

Lesson 2: The Depth of Mans being Impel Him to Seek God

Outside the complex system of his body, man has vast and vital dimensions that are not in any way confined by his bodily mechanism. In order to discover those aspects and planes that are beyond the bodily structure and physical dimension of man, one must search out the inward and spiritual structures of man and perceive the broad horizons of his comprehensive nature, together with the delicate and refined manifestations of his feelings and instincts.

A series of special modes of perception exist in man's being that are rooted in themselves, arise from the very stuff of man's nature, and do not owe their emergence to any external factor. Among these perceptions are the sense of commitment to trust, justice, veracity and honesty.

Before he enters the realm of science and knowledge with all its concerns, man is able to perceive certain truths by means of these innate perceptions. But after entering the sphere of science and philosophy and filling his brain with various proofs and deductions, he may forget his natural and innate perceptions or begin to doubt them. It is for this reason that when man moves beyond his innate nature to delineate a belief, differences begin to appear.

Inclination to religion and belief in God, draw, in their initial stages, on instinctive motives and innate perceptions, but then they develop and evolve with the help of ratiocination and reflection.

The roots of innate feeling in the disposition of man are so deep and, at the same time, so clear and evident that if a person purges his mind and his spirit both of religious concepts and of anti religious thoughts and then looks at himself and at the world of being, he will clearly see that he is moving in a certain direction together with the whole caravan of being.

Without any desire or will on his part, he begins his life at a certain point, and again without willing it, he advances toward another point, one which is unknown to him. The same reality can be observed in all

natural creatures, operating in a precise and orderly way.

If a clear-sighted man, still in the state of nature, looks at the circumstances surrounding him, he will distinctly feel the existence of a great force that encompasses him and the whole world. In his own being, which is an extremely small part of the great world, he will see knowledge, power and will to exist, and he will ask himself how knowledge, power and will could not exist in the world as a whole.

It is the finely calculated order and motion of the world that compels man to accept the existence of a universal intellect that, lying beyond the world of nature, nonetheless designs and commands it; unless this be accepted, the orderliness of the world cannot be explained. Anyone assessing his position in the world can perceive that there is a power which creates him, brings him here, inspires motion in him, and then removes him again, without his permission or assistance being sought for any of this.

The Commander of the Martyrs, Husayn b. 'Ali, may peace be upon both of them, said in his intimate supplications to the Creator:

"How is it possible to deduce Your existence from a thing which depends upon You for its very being? Why do You not possess that manifestness that other-than-You possesses, so that it might make You evident? When were You ever hidden from the inward eye so that You might need proofs as a guide to You? When were You ever distant from us so that Your traces and signs might draw us nigh to You? Blind be the eye that does not see You watching over and guarding it!

"O God, You Who have manifested Yourself to us with Your splendor, how can You be hidden when You are manifest and evident? How can You be absent when with Your unceasing manifestation You watch over Your Servants?"¹

Nowhere and at no time has a thing made without a maker been seen, nor a deed without a doer. The search for the link between cause and effect arises from an inward instinct in man; awareness of causality cannot be removed from anyone.

Likewise, the religious feeling, the search for a Creator, can also not be removed from anyone. Even a child with no experience of the world, whenever he hears a sound or observes a motion, will instinctively turn his attention to the origin of the sound or the motion.

The foundations both of practical life and of knowledge rest upon the acceptance of a cause for every effect. The norm of causality is, in fact, an absolute one which admits of no exceptions. Geology, physics, chemistry, sociology, economics, in these and other sciences, research has the purpose of specifying the causes and factors that determine relationships.

In short, it is clear that science and knowledge are nothing other than the search for causes; all progress and advancement in human affairs result from the investigations carried out by scholars into the causes of phenomena.

Were it to be possible for us to find in a single being or corner of the universe a sign of absolute self-origination or creativity, we would be justified in extending that one instance to the whole scheme of being.

Of course, it is not necessary that the law of causality should always manifest itself to us in familiar forms. The variety and multiplicity of causes is such that an investigator concerned with only one phenomenon might not be able to specify all the causes. However, in all the affairs of mankind, particular and general, past and future, in the circumstances of the individual or of society, not a single point can be found that is accidental.

