

# Islamic Perspective

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**Islamic Perspective**  
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**Contents**

**Articles**

A Critique of the Proposed Models for Measuring Religiosity in Iran

Mohammad Baqer Akhoondi / 1

A Methodology for the Social Interpretation of the *Qur'an* (A Case Study of Social Laws in the *Qur'an*)

Seyyed Ali Naqi Ayazai & Ali Rahbani Khorasegani / 17

The Anthropological Ideas of Al-Jahiz

Mohammad Baghestani Kouzegar / 29

The Social Philosophy of Ibn Sina

Razieh Birouni Kashani & Seyed Mohammad Hoseini / 39

Allama Jafari and Dostoevsky (Rereading the Russian Literary Legacy in an Alternative Perspective)

Seyed Javad Miri / 53

A Plan for the Sociology of Religious Propagation

Seyyed Mohsen Mirsondosi / 63

Ibn Khaldun and Indigenous Sociology

Masood Saeedi / 73

**Book Reviews**

Mohammad Amir Nouri et al., *Khums: Challenges and Solutions*, Mashhad: Boustane Ketab, 2005. 784 Pages

Sayed Mohsen Mirsondosi / 81

M.B. Akhoundi & A.N. Ayazi, *Social Concepts in the Qur'an (on the Basis of Tafsiir-e Rahnama)*, Mashhad: Daftar-e Tablighat-e Eslami, 1992. Three Volumes 2100 Pages

Sayed Mohsen Mirsondosi / 83



## **A Critique of the Proposed Models for Measuring Religiosity in Iran**

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### **Abstract**

Religiosity has been the center of scholarly attention for a long time and a great deal of research has been carried out to measure it. However, to date the criteria for measuring religiosity have been largely western-centric and Christian; consequently, the results have been far from consistent. Researchers such as Shojaezand and Khodayarifard have criticized this trend; they have proposed indigenous Islamic models. This article relies mostly on the method of qualitative content analysis and grounded theory to offer a critique of the current models for measuring religiosity in Iran, and to develop a new model based on the *Qur'an*. This model, which relies on verses from the *Qur'an*, is based on the essential aspects of the human. It approaches religiosity as composed of two interdependent dimensions: faith and action. This model proposes seven levels of religiosity, each of which is based on a verse from the *Qur'an*.

**Keywords:** Religiosity, Iran, Measuring Religiosity, Durkheim, Belief.

### **Introduction**

To date, different criteria and models have been used to measure religiosity. Each of these considers religiosity in a different way. Comte's religiosity model includes three dimensions: belief, emotion, and action (Aron, 1370: 116). Durkheim's model includes ideological, ritualistic and associational dimensions (Durkheim, 1382: 47-48). Leoba's model has four dimensions: beliefs, emotions, actions, and the social aspect and Lenski's model is based on religious orientation and communal participation (Shojaezand, 1386: 40-42). Fukuyama emphasizes cognitive, cultic, creedal, and devotional dimensions (ibid: 42). Woolf divides religiosity into four categories: biased religiosity, superficial religiosity, religious relativism, and conscious religiosity (in Fontaine et al., 2003). Glock and Stark present a model that includes 4

dimensions: 1. Experiential (religious emotions; that is, conceptions and emotions related to establishing a relationship with the holy being); 2. Ideological (beliefs); 3. Ritualistic (behaviors, rituals, and actions carried out by the followers of a religion); 4. Cognitive (the individual's perception and conception of the world as a basis for action) (Serajzadeh, 1380; Shojaezand, 1384; Taleban 1379; Habibzadeh, 1384; Ganji, 1383; Khodayarifard et al. 1388; Ahmadi, 1388; Tavasoli and Morshedi, 1385). Glock and Stark believe that their model can be turned into a global model. Faulkner adds a consequential dimension to the model proposed by Glock and Stark. Ling and Hante introduce a 13-component scale. Others, such as Frankel, Alice, Fromm, Piaget, Goldman, Kohlberg, Faller, Ucer, Allport and James, have introduced different models for religiosity, based on the socio-cultural situation they were designed to analyze (Qaemania, 1379; Shojaezand, 1386, Alayi, 1381; Khorsandi, 1387; Khodayarifard et al. 1388; Bahrami, Ehsan 1380). These models for measuring religiosity have tended to generalize; in other words, these models (which have been largely developed in a Christian or Jewish background) have been applied to other parts of the world, with different cultures and religions, including Muslim societies (Shojaezand, 1386, Khodayarifard et al. 1388; Ahmadi 1388). This has been the case with most research on religiosity carried out in Iran. In these studies, original Islamic resources have been disregarded; efforts have been made to demonstrate that models based on the ontological and epistemological principles of other schools and religions are applicable to Islam, and to the conditions of Iranian society (Khodayarifard et al. 1388; Ahmadi, 1388). Since different models have been used to measure religiosity in Iran, some studies reveal a low level of religiosity (National Institute for the Youth Studies, 1383; Rabbani Khorasgani and Qasemi, 1381; Behravan, 1382; Shakiba, 1379; Akhoondi, 1384; Serajzadeh, 1383; Soodkhah, 1386; Ahmadi, 1388), while others show that religiosity is at a high level (Khodayarifard et al., 1388; Ahmadi 1388). The present article aims to examine the models that have been used to measure religiosity in Iran, and to propose a more appropriate model, one that is based on interpretations of the *Qur'an*.

## **Research Methodology**

The present article uses the methodologies of latent qualitative content analysis and theoretical coding. Content analysis is a non-reactive and non-interventionist method used to categorize concepts (Seddiq Sarvestani and Rahmatollah, 1375). However, in the method proposed by Strauss and Corbin, relevant information is first analyzed and then arranged in a new combination. This method, called theoretical coding, is carried out in three different ways: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding

(Flick, 1387: 335; Strauss and Corbin, 1386: 100-102, 113). Models of religiosity based on interpretations of the *Qur'an* have involved qualitative content analysis and the categorization of concepts as follows: social concepts are recognized on the basis of theoretical sampling, concepts are analyzed, sociological terms equivalent to the concepts being analyzed are found, concepts are axiomatized, and finally the key categories are determined, and finally the main framework is highlighted.

### **A. Assessment of the Proposed Models for Measuring Religiosity in Iran**

In his article “A Model for Measuring Religiosity in Iran,” Shojaezand levels the following criticisms at western models used to measure religiosity in Iran:

1. Sweeping generalizations: “when these models are taken to be universal and general and are used in different religious and social contexts, without implementing any changes in them, they [become] unreliable and misleading.” “Therefore, to criticize these models as non-indigenous is to criticize their claim to be universal and their applicability in different environments and conditions. One of the most important criticisms raised here is that these models are generalized broadly and applied in a simplistic way, and in the wrong place[s]” (Shojaezand, 1384: 48).

2. The spread of a Christian approach: “among the studies carried out on religiosity and its dimensions in Iran, few cases have dealt with *sharia* or commitment to religious laws and instructions.” Also, due to the dominance of a Christian approach to religiosity, there seems to be no clear distinction between faith and belief, and one is usually reduced to the other (ibid).

3. Lack of a clear distinction between categories: “the problem with other measures developed so far is [the] relative lack of a clear distinction between different categories; in other words, the category of dimensions of religiosity has not been distinguished from the category of the signs of religiosity, and none of them have been distinguished from the consequential categories” (ibid: 49).

4. Lack of a clear distinction between individual and social religiosity: “unlike what Glock says, the degree of the religiosity of the society cannot be judged as the sum of the religiosity of the individuals. Religiosity of society is the consequence and manifestation of individual religiosity; however, they are independent from each other. Religiosity in the society can be the result of a strict controlling system or the embedment of religion in the social and cultural structure of the society, without affecting the individuals at all” (ibid: 50).

5. “Although western models for measuring religiosity are developed in a specific

context under special conditions, and are empirically tested on specific groups, they claim to have universal applications” (Shojaeezand, 1386: 51). According to Shojaeezand, these models cannot be used to measure religiosity in Muslim societies; therefore, a model should be developed which is consistent with the culture and social conditions of the Iranian people.

### A.1 Assessment of Shojaeezand’s Model

Shojaeezand has examined religious resources in developing his model. He has utilized verses 7 to 9 of *Surah As-Sajda*, and verses 28 and 29 of *Surah Al-Hijr*, and has closely studied the works of Mulla Sadra and Morteza Motahhari in order to develop his model for measuring religiosity in Iran (Shojaeezand, 1384).

Dimensions of the Human Being	Aspects of Religion	Dimensions of Religion	Dimensions of Religious Faith	Signs of Religious Faith	Outcome of Religious Faith	
Mind	Epistemic	Belief	Adhering to Belief	Having Religious Knowledge	Divine Vision	
Psyche	Emotional	Morals	Acting Morally		Following Morals	Seeking Meaning
		Faith	Having Faith			
		Rites of Worship	Performing Rites of Worship	Individual		
Body	Practical (Behavioral)	Religious Knowledge	Following <i>Sharia</i>	Performing Individual Duties	Religious Appearance	Being Pious
					Religious Identity	
					Performing Rites of Religion	
				Performing Collective Duties	Religious Participation	
					Religious Association	
					Religion in Family	

In a study based on this proposal, Habibzadeh (1384) has tried to measure different kinds of religiosity among students at the University of Tehran. The following points can be highlighted regarding this model:

1. In Shojaeezand’s model, beliefs, which constitute the merely epistemic dimension of religion, are placed at one end of the spectrum. The laws of *sharia* (religious laws), which constitute the practical dimension of religion, are positioned at



the other end. However, according to the *Qur'an*, the epistemic dimension cannot be separated from the practical dimension of religion. The epistemic and practical dimensions are two important aspects of religion, which are closely connected and practically inseparable. Righteous action is a requisite for faith, and it has its roots in faith. Therefore, no spectrum can be imagined whose two ends represent epistemic and practical dimensions of religion. From the viewpoint of the *Qur'an*, knowledge is accompanied by action; righteous action can be fulfilled only when it is accompanied by knowledge. Therefore, the righteous action highlighted in the *Qur'an* is essentially different from the ritualism discussed by sociologists: without faith, righteous actions are of no value.

2. In his model, Shojaeezand alludes to the mental, psychic and physical aspects of the human being; however, according to the *Qur'an*, human beings have two aspects: "psyche" or "soul" and "body": the body is material and worldly, and the soul is abstract. The soul has different dimensions; the mind is one of these dimensions. Therefore, the mind cannot be positioned as next to the soul, and nor can it be considered a separate dimension of man. The soul is an integrated entity that cannot be separated or divided. Although body and soul are different, they constitute one truth and one entity. In other words, man is a unified truth consisting of both dimensions (body and soul); he cannot be described in terms of duality or separation (→ Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1380).

3. Shojaeezand considers religion to have an epistemic aspect; however, the *Qur'an* does not consider belief sufficient for religiosity (Akhoondi, 1390). According to Shojaeezand's model, if someone believes in religion but does not act according to his faith, he is still partly faithful. But based on the *Qur'an*, one who believes in religion but does not perform righteous actions is not faithful. According to the *Qur'an*, the *kuffar* (unbelievers) and even Satan believed in God, but since they did not act according to their faith, they were not faithful.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, one cannot be called faithful merely because one has religious beliefs. The problem here might be that Shojaeezand does not clearly distinguish between conviction, belief and faith. However, the *Qur'an* highlights adhering to the faith, rather than belief, as key to being faithful. Faith is preceded by conviction and belief; naturally, one who is faithful adheres to some convictions and beliefs.

4. In his model, Shojaeezand divides religiosity into adhering to one's beliefs, being faithful, performing the rites of religion, acting morally and following *sharia*. However, one who holds a belief but does not practice acts of faith is not faithful; because of the undeniable connection between faith and righteous action in the *Qur'an*, one who is faithful must perform the rites of religion, act morally, follow

*sharia*, and vice versa. In other words, being faithful entails performing rites, acting morally, and following *sharia*. Nevertheless, Shojaeezand distinguishes being faithful from performing rites, acting morally, and following *sharia*; this stance cannot be justified by the *Qur'an* or the tenets of the religion. Performing religious rites, acting morally, and following *sharia* are the righteous actions, which, along with faith, are repeatedly discussed in the *Qur'an*.<sup>2</sup>

5. One of the serious criticisms Shojaeezand levels at western ideas about measuring religiosity is that, according to him, western scholars have not distinguished belief from faith, which causes numerous problems for measuring religiosity (Shojaeezand, 1384: 48). Nonetheless, his definition of faith attracts the same criticism that he levels at western ideas. In his definition of faith, Shojaeezand states that “faith is the depth and intensity of fondness and the degree of trust and reliance on a concept.” But this definition is different from the definition of faith found in the *Qur'an*; it defines faith as submission to divine will—submission with certainty and confidence and without hesitation is a necessary component of righteous action. In the logic of the *Qur'an*, religion is equal to submission; in the definition offered by Shojaeezand, action is not a requirement of faith.

6. In Shojaeezand’s article, no definition of religion can be found. However, religiosity is defined as “devoting effort to religious practice in a way that the attitude, inclination and action of the individual are affected” (ibid: 49). This definition is different from the one offered in the *Qur'an*. In numerous verses in the *Qur'an*, “religiosity” is defined as submission to the will of God, and acting according to the *Qur'an*; the degree of a person’s submission indicates the degree of a person’s religiosity (Ibn Arabi, 1378: 218; Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1386: 277; Tabatabaee, 1374; al-Sadduq, 1400 A.H.: 22). In the present article, religion is defined as submission to the revealed will of God which derives from His existential will; this is expressed by messengers of God and is much required by the innate nature of man. However, in Shojaeezand’s article, religiosity is regarded as an experience that one undergoes; the present article adopts the same attitude.

