my mind" (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 11). This event was the meeting between Akhundzadeh and *Mirza Shafi'* in Ganjeh, from which point the second period of his life starts.

During this period, Akhundzadeh directed all of his efforts towards improving society by removing from Islamic beliefs what he considered

1. For a different treatment of why some of ākhundzādeh's works, and in particular his *Letters of Kamal al-Dawlah*, were not published, see Mazināni (1389 Sh, 58).

to be superstitious ideas. He did this by means of emphasizing on learning contemporary sciences. In this period, most of his works were tainted with a critical view of religion. Nevertheless, they were still not what later became his complete denial of religion altogether. His most significant activity in this period was his effort to create a new alphabet, in which he imitated the western alphabet.

However, the failure of Akhundzadeh's efforts and his distancing himself from traditional Islamic thought lead to the last and most important intellectual period of his life, which he called "Islamic protestantism." By the word "Protestantism," he means a complete destruction of Islam as a religion. This is something that will be discussed further in detail later on.

In summary, in one phase of his life he attempted to adapt religious ideas with new ideas. However, in the later phases, he took a step further and categorically denied religion (Gudarzi 1387 Sh, 124).

In fact, we can classify the periods of his thought using the contemporary jargon in the following way: In the first period, he still believed in Islam and had a traditional view. In the second period, he rejected some of the teachings and laws of Islam within the framework of a plan to reform it. He did this under the banner of "Islamic Protestantism." And in the third period, he rejected the principles of Islam. In particular, he rejected the belief in God. Consequently, He rejected all kinds of religion, Islam or otherwise.

Below, we will analyze the second and third periods of Akhundzadeh's thought.

1.1.2 The Second Period

The first step that Akhundzadeh took towards progress was to promote western concepts and methods of study. He began by utilizing one of the most important methods of forming new ideas, i.e., criticism. He presented this concept under the title of *kritika* and was of the opinion

that this was a lofty method for education. It is for this reason that he made a clear distinction between criticism and admonishment and said that while the first was an effective method of amendment and purification, the second was useless (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 23; 1349 Sh, 10).

Thus, he started his activity by criticizing the intellectual, religious, and social situation of his age, and his main means in this period was to write plays and to have these plays performed on stage. In the play *Molla Ebrahim Khalil, the Alchemist*, he deals with the issue of superstition and compares religion to it. The play *Monsieur Jordan, the French Botanist and Darvish Mast-'ali Shah, the Famous Magician* also deals with the confrontation between magic and superstitious women with new sciences and their representatives. Azhand writes about this work:

The play *Monsieur Jordan* is a comparison between the world of the east and the world of the west. The charlatanism and demagoguery of some of the elements in society, the ignorance of eastern people, the progressive ideals of western civilization, its new culture and science and the necessity of adoption from this culture are among the themes of this play. (Azhand 1373 Sh, 27)

His other works entitled *The Vizier of Khan-e Lankaran* is based on two important political and social ideas. One is the criticism of oriental despotism and the other is the relation between women and freedom. In another work called *Quldurban (Bear)*, he criticizes the social situation of his time as well as the rituals and customs prevailing in Caucasia. In brief, he imagines them to be the result of illiteracy, ignorance, and superstition. The play *A Miserly Man*, which, according to some critics, is one of his best plays (Algar 1985, 1:736; Malekpour 1385 Sh, 1:161), is the story of a miserly cloth salesman named Haji Qara who has an Islamic appearance. However, when working with a certain Heydarbeyg, he gets involved in stealing and smuggling. His

last work, *Dispute Lawyers* is about the efforts of a man named Aqa Hasan, who strives to marry a rich girl named Sakine Khanum but is rejected by her. For this reason, he tries to steal the inheritance of this girl with the help of some lawyers. The most important doctrinal part of this story is expressed in a dialogue between Aqa Mardan and the sheriff about lawyers. Aqa Mardan asks the sheriff: “They are aware of their own religious problems?” The sheriff responds: “I assure you that all are literate. They all make difficulty for the demon. Do not take them to be simpletons. All the four men do congregational prayers in the mosque” (Akhundzadeh 1349 Sh, 294).