Not only is there a particular order inherent in the creation of each separate phenomenon; there is also observable in the relationship of every phenomenon with other phenomena, as well as the relationship of each phenomenon with the environment within which it exists, a subtle and finely calculated order.

For example, in the cultivation of a tree, the laws of the heavens and the earth operate in perfect harmony with the structure of its roots and branches. There is also a relationship of animals with that tree insofar as they draw nourishment from it. How is it possible that accident should lie at the origin of such orderly relationships?

If a phenomenon were to take shape at a certain level in the structure of being, unconsciously and on the basis of chance, this would furnish an excellent groundwork for the disappearance and destruction of the world.

For the slightest disruption in the balance of elements and the smallest disharmony in the radiant laws of the universe would be enough to make things lose their moorings and the heavenly bodies collide, resulting in a massive explosion and the destruction of the world.

If the origin of the world were based on accident, why are the theories even of the materialists based on the supposition of a plan, an ordering, an absence of chance? If the whole world is the result of chance and accident, what is it that did not emerge on the basis of chance? If an existent thing came into being not by virtue of chance, what are its distinguishing features and characteristics and can they be applied to the numerous and variegated phenomena of the universe?

Now since accident is opposed to order and harmony, it follows that whatever bears traces of planning, design and calculation should be disharmonious and discontinuous, because the concepts of planning, design and calculation are opposed to accident and chance.

To suppose that accident is the infrastructure of the universe and its governing principle does not rest on any logical proof or scientific evidence cannot be accepted as a definitive solution to the geometry of the structure of being.

When the experimental sciences demonstrate that the elements and natural factors cannot exert any

independent influence and do not possess any creativity; when all of our experiences, our sensory feelings, and our rational deductions point to the conclusion that nothing occurs in nature without a reason and cause and that all phenomena are based on an established system and specific laws, when all of this is the case, it is surprising that some people turn their backs on scientific principles, primary deductions and propositions based on reflection, and deny the existence of the Creator.

Education and environmental factors are among the causes that either prevent man's innate perceptions from displaying themselves, or, on the contrary, reinforce them. Whatever displays itself from the source of instinct resembles in its orderliness the patterns of nature.

Those who have been left free to follow the original course of their creation without being imprisoned by habit and whose inner nature has not been colored by words and expressions, are better able to hear the summons of their inner being and to distinguish good deeds from bad and true beliefs from false.

Irreligion, which is, in fact, a turning away from original nature, is, therefore, rarely to be seen among such individuals. If someone tells them that the world has no indwelling order and that it is the offspring of chance, decking out his words in philosophical terminology, he will have no effect on such people, because they will reject his theories by virtue of their own original nature.

Those who are caught up in the webs of science may fall prey to doubt and confusion as a result of alluring terminology. The limited knowledge that inspires arrogance in man is like a piece of colored glass placed in front of the aperture of the intellect and the original nature; whoever possesses this knowledge sees the world tinged with the color of his learning and art.

He imagines that the entirety of reality is what he sees through the narrow aperture of his senses and intellect that are a prey to color. Of course, we do not mean that man should refrain from developing his intellect in order to safeguard himself against illusion. However, he should not be limited by or take pride in his limited knowledge and art.

Most people, instead of making their learning and knowledge a ladder for the ascent of their intellect in order to raise themselves to a higher level, remain stationary and imprisoned within the four walls of concepts and terms.

Man's original nature, once it senses danger, rushes to his aid. When a person is pressed by hardship and overwhelming problems, when material factors turn their back on him, when he has no access to any of the resources of life and is drowning like a straw in a maelstrom of vicissitudes and death is but one step away—then an inward motive guides him instinctively to a non-material source of support.

He seeks aid from one whose power is superior to all powers, and he understands that it is that compassionate and all-powerful Being who can succor him with His extraordinary power and save him. Because of his perception, with all of his strength he seeks the aid of that most sacred being to save him from danger, and in the sanctum of his heart, he feels the power and strength of that being at work for

his salvation.

Once someone asked Imam as-Sadiq, upon whom be peace, to guide him toward the Lord, saying that he had been confused by the words of the polemicists. The Imam asked, "Have you ever traveled by ship?"

He answered, "Yes."