## **A.2 Assessment of Khodayarifard’s Model**

In light of the aforesaid concerns with models for measuring religiosity, Khodayarifard et al. (1388) conducted research entitled “Development of a Criterion for Religiosity and Assessment of the Level of Religiosity among Different Classes of Iranian Society.” The same research team published an article in 2006 regarding the development of a criterion for religiosity based on the *Qur'an* and the Islamic tradition; their model for measuring religiosity in Iranian Muslim society is as follows:

Religiosity	Cognition and Religious Belief	Religious Cognition	God
			Prophets and Holy Men
			The Hereafter
			Religious Duties
		Religious Beliefs	Accepting God, the Unseen World, and Angels
			Accepting Prophets, Holy Men, and Revealed Books
	Religious Inclinations, Interests, and Emotions	Positive Emotions	Accepting Life in the Hereafter
			Accepting Divine Laws and Instructions
			God
		Negative Emotions	Prophets and Imams
			Righteous People
			Enemies of God and Holy Men
	Commitment to and Performance of Religious Duties	Morals	Dependency on the World
			Individual
Islamic Laws		Social	
		Individual	
			Social

Source: Serajzadeh, 1387

The following points can be made regarding this model:

1. The most important point about Khodayari’s model is that, like the western scholars, he only pays attention to religious convictions and beliefs, and ignores faith altogether. Shojaeezand directed the same criticism at western models. However, it should be added that Khodayarifard regards religious belief as an important dimension of religiosity, and assesses religiosity based on religious belief. But faith is of greater importance than belief in the *Qur’an*; and faith is situated at a higher level than belief and conviction. To put it simply, one who holds convictions and has belief but does not adhere to his faith, is not faithful. Interestingly, Khodayarifard defines religious conviction in terms of knowing and believing in God, the prophets, and the hereafter (Khodayarifard et al., 1388: 42).

2. In Khodayarifard’s model, religious emotions are regarded as an essential dimension of religiosity. Although this important point is disregarded by Shojaeezand, it cannot be considered as a separate dimension of religiosity. Religious emotion is a component of righteous action and a sign of religiosity.

3. In Shojaeezand’s model, being faithful is distinguished from performing religious rites, acting morally and following *sharia*; however, in Khodayarifard’s model, being faithful is considered to be a “practical commitment to religious duties”. A practical commitment to religion unaccompanied by faith, however, amounts to

what western sociologists call ritualism, and is, from the viewpoint of the *Qur'an*, insignificant. As will be discussed, according to the *Qur'an*, righteous action must be accompanied by faith; in other words, these two are interdependent, as faith produces righteous action, and righteous action is rooted in faith.

4. Although Khodayarifard has proposed numerous definitions for religion, he does not specified the one on which his study is based. It seems necessary to define religion on the basis of Islamic resources; the measurement of religiosity should be based on these resources as well.

5. According to Khodayarifard, religion and religiosity are two separate concepts. To him, religiosity is to believe in God, the prophets, the hereafter, and the divine laws, as well as loving God, the holy men and people, and having a commitment to the performance of the religious duties that allow one to experience intimacy with God. This definition of religiosity is the same as the one provided by Khodayarifard; however, it should be noted that, based on Qur'anic verses, the Islamic tradition, and the ideas of Imam Ali (PBUH)<sup>3</sup>, this conception of religion and religiosity is inadequate. According to the *Qur'an* and to Islamic tradition, religion is always accompanied by action; therefore, religion and religiosity are not separate but are a unified truth. When one accepts total submission to the will of God, he will walk on the right path, and will achieve perfection. The degree of an individual's religiosity is equivalent to the degree of his or her submission to the will of God (Ibn Arabi, 1378; Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1386; Tabatabaee, 1374).

### A.3 Serajzede's Comparison of the Models Provided by Glock and Stark, Shojaeezand, and Khodayarifard

Serajzede compares the models of religiosity provided by Glock and Stark, Shojaeezand, and Khodayarifard in an experimental way (1387), as follows:

Dimensions of Khodayarifard's Model	Dimensions of Glock and Stark's Model	Dimensions of Shojaeezand's Model
Cognition and Religious Belief	Ideological Dimension	Holding a Belief (Beliefs)
Interests and Religious Emotions	Experiential Dimension	Having Faith (Issues of Faith)
Commitment to and Performance of Religious Duties	Consequential Dimension	Acting Morally (Morals)
		Following <i>sharia</i> (Religious Laws)
	Ritualistic Dimension	Worshiping (Rituals)

The findings of his research, which was carried out on a sample of Semnan University students living in a dormitory (in the academic year 1985-1986) are as

follows: the Glock and Stark and Shojaezand models provided similar results in terms of the students' mean scores for religiosity (3.73 and 3.79, respectively). Khodayarifard's model resulted in a mean score of 4.02. The differences between these models, even the slight differences between the models of Glock and Stark and Shojaezand, based on the T-Test and the F-Test, are significant, and can be generalized to the statistical population. With regards to standard deviation, all three models are similar, and report uniform levels of religiosity among the respondents.

Model	Dimension of Religiosity	Mean	Standard Deviation
Glock and Stark	Total Religiosity	3.73	0.58
	Ideological	4.41	0.62
	Experiential/ Emotional	4.28	0.60
	Consequential	3.22	0.86
	Ritualistic	3.02	0.74
Shojaezand	Total Religiosity	3.79	0.53
	Beliefs	4.47	0.56
	Worship / Rituals	3.18	0.75
	Morals	3.77	0.57
	Religious Laws	3.80	0.70
Khodayarifard	Total Religiosity	4.02	0.53
	Cognition and Religious Belief	4.35	0.57
	Interests and Religious Emotions	3.95	0.51
	Commitment to and Performance of Religious Duties	3.82	0.58

In Glock and Stark's model, 73.3% are highly religious; in Shojaezand's model, 69.9% of the sample population is defined as highly religious. However, in Khodayari's model 83.4% are highly religious (Serajzadeh, 1387). Serajzadeh has studied these models on a theoretical level; these are his findings:

1. "Glock and Stark's model is developed on an inductive basis. For the development of this model, different aspects of religiosity from different religions have been compared and studied, and former religiosity models have been experientially examined. Assuming that different religions which are somehow different in content have common frameworks and dimensions, they highlighted five dimensions as common among all religions. Shojaezand and Khodayarifard adopt a different theoretical and methodological departure point from that of Glock and Stark.

They draw on the ideas of Muslim theologians, and utilize a deductive method to present different aspects of religion and religiosity in their model. Although the theoretical and methodological departure point of Glock and Stark is different from that of Shojaeezand and Khodayarifard, the religiosity dimensions presented in their models are somehow comparable. In other words, these three models are more similar than different” (Serajzadeh, 1387: 49-51).

2. As Serajzadeh explains, the differences among the mean scores of different dimensions in Glock and Stark’s and Shojaeezand’s models are greater than those found in Khodayarifard’s model; the difference in the scores for religiosity in Glock and Stark’s and Shojaeezand’s models is as great as 1.39 units, while this difference is 0.54 at the most in Khodayarifard’s model. According to the findings discussed so far, and as far as measuring religiosity is concerned, the models of Glock and Stark and Shojaeezand are not markedly different, and researchers can use either to measure religiosity. But Khodayarifard’s model measures religiosity in too general a way, and cannot distinguish between its different dimensions. Therefore, Khodayarifard’s model is less useful than the other two (Serajzadeh, 1387: 62).

3. All three models are satisfactory in terms of validity and reliability. Since the models of Glock and Stark and Shojaeezand better demonstrate the distinction between the two standard groups, and the distinction between different dimensions of religiosity, they are preferable. Furthermore, the number of the propositions in Glock and Stark and Shojaeezand’s models is almost one fourth the number of propositions offered by Khodayarifard’s model, which is another point in their favour (ibid: 62-64).

4. Some theoretical criticisms have been directed at the indigenized version of Glock and Stark’s model; it has been considered an inappropriate model for measuring religiosity in the Iranian and Islamic communities (Shojaeezand, 1384); however, Serajzadeh argues that it is by no means less appropriate than its rival model, and, in terms of the validity of criterion groups, it is more applicable (Serajzadeh, 1387: 62-64).

#### **A.4 Assessment of Glock and Stark’s Model**

The religiosity model based on Qur’anic verses, unlike the model developed by Glock and Stark, is intra-religious and deductive. The difference between them is essential, contrary to what Serajzadeh maintains. He holds that Glock and Stark’s model is quite efficacious in Iran and in Muslim communities; he confirms that the model is universally applicable. But a qualitative content analysis of the interpretations of the *Qur’an* shows that a religiosity model based on the Qur’anic verses is different in every aspect from Glock and Stark’s model, and from the other two that are based on

Islam (Akhoondi, 1390). The major differences between this model and the two models developed by Shojaeezand and Khodayarifard have been discussed above; this section focuses on the differences between the Qur'anic model of religiosity and Glock and Stark's model.

1. As in Shojaeezand and Khodayarifard's models, beliefs constitute an important dimension of religiosity in Glock and Stark's model. However, in the model based on the Qur'anic verses, as discussed with reference to the two aforesaid models, beliefs do not solely constitute one's degree of religiosity. The major dimension of religiosity in this model is faith, which is preceded by belief. In other words, one who is faithful necessarily adheres to a belief, but one who adheres to a belief is not necessarily faithful.

2. The model based on Qur'anic verses, unlike Glock and Stark's model, does not consider religious knowledge to be a dimension of religiosity. In the *Qur'an*, there are numerous examples of people who possess knowledge about a specific subject, but do not believe in it. For example, in verse 146 of the *Surah* al-Baqara,<sup>4</sup> it is mentioned that, although the Israelites knew Prophet Mohammad very well, they never converted to his religion, and even continued to oppose him. Therefore, one who only has religious knowledge is not necessarily faithful. In fact, science is knowledge and cognition, and belief is well-established knowledge and cognition; however, faith is submission to well-established knowledge. Therefore, faith occurs after knowledge and belief; one who is faithful adheres to a belief, while one who holds a belief is not necessarily faithful.

3. In Glock and Stark's model, the ritualistic aspect constitutes a dimension of religiosity that measures only a part of religiosity. However, in the model based on the Qur'anic verses, although righteous action is a dimension of religiosity, it does not constitute a dimension of religiosity when it is not accompanied by faith. In other words, faith plays an important role in righteous action and is not separable from it.

4. In Glock and Stark's model, faith is viewed as a part of religious experience; however, like the religious experience itself, it is not clearly defined and explicated (Shojaeezand, 1388). Serajzadeh considers religious experience to be equivalent to religious emotion; consequently, religious experience is completely different from faith in the model based on the Qur'anic verses. However, attention, trust and fear, which are highlighted by Serajzadeh as components of religious experience, can be regarded as signs of faith in the model based on Qur'anic verses (ibid). "Although religious experience is one of the most ambiguous and complicated aspects of religiosity, it has turned into a sign of religiosity and a major category of measuring

religiosity. Also it has been reduced to descriptive quantitative data, though it is the most qualitative dimension of religiosity and the most fluid spiritual state of the individuals. Why the complexity at the stage of understanding and description, and the simplification and reduction at the stage of measuring, have not disturbed the positivism dominating American sociology and have not discouraged it from studying this intangible phenomenon is an important question the answer to which should be sought in the process which caused this concept to be brought about as the essence of religion and an index of religiosity” (Shojaeezand, 1388: 38).

### **B. Religion and Religiosity in Interpretations of the *Qur'an***

According to Qur'anic verses, the human is made up of both body and soul; despite their broad differences, the two together constitute a unified being. These two dimensions constitute one reality: one dimension is changing, material, and perishable, and the other is unchanging, non-material and perpetual. In order to perfect these aspects, the human requires both knowledge and action. The soul depends on knowledge and the body depends on action; together, these two constitute the human being (Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1380 and 1388). Since religion is innate, and compatible with the essential aspects of man, it has two dimensions (Tabatabaee, 1374; Makarem Shirazi, 1374; Taleqani, 1362). A content analysis of different interpretations of the *Qur'an* shows that faith and righteous action are two essential dimensions of religious sociability, through which the faithful man achieves perfection. In fifty-one verses of the *Qur'an*, the word “faith” is immediately followed by “righteous action.” For example, verse 10 of *Surah Fatir*<sup>5</sup> considers faith and righteous action to be two important factors in the perfection of man. This shows that faith should be accompanied by righteous action. In many verses of the *Qur'an*<sup>6</sup>, faith and righteous action are considered to be inseparable (Makarem Shirazi, 1374: 1/ 242). When the theoretical aspect of religion is internalized, the soul is formed, and faith is manifested. When faith is developed, the second aspect of religiosity—that is, righteous action—is manifested. Faith precedes action, and righteous action is its fruit (Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1380, 1388). Faith is nobler than knowledge and belief; when it is developed in individuals in the process of religious sociability, it is implied that the process of perfection of man is already well underway. Because of the close connection between faith and righteous action, when faith is developed in a person, the faithful person will perform righteous actions; the righteous action is rooted in faith (ibid). Therefore, there is a close connection between the believer and the faithful; this is repeated 67 times in the *Qur'an*.<sup>7</sup> In other words, a believer is a person who adheres to his



faith and performs righteous actions; he is called the faithful. In the process of religious sociability, when faith is internalized in a person, and he submits to faith, righteous action is the logical consequence. Based on a qualitative content analysis of the interpretations of Qur’anic verses,<sup>8</sup> religion can be defined as “submission with certainty” to the revealed will of God. This derives from His existential will, and is expressed by His messengers (Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1382; Tanbatabaee, 1374; Makarem Shirazi, 1374). Based on this conception of the verses of the *Qur’an*, the following model is proposed for measuring religiosity in Iran. This model primarily deals with the stages of religiosity rather than its dimensions; therefore, It seems that this method of measuring religiosity has not been attempted previously. As discussed in some other articles, this model presents seven stages of religiosity on the basis of reliable interpretations of the *Qur’an*. These stages are as follows: apparent acceptance of faith (for the faith hath not yet entered into your hearts), religiosity as a whole, religiosity in every detail (when one enters into Islam whole-heartedly), religiosity with certainty (believers who came to believe in Allah and his messenger, and have never since doubted), religiosity in politics and social issues (accept them with the fullest conviction), religiosity in being selected (bow to the lord and cherisher of the universe), and religiosity with calmness and confidence (behold! verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve).