The only fictional work of Akhundzadeh is called *the Story of Yusof Shah Seraj*. In this work, he rejects astrology, fortune telling, the belief in the goodness and badness of certain times, the influence of stars, magic, and alchemy. Also, as he does in his other works, in this work he attacks the Islamic scholars and dervishes. Concerning this work, Aryanpur writes:

The intention of the author of this story is to express the tyranny and despotism of the Shah and the stupidity and flattery of ministers, officials, the clergy, and poor people. Another theme is that the cause of the destruction of the once glorious Iran and the abjection of its condition is nothing but the trustees of the state, the [seemingly] great scholars and the [apparently] respectable ministers. (Aryanpur 1379 Sh, 1:346)

His works are chiefly characterized by a criticism of religion in a direct manner within the framework of plays and stories. However, following this, he chose a new method for the presentation of his material.

2.1.2 The Third Period

In this period, he expressed himself in a more direct manner and in the framework of articles and treatises. The first effort he made to actualize his goal was to propose a new alphabet for the Persian language. He

considered the main reason for the backwardness of Iran and Iranians to be the Islamic alphabet. Of course, he does not clearly specify why he believes that the prevailing Persian alphabet stems from religion and not the evolution of language per se. What is more, he presents this issue in the form of a dialogue (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 188-90). In this dialogue, he says that the way to development is literacy, and this is only attained by changing the alphabet. He says that “through the new alphabet, the whole nation of Islam will be able to read and write in their own language in a relatively short period of time” (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 190).

In order to attain this goal, he tries to show that this idea is in agreement with religious laws: “I am certain that this type of reform is not incompatible with the noble religious law and that the respectable scholars will not prevent it from being taught” (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 7). But his main intention in changing the alphabet can be understood from the following quote: “One of the bad effects of the dominancy of the wild Arab nomads was that they imposed upon us such a complex alphabet that made the acquisition of even an ordinary level of literacy a very arduous task” (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 207). We can see the roots of his negative feelings towards Arabs and religion from such statements. Describing the view of Akhundzadeh, Adamiyat writes: “If you want to know the truth, Mirza Fath Ali had never felt pity for the noble religious laws. Nor did he ever believe in religious obligations. Be means of changing the alphabet he really wanted to remove the clergy from the scene” (Adamiyat 1349 Sh, 79).

After this useless effort, he proposed a new plan (Ostadi 1392 Sh, 11). In his letter to the editor of the newspaper *Haqayiq* in 1872, he wrote: “The present Islamic alphabet should not be changed at all ... However, when new works are written, the translations of foreign nations and ideas should be written in the new alphabet” (Akhundzadeh 1963, 196).

Following his defeat in reforming the script, he investigated the causes of his failure and came to the conclusion that the religious sentiment of the masses was the major obstacle standing in the way of the transformation of the script. Thus, he came to the conclusion that the only way to achieve his reformations was to destroy the very basis of religion (Mowlavi 1369 Sh, 1:156). In order to carry this out, he wrote *The Letters of Kamal al-Dawlah*. No doubt, these were ideologically impacted by the *Persian Letters* of Montesquieu (Myсraфaев 2013, 219). It is interesting that the author of the book *M. F. Akhundov* places *The Letters of Kamal al-Dawlah* at the same level as that of the *Persian Letters* of Montesquieu (Jafarov 1962, 20).

Nevertheless, in a letter in 1876, Akhundzadeh writes: “It is not necessary to directly oppose the religion of our ancestors. We should apparently follow religion in a brotherly fashion but to be followers of the truth in our hearts” (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 196). However, in an article on *Biyaghrafiya*, he clearly states that the publication of *Kamal al-Dawlah* was for the purpose of “the destruction of the base of this religion” (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 15). And in a poem, he states: “If I do not uproot this religion, I would not be ‘Ali, the son of Taqi Hasan” (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 234-35). In another place, he clearly states that the blow that the letters will deal to Islam will be more effective than the blow that an army of one thousand people could deal to it. It will weaken the faith of the people and they will begin to doubt Islam (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 234-35).

All in all, he considered his work to be very important and crucial. He felt that it would determine the future of his society. Moreover, he felt that he had a special dignity: “In my view, *The Letters of Kamal al-Dawlah* are to be translated into French, like the work of Renan. If it is translated, it will be received warmly by European readers” (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 307). Thus, the third period of his ideas climaxed with this work and with his *Criticism on a Single-Word*, the

translation of some western texts and his correspondence with people of the same views.