The Imam: "Did it every happen that the ship sprang a leak and there was nobody to save you from drowning in the tempestuous waves of the ocean?"

"Yes."

The Imam: "At that dangerous moment and in that state of despair, did you have the feeling that an infinite and almighty power might save you from your terrible fate?"

"Yes, that's the way it was."

The Imam: "It is God Almighty Who is the source of reliance and toward Whom men look with hope when all doors are closed.–"2

Even rebellious and materialistic men of power who are oblivious to the eternal power of God when they enjoy dominion, change when they fall into the trap of defeat and destruction. They forget the denial of God that their environment and materialist schools of thought had inculcated in them and they wholeheartedly turn to the origin of all beings and the source of all strength.

History records numerous examples of such persons who fell victim to difficult and trying circumstances so that the dust of pollution was suddenly removed from their original natures and from the depths of their souls they turned toward the peerless Creator.

In addition to the inner resources that are innate in man's being and help him to discover reality so that free from all mental constructs and constraints he advances on the path of his original nature, the external factor of guidance and admonition is also necessary to show him the way and to reinforce his original nature. It is guidance that reforms rebellious qualities and protects the intellect and original nature from perversion and obedience to false gods.

The Prophets were sent to make men aware of the subtle perceptions of their original nature, to make their godly inclinations flow in their proper course, and to give wings to their lofty aspirations.

The Commander of the Believers, Imam "Ali, upon whom be peace, said, "God sent His Messengers among men so they might question them concerning their covenant with God, recall to them the forgotten bounties of God, speak to them by way of admonition, arouse in them hidden wisdom, and display to them the signs of God's power."3

Such guidance and admonition do not in any way imply extinguishing the light of man's creative will or depriving him of his freedom and ability to think and to choose. It is, on the contrary, a kind of assistance

to his positive inclinations and instincts enabling them to grow and develop. It is through guidance and admonition that men are freed of their bonds and enabled to profit from all the dimensions of their original nature and to flourish with all of their beings.

The Qur'an says:

"The Prophet removes all arduous rules and customs that men had placed on their necks like chains. So those who believe in him, respect him and aid him, who follow the light that has been revealed to him, they are, in truth, those who are saved in this world." (7:157)

"O you who believe, respond and obey when God and the Messenger summon you to life-giving commands." (8:24)

"O mankind, in truth an admonition has come to you from your Lord and a healing cure for the sicknesses of your soul." (10:57)

The first people who accepted the summons of the Prophets were men of pure hearts and enlightened consciences. The ranks of their opponents consisted of those who relied on their illusory power and wealth or were filled with pride on account of their paltry knowledge and deficient, illusion-tainted intellects, in such a way that their groundless arrogance prevented their inner capacities and aspirations from flourishing.

A certain scholar has put it thus: "In spiritual matters, too, the law of supply and demand prevails. If the demand for religion did not exist in man's nature, the supply provided by the Prophets would be wasted. We see that the supply provided by the Prophets did find customers; their fertile, unclouded and authentic visions found numerous followers and supporters. This is proof that the demand for religion exists within man and his innermost consciousness."

In fact, the basic preaching of all the Prophets was a call to monotheism, not a proof of the existence of God. They negated the worthiness of idols, of the sun, the moon and the stars, to be worshipped, so that man's inner and natural thirst for worship should not be satisfied by recourse to external objects such as these and they might, instead, seek all their aims and values in a firm arc ascending to the true object of worship.⁴

Their hearts should be attached to infinite perfection, and with such a faith ever ascending, they should constantly advance toward the source of all values and virtues, finally reaching their aim.

All varieties of polytheism and irreligion, the primitive form that is idolatry and the advanced form that is materialism, are the result of turning away from innate nature.

The progress of knowledge concerning religious experience which is taking place all over the world has resulted in discoveries that permit certain important conclusions to be drawn.

Based on the considerable data collected by sociologists, archaeologists and anthropologists, the history of religions now analyzes the religious instinct, together with the institutions, beliefs, customs and the factors that shape society, in a new way that is largely at variance with the explanations previously given.

There is now a current of thought that is constantly winning new adherents from various schools of thought to the effect that the religious feeling is a primary, natural and stable component of the human spirit and that it is an innate means of perceiving the supra-rational.

