

Chapter 3: Faith, Schools of Thought and World Vision

Intellectual and philosophical definition, as well as faith are essential requirements of a soundly conceived ideology.

It presupposes a universal perspective based on a particular logic and insight and supported by a systematic reasoning concerning the world, as well as faith. Faith gives it the power of creating attachment and love for objectives higher than the individualistic and private ones, a fact recognised in some modern schools of thought like existentialism.

They intend to create an ideology minus faith. They wish to set up a system on pure philosophy, without faith, as a kind of love for a higher objective, and that is not possible.

Sometimes they set up a remote shadow which is based on human fancy, and nothing more. Yet, an ideology is based on faith that makes it sacred, If its foundation is not faith and is merely an intellectual system, it cannot rouse love and affection, since it lacks a logical basis, though it can be imposed by force or suggestion.

A school of thought is a single, practical system, and not only a theoretical one or something related to theoretical sciences. This system means the idea about what exists. For example, Aristotle's or Newton's physics each represents a theoretically conceived system.

A practical system is what it is. For the ancients too, knowledge was divided into theoretical and practical. In an empirical system, an investigation aims at finding out the best way, such as concerning how should man live, and how a society ought to be, one pillar of it is organization, which consists of parts each of which has its own place, task and significance.

It cannot be a collection of scattered thoughts which cannot lead to a coherent system, A school of thought is a collection of harmonious ideas related to real life, that is, what it should be and what it should not be. Theoretical thoughts are its basis and spirit, That is why we said every ideology is based

on a universal perspective, which, in turn, means viewing the world as it is, as distinct from viewing man as he should be.

The spirit of a school of thought must, on one hand, possess vision and evaluation of existence, and on the other, create ideals, that is, not only a philosophical basis but a religious basis. It should offer something to be loved, a moral, as well as a social ideal, Astronomy gives us some knowledge about the celestial bodies that exist But it says nothing about how they should be or should not be, since such matters do not concern human life.

A school of thought offers something in which an ideal is presented to man. Monotheism is capable of providing a basis for philosophizing in an universal perspective, so as to obtain an insight into existence. At the same time, it represents the uniqueness of God, as contained in the Qur'anic expression: "There is no god, but God."

The ancients divided monotheism into several kinds; Monotheism of Essence, of Attributes, of Deeds, and of Worship.

Monotheism of Essence means a belief that God has no equal or partner. Monotheism of Attributes means that His Essence is not contrary to His Attributes, which, in turn, are not contrary to one another. In his unity and Wisdom He possesses all perfections. Monotheism of Deeds means also the unity of acts, Monotheism of Worship means that He only is worthy of worship and must be worshipped and this is inherent in the soul of man. The Qur'an says:

"Do you seek other than God's religion, while everything in heaven and on earth is bound to obey Him?" (3: 83)

Our worship is in fact a kind of voluntary surrender and obedience, as indicated in Genesis¹ in which everything that is created sings His praises. In Monotheism of worship, God's Essence is the ideal of man. As He is unique, there is no dualism for Him, and He is the origin of Universe, and the only object of worship, and worthy of it. Thus, monotheism has two properties: it is firstly a kind of vision and evaluation of existence, and secondly an ideal for man.

Marxism is entirely different, It is a materialistic vision, which accounts for living, but is not an ideal, and can never offer an ideal, aside from an economic kind, It offers to safeguard the interests of deprived classes as an objective and tells them to try and seize their rights. But this is only a defective goal. and may be supposed to be an ideal until one attains it, and once attained, what then? It is an end of ideology and goal.

A materialistic goal cannot be construed as a sacred goal, It is not above human objectives and self-sacrifice in it is illogical, since it comprises the materialistic ideal. To secure material gains through self-sacrifice is essentially self-contradictory, Can that be called an ideal?

Marxism is in fact an absence of ideals and is a return to individual instincts. Its power lies in breaking fetters. It cannot account for all aspects of life, including political, social, economic, and moral ones, except indirectly. In such a case justice and ethics lose their real meanings.

A school of thought may evidence a spirit determined by the relationships of cause and effect. However, a school of thought must have a suitable idea so as to lend a world perspective. The converse is not true, since a world vision without a suitable ideal does not by itself provide an overall elan or spirit in a school of thought.

To be constructive, man looks to the future, not to the past and present. Therefore, philosophy alone is not enough. World visions have also another difference with one another; one of them creates an obligation, while another does not. In other words, one of them gives man responsibility, while another does not.

Monotheistic world vision creates a divine obligation. Others like existentialism lack a spiritual foundation. A man may say: "I am responsible for myself, because I am free," But this kind of freedom does not make sense, since it is unrelated to everything else, thus causing many difficulties. Suppose I am free and ungoverned by any obligation, either environmental or divine.

So, as they say, I am responsible for myself, and none else is responsible for me. Does that involve responsibility to others, too? Should I choose something for myself which would be profitable for others also? If they put this responsibility on me, where does it come from? Others are free, too, and that absolute freedom has no harmony with responsibility before others.

In this kind of freedom they speak of, becoming a model for others is also meaningless. It would mean giving generality to my choice and claim that that choice is not only good for me, but also for others. But others are free, too, and no agent can be preferred to one's own will.

Moreover, we may agree so far that my choice may be so proper that it would affect and encourage others in their choice. But this influence is different from a feeling of responsibility in my conscience. Who would create an obligation in me to act in a particular way or not, keeping in view its effect on others? Is there a God to call me to account? You would say 'no'. Is there a conscience? Again, you would say 'no', Who then?

Monotheistic world vision, because of its ability to create ideals, obligation and responsibility, also serves as a guide. It shows the way to attain its goal. It gives joy and encouragement, and promotes in us a spirit of self-sacrifice. Above all, as Tabatabai, the great scholar, has said, it can be an element consisting of all the elements of teachings. The principle of monotheism is like water which saturates the roots of all thoughts, or like blood which carries the food to all parts of the body, or like a spirit which gives life and dynamism to a school of thought,

Concerning an ideal, Sartre and others say that man should not stop at a boundary, but he should go

beyond it and change the previous plan for a new goal, and in this way advance constantly, This means perpetual motion in a direction without having a definite goal and destination from the beginning, like someone who walks as far as he can see until a new horizon opens before him to go on, He does not wish to reach a definite point, for, he considers it the point of death.

In monotheism, however the goal is always there from the very beginning, clear, and unlimited, as well It always remains new and challenging. No other world vision constitutes the source and spirit of a school of thought, as both an ideal and a motivating force. At the same time, monotheism creates obligation, produces joy, provides guidance and encourages self-sacrifice, It sustains comprehensive development of a community, so that all problems may be solved, It is only monotheistic world vision which is comprehensive enough to possess all the above qualities.

1. The Qur'an: 62: 1, 61: 1, and 13: 15.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/goal-life-ayatullah-murtadha-mutahhari/chapter-3-faith-schools-thought-and-world-vision>