Like other people of his time, he felt that Muslim countries were suffering from many problems. He came to this idea after he had accepted the philosophical principles of modernity. According to Akhundzadeh, the despotic regimes in the Islamic countries were the source of the backwardness prevailing in them. They were the source of all the social diseases in these countries. The despotism, injustice, and oppression in them was the source of their own destruction (мыстафаев 2013, 223). Due to this, Akhundzadeh views the historical conditions of Iran as being similar to the beginning of modernism, progress, and change in Europe (Taleshani 1385 Sh, 70).

He actually intended to open up a new horizon before the people of Iran as well as its neighbors by means of his new plan. These new horizons were humanism, materialism, scientism, literary realism, nationalism, liberalism, law and constitution, and many other mottos like these (Farasatkah 1374 Sh, 63). In fact, he has been portrayed as “a liberalist and secularist in the western meaning [of these terms]” (Haeri 1360 Sh, 29).

His basic plan was founded upon some of the essential ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, which he described in the beginning of his *Kamal al-Dawlah* in detail. He was of the belief that the main way to save a nation was for it to acquire the knowledge necessary for the acquisition of livelihood, the perfection of the natural sciences and industry, ethical goodness, and the adoption of the norms of civilization (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 9). He maintained that in order to achieve civilization, progress is necessary; in order to achieve civilization and progress, people must be liberal; and in order to achieve freedom and liberation, there is no way but revolution:

Revolutions occur when the people become fed up with the unlawful behavior of a despotic king. They rebel in an attempt to remove him

and to legislate rules for their own welfare and happiness. They come to realize the absurdity of religious beliefs and stand up to religious scholars and select a school of thought that is in agreement with the intellect and grounded on the prescriptions of the philosophers. (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 10-11)

Thus, in the first of these letters, he tried to identify Islam with despotism, and in the other letters, he criticized Islamic beliefs. In this way, he sought to annihilate what he felt was the despotic policy of Islam.

One of the important factors of progress, according to Akhundzadeh, was the presence of what he called "*Faramushkhaneh*." It has been said that "Akhundzadeh was an advocate of the formation of Freemasonry in Iran and he believed that this was one of the tools for freedom and liberation" (Haeri 1360 Sh, 27; Adamiyat 1349 Sh, 149-50).

Quoting three different works of Akhundzadeh in which he advocated and admired masonic lodges, Rain believes that, despite an oral speech by Akhundzadeh to the contrary, he was never a member of any Freemasonry lodges (Rain 1357 Sh, 1:459-60). However, He further quotes pieces of evidence which reinforce the possibility of a relationship between Akhundzadeh and Freemasonry (Rain 1357 Sh, 1:461-65).

Following the discussion regarding the opposition between despotism and Islam, the second main issue discussed in his *Letters* is nationalism. After having denied religion, he tries to replace it with "nationalism and the love of one's nation." He portrays himself as an adherent of the ancient culture of Iran. In a letter in 1871 addressed to Maneckji, a prominent Persian in India, he writes: "Though I am apparently Turkish, my ancestry goes back to Persia" (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 249) and "You are the memorial of our ancestors" (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 249). He also writes the following in another place: "The Zoroastrians are our brothers, countrymen, and members of

our race and share the same language with us” (Akhundzadeh 1963, 214).

On one hand, he introduces himself as a person opposed to despotism and in a letter to Jalal al-Din Mirza, he writes the following:

In Iran, after the overcome of Arabs and the degradation of Persian government and annihilation of the culture and rules of Mahbadian, the sovereignty has not been a real one. After the Hijrah, the rulers of this country have been despotic and illegal. (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 255)

On the other hand, this nationalism is fully in conflict with his anti-despotism, because he gives the title “angelic kings of Persia” to the despotic kings of Iran (Mowlavi 1369 Sh, 1:157). Also, according to Akhundzadeh, religion cannot really prevent the intrusion of foreigners, since nobody really believes in the importance of heaven or martyrdom. In order to prevent that, it is necessary to plant the seed of nationalism and patriotism in their hearts (Adamiyat 1349 Sh, 115; Mowlavi 1369 Sh, 1:157).¹

The third issue that Akhundzadeh tackles in *Letters* is the philosophical, ethical and jurisprudential dimensions of religion, and, in his plays, he mentions some of his objections to ethical and jurisprudential topics. In philosophy, his methodology was based upon rationalism and scientism. He states that “as long as science does not prevail and as long as people are unable to distinguish right from wrong by means of science [the state of affairs will be the same]” (Akhundzadeh 1963, 183), and “if science prevails ... cases like theirs will be prevented from reoccurring and creatures will be free from ignorance, intrigue, and distress” (1963, 183-84). In this regard, Adamiyat writes: “Then he took his ideas from the philosophical and