In about 1920, a German philosopher by the name of Rudolf Otto was able to prove that parallel to the intellectual and ethical elements in man, there are also innate, supra-rational elements that constitute the religious feeling. Attributes concerning God such as power, greatness and transcendence have the purpose of emphasizing that sanctity cannot be reduced to any other concept. It is an independent category that cannot be derived from any other category and cannot be identified with any other concept, rational or otherwise.

One of the peculiarities of the present age is, in fact, the search for a fourth dimension in the world of nature called "time." Like the other dimensions, it must be intermingled with bodies, and, therefore, no body exists in the world free from the time which arises from motion and change.

It is likewise a characteristic of the age that the researches of scholars have led to the discovery of a "fourth dimension" of the human spirit, the religious feeling.⁵

The other three dimensions or feelings consist of the sense of curiosity, the sense of virtue, and the sense of beauty. The religious sense, or the concept of the sacred, is the fourth dimension and the most basic of senses. Everyone has innately an attraction and inclination to what lies beyond nature, separately and independently from the other three senses.

With the discovery of the religious sense, the three dimensional prison of his spirit collapsed and it was proven that man's religious inclinations are autonomously rooted in his being. They showed themselves even in ages when men were living in forests and caves.

Despite the primacy, autonomy and effectiveness of the senses of curiosity, virtue and beauty and the role they played in the emergence of science, morality and art, it was the religious sense that prepared the ground for the activity of these three senses, helping them to advance on their path and to discover the secrets of the created world.

From the viewpoint of a believer, the world has been designed on the basis of laws and a precise, well-calculated plan. This belief in an ordaining, wise God stimulates the sense of curiosity to seek out and discover the laws and mysteries of nature that are based on a chain of cause and effect.

The role of the religious sense in the development and advancement of man's lofty qualities, in modifying

his instincts and fructifying his sense of morality and virtue, is undeniable. Those who follow the dictates of religion regard it as one of their most important religious duties to control their instincts and to acquire outstanding, lofty attributes.

Religious thought has also been a factor throughout history in cultivating the aesthetic sense. Primitive men produced their most creative works of art in order to glorify their gods. The remarkable temples of China, the great pyramids of Egypt, the distinctive statues of Mexico, the refined and astounding architecture of the Islamic East all these drew on the religious sense.

Psychologists believe that there is a connection between the crisis of maturity and the sudden emergence of religious feelings. In this period of life, even in persons who had previously been indifferent to religious matters, the religious sense takes on a special intensity.

There is no doubt that inward summons manifest themselves in such a way that no obstacle can block their path. However, certain factors such as contrary propaganda can decrease the growth and development of inward feeling and correct thought, although such negative influences cannot result in the complete uprooting of natural tendencies. If such hindrances are removed, sound instincts resume their activity and display themselves by means of their inward creative effort.

We know that more than half a century has passed since the communist revolution of the Soviet Union, but the roots of religion are still alive deep in the souls of many of the Soviet people. Despite all the efforts that have been made over this long period by the rulers to obliterate religion, they have been unable to remove the religious sense from the masses.

The existence of materialist ideas in the world does not, therefore, contradict the fact that belief in God is natural to man. If a certain school leaves the path of original nature, thereby making an exception of itself vis-à-vis other schools, both in the present world and in past times, this cannot be regarded as disproving the contention that belief in God is natural to man; exceptions exist in all spheres. What history shows is that the materialist school was founded in the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ.

1. Du'a 'Arafa in Mafatih al-Jinan, p. 265.

2. Bihar al-Anwar, III, p.41.

3. Nahj al-Balaghah., ed. Subhi Salih, p. 43.

4. There is a clear reference to this matter in the following words of Imam Sajjad, upon whom be peace: "Pure and exalted are You, O Lord, Who knows the weight of the heavens! Pure and exalted are You, O Lord, Who knows the weight of the earth! Pure and exalted are You, O Lord, Who knows the weight of the darkness and the light! Pure and exalted are You, O Lord, Who knows the weight of the shade and air!" (Sahifa-yi Saniya, prayer 55).

5. Hiss-i-Dini, translated by Engineer Bayani.

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