**Proposed Model Based on Interpretations of the *Qur’an***

Essential Dimension of Man	Constituent	Dimensions of Religion	Status	Dimensions of Religiosity	Stages of Religiosity
Soul	Knowledge	Consciousness Belief	Mind	Muslim	Apparent acceptance of religion
		Faith	Heart	Faith  Believe  Righteous Action	- Religiosity as a whole - Religiosity in every detail - Religiosity with certainty - Religiosity in politics and social issues - Religiosity in being selected - Religiosity with calmness and confidence
Body	Action	Action	Limbs and Body Parts		

## Conclusion

One of the most substantial differences between the three models developed by Glock and Stark, Khodayarifard, and Shojaeezand, is that each dimension of religiosity in these three models has an independent identity, and constitutes a part of the reality of religiosity (Serajzadeh, 1387). Therefore, when one is committed to a belief or ritual, he is considered to be faithful in some way. But in the model that is based on the Qur'anic verses, there is a deep and intimate connection between the different dimensions of religiosity. These dimensions are interdependent, and religiosity is complete only when all dimensions are present.

## Note

1. The people of the book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know (Baqara: 146).  
Those to whom we have given the book know this as they know their own sons. Those who have lost their own souls refuse therefore to believe (An'am": 20).
2. Baqara: 25; Al-e Imran: 57, 122, 136, 173; Nisaa: 9; Maidah: 93; Yunus: 4, 9, 36; Maryam: 96; Hud: 23; Hajj: 14, 38, 50; Yusuf: 57; Ra'd: 29, 208; Ibrahim: 23; Kahf: 30, 107; Nur: 55; Shu'araa: 227; Ankabut: 7, 9, 58; Rum: 15; Luqman: 8; Sajdah:19; Sabaa: 4; Fatir: 7; Saad: 24, 28; Ghafir: 58; Fuslat: 8; Shura: 22, 23, 26; Jathiyah: 21, 30; Muhammad: 2, 12; Fat-h: 29; Talaq: 11; Inshiqaq: 25; Buruj: 11; Tin: 6; Baiyina: 7; Asr: 3.
3. In his definition of religion, Imam Ali (s) stated, "I offer a definition of Islam which has not been offered so far, and will not be offered after me; Islam is submission, and submission is certainty, and certainty is affirmation, and affirmation is confession, and the reality of confession is performance, and performance is action; the faithful receive their religion from God, and the faith of the faithful is revealed through their action, as the impiety of the unbelievers is known from their denial" (Tabatabaee, 1374: 3/ 197).
4. The people of the book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know.
5. If any do seek for glory and power, to Allah belong all glory and power. To him mount up (all) words of purity: it is he who exalts each deed of righteousness. Those that lay plots of evil, - to them will come a terrible penalty; and the plotting of such will be void (of any results).
6. A messenger, who rehearses to you the signs of Allah containing clear explanations, that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of darkness into light. And those who believe in Allah and work towards righteousness, he will admit to gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: Allah has indeed granted for them a most excellent provision (Talaq: 11).
7. Baqra: 91, 93, 221, 247; Al-e Imran: 49, 139, 175; Maedah: 23, 57, 112; al-Anaam: 118; and so on.
8. The word "religion" is repeated 101 times, in the 40 Surahs of the Qur'an.

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## **A Methodology for the Social Interpretation of the *Qur'an* (A Case Study of Social Laws in the *Qur'an*)**

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### **Abstract**

One approach to the study of the *Qur'an* is based on social interpretation. Accordingly, various interpretations of the *Qur'an* have been offered in different eras. Interpretations such as *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, *Nemoonah*, *Al-Kashif* and *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* have dealt with social issues in the *Qur'an* and are mostly referred to in a social, not sociological, framework. However, a requisite for the interdisciplinary studies of sociology and the interpretation of the *Qur'an* is the precise and specialized application of sociological concepts in these fields. This doubles the importance of interdisciplinary studies. Sociology, as a scientific discipline, with its own principles, fundamental concepts, basic hypotheses and different views in various fields, emerged more than a century ago. Therefore a precise and erudite application of these subjects can be rightfully expected from the scientific society.

On the other hand, social interpretation, with its new goals and attitudes toward the *Qur'an*, seeks to uncover the social messages of the *Qur'an* and open a new chapter in the interpretation of the *Qur'an*. In other words, this approach reiterates the fact that, besides individual messages, the *Qur'an* incorporates social rules and regulations which need to be highlighted and analyzed in a new way - something rarely done in the interpretations of the *Qur'an* so far.

The present article seeks to reconstruct the humanities by adopting a Qur'anic approach, and apply the teaching of this holy book to human

relationships in modern human societies. This has made the author, who has studied sociology both at university and *hawzah*, adopt a sociological attitude to the *Qur'an*, elicit sociological propositions from the *Qur'an* and analyze them on the basis of the existing interpretations.

In this article the interdisciplinary methodology is utilized to analyze the relationship between sociology and the social interpretations of the *Qur'an*; then a case study of this issue is conducted. Issues such as social life and the related rules and sociological rules and their examples in the *Qur'an* are analyzed, and the characteristics of these rules, the conditions for their fulfillment and their role are carefully studied.

**Keywords:** methodology of social interpretation, explanation of social life, structure of social rules and their characteristics, function of social rules.

## Introduction

Subject-based scientific interpretation is one method for interpreting the Qur'anic verses. This method has been very popular among Muslims; some believe it dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH. Alongside developments in the different fields of human knowledge, this style of interpretation has grown significantly in importance. Human sciences have produced findings that sometimes overlap with the teachings of the *Qur'an*.

Supporters of this style of interpretation have attempted to analyze the correspondence between scientific theories and the views expressed in the *Qur'an*. When there is a disagreement between the two, scholars try to offer an erudite explanation of the difference in light of scientific principles. Thematic interpretation has been defined as follows:

Thematic interpretation is a human attempt at a methodical understanding of the responses of the *Qur'an*, in light of a theory-based collection of verses, to scientific and theoretical issues, arising from human knowledge and the collective life of human beings, to which the *Qur'an* is expected to provide a sensible answer" (Jalili, 1387: 143).

The social interpretation of the *Qur'an* is derived from this style of interpretation, and since the social interpretation of the *Qur'an* belongs to the category of human understanding and knowledge, it is discussed in the context of sociology. The characteristics of this style of interpretation can be influenced by the social space in which the commentator lives; in the contemporary world, especially as a result of developments in hermeneutics and the sociology of knowledge, it has become more clear how the individual, and his presumptions and expectations, affect his understanding of a text.

Therefore, today we can better appreciate that the commentator's prior knowledge and perspective affect his understanding of the *Qur'an*, and orient his reading of the text.

### **The Characteristics of Social Interpretation**

Hermeneutic scholars have thoroughly examined the interpretation and understanding of different texts, and have highlighted five issues that constitute the basics and principles of the interpretation and understanding of texts. These are as follows: 1. The preconceptions and prior knowledge of the commentator (hermeneutic cycle). 2. The orientation of the commentator's interests and expectations. 3. The historical significance of the commentator's questions. 4. The recognition of the center of the meaning of the text and the interpretation of the text as a single "unit". 5. The translation of the text from the historical perspective of the commentator (Mojtahed Shabestari, 1375: 16).

The following section focuses on the first issue—the preconceptions of the commentator.

### **The Preconceptions of the Commentator**

There is a disagreement among scholars of hermeneutics about whether the prior knowledge of the commentator can be traced in the interpretation or not. This disagreement grows out of the ideas of two different groups of scholars of hermeneutics on interpretation. Those who consider interpretation to be a process of revealing the author's intentions believe that the preconceptions of the commentator can be very influential. In some cases this can result in the commentator disagreeing with the position held by the author. Some scholars believe that "for the commentator to enter the subjective world of the author, he should both take into consideration the meanings of the words of the text, and try to share the subjectivity of the author, so that he can familiarize himself with the discourse of the author" (Nasri, 1381: 100).

However, a second group of theoreticians holds that the purpose of interpretation is not to uncover the intention of the author; therefore, there is no need for the commentator to enter the subjectivity of the author; different commentators, with various preconceptions, can offer different interpretations.

### **The Presuppositions of the Commentator in the Social Interpretation of the *Qur'an***

Social interpretation, based on some presuppositions, seeks to uncover the intentions of the author; therefore, it requires special conditions. For instance, the Qur'anic

commentator highlights that the *Qur'an* is not exclusive to the people of a particular era or area, but was revealed to guide all human beings towards the true path. As a result, the commentator on the *Qur'an* tries to “apply the verses of the *Qur'an* to the context of reality and elicit the responses of the *Qur'an* to the challenges and questions of the time” (Al-Rezaee al-Isfahani, 1383: 283).

The presence of social messages in the *Qur'an* necessitates applying them to real life; Allameh Fadlallah stresses this point in the preface to his interpretation of the *Qur'an*, *Min Wahi al-Qur'an*:

“The *Qur'an* is not a lexical book and is not limited to its lexical meaning, but it is composed of words which are in motion in the spiritual and intellectual spaces. Therefore, our dealing with the verses of the *Qur'an* is different from dealing with abstract literary texts which move in the space of mere thought away from reality” (Fadlallah, 1419: 1/25).

Another characteristic of the social interpretation of the *Qur'an* is the movement from the individual's viewpoint to a social viewpoint. Concepts such as freedom, social justice, social deviance, values and culture, in general, are studied from the perspective of social concepts.

### **The Explanation of Social Life in the *Qur'an***

Sociology, as a science that is based on special rules and is designed to enable the study of the life of societies, holds that there is order in social relations: this order governs groups, social interactions, socialization, and social conflict. Human beings are part of nature, and follow rules that can be analyzed, understood, and predicted (Charon, Joel M., *Ten Questions: A Sociological Perspective*, 42).

In his book *Society in the Qur'an*, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli presents different viewpoints regarding the reasons for human beings' engagement in social life. He reviews the ideas of Allameh Tabatabaee, and offers a rational analysis of social life:

The human, by nature, is *mustasmir bittab'* (by inherent nature seeks benefit), but his spirit is *madani bilfitrah* (civic by innate nature) and there is a *jihad akbar* (greater *jihad*) between these two. Therefore, humans should live in society by nature, but this tendency towards society is something apart from his legalism, justice-centrism, and search for the right. Therefore, collective life is a requirement of human nature, and being civilized, searching for justice, and searching for the right thing are requisites of his *fitrah* (innate nature), not his *tab'* (inherent nature).

From a Qur'anic viewpoint, it is indisputable that the life of man on earth was initiated by a man and a woman, called Adam and Eve, in the form of family life. A sexual relationship, peace and quiet, family connections, and emotional and psychic



elements constitute the first links and the connections between humans, and form the foundation of human society. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> verses of *sura Al-Room*, we read:

Among his signs is this, that he created you from dust; and then, behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide)! And among his signs is this that he created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and he has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are signs for those who reflect.

On the other hand, the difference among human beings, in terms of talent, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional blessings, is natural. This makes human beings dependent on each other and leads them to social life, and reveals the importance of social life to them. Moreover, the different needs of human beings increase steadily, and human beings gradually become aware of them. This results in the reinforcement and strengthening of the communities that are formed. Individuals who may have no marriage or blood relation, or may be from different races and nations, not only accept social life, but also contribute to its strengthening, and prevent its dissolution.

In other words, social life is a plan in the creation of the human being and it is closely connected with human nature. This style of living is rooted in the nature of the human being, and, as far as human beings possess these characteristics and desires, the tendency towards society and social life continues to exist in them. This is confirmed by the Qur'anic verses quoted above.

### **The Concept of Law in the *Qur'an***

*Qanoon* (law) is a Syriac word that means ruler, principle, tradition, and ritual (Sadjadi, 1375: 570); in legal terminology, it is a rule enforced by legislators (Jafari Langroodi, 1384: 517). It refers to a causal relationship between social phenomena, which is repeatable, predictable, and organized, and is seen to be valid through continual observation. As Williams has highlighted, social rules are composed of normative principles. They are evident issues per se; they have value in terms of logic. They pave the way for harmony between the individual and society, and eventually lead to harmony between all individuals (Sarokhani, 1370: 709).

*Sunna* (tradition) means method, way, path, nature, conduct, and *sharia* (Tarihi, 1395: 1/ 268). It also has numerous other meanings; however, based on the following two definitions, it has the same meaning as "law":

1. Methods through which God plans and manages all the issues in the universe (Mesbah Yazdi, 1368: 425). These methods are inviolable and unchangeable.

2. What is called the system of the world and the rules of causes in philosophical terminology is called divine tradition in religious terms (Motahhari, 1374: 135)

Although law is not defined in the *Qur'an*, by referring to the implications and indications of verses, and examining the concept of *sunna* (which has been frequently used in the *Qur'an*), it can be concluded that *sunna* has the same meaning as law, as is highlighted in verse 137 of *sura Al-e Imran*: “many were the ways of life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected truth.”

This verse emphasizes both the traditions and the laws of history, and the need to study and examine historical events in order to discover and elicit traditions and laws, and learn the lessons of history (Sadr, 1369: 95). Therefore, divine *sunnas* can be interpreted as sociological rules provided by the *Qur'an* for the planning and management of societies.

### **The Structure of the Social Laws of the *Qur'an***

Two types the Qur'anic laws are examined here in order to clarify some other aspects of our discussion:

1. The first type of the Qur'anic laws includes propositions in the form of conditional statements which establish a relationship between two phenomena or two sets of phenomena. This type of law is not concerned with the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the condition and it does not inform the reader as to whether the condition in question has been realized or not. The only thing it tells us is that the outcome of the condition is not separable from the condition itself (ibid: 143).

One of the verses of this type is the 11<sup>th</sup> verse of *sura Al-Rad*, which is concerned with changes in fate: “Allah does not change people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts.” In this verse there is a connection between the change in the internal content of man and the change in his external state; whenever a change occurs inside human beings, there will be a change in their external state, their material situation, and the way they are viewed by the world.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> verse of *sura Al-Isra'* it also states that “when we decide to destroy a population, we (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them: then (it is) we destroy them utterly” (Sadr, Traditions of History in the *Qur'an*, Bit: 73-75).