1. It should be noted that the knowledge of Ākhundzādeh about ancient Iran was very little, that most of what he knew about it was taken from the biased works of some orientalist and Iranologists.

scientific thought of Europe ... He measures the principles of religious laws by the spirit of the history of time and becomes the mouthpiece of religious reform” (Adamiyat 1349 Sh, 174-86).

Of course, Adamiyat’s views are partially wrong, since Akhundzadeh did not intend to become the mouthpiece for the reform of religion, even though he was in disagreement with all kinds of religious thought. As he states, “The invalidity of the older religions is unclear for the followers of these three religions—i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, when their features are properly explained for them and their invalidity is proven, they will also confirm their invalidity automatically and willfully” (Gudarzi 1387 Sh, 129; Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 281).

For this very reason, he considered himself to be one of the philosophers who rejected the foundations of the revealed religions—that is, God. He was also of the opinion that Rumi, Sheikh Mahmud Shabistari, Abd al-Rahman Jami, and other mystics had grasped such a philosophical theory but that they expressed it in the guise of mysticism due to a fear of the masses (Madadpur 1386 Sh, 3:330-31). In this regard, he lays the foundation of his discussions upon a specific epistemological vision. He believes that the world and its rules are fully understandable. These rules are discovered through science. The foundation of human knowledge is the external world, which is grasped through the activity of our senses. This sensation is the only thing that gives us proper knowledge of the external world, and it is the source of true knowledge. Knowledge in his view is only trustworthy when it is based on sensation (Мамедов 1978, 59). He confirms this by means of something he found in the margins of one of the books of Zimmerman. Zimmerman wrote that human sensation is necessarily limited and that there are many things that human beings do not grasp by means of their senses, but they exist. Man can discover the insensible rules of nature with the help of the abstract mind. As an example, he mentions the law

of gravity. He believes that from the beginning, the function of the scientist was to discover the secrets of the universe.

Akhundzadeh accepts these statements by Zimmerman and emphasizes that humans can study the objective world through the senses and the mind and learn about it by these means (Мамедов 1978, 63-64). Akhundzadeh begins his philosophical investigations with a discussion regarding God and the concept of the Necessary Being. He believes that it is impossible to prove this entity by means of the impossibility of an endless chain of causes (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 121-24).

Of course, he believes in a specific type of determinism and has his own idea of causation, according to which humans are the causes of the effects that stem from them and God does not interfere in the creation of their actions. In a letter to Mankji (July 29, 1871), he states that becoming a devil or an angel depends on a non-divine cause: "When that non-divine cause is eliminated, the devil will become an angel" (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 250).

Most of his objections to the existence of a creator and the impossibility of a proof for religious beliefs were taken from Hume. He also wrote some letters to scholars in India and Mumbai in which he wrote extensively about Hume (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 121). A meticulous study of his ideas and arguments shows that in addition to Hume, in some aspects, his philosophy was very similar to Spinoza. This is especially true with respect to the idea that nature is its own cause (*causa sui*) (Мамедов 1978, 37).

Also, in his views about issues such as space and time, the criticism of religion, fanaticism, and superstitions, he was in agreement with the viewpoints of the French materialists, particularly Holbach (Мамедов 1978, 39). In his personal library, there was a book on the history of philosophy, in which, under Holbach's explanation of "the system of nature," Akhundzadeh wrote that the aforementioned judgment "was correct" (Мамедов 1978, 37).

Akhundzadeh did not believe in God. Not only does he deny the philosophical-theological God, he also denies the God of the mystics as well. He has a detailed critique of Rumi, in which he mentions three objections:

1. The belief in free-will for the Universal Being and the theory of the Unity of Being.
2. The belief in mystical annihilation in God that had been presented by the Indian Buddha. According to him, this is a meaningless concept that the wise Hindu and Muslim people have never been able to understand (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 36). He also says that attributing the dictum “Die before you die” to the Prophet (s) is mistaken and that this dictum is probably taken from the Buddhist tradition (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 37).
3. The belief that “the spirit remains after separation from the body and will be attached to the Universal Being. However, the wise men of Europe do not believe in the immaterial and independent spirit” (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 37).

In the end, he says that the objections he has leveled at Rumi are not his own but are taken from European scholars (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 37). In light of this, we can definitely state that he does not have any belief in the immaterial spirit or super-natural beings and that he thinks in a purely materialistic manner.

In fact, contrary to the logic of Muslim theologians and mystics who believed that the rules of nature and society were based upon the divine will, he felt that the world always moves forward because of a series of internal laws that govern it (Мамедов 1978, 54).

With the denial of God, the immaterial spirit, and metaphysics, there is no room left for any other religious belief; nevertheless, he occasionally attacked other principles of religion—including prophecy,

theodicy and imamate (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 99; 1357 Sh, 190). An important point to note is that he not only criticized Islam but also other religions as well (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 94-95).

Thus, with this attitude, for the first time in the intellectual history of Muslims and Iranians, a concept named Protestantism was put forth—a worldview in which the rights of God and the obligations of servants of God were totally annihilated and only the rights of people remained. It has often been observed that “the concept of Islamic ‘Protestantism’ is fully different from the meaning this term has in the religious reforms in the West” (Akhundzadeh 1963, 12).

In fact, before him, the concept of Protestantism was limited to the denial of certain laws and rituals of Islam. However, his can be defined as the denial of the rights of God and the religious obligations of human beings.

In the beginning, he considered praying and other religious rituals as absurd. Then, he separately criticized various types of Islamic rulings, such as the religious taxes, the ritual prayer, fasting, the punishment for extra-marital affairs, retaliation, and so forth (Akhundzadeh 1351 Sh, 101). He blamed all these problems on the clergy and criticized this group intensively (Akhundzadeh 1963, 36-38).

He proposes the secularization of society, with the intent of removing Islam from it. This secularization is nothing but the marginalization of religion from the social and political spheres. As he writes in a letter to Mostashar al-Dawlah in 1871, while admiring the idea of a “single world,” he criticizes the efforts to link religious decrees to French Constitution. He believes that the solution to the problems is the following:

Judgment is to be taken away from clergies in all parts of Iran, and all courts are to be attached [directly] to the Ministry of Justice. From now onwards, the clergies should not interfere in any dispute

or in the settlement of affairs. Like the Europeans, they should only pay attention to matters such as prayer and some personal affairs, such as marriage, divorce, and the burial of the dead bodies. (Akhundzadeh 1357 Sh, 200-1)

In fact, in a letter he wrote in 1871, Akhundzadeh presents the same concept of state-nation in a very simple language and sees the solution to lie in the creation and establishment of a national state and a national government (Ajudani, 1382 Sh, 51). In this way, he intended to separate politics from religion. Adamiyat believes that, among the authors of the Islamic world, Akhundzadeh was the only person who pointed out the impossibility of combining “European politics and principles of religious law” (Adamiyat, 1349 Sh, 154).

Conclusion

Akhundzadah is considered one of the first critics of religion in the Muslim world and in Iran in particular. He was under the intellectual influence of thinkers such as Voltaire, Helvetius, Holbach, Diderot, Hume, Newton, Petrarch, and some Russian thinkers. He borrowed most of his anti-religious arguments from Ernest Renan and Thomas Buckle.

The gist of Akhundzadeh’s discussions and the results he intended to reach can be observed in the following statement: “Now it is the time to use your five senses, to enjoy and live in the world, and gain virtues in worldly affairs” (Akhundzadeh 2535, 12-13). Jafarov rightly comments in this regard: “The struggling atheist character of Akhundov has an inseparable link with the materialistic understanding of the phenomenon of the nature” (Jafarov 1962, 21).

Most of Akhundzadeh’s criticisms of Islam are in fact the old criticisms of western orientalist (Algar 1985, 1:738). However, a very basic problem in his thinking was that he had very little knowledge of Islam and the cultural-historical situation of Islamic lands, including Iran (Ostadi 1392 Sh, 19). Mojtahedi writes in this regard:

In a sense, Akhundzadeh is the inventor of a way of thought which has gradually been reinforced in Iran and has led to the formation of a type of superficial, positivistic philosophy and banal scientism, which does not surpass the limit of words. However, it is very dangerous and the cause of the annihilation of philosophical contemplation and original scholarly research. (Mojtahedi, 1384 Sh, 182)

The main sources of Akhundzadeh's thought can be divided into two categories: (1) works that made him acquainted in his childhood with some Islamic concepts and sciences, but they did not allow him to deeply ponder over their content; (2) the works of modern western thinkers, including natural scientists, philosophers, and politicians. He became acquainted with modern concepts and the prevailing discussions of his era by means of these sources. Relying on them, he attacked all types of metaphysical concept, without studying them in a scholarly and unbiased manner.