In the last verse, two things are connected together: one is the commandments given to the lewd and lascivious people in the society, which they disobey, and the other is the annihilation and dissolution of society.

2. The second type covers lenient laws, or the laws which are concerned with the tendencies of man. This means that not all laws and traditions are unquestionable in all

eras; however, they will finally dominate the world. An example of this is the law regarding a tendency towards religion as a tradition in human nature: “so set thou thy face steadily and truly to the faith: (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which he has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah: that is the standard religion: but most among mankind understand not” (Al-Room: 30). One characteristic of this kind of tendency is the possibility of temporary opposition and struggle; eventually, opposition to these laws leads to deviation and annihilation. This is another aspect of lawfulness.

The late Mohammad Baqer Sadr believes that the laws that govern religion are of this kind; although temporary opposition to these laws might be organized, no long-lasting or widespread opposition is possible (Sadr, 1369: 161)

Definite and practical propositions resist any change or modification, because they are definite and ascertained, not in the form of a conditional statement. Verse 62 of *sura* al-Ahzab alludes to the same point “(such was) the practice (approved) of Allah among those who lived aforesaid: no change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah.”

### **The Characteristics of Social Laws in the *Qur'an***

Laws generally have special and at times unique characteristics in different circumstances and contexts; the sociological laws of the *Qur'an* are no exception. Among their general characteristics are their universality and compatibility with the freedom of human beings; among their unique features is their divine quality.

1. These laws are general and universal; in other words, they do not demonstrate accidental and unplanned relationships, and consequently they are constant and inviolable. The *Qur'an* places a strong emphasis on these laws, and their generality and universality; this illuminates their scientific aspect, and encourages individuals to examine social issues and history with insight and knowledge, and to accept them with the same consciousness. Therefore, the *Qur'an* states, “but no change wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing): no turning off wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing)” (Fatir: 43). “(This was our) way with the messengers we sent before thee: thou wilt find no change in our ways” (Al-Isra: 77). These kinds of verses (also, Al-Anaam: 34 and Al-Ahzab: 62) reveal the continuity and universality of sociological laws, and illustrate the scientific quality of these laws as well. In some other verses, those who try to exempt themselves from these laws are reproached:

“Or do ye think that ye shall enter the garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? they encountered suffering and adversity, and

were so shaken in spirit that even the messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "when (will come) the help of Allah?" ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near" (Al-Baqara: 214).

2. Sociological laws are compatible with the freedom and will of human beings. In some schools of thought (such as materialism), it is wrongly believed there is a kind of conflict between lawfulness and the will of the human. However, the *Qur'an* stresses that human will is the center and the focal point of the events and issues that unfold in the world (Sadr, 1367: 76-78).

"Such were the populations we destroyed when they committed iniquities; but we fixed an appointed time for their destruction" (Al-Kahf: 59).

"If they (the pagans) had (only) remained on the (right) way, we should certainly have bestowed on them rain in abundance" (Al-Jinn: 16).

"Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts" (Al-Rad: 11).

Intentional oppression and treading a particular path at will, and also deciding to change something from within, are among the instances that reveal the role of will and free choice in laying the foundations for a specific law or tradition in these verses. These verses indicate that historical traditions are not out of the human's will. Everything is somehow decided by man; God has made every change possible through the will of the human, and whenever a nation decides to tread the right path, God will grant it happiness and prosperity. Taking this principle into consideration creates an opportunity for the human to demonstrate his freedom, choice, and free will. Therefore, the freedom of man plays a key role in the traditions and laws described by the *Qur'an*, and in the establishment of society.

3. The divine quality of social laws is unique to this type of laws. "Divine quality" does not mean that the action is directly and immediately carried out by God; different natural, ordinary, and supernatural means may play a role, but yet the action attributed to God. When the word *sunna* or *sunan* (tradition or traditions) is used in the *Qur'an*, either it is directly attributed to God (such as in Al-Ahzab: 38, 62; Al-Ghafir: 85; Al-Fath: 23) or it is indirectly attributed to God. In fact, the first cases relate to the establisher of the tradition, and the second cases relate to the place where the traditions are implemented—the societies and the states (Mesbah, 1368: 426).

Therefore it can be argued that:

A. The lawfulness of society should be seen as resulting from divine rules and regulations, not the compulsion of history and the environment.

B. The divine quality of traditions and laws indicates that these causes and effects

are either directly related to God, or that it is God who implements his ordinance and will in these regulations, and through these rules.

C. These laws, like natural laws, are in alignment with the will of God; they reflect his will.

### **The Conditions for the Realization of the Social Laws of the *Qur'an***

As discussed earlier, all natural and human phenomena are governed by laws and are associated with the rules of causality; therefore, one of the necessary factors and conditions for the realization of the law is adherence to the *sunna*. As Shahid Sadr argues in his *Thematic Interpretation*, one advantage of social and historical phenomena in human societies is that they are closely connected with a goal; in other words, social phenomena aim to achieve their goals, and as some philosophers have pointed out, in addition to having an efficient cause, they have a final cause. Water boils when it is heated, but water is not oriented towards the state of boiling. Water boils due to the action of the person who heats it. However, purposeful human action includes a connection other than its connection to its goal. This goal does not exist at the time a purposeful human action takes place and is intended to be realized later. However, every action that has a goal cannot be necessarily included in social laws; there is another condition for an action to be included in social laws, which is the social aspect of the action. In fact, the context for the action should be social: society is the material cause of the action, and it is a domain that takes the action beyond the individual aspect, to a higher level (Karami Faridani, 1385: 152).

### **The Function of the Social Laws of the *Qur'an***

#### **1. Generalization of the Effects of Social Actions**

One of the exclusive functions of society is the official or unofficial organization of an educational system. This system is responsible for the process of socialization. As a result of such a process, whenever a particular action is carried out by all or the majority of individuals in a society, the favorable or adverse outcome of that action will affect all the individuals in that society. In the Holy *Qur'an* it is stated, "if the people of the towns had but believed in and feared Allah, we should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth" (Al-Araf: 96). In another verse it is stated "and fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong" (Al-Anfal: 25). This verse warns all believers against the sedition of the unbelievers, and addresses all believers because everybody will be affected by the sedition.

This law is not specific to a particular tribe or group; it is a universal law, and its universality can be illustrated.

Therefore, if we examine the verses of the *Qur'an*, we can elicit a set of genetic and legislative laws that are common among all societies, and can be generalized.

## 2. Learning Lessons

Commanding others to learn lessons from different events is possible and useful only when those events or historical truths are not particular to a given society, and thus have implications for other societies in different eras. From the viewpoint of the *Qur'an*, there are many common points between what happened to our predecessors and what will happen to future generations. This makes learning lessons from the destiny of our predecessors possible. This point is highlighted in the following verses:

“There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding” (*Yusuf*/111), and “verily in this is an instructive warning for whosoever feareth (Allah)” (*Al-Nazi'at*).

These verses, and verses such as the 13<sup>th</sup> verse of *Al-e Imran* and the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of *Al-Hashr*, stress that social laws, because of their general aspects, and because of the essential similarities between different societies, can teach people valuable lessons. Different societies can use these lessons to pave the way as they make progress, and to prevent different problems.

Some other verses that are relevant will be discussed here, including those that are concerned with the invitation to journey through the earth and learn lessons. The *Qur'an* invites people to travel around the earth and learn about the destiny of the people who lived before them.

“Nor did we send before thee (as messengers) any but men, whom we did inspire, (men) living in human habitations. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them!?” (*Yusuf*: 109)

“Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them!?” (*Al-Room*: 9)

The Qur'anic term “travelling through the earth” implies thinking about and reflecting on historical events in order to learn lessons. If an event was particular to a nation, God would not invite other people to reflect on it.

From the viewpoint of the *Qur'an*, this law is inviolable: societies which refute the divine teachings and become involved in delinquency, idolatry, and paganism will have an unhappy fate. This divine law is universal and inviolable, and that is why people should learn lessons from the destinies of their predecessors.

## Conclusion

The *Qur'an* and sociological studies have discussed the lawfulness of societies. The comprehensiveness of the *Qur'an* can be inferred from the fact that the *Qur'an* has described the characteristics of the laws that govern societies and has discussed the conditions and factors which impact the realization of these laws. The *Qur'an* considers society to be the main setting for the formation of different behaviors. According to the *Qur'an*, the laws that govern societies are based on the material world, but are also oriented toward the other world and non-material issues; however, such an explanation about social laws is not provided by sociology. This shows the miraculous universality and comprehensiveness of the *Qur'an* in dealing with the issues of human society, and in analyzing the rules and regulations that govern different behaviors.

It should be noted that certain laws and rules appear in the *Qur'an* that not only have the general characteristics of laws, but also possess divine features that make them inviolable and definite. This opens up the possibility for new methods in the study of law in history and society.

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## **The Anthropological Ideas of Al-Jahiz**

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### **Abstract**

Abu Uthman Amr ibn Bahr, born in Basra, c.776-869 A.D., known as al-Jahiz, was a Mu'tazili speculative theologian (*mutakallim*) and litterateur. Although he is predominantly known for his works of literature, a cursory examination of his relatively large number of books reveals that his work addresses various topics; some of his discussions have been reviewed in the *Encyclopedia Islamica*. Many of his ideas and views are concerned with social science, and merit extensive discussion. The present article deals with some of his social ideas in the domain of anthropology, and attempts to analyze the theoretical foundations and principles of his ideas.

**Keywords:** al-Jahiz, anthropology, Muslims, culture, history.

### **Introduction**

Approximately one half of Al-Jahiz's life was spent in the third century of the Hijri calendar (9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). This era is of great importance in the history of Islamic culture and civilization due to some of its outstanding features:

#### **A. The Eventual Establishment of Islam in the World**

While the Islamic conquests had been completed by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup> (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH), and the Muslim territory in Asia, Africa and Europe had been marked out in the first half of the same century with the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty, the fear of instability grew in the Islamic world. However, with the establishment of the Abbasid rule, and their remarkable ability to ensure security and stability in the Islamic world, as well as the widespread participation of different tribes and newly converted Muslims in the administrative system of the conquered lands, an era of stability began in Islam. Especially in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, the powerful Abbasid caliphs guaranteed security and stability in the eastern and western parts of the Islamic territory.

## **B. The Recognition of the Social Status of Non-Arab Muslims in the Islamic Caliphate**

Under the Rashidun Caliphs, newly converted Muslims known as *mawali* (Non-Arab Muslims under the patronage of Arab tribes) played a great role in the administrative system of the conquered areas. In the Umayyad era, however, with the translation of administrative codes into Arabic, and as a result of certain discriminatory policies, the status of the *mawali* was lowered. With the suppression of some of the civil rights of the newly converted Muslims, rebellions broke out. However, when the Abbasids came to power, the non-Arab Muslims gained a privileged status in the administrative system because of the important role they played in the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty. Despite discontentment on the part of the Abbasids, the non-Arab Muslims utilized the skills and capacities of their own civilizations in the service of the government of the Abbasid.<sup>2</sup>

## **C. The Culmination of the Translation Movement**

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the translation movement paved the way for the presence of different cultures, and for their interactions with one other in the newly established Islamic territory. Greek, Roman, Indian, and Chinese cultures (from outside of the Islamic world) and Iranian, Syriac and Turkish cultures (from within) coexisted and sometimes came into conflict with Arabic culture, bringing about a new wave of interaction.

These realities engendered high levels of competition and interaction among different nations and races. People of different cultures were placed next to each other; this laid the foundations for the recognition, analysis, and comparison of their differences and similarities. Al-Jahiz spent a considerable part of his life during the course of these events; his experience of this era enriched the development of his anthropological ideas. Al-Jahiz's anthropological ideas can be divided into two categories:

### **I. General Anthropology**

The term "general anthropology" is used here to refer to all the efforts made by al-Jahiz to study and analyze the general characteristics of different human societies, without taking into account their cultural, linguistic, and geographical particularities. He discovered common underlying principles among different human societies, as follows:

#### **1. The Principle of Need as the Origin of Social Life**

Al-Jahiz maintained that the reason for the emergence of collective life, as a system

which has always existed, is “people’s interdependence, which has encouraged them to cooperate with each other to satisfy their needs, and prevent harms and problems” (al-Jahiz, vol.1 42-43).

According to him, this interdependence is not specific to the people of a particular era, as all societies are based on the principle of need: “the need for absent people has always existed...our need to know about our predecessors is the same as our predecessors’ need to know about their predecessors, and our descendents will have to know about us” (ibid.). He discusses this need as it exists in different social classes and goes on to examine the king’s need for the market and the market’s need for the king (ibid. 44).

## **2. The Principle of the Continuation of Enmity among Human Societies**

Al-Jahiz, who considers need to be the reason for the cooperation among people and for the development of social systems, addresses the issue of enmity among different human societies; he articulates four reasons for this enmity (ibid. 96):

### **A. Professions**

According to al-Jahiz, beside positive competition, there is a kind of negative competition among people who have the same job, which can turn into jealousy and enmity.

### **B. Neighborhood**

Neighboring communities often experience conflicts and challenges. Observing the rights of one’s neighbors is of crucial importance to the social life of people, and disrespecting these rights results in challenges and conflicts among different societies.

### **C. Kinship**

Al-Jahiz believes that kinship and common ancestry are among the causes of discord and enmity, which can result both in competition and hostility.

### **D. Poverty and Wealth**

The gap among different social classes, which results in the existence or lack of economic opportunities, sows the seeds of negative competition, conflict, jealousy and enmity.

## **3. The Principles of Survival and Cooperation**

By discussing the causes of conflict in human societies on the one hand, and the need for cooperation on the other, al-Jahiz tries to answer the question, “Does one of the two principles of survival and cooperation take precedence over the other, in social

relationships?” He maintains that the principle of cooperation among people is of greater importance than the causes of enmity, and argues that, “in human relationships friendship always conquers enmity” (ibid: 101).