References

- Adamiyat, Fereydun. 1349 Sh. *Ideas of Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh*. Tehran: Kharazmi.
- Ajudani, Mashallah. 1382 Sh. *Iranian Constitution*. Tehran: Akhtaran.
- Akhundov, Mirza Fath Ali. 1971. *Play of the Tale of a Miserable Man & Autobiography*. Translated by Ahmad Mahdavi. Tehran: Atae Institute.
- Akhundzadeh, Mirza Fath Ali. 1349 Sh. *Allegories*. Translated by Mohammad Ja'far Gharajeh Daghi. Tehran: Kharazmi.
- . 1351 Sh. *Articles*. Collected by Bagher Momeni. Tehran: Ava.
- . 1963. *New Alphabet and Writings*. Baku.
- . 1357 Sh. *New Alphabet and Writings*. Edited by Hamid Mohamamdzadeh. Tabriz: Ehya.
- . 1355 Sh. *Persian Articles*. Edited by Hamid Mohammadzadeh and H. Sediq. Tehran: Negah.

- Algar, H. 1985. "AKHUNZADA." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- Aryanpur, Yahya. 1379 Sh. *From Saba to Nima*. Tehran: Zavar.
- Azhand, Yaghoub. 1373 Sh. *Playwriting in Iran*. Tehran: Ney.
- Brands, H. W. 1986. "AKHUND-ZADA." In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Farasatkah, Maghsud. 1374 Sh. *The Beginning of Contemporary Modern Thinking (Religious and Non-Religious)*. Tehran: Sherkate Sahamiye Enteshar.
- Gudarzi, Qolamreza. 1387 Sh. *Religion and Intellectuals of Constitution Movement*. Tehran: Akhtaran.
- Haeri, Abdolhadi. 1360 Sh. *Shiites and the Constitution Movement in Iran and the Role of Iranians Residing in Iraq*. Tehran: Amirkabir.
- Jafaroy, J. 1962. *M. F. Akhundov*. Translated by A. Shafaei. Baku: Azerbaijani Government Journals.
- Madadpur, Mohammad. 1386 Sh. *Course of Contemporary Thought*. Tehran: Sureye Mehr.
- Malekpour, Jamshid. 1385 Sh. *Dramatic Literature in Iran*. Tehran: Tus.
- Мамедов, Ш. Ф. 1978. *Мирза-Фатали Ахундов*. Москва. ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО «МЫСЛЬ».
- Мамедов, Н. Дж. 1982. *Реализм М. Ф. Ахундова*. Баку: Маариф.
- Mazinani, Mohammad Sadeq. 1389 Sh. *Distinctions of Religious and West-Oriented Constitutional Advocates*. Qom: Bustane Ketab.
- Mojtahedi, Karim. 1384 Sh. *Familiarity of Iranians with the New Western Philosophies*. Tehran: Pazhuheshgahe Farhang va Andisheye Eslami.
- Movaseqi, Ahmad. 1388 Sh. *Renovation and Reforms in Iran*. Tehran: Qumes.
- Mowlavi, Mohammad Ali. 1369 Sh. "Akhoundzadeh." In *The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia*. Tehran: Markaze Da'erat al-Ma'aref-e Bozorg-e Eslami.
- мустафаев, шаин. 2013, "ахундов и французское просвещение: духовный мост через столетие" в "Культурный трансфер на перекрестках Центральной Азии: до, во время и после Великого шелкового пути", Париж–Самарканд: МИЦАИ.

Ostadi, Kazem. 1392 Sh. *Akhundzadeh and the Change of the Alphabet*.
Tehran: Elm.

Rain, Esmael. 1357 Sh. *Faramushkhaneh and Freemasonry in Iran*. Tehran:
Amirkabir.

Taleshani, Mozaffar Namdar. 1385 Sh. *On Yearning for Modernity and
Progress*. Tehran: Nashro Pazhuheshe Ma' nagera.