Al-Jahiz studied the history of man, and pointed out that there are many more instances of cooperation and peace than of conflict and war. Perhaps the continuation of social systems offers support for his claim, because if enmity and war played a greater role in human relations, the social system would already have been destroyed.

#### **4. The Principle of Patriotism**

According to al-Jahiz, another important principle of social life is love for one’s country, which he considers to be common to all people (ibid: 100). He sets out the following reasons for his claim:

##### **A. The Qur’anic Verses**

As a Muslim thinker, he finds supports for his claim in the Qur’anic verses: “God the Almighty talks about the houses of people and their fondness for them in His Book; God says that if we order people to either kill themselves or leave their houses, few will do that” (al-Jahiz, 2002: 100). In this verse, God compares death with forced migration from one’s home. Another verse asks “why can’t we fight in the way of God, while we have been driven out of our homes, and our children face death?” (ibid: 101) In this verse, God compares being expelled from one’s home with the death of one’s children.

##### **B. Different Forms of Life**

Different lifestyles suggest that people feel a strong love for their country and for their hometown. According to al-Jahiz, the formation of social life in valleys, mountains, deserts, and cities is a sign of patriotism; he considers love of one’s country to be a divine blessing aimed at filling the earth with happiness and welfare. This is only possible through developing love for one’s country (ibid: 100).

#### **5. The Principle of Diversity of Life**

Al-Jahiz deals with the differences in the lives of people and their outcomes. Some of these differences and their consequences are as follows:

Disposition: according to al-Jahiz, a person’s nature is the origin of their taste, and of their love and hatred for different things (ibid: 101).

Profession: al-Jahiz believes that one of the manifestations of the differences among people is the differences among people’s professions (ibid: 137).

Clothing: al-Jahiz discusses the differences in the way people dress – both at the same time and place, and in different times and places (ibid: 100).

Homeland: he studies various forms of social life and the differences among them.

Skin color: the diversity in people's skin color has always existed, and there is some discussion of these differences in al-Jahiz's writings.

Race: al-Jahiz discusses the diversity of race as the result of geographical differences.<sup>3</sup>

Language: he discusses this issue in his writings on translation (a subject of great importance in that era).<sup>4</sup>

Religion: discussions of people's different religions and beliefs throughout history constitute an important part of al-Jahiz's writings (ibid: 138-139).

Customs and Rites: the rites and customs of societies are closely studied by al-Jahiz, and some important principles are outlined in his studies on customs (al-Jahiz, 3/ 95).<sup>5</sup>

Culture and Civilization: he considers people to be the major building-blocks of culture and civilization; he discusses different cultures and civilizations.<sup>6</sup>

Names: the differences in the names of people, and the reasons and consequences of such differences, are of interest to him (al-Jahiz, 2002: 138).

#### **The Continuation of Deals and Transactions**

There is no doubt that deals and transactions can be carried out only when the buyer, seller, goods, and price are known; this brings about peaceful interactions among people. According to al-Jahiz, one important function of the differences among people is the continuation of transactions, which contributes to the durability of social life (ibid, 100).

#### **The Different Functions of Nature**

The differences in peoples' taste leads to their inclinations toward different aspects of nature. Al-Jahiz maintains that, without such diversity, some parts of nature would not function properly (ibid).

#### **The Development, Continuation and Dynamism of Civilizations**

According to al-Jahiz, the diversity of tastes and inclinations leads to the development of various professions and crafts, which in turn bring about the continuation and dynamism of civilizations (ibid. 137).

#### **The Prevention of War**

Al-Jahiz maintains that people's love for their own country can somehow prevent them from invading other countries. Patriotism can bring about peace; without love for one's country, destructive wars may break out between countries (ibid: 137-138).

In his discussion of the factors that give rise to disagreement and discord, al-Jahiz points out the following:

**A. Divine Will**

As a Muslim thinker, al-Jahiz believed that the world is replete with manifestations of the will of God. He considered the diversity in human ways of life to be a manifestation of divine will and wisdom (ibid. 138).

**B. Environmental Effects**

According to al-Jahiz, the environment influences the behavior, customs, language, tendencies and professions of people (ibid: 99). He analyzes the effects of the physical environment on the skin color of living beings in the dry land of Medina (al-Jahiz, 2002: 554).

**C. The Effects of Time**

Al-Jahiz maintains that time is one of the factors that influence the behavior, customs, language, tendencies, and professions of people. He explains the formation of culture, and the ways that the dominant culture can affect people in different eras (though he does not discuss this in great detail).<sup>7</sup>

**D. The Tendencies of People**

The natural tendency of human beings toward diversity is, according to al-Jahiz, one of the important causes of diversity and difference in the social life of people throughout history (al-Jahiz, 2002: 81).

**E. The Ontological Differences**

Al-Jahiz is of the opinion that different issues in life can be described as either possible or impossible (*imtina'*). He discusses the possible issues concerning religion and God, which according to him cause disagreements between people. However, people seem not to disagree about issues that fall into the domain of the impossible -- social issues fall into this category (ibid: 138-139).

Also, some examples of the consequences of the differences in human societies can be found in the writings of al-Jahiz.

**F. The Presence of Signs**

Signs are among the factors that, according to al-Jahiz, help us differentiate human societies from one another, and understand them. He believes that the differences among people bring about certain signs in human societies (ibid: 100).

## **II. Particular Anthropology**

Al-Jahiz examines the anthropological aspects of particular societies; he describes

their characteristics and the reasons for them. He highlights two points before starting his discussion of different nations: first, relativity is an important principle to be considered in the comparison of different societies. The potentials and abilities that different societies and nations possess are deeply influenced by their environment; as a result, societies differ from one another in terms of their potentials and abilities (al-Jahiz, 2002: 491, 508). Second, peoples' abilities, potentials, and capacities are all influenced by the will of God. People's interdependence has made them continue to cooperate and live with each other, despite their differences (al-Jahiz, 2002: 137).

Next al-Jahiz provides a description and comparison of the characteristics of certain nations, in order to provide a better understanding of them:

### **1. The Greeks**

The translation movement that began at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and reached its summit at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century was in part dedicated to the works of the Greeks. Al-Jahiz, who lived in the same era and seems to have read these translations, discusses the abilities and inabilities of the Greeks:

#### **The Abilities of the Greeks**

Among the abilities and positive features of the Greeks are wisdom, accuracy, investigation into the causes of different issues, and the invention of tools and equipment for medicine, astronomy, keeping time, and making war (al-Jahiz, 2002: 509).

#### **The Inabilities of the Greeks**

The Greeks were not proficient in trade, industry, agriculture, gardening or architecture (ibid, 508). While al-Jahiz may have been wrong, in some respects, in his judgments regarding the Greeks, what is clear is that the Greeks were famous for philosophy, as he acknowledges.

Al-Jahiz maintains that the support that the Greek kings provided for the philosophers enabled them to dedicate their lives to meditation on philosophical issues. In other words, it can be said that, according to al-Jahiz, the popularity of philosophical issues in academic circles, and the kings' support for knowledge, turned Greece into the most important center for philosophy in the world.

### **2. The Chinese**

According to al-Jahiz, the Chinese were dexterous in painting, calligraphy, wood-carving, and producing goods of varying qualities (ibid: 508-509); however, he does not discuss the reasons for their skills.

### **3. The Indians**

He discusses about forty characteristics that he attributes to the Indians. According to him, the Indians were pioneers in astronomy and arithmetic, produced effective medication, performed beautiful dances and songs and were good painters and magicians; they were also known to be very patient (ibid: 556).

### **4. The Arabs**

Al-Jahiz has written about the popular sciences, professions and skills among Arabs, such as industry, agriculture, bureaucracy, astronomy, genealogy, physiognomy, and poetry (ibid: 508).

### **5. The Turks**

According to al-Jahiz, the Turks were as skillful at war as the Greeks were at philosophy, as the Chinese were at industry, as the Arabs were at poetry, and as the Iranians were at governance. Al-Jahiz says that while in most countries different people from different areas cooperate with one another to produce swords, the Turks perform all the stages themselves and are highly skilled in making swords (ibid: 511).

### **6. The Iranians**

He discusses the competence of the Iranians in governing, devising administrative systems, and formulating clear rules and regulations (al-Jahiz, 184). Al-Jahiz considers the Arabs, Indians, Iranians, and Romans to be superior to others in term of their customs, ethics, governments, and knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

A brief study of the ideas of al-Jahiz indicates that anthropology, as a branch of the social sciences, was developed in the Islamic world some centuries before the work of Ibn Khaldun. Also, while the Middle Ages is considered to be a dark era in science and knowledge in Europe, there were some important scholars in this period in the Islamic world. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, al-Jahiz developed interesting ideas in certain fields of knowledge such as social science. Finally, what paved the way for the development of these sciences in the Islamic world was the open social climate that allowed for interaction among different races and groups of people, as well as public participation, and the development of scientific ideas.



## Note

1. The Islamic conquests ended with the Battle of Tours (Balat Al-Shuhada Battle) in 732 in France. See Abdollah Inan, *The History of the Islamic State in Andalusia*, trans. Abdolhamd Ayati, Kayhan Publications, pp. 92-185.
2. The presence of people from different nations in the administrative system of the Abbasids supports this claim. For example, in describing the composition of the Abbasid army, al-Jahiz refers to Turks, Khorasanis, Arabs, and Iranians. See *Al-Rassa'il al-Siyyasah*, Beirut, Dar al-Maltabah al-Hilal, 2002, 475.
3. See *Al-Rassa'il al-Siyyasah*. Al-Jahiz talks about the Turks (p. 150), the Indians (p. 556), the Greeks (p. 508), the Chinese (p. 509), the Arabs, and Iranians (p. 509) in his treatise, and describes their characteristics.
4. He discusses the effects of cities on the diversity in languages. *Al-Rissalah al-Kalaamiyah*, Beirut, 2002: 92.
5. He describes the diversity in the clothing of certain important public speakers (ibid: 92) and the clothes of the Christians of the city of Bahrah (ibid: 90).
6. He discusses the characteristics of the civilizations of the Greeks (p. 508), the Indians (p. 556), the Turks (p. 150), the Chinese (p. 509), the Arabs, and the Iranians (ibid: 509).
7. → item 29.

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## The Social Philosophy of Ibn Sina

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### Abstract

Ibn Sina, one of the great thinkers of the Eastern-Islamic world, profoundly influenced later philosophical ideas. The present article seeks to show how Ibn Sina's epistemology (in the field of social philosophy) relies on an understanding of social relationships. This kind of epistemology depends on a rationality that derives from intellectual understanding (*'uqalae*) and from the conceptions that underpin a particular understanding of community. This article attempts to understand the nature of community, and the formation of social ethics, as discussed in Ibn Sina's moral philosophy. In the following pages, Ibn Sina's ethical and social discussions are studied, and a content analysis of these discussions is conducted. It is concluded that Ibn Sina recognizes no collective identity for man; he is of the opinion that social life is based on human needs; the ideas that evolve in a given community constitute the origin of basic ethical concepts.

**Keywords:** Ibn Sina, community, conceptions, social structures, ethical proposition, intellectual (*'uqala'ee*), widely known premises (*mashhurat*).

### Introduction

Ibn Sina was not a sociologist; he did not try to explain social phenomena. He studied society, and social and human issues, in the framework of his philosophical ideas. Social science addresses social problems and phenomena and aims to rectify society. Social scientists identify, understand, and gain control over social phenomena; mere scholarly enquiries are not considered to be efficacious or of practical merit. Students of the social sciences examine social rules, and attempt social action and transformation (Soroush, 1374: 1). However, Ibn Sina's philosophical manner of addressing social

issues did not prevent him from taking wise actions and measures, which he did through philosophical explanations, rather than through scholarly projects.

Ibn Sina divided sciences into two kinds: changing and unchanging. Political philosophy and practical philosophy (*hikmah*) are unchanging sciences, and the passage of time does not make them outdated; therefore, according to him, only this part of *knowledge* is true. Political philosophy and practical philosophy are among the genuine and timeless sciences that human beings will always need.

Sciences of the first type deal with concepts that are relevant in different eras; these sciences are divided into theoretical and practical. The goal of theoretical sciences (as distinct from practical sciences) is the assertion of certain (*yaqini*) beliefs in existence whose existence is not dependent on the actions of human beings. Metaphysics, mathematics, and physics are among the theoretical sciences. Practical philosophy either deals with one individual (the cultivation of morals) or is relevant to groups of people (politics and economics). Ibn Sina is of the opinion that sciences that deal with the issues that are pertinent to groups of people are included in the domain of the practical intellect. At the end of his *Kitab al-Najat (The Book of Salvation)*, Ibn Sina provides an example of reasoning in the socio-political domain (Ibn Sina, 1370).

Since most ethical issues arise in society, and in connection with people, the role of social attitudes in the context of ethical education cannot be ignored. An important question addressed in this article is<sup>1</sup> whether Iranian philosophers have adopted a social approach to ethics. In answering this question, this article focuses on Ibn Sina, one of the greatest Iranian philosophers. This analysis is of considerable importance for the following reasons: first, it provides an analysis of the intellectual foundations of the cultural heritage of Iran. Second, it considers the social ideas that possess great potential for strengthening the ethical foundations of the society. One strategy for reinforcing morals in society is exploring and analyzing the cultural capital of the country. Therefore, dealing with the issue of ethics in society has both cultural and educational significance.

Since Ibn Sina does not address social issues directly, this article attempts to study his ideas on ethics in order to reveal some of his ethical ideas. The assumption of this article is that by considering basic ethical propositions such as “justice is good,” and other widely known (*mashhur*) premises, Ibn Sina asserts that ethical propositions can be justified through common sense; social factors serve as the origin of the ideas that contribute to the evolution of ethical conduct. Thus it can be claimed that Ibn Sina recognizes a special identity for the community; to him community has a specific human cohesion and solidarity, and does not merely satisfy human needs. This article begins by discussing Ibn Sina’s widely known premises such as “justice is good” and

“oppression is abominable.” This discussion includes a consideration of the social identity of man from the viewpoint of Ibn Sina, as well as the social structures that are based on the social identity. Next, the human actions, that play a great role in the formation of ethical conduct, are discussed in terms of psychological concepts on the basis of his views.

## Literature Review

Ibn Sina’s socio-ethical ideas can be found in his discussions of logic, theology and psychology. According to Sharifian, Ibn Sina was influenced by the political ideas of Plato and Aristotle; he believed that civil society is a natural entity because man is a natural being. Rational laws govern society; the laws of *sharia* confirm rational laws. These laws originate in the ideas of the elite, especially in the scientific endeavors of philosophers. With reference to government, Ibn Sina does not approve of the rule of philosophers and justice on the part of the ruler is of great importance to him. He probably did not support the rule of *hakim* (polymath philosopher). According to Ibn Sina, justice is the main principle that a ruler must uphold; government should be lenient and tolerant.

Kadivar (1383) maintains that Ibn Sina does not discuss community and politics at length. This might be because he considered politics to be secondary to *sharia*, and considered the findings of the *faqih* (expert in Islamic law) to be sufficient for the community. According to Kadivar, in explaining the relationship between *sharia* and *hikmah* in practical philosophy, Ibn Sina stated that any association has two important principles: the legitimate law itself, and the administrator and guardian of that law. Only the administrator is allowed to separate economics from politics. Ibn Sina holds that in ethics (the man himself), economics (the minor association), and politics (major association), the legislator should be one single person; and the ideal person as legislator is the Prophet. In oriental philosophy (*hikmah mashriqiyyah*), Ibn Sina includes the science of *sharia* (or *sanaa’ah shaari’ah*) in practical philosophy. Kadivar holds that it is not clear why Ibn Sina lists the science of *sharia* as parallel with the three sciences of practical philosophy, since he regards these three as dependent on *sharia*. However, he explains that Ibn Sina did not deem it necessary for these three laws to be derived from *sharia* (rather, he deemed such a thing to be preferable); otherwise, the science of *sharia* would have been the fourth branch of practical philosophy.

Social scientists have discussed Ibn Sina’s ideas about the necessity of social life, the legislator, the Prophet, and his role as the legislator (the ruler who must be obeyed by all), and *sharia* as the source of law and justice, as well as his social ideas.

On the other hand, in his discussion of different kinds of syllogisms in terms of matter of argument (*madah*), Ibn Sina considers widely known premises as one kind of syllogism. Widely known premises are those syllogisms whose middle term is derived from the popular ideas that are accepted on the basis of the ideas of the intellectuals (*'uqala*). According to Ibn Sina, widely known premises have general and particular meanings. Particular meanings are propositions that express the ideas and views of a group of people. In other words, these propositions originate from collective wills and conventions; he also calls these propositions *ara' mahmudah* or *ta'dibat salahiyah* (the praiseworthy opinions) (Ibn Sina, 1367: 413).

A widely known (*mashhur*) proposition is a proposition that is accepted by all people, though it might be one of the self-evident or primary premises. Therefore, all self-evident or primary premises are among the widely known (*mashhur*) propositions, because they are widely known. When widely known propositions are used unqualifiedly, their particular meaning must be kept in mind; these are propositions that originate from general acceptance (ibid: 414).

According to Ibn Sina, these propositions can be learned through education and in the community. In other words, a person who has received no education from other individuals in his society cannot decide whether these propositions are right or wrong using his own intellect and sense. Propositions such as “justice is good,” “making fun of others is wrong,” and “killing animals is wrong” are among these propositions: the affirmation of the predicate is not necessary, but education is needed for their affirmation. In propositions such as “the whole is bigger than the part,” however, the affirmation of the predicate is necessary for the subject (it is not possible for the part to be bigger than its whole). But in the proposition “lying is wrong,” the affirmation of the predicate is necessary for the subject, and a situation can be imagined in which lying is not wrong – for example, when lying is to the advantage of the majority (Tusi, 1375: 221).

Those who assume that Ibn Sina includes ethical propositions among the widely known premises, and that he relies on the ideas of the intellectuals (*'uqala*), consider him to be unrealistic in terms of moral philosophy. From a non-realistic ethical viewpoint, ethical values depend on conventions, and are not rooted in the essence of actions. Lahidji dismisses this argument, and holds that the fact that Ibn Sina included propositions such as “justice is good” and “oppression is bad” among the widely known ideas does not suggest that he did not also recognize them as self-evident, because “a proposition can be included both among the certain premises (*yaqiniyyat*) and the received premises (*maqbulat*), and this can be validated both through logic and argument” (p. 61).

Sharifi (1386) maintains, however, that the inclusion of ethical propositions among the widely known premises would lead to three unacceptable consequences. First, it would mean the acceptance of ethical conventionalism—a kind of subjectivism that entails relativism. Thus, ethical relativism would be a prerequisite for accepting the ideas of Ibn Sina. Second, this would indicate that we have accepted ethical pluralism, which is the consequence of relativism; according to this doctrine, two contradictory ethical propositions in two different societies are simultaneously justifiable. Third, there would be no possibility for ethical criticism, because such criticism requires the presence of certain unchanging universal criteria. Ethical pluralism eliminates the possibility of ethical criticism, as such doctrine suggests that the only criterion for evaluating propositions is their social acceptance or lack thereof (p. 14).

Sharifi is of the opinion that the fact that Avicenna has included ethical propositions among the widely-known premises entails a kind of relativism, because, according to him, Ibn Sina considers ethics to be based on conventions, and conventionalism results in relativism – this, in turn, eliminates the possibility of ethical criticism. However, it can be said that what Ibn Sina meant by convention is different from the conventions that are based on special situation; Ibn Sina’s conventions are founded on common sense and the laws of *sharia*. People in different eras and different places influence the development of these conventions; this consequently turns them into public opinions, which can face criticism and assessment. Moreover, the framework of *sharia* and the influence of God give the conventions that are founded on common sense special qualities; this status opens up the possibility of their being assessed through intra-religious criteria.

Javadi (1386) believes that although Ibn Sina includes ethical propositions among the widely known ideas (which are approved only through the agreement of intellectuals), he can be considered a realistic moral philosopher. He maintains that since Ibn Sina believed in the correctness or wrongness of ethical propositions, we can conclude that he was realistic. “Some widely known ideas are true and some are wrong. However, the true ones are not among the primary truths (they are, rather, theoretical), because, although the intellect considers them to be *mahmudah* (praiseworthy), the intellect does not recognize them as true in a primary way; they can be accepted as primary only through argument and reasoning” (Ibn Sina, 1386: 25).

According to Griffel (2012), Ibn Sina believed that human beings have a natural ability to recognize the rules of grammar and poetic meter, but have no such talent for the rules of analytic thinking. A person may know what is correct in grammar and in poetry, but must be taught analytic thinking through the study of logic (p. 14). It is obvious that the social outcome of bringing ethical statements under the widely known (*mashhur*) propositions is not noticed.

It can be claimed that most scholars have analyzed the ethical ideas of Ibn Sina according to criteria drawn from the domain of moral philosophy. If we accept Ibn Sina's presuppositions on community and ethics, what other consequences could we draw from his views? Ibn Sina led a social life like others, practiced medicine and held positions of great authority in the government; however, he never gave up his philosophical meditations on different domains of thought. In the next section, the widely known propositions are analyzed in terms of their implications for Ibn Sina's social philosophy.

### **Widely Known Propositions (*Mashhur*)**

Ibn Sina's ideas about widely known propositions are important for two reasons. First, he includes the ethical propositions in his discussion of logic. Second, by including these propositions among the widely known premises, which depend on the views of intellectuals, Ibn Sina assigns an important role to the community and to intellectuals' conceptions in the justification of ethical propositions.

Widely known premises are syllogistic subjects discussed in books of logic. Ibn Sina divides the syllogism into five categories: demonstration, dialectics, rhetoric, poetry, and fallacy. These are called the Five Figures (*sanaa'at khamsah*). It should be noted that he specifies two kinds of judgments or affirmations: self-evident and theoretical. Theoretical judgments can be made through syllogism, induction and analogy. Self-evident judgments need no medium to be obtained. These judgments are the source of argumentations in the sciences. They are known as primary intelligibles (*maq'ulat*), and are divided into four groups: admitted premises (*musallamat*), presumed premises (*maznunat*), ambiguous premises (*mushabbihat*), and imaginative premises (*mukhayyalat*).

There are two kinds of admitted premises: beliefs (*mu'taqidat*) and derivatives (*ma'khuzat*). Beliefs are divided into certain premises (*yaqiniyyat*), widely known premises (*mashhurat*), and estimative premises (*wahmiyyat*). Certain premises are divided into primary premises (*awwaliyyat*), observational premises (*mushahidat*), experiential premises (*mujarrabat*), intuited premises (*hadsiiyyat*), transmitted premises (*mutawatirat*), and inherent premises (*fitriyyat*). These six types of propositions constitute the premises of demonstration (*burhan*). In other words, a demonstration depends on propositions that produce certain apodictic judgments. Derivatives, which constitute the second group of the admitted premises, are divided into two categories: received premises (*maqbulat*) and asserted premises (*taqririyyat*). Received premises are propositions that are accepted by great scholars, scientists, or



trusted leaders; asserted premises or admitted premises are propositions that are used in argumentation, and cannot be denied by the addressee (Ibn Sina, 1367: 412-427).

The first figure of the Five Figures, demonstration, is made up of certain premises (*muqaddimat yaqini*); the second figure, dialectic, includes widely known and admitted premises. In his *Kitab al-Shifa*, Ibn Sina maintains that the demonstrative syllogism brings about certainty and is intended to convince the other party; he states that “syllogisms are of different categories, some bring about certainty, which are demonstrative syllogisms, and some bring about quasi-certainty, which are dialectical syllogisms” (ibid: 411).

Other logicians agree with Ibn Sina on this point. His commentator Nasir al-Din al-Tusi is of the opinion that dialectic is subsequent to demonstration, because essentially it is to the advantage of the individual, and is intended to dominate the discussion and convince others (Tusi, 1375: 329).

Propositions that function as premises are of two kinds: widely known premises (*mashhurat*) and admitted premises (*musallamat*). The widely known premises include certain premises (*yaqiniyyat*), qualified corrections (*ta'dibat salahiyah*), ethical propositions and affective qualities (*khulqiyyat* and *infi'aliyyat*), and inductive propositions (*istiqraiyyat*). Ibn Sina finds the term *ara' mahmudah* (praiseworthy ideas) to be more appropriate than *mashhurat* (widely known ideas), because, according to him, the above-mentioned premises are included among the widely known premises only because they are widely known (Ibn Sina, 1332: 52). The widely known premises are divided into true and untrue. Premises that are accepted because everybody acknowledges them are true widely known premises (Ibn Sina, 1367: 410). “As in the certain premises, conformity with the external world is valid, in the widely known premises also, conformity with the ideas of people is valid” (ibid: 419).

Therefore, the validity of the widely known premises is based on popular opinion regarding their content; some widely known premises are accepted as certain premises. They are widely known by the people, but they are not necessarily certain. As a result, any proposition that is affirmed by the public (either true or untrue) can serve as a premise for dialectic. The propositions that are opposite to the true premises are called improper rather than untrue, as one might expect (Ibn Sina, 1360: 53). All primary premises are widely known, but the reverse is not necessarily true. Every primary proposition is widely known, but every widely known proposition is not primary.

The widely known premises are of two kinds: true and untrue. True widely known premises are propositions that are generally accepted, and pertain to good habits, and exemplary behavior, actions, or emotions on the part of humans. Untrue widely known

premises are propositions that are accepted by a certain group or by the majority of people, such as “resurrection is true,” “eating beef is forbidden by *sharia*,” and “God is unique” (Ibn Sina, 1367: 427).

Widely known syllogisms (*al-qias al-mashhur*) are obtained from the traditions and emotions of the people (Hairi Yazdi, 1361: 97), and their validity is the result of their being known by the people. This shows that human issues can be divided into two categories: rational issues and intellectual (*‘uqala’ee*) issues. Rational issues are judged by pure intellect, and all human beings accept them; these issues serve as the matter of argument for demonstrative syllogisms. However, intellectual issues are usually particular to a given society or nation; they are accepted by the people because they have been affirmed by intellectuals (*‘uqala*). These rational issues form cultural and human truths, and generally constitute the foundations of civil and criminal rights (ibid).

Ibn Sina stresses that without the special education that the community provides, widely known propositions cannot be acknowledged. “Another group of the widely known premises is called the praiseworthy (*mahmudah*) ideas; probably only these ideas should be called widely known ideas, because they only depend on public acceptance. These ideas cannot be affirmed only through pure intellect or senses; their affirmation also requires proper education, induction, historical experience, or human emotions” (Ibn Sina, 1956: 64).

Also, reliance on common sense indicates the validity of a society and its components. Many thinkers believe that society is more than the sum of its individuals, although a society cannot be separated from its individuals and its groups. A close study of society indicates that there are systematic interactions among individuals, and unwritten social rules, which are respected. However, individuals sometimes change or modify these interactions and structures in innovative ways (Stones, 1379: 14). Although these innovations bring about changes in a society in different eras, the major principle of life remains: one must act in accordance with given structures and relations. And, in fact, the changes in society occur through these same structures and relations.

According to Ibn Sina, the practical intellect is fulfilled in part through relationships and interactions with others (Ibn Sina, 1373: 12). The individual should consider himself and his social relationships with others. Therefore, logic is Ibn Sina’s point of departure for considering relationships between people.

Using logic for this purpose entails two epistemological and psychological explanations. The epistemological explanation deals with different beliefs – with their natures, their origins, and their validity. Admitted premises, widely known premises,

and the ideas that shape ethical behavior and social relationships are discussed in this context. Demonstrations of theoretical intellect move from demonstrative premises to dialectical and rhetorical premises, and theoretical intellect appears in the domain of human relationships.

Logic is the science of argument. Argument is the process of explaining or affirming new truths on the basis of presumed truths; it is a subjective process and is studied in psychology. If we consider the reasons that lead us to a new truth, we realize that we need logic. Logic does not give us any knowledge about the world, but it tells us how to attain knowledge about the world and gives us criteria to use for this purpose. Therefore, logic enables us to identify the defects in our arguments, and to rectify our beliefs.

Ethics and logic allow us to find the criteria for the development of sound arguments in the domain of action. Ethics is a normative science that addresses human conduct and concepts such as goodness, badness, correctness, or wrongness. The theoretical aspect of ethics deals with the reasons for different actions, and the judgments about their correctness or wrongness.

Although both ethics and logic deal with the nature of values, each addresses a special aspect of these questions. In ethics, the goodness or badness of human actions is discussed, while in logic the correctness or wrongness of arguments is of importance. In other words, logic enables a focus on the validity of arguments, and offers criteria for judging arguments on the basis of rules of thought. Therefore, based on these premises, it can be deduced that:

- Widely known premises are part of our beliefs.
- Beliefs are assessed on the basis of the criteria provided by logic.
- Widely known premises are assessed on the basis of the criteria provided by logic.

Thus, the widely known premises are included among the beliefs. An examination of the widely known propositions reveals that the validity of each of them depends on a mental aspect of man: the degree to which it is convincing, correspondence with public opinion, modesty, spiritual states of man, habit, repetition, transmission (*tawatur*), and deductive examination. Can we accept these issues as the origin of ethics just because Ibn Sina mentions them? Can we claim that Ibn Sina's point of departure for rectifying a social structure is the individual and his relationship with others?

The things that the human being accepts as beliefs, and which constitute the foundation of his conduct, have various sources. Ibn Sina accepts these sources realistically, and draws attention to their effects on individual and social lives. Although he does not explicitly provide a way to rectify these sources, he highlights

logic as a method for distinguishing between right and wrong. There is always the possibility that an idea will be wrong; wrong ideas can be rectified through other widely known ideas and through logic.

### **The Social Identity of Man from Ibn Sina's Viewpoint**

Ibn Sina does not address society and social education directly. Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, in his commentary on *Al-Isharat*, maintains that, according to Ibn Sina, man is by nature a civic being, and civilization is the same as human society. But Ibn Sina does not seem to have discussed this subject explicitly (Shakouri, 1384: 304). Most of Ibn Sina's ideas about social education can be explored in his discussions of practical philosophy. He divided practical philosophy into two parts: one is concerned with the individual, and the way to refine individual behavior and manners in order to enable the attainment of eternal happiness. The second part is concerned with the social participation of human beings, with the aim of establishing a "perfect system" in society.

According to Ibn Sina, the difference between man and animals is that human livelihood must be secured through group life, because man cannot satisfy all his needs alone. However, leading a group life in order to satisfy one's needs does not justify living a social life. Ibn Sina discusses the necessary conditions for the establishment of the *medina* (the city-state); he states that conditions such as social rites and customs, laws and rules, and a government that can stabilize society are necessary for attaining human perfection (Ibn Sina, 1383: 534-535). These conditions, which entail cohesion, solidarity, and the fulfillment of human commitment in social relations, are among the necessary conditions for civic participation. The necessary components for society according to Ibn Sina are discussed in the next part.

### **The Components of Society from Ibn Sina's Viewpoint**

#### **Social Structure**

Ibn Sina Avicenna views cooperation and interaction as a necessary social structure whose rules and regulations should be observed by the individuals. This social structure is among the basic characteristics of human society that should serve as the foundation of individuals' behavior. In a discussion of the necessity of social life and the division of labor, he highlights the principle of participation, and states that "participation is essential for the existence and survival of man." Participation can be interpreted as the commitment of all people to active involvement in social issues (Ibn Sina, 1376: 496).

According to Ibn Sina, cooperation and participation on the basis of civil law, with

the aim of distributing resources, is an important characteristic of human societies. To attain perfection, human beings need civic life and collaboration: this is because they cannot satisfy all their needs on their own. Therefore, participation is the basic principle of human social life (Ibn Sina, 1370: 285). This principle indicates that everybody has a duty to cooperate in the fulfillment of tasks. However, cooperation with others also entails business, trade, and services, and entails special customs, rules, and regulations (Ibn Sina, 1379: 4).

### **Traditions and Laws**

Clearly, the continuation of human society and civil order would be impossible without rules and regulations. Ibn Sina's *medina* is no exception; he uses terms such as rule, tradition, and praiseworthy ideas to describe what we generally call law. In addition to participation and collaboration, human societies need rules and laws to provide individuals with a framework for social life (Ibn Sina, 1383: 535).

However, an important question is who sets the rules for social relationships? Ibn Sina attaches a lot of importance to consultation in the affairs of the *medina*. The duty of consultants is to find points of agreement among people, and to try to combine them and harmonize them with the habits and dispositions of people in different societies, so that the rules can be followed without any problems (Ibn Sina, 1950: 20).

### ***Sharia* (Islamic Law)**

According to Ibn Sina, *sharia* provides the foundation and framework for law. *Sharia*, with which God has blessed human beings, is based on the needs of virtuous human beings. It paves the way for the establishment of an appropriate system for social life (Ibn Sina, 1370: 287). Ibn Sina stresses that the *medina* should be ruled on the basis of divine *sharia*. He maintains that *sharia* forms the foundation and framework of the necessary laws for the *medina*, but reminds us that the particular cases and details of these laws should be developed on the basis of human intellect. Therefore, the elite and the consultants are responsible for examining society, and relevant historical and cultural facts, in order to develop the law (Ibn Sina, 1370: 286).

### **Rulers and Consultants**

Guardians are needed to protect the laws, and people must observe the implementation of laws in order to prevent any misinterpretation of laws or injustice. Others should explain different aspects of the law, and pave the way for their acceptance (Ibn Sina, 1383: 535).

## Conclusion

As discussed above, according to Ibn Sina, society is established on the basis of human needs. He recognizes no social *fitra* (innate disposition) for man. The collective identity of man is determined by those needs that must be satisfied for survival. For the fulfillment of all basic needs, some mechanisms and devices must be developed. These mechanisms and their justifiability emerge from Ibn Sina's views on man and his social life. For Ibn Sina, society is a conventional entity that can be explained in terms of human beings' perfectionism, and their interdependence.

According to him, social traditions are one of the sources of ethical principles; they provide people with logic and criteria for evaluating beliefs, so that they can be examined and corrected.

Perhaps we can suppose Ibn Sina to have said that man should be examined in his social context in a systematic way, and that man can use rational knowledge to move from individual evolution to social life; however, intellectual laws, traditions, and relationships are among the social principles necessary for moving towards a successful social life.

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## **Allama Jafari and Dostoevsky**

### **Rereading the Russian Literary Legacy in an Alternative Perspective**

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#### **Abstract**

One of the contemporary Iranian social thinkers who have worked upon the relation between philosophical problematiqués and literary insights is Allama Jafari. He engaged with literary thinkers in general and Russian Literary thinkers (RLT) such as Leo Tolstoy, Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky and Maxim Gorky, in particular. Very little has been researched by either Russian or Iranian on the importance of Russo-Iranian philosophical engagements. In this paper the author has focused on Dostoevsky and the reception of his discourse by Allama Jafari in relation to sociological questions such as ‘awe and infinity’, ‘social life and progress’, and ‘reason and intellect’.

**Keywords:** Alternative Perspective, Infantile Reason, Human Culture, Partial Reason, Rumi.

#### **Introduction**

Within psychological debates, the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action is conceptualized as volition. Within the field of linguistics the concept may refer to a distinction that could aim at expressing whether the subject *intended* the action or not. In other words, the question of human will has occupied the minds of philosophers long before academics attempted to conceptualize issues related to volition based on their respective disciplinary approaches. The philosophical question of ‘human will’ is an issue that Allama Jafari dwelled upon in a serious fashion as this question has been one of the most perplexing problems in the context of philosophy. For instance, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and many other famous philosophers spoke about the

cruciality of free will in the constitution of human existence. Needless to argue that the questions on free will and determinism have had grave consequences for human societies across various cultures and eras as these questions are not only of intellectual importance but have vital consequences for humanity at large. A cursory look at ideologies and past or current political systems would reveal the importance of freedom or lack of it in the constitution of social organizations where the governing elites deal with their own people based on their respective attitudes towards agency and structure. Of course, one could see sparks of these debates within the contexts of social theories and various schools which support either of these positions depending on the primacy one may attach to determinism or indeterminism or positions that could lie in the middle of these diametrically opposing perspectives. However, the question which is of interest for us in this context is the relation between free-will and conscience. In other words, how is free-will and conscience related?

Allama Jafari argues that the question of conscience is deeply interconnected with the phenomenon of 'will' and this interconnectivity is eloquently expressed by the dominance of human will in the constitution of human psyche. In an episode in his work, i.e. 'Conscience' Allama Jafari conceptualizes the problem of 'will' by arguing that

... .. this phenomenon of will within the parameters of human actions is of fundamental significance as the seed of conscience shall grow in opposition to the ruthless dominance of desires ... (2009: 90).

The growth of conscience within the bosom of human life is one of the most important problematiques which has been discussed by various perennial philosophers but very rarely has reached people of different walks of life. Allama Jafari has, as aforementioned, noted this discrepancy between the cruciality of substance and parochiality of form within the paradigm of *hekmat* in a remarkable fashion. On the relation between 'conscience' and 'volition' he employs the conquering conceptual framework of Dostoevsky in his 'Notes from Underground' (*Записки из подполья*) which allows Allama Jafari to express his ideas in a more effective fashion. He argues that Dostoevsky has expressed this issue in the following manner

Where should humanity, in general, go? Anytime it reaches the destination, it becomes confused and feels a kind of perplexity in itself. Humanity seems to love the struggle on the path of destination, but it looks like as though the very point of union is not desirable for human being as such (Dostoevsky cited by Allama Jafari, 2009: 90).

What does Dostoevsky mean? In Allama Jafari's view, Dostoevsky has realized a very poignant matter in relation to human existence, namely

... the dialectics between relativity and absolutivity of objectives. In other words, what one achieves seems to be of relative significance and hence unfulfilling existentially and this sense of unfulfillment pushes us towards the ultimate reality of an absolute kind ... . Since in the phenomenal world, we cannot find absolute ideals but relative objectives ... therefore the insatiable yearning of human soul remains unsatisfied ... . (2009: 91).

Dostoevsky, in Allama Jafari's view, attempts to explain a very fundamental fact about the power of volition which has eluded the fathers of the Enlightenment Tradition who attached unlimited importance to reason in organization of social life of humanity. In other words,

... I don't think that Dostoevsky intends to insult the significance of sound reason in the constitution of human self ... . . . on the contrary, he seems to refer to a more subtle problem which has eluded philosophers of modernism, namely the imperative power of desire which could sideline the centrality of sound reason if not harnessed by another faculty ... . (Allama Jafari, 2009: 93)

Allama Jafari discerns these insights in Dostoevsky's literary works which are similar to perennial concerns of *hekmat* which constitutes the intellectual background of Allama Jafari's discourse. For instance, take one of the episodes in 'Записки из подполья' where Dostoevsky beautifully demonstrates the insufficiency of modernist interpretation of reason as the sole manager of human life, i.e.

...gentlemen! May I have your attention! Reason is a good thing but it will always remain reason which could provide food for thought. While desires and cravings, in contrast to reason, are manifestations of life in its totality. In other words, reason constitutes part of what existence is while irrational dimensions of life are far bigger than the rational aspects of human existence. What I am trying to say is that the whole human life and whatever lies in it- and even if this life in its apparent representations may appear dull, tattered, decayed and rotten ... it is still life and has no connection with rationality and reason ... . . . . In other words, life is not a mathematical formula, square root and cube root of the equation ... (Dostoevsky cited by Allama Jafari, 2009: 95)

Irrationality and the question of rationality is part of a larger debate within social theory and philosophy which could be traced to classical discourses of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Karl Mannheim where the latter differentiated between substantive rationality and irrationality, which dealt with thinking, and functional rationality and irrationality, which dealt with action. In sum, the path forward is not solely achievable by recourse to reason but one should step in the realm of conscience (2009: 97).

## **Awe and Infinity**

In the periphery of modernist streams one can discern certain references to supra-

rational discourses which are at odds with discursive rationality and empiricism that have reigned supreme since the institutionalization of tenets of the Enlightenment Tradition. For instance, one can refer to transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, Robert Musil, Harold Bloom, and Henry David Thoreau; mystic-philosophers such as Immanuel Swedenborg, Jakob Böhme and William Law; intuitionist school of philosophy à la Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead and even religious streams within existentialist philosophy and non-rationalist schools with phenomenological inclinations. Although these peripheral streams have not gained institutionalized locus within academia nevertheless their intellectual impacts upon the larger fabric of global cultures are undeniable as the end of modernism and the rise of postmodernism (with all its ailing intellectual state) is a strong indication that *things cannot go back to the way as they were before*. The vital questions and any issue which could not be quantified or reduced to numbers have not been rated as important in the epoch of quantity as it was elaborated eloquently by Rene Guenon in his insightful work, i.e. *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (2002). In other words, the marginalized thinkers have been trying to convince others that immediate experience and intuition are more significant than rationalism and science for understanding reality and also one should distinguish between technical domination of reality and integral comprehension of reality for the actualization of human self. Taken these issues into consideration then one could turn to vital questions such as ‘infinity’ and ‘awe’ that have occupied the minds and hearts of authentic thinkers in all ages, in general, and in modern time, in particular. Sometimes thinkers who have swum against the institutionally dominant intellectual currents or mainstream modes in academia and have also been branded as counter-modernists or even enemies of the modern civilization have had great enduring impacts upon the general fabric of culture in various ways. By posing challenging questions and working on vital issues rather than being concerned with merely intellectual or rationalistically-loaded problematiques they have forced the larger society to reflect upon irrational dimensions of human *leben* which seem to overshadow rational aspects of economy/society/culture in critical fashions. Infinity and awe are perennial questions which have not caught the due attention of disciplinary thinkers as they have in undisciplinary circles. For instance, Dostoevsky seems to be very fond of the transformational possibility of awe which a human being could sense before the daunting depth of infinity. I categorize Dostoevsky as one of the ardent advocates of primordial school of social theory along with Erich Fromm and Allama Jafari (and many others whom I have elaborated in my earlier works) who have looked at ‘vital issues’ –and not only intellectual issues- in an undisciplinary fashion.

By looking at Rumi, Allama Jafari turns to the question of infinity which could induce a profound sense of awe in the heart of human being in an overwhelming fashion and argues that

... the sense of marvel which is based on gnosis ... is the aim of all self-actualized individuals ... who view the gamut of reality from an elevated point of departure ... as though they are standing on the top of a mountain ... and ... upon that point they sense the harmony and prevailing unity in the entire universe ... and by listening to the wonderful musicality of these harmonious strings of unity and harmony ... they fall into an ecstatic mode of awe [which is rooted in the awesome depth of infinity] ... (Allama Jafari, 2008: 1/ 165).

Allama Jafari argues that the question of awe and the sense of marvel which could result when an individual encounters the infinite reality of life are of great importance within the hekmatic paradigm and as a matter of fact it has been conceptualized in the prophetic body of knowledge as the problematique of rapture, awe, marvel and bewilderment. Then he turns to Dostoevsky's *Demons* (Бесы) and attempts to bridge between the hekmatic quest and the Russian literary thinkers who have worked in a thematic fashion on perennial questions in a literary fashion. Allama Jafari is, indeed, the only Iranian thinker who has dared to bridge between hekmat and literature based on a specific theoretical position, i.e. the theory of universal human culture. In order to demonstrate the thematic similarity between hekmatic vector and literary perspective of Dostoevsky he focuses on the question of 'perplexity' as one of the most fruitful dimensions of the spirit of self-actualized individuals who

... at the zenith of knowledge ... before the infinity of reality ... falls in a sense of rapture. (Allama Jafari, 2008: 1/ 166).

Allama Jafari argues that Dostoevsky has contemplated on these issues too when he states that

... there are moments ... in any human's life ... it may last no more than five or six seconds ... when one may feel in harmony with the entire universe ... and this intuition may give a sense of completeness within one's soul in a deepest fashion ... I don't want to argue that this sense is of a heavenly origin but this sense of tranquility could not be derived from mundane routines of daily life ... in other words, one should either transform the body or die! This is an unambiguous sense which is beyond any reasonable doubt ... as though you suddenly feel the whole reality is addressing you ... by exclaiming loudly ... yes, all is right and fair (Dostoevsky cited by Allama Jafari, 2008: 1/ 166).

Of course, one may disagree with Allama Jafari's interpretation of Dostoevsky or even other Russian literary thinkers but this disagreement cannot prevent us from taking his approach seriously as he has put forward his commentaries within a feasible

theoretical frame of reference which has not been explored or even reflected upon yet. There is no doubt that Dostoevsky is one of the most paradoxical thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose thought seems to be in conflict with modernism and whatever it promised since the early dawn of the Enlightenment Tradition. But what has been of great significance for Allama Jafari which has, in turn, drove him towards an integral engagement with the Dostoevskian thought is the *perennial character* of problems which Dostoevsky worked upon along his turbulent intellectual sojourn. It may be of interest to note that the multifaceted character of the Dostoevskian thought was not recognized at once but it took a long time to unfold in an integral fashion. For instance, Dostoevsky did not become popular in the West instantly, not even after the tribute paid to him by Nietzsche. According to André Gide's records he was, at the start, viewed as a remarkable author, albeit too austere, surreal and incomprehensible. (Gide, 1981) This had begun to alter with the rise of the French existentialists and endorsements by Gide, Camus, and Sartre. From the Anglo-American angle, however, a factor that made a sea-change in the understanding of Dostoevsky was the growing recognition of psychoanalysis and the hunt for the unconscious in literature. Freud himself considered *Brothers Karamazov* one of the keys to understanding his theories. In a 1928 essay, *Dostoevsky and Parricide*, Freud describes Dostoevsky as one of the great literary geniuses that sensed the paramount cultural and civilization role of the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1945: 1-8). The psychological reading of Fyodor Dostoevsky is also said to have influenced such contemporary American writers as J.D. Salinger, Joseph Heller, and Jack Kerouack. (Bloshteyn, 2007. 101) However this change of attitude has not reached Iran yet and I dare to assert that Allama Jafari's engagement based on a uneurocentric reading of Dostoevsky merits to be researched upon at a global scale as he has interpreted the Dostoevskian paradigm within the parameters of transcendent unity of humanity which could assist us in establishing a harmonious global world system based on reconciliation, just and peace.

### **Social Life and the Question of Maturity**

Events of the past four decades have challenged many of the fundamental beliefs, institutions, and values of modern culture--the culture of *progress*. Are science and technology really progressive and beneficial? Have they led to the enhancement of welfare, greater happiness, and moral improvement? Is the continued growth of material productivity possible, sustainable or even desirable? Are the institutions of progress viable?

More and more leading humanists, scientists, theologians, philosophers and social scientists question the validity of linear development and one is tempted to talk about

progress and its discontents a la Freud who spoke of civilization and its discontents. It is not hard to see the rising dissatisfactions which are discernible in various spheres from science to morals and politics, and the many problems created or left untouched by progress. In other words, one could conclude that the term no longer refers to “an inevitable sequence of improvements” but rather to “an aspiration and compelling obligation” (Almond et. al., 1982).

In other words, views concerning the progress of humanity are not consensual and one would dare to state that they are, indeed, contradictory. For instance, there are philosophers and thinkers who regard the birth of modern matrix as the sole redeemer of human subject while the denouncers consider the matrix of modern civilization as suicidal for humanity at large. Of course, there are some who blame one aspect of modernity such as technology while others who hold the reductionist worldview of mechanical science accountable for current catastrophic ecocidal global policies and mismanagements and still others who choose the path of apologetics by arguing that it is not modernism to be charged but those who attempt to manage modernity that are responsible for its shortcomings. At any rate, the question remains intact and that is the relation between modern social organization and the betterment of humanity in a qualitative fashion. To put it differently, is societal evolution a fact or a myth? Is the argument put forward by evolutionists accurate or inaccurate? There is no doubt that human society has changed much over the last centuries and this process of ‘modernization’ has profoundly affected the lives of individuals; now we live quite different lives from those forefathers lived only five generations ago. There is difference of opinion as to whether we live better now than before and consequently there is also disagreement as to whether we should continue modernizing or rather try to slow the process down. Quality-of-life in a society can be measured by how long and happy its inhabitants live. By using these indicators researchers assess whether societal modernization has made life better or worse. Firstly they examine findings of present day survey research. They start with a cross-sectional analysis of nations during a specific period and based on these data they argue that people live longer and happier in today’s most modern societies. Secondly they examine comparative trends in modern nations over some decades and find that happiness and longevity have increased in most cases. Thirdly they consider the long-term and review findings from historical anthropology, which show that we lived better in the early hunter-gatherer society than in the later agrarian society. Together based on these quantitative data they assume that societal evolution has worked out differently for the quality of human life, first negatively, in the change from a hunter-gatherer existence to agriculture, and next positively, in the more recent transformation from an agrarian to an industrial

society. Finally they conclude that we live now longer and happier than ever before. This positivistic approach which is based on an evolutionary philosophy of history seems to be at odd with Allama Jafari's reading who does not share the optimism of evolutionist social thinkers who take an instrumentalist approach to humanist questions. Allama Jafari's critical stance brought him closer to Dostoevsky's critical perspective on modern civilization where the latter argued that the modern civilization may be organizationally more advanced but as far as fundamental human ideals are concerned it is on a regressive curve. In other words,

... there is a colossal difference between modern civilization and its predecessors as it is wilder and possess more destructive instruments (Dostoevsky cited by Allama Jafari, 2008: 2/ 506).

Allama Jafari agrees with this view as the modern civilization has eroded two fundamental pillars of human existence which Dostoevsky deemed as necessary, i.e. 'belief in God' and 'immortality'. To put it differently, instrumental sophistication of human society could not compensate for the loss of essential ideals which in their absence, it would be difficult to envision a humane future for the human species. When Allama Jafari quotes Dostoevsky in the middle of his debates on philosophy of history it is undeniable that he shares the Dostoevskian rejection of Europe's culture and her philosophical movements which annihilated religion as a cultural force as well as the manual for self-actualization.

## **Reason and Intellect**

One the most perplexing issues within modern matrix are the question of reason and its probable epistemological distinction from intellect as a perceptual faculty. In other words, how distinguishable are reason and intellect within discursive paradigms of academic discourses? The brief answer is that the concept of 'intellect' has lost all its scholastic connotations and hence irrelevant within modernist discourses which are at odds with essential interpretations of reality, existence, and being. To put it otherwise, while the modernist interpretations of intellect are completely negative as far as the perceptual functions of this faculty is concerned, nevertheless a particular form of this concept has entered the imaginary landscape of modernity, i.e. *intellectual*—which in this new configuration does not bear any resemblance to its premodern/unmodern form of 'intellect'. The modern configuration is conceivable in an anthropocentric fashion while the unmodern/premodern concept refers to an epistemological possibility in going beyond the accidents by reaching to the nub of the essences which lie at the heart of ephemeral phenomena. This conflict between 'reason' and 'intellect'



is not unfamiliar within the context of *hekmat* in Iran and the world of Islam. Allama Jafari has pondered upon the probable conflicts between reason and intellect while commenting on Rumi who, in turn, has contemplated on the epistemological limits or functions of respective faculties of reason and intellect in a different parlance. The concepts used by Allama Jafari while commenting on Rumi should be accounted for as there are interesting dimensions in these uneurocentric concepts which could enable us to link the endeavors of Allama Jafari to the position of Dostoevsky which may, at first, seem very remote but, as a matter of fact, are deeply intertwined. The distinction between reason and intellect are conceptualized by Allama Jafari as the difference between ‘partial reason’ and ‘general reason’. He argues that what Rumi dismisses is not ‘general reason’ but ‘partial reason’ as when

... this partial reason aspires to act as an absolute arbiter then all its forces are directed at utilitarian purposes ... and its role is reduced to a simple actor at the disposal of egoistic self ... reason in this fashion is incessantly in desperate need ... it never feels the true sense of autonomy ... the partial reason covers its own cravings under various attractive disguises. Reason under this category is similar to the description provided by Dostoevsky (Allama Jafari, 2008: 7/ 231).

Allama Jafari finds a substantive resemblance between Rumi’s conception of ‘partial reason’ and Dostoevsky’s conception of ‘infantile reason’. He elaborates this point by relating an episode where the Russian philosopher describes the modalities of ‘infantile reason’, as

... a child who frequently gropes towards the bucket of jam ... and hides himself ... , [in other words, the infantile reason] acts like a sorcerer and is indeed unstable (Dostoevsky cited by Allama Jafari, 2008: 7/ 231).

In other words, Allama Jafari attempts to distinguish between formal rationality and substantive rationality in a *hekmat* parlance which needs to be elaborated where the global audience is more familiar with eurocentric modalities of debates and discourses. For instance, Allama Jafari talks about spitefulness of reason in a fashion which would be incomprehensible if one does not take into consideration the categorical distinction which he has made between ‘*Aql Ma’ash*’ (Reason in the sphere of *Oikos-Nomos*) and ‘*Aql Ma’ad*’ (*Nous*). He argues that

... human being is gifted with two kinds of reason; the first one is suited for managing the matters of the material world ... and it would be futile to recruit it as the mind’s eye for obtaining truth, elevated forms of reality, and transcendent values ...; the second form of reason is the faculty of the human mind which is [described in classical philosophy as] necessary for understanding what is true or real, [similar in meaning to intuition] (Allama Jafari, 2008: 7/ 231-232).

Allama Jafari by using Rumi's concept of 'partial reason' and comparing it with the Dostoevskian concept of 'infantile reason' has achieved many settled goals which are in congruent with his theory on transcendent unity of human culture. In other words, he has opened up a global stage for the hekmatic issues while linking them with the wisdom issues embedded in the literary paradigm of the Russian literary discourses, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, he has implicitly demonstrated that there is an ethereal unity among highly self-actualized human beings from different cultures and epochs which are disregarded in the mainstream academic discourses that are under the spells of sociological relativism. Of course, it would be of great significance if the students of comparative philosophy and social theory would inquire about the similarities and dissimilarities between Rumi, Dostoevsky and Allama Jafari on aforementioned issues in a thorough fashion as these kinds of research would enable us to surpass the current derisive political antagonisms which are pushing humanity towards mental ghettoization and sociopolitical segregation of the world community.

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## **A Plan for the Sociology of Religious Propagation**

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### **Abstract**

The sociology of religious propagation, as an important field of study in sociology, aims to recognize the social necessities of the processes of religious propagation, and to understand, analyze, and explicate the mutual effects of social variables and religious propagation. In the context of social interaction, there are three types of religious propagation: the agent of religious propagation is either an individual or an intermediary group, or religious propagation takes place at a macro social level. Also, religious propagation can be influenced by other variables of the social system. The present article seeks to theorize the idea of religious propagation in the context of social interaction, and present examples drawn from the Iranian context to open up a new horizon in the study of religious propagation.

**Keywords:** sociological analysis, religious propagation, social interaction systems, emergent effects.

### **Conceptual Plan of the Problem**

Sociology has been described as “primarily the science of social necessities”; it has been said that “new sociology, to a large extent, deals with the study and analysis of the effects of social variables on each other” (Boudon, 1383: 10). Religious propagation is defined as “the set of actions carried out with the aim of communicating religious messages” (Khandan, 1374: 15); it “paves the way for the masses to accept an idea or a faith and support it, and even encourages them to take specific measures” (Biro, 1379: 306). The main goal of the sociology of religious propagation, then, is the recognition of social necessities in the processes of religious propagation, and the understanding, analysis and explication of the mutual effects of social variables and religious propagation. Clearly, this approach to the propagation of religion is sociological; however, psychology and social psychology may be of assistance in understanding different analyses of the religious propagation.

When religious propagation is considered in terms of social interaction (social action + social reaction), its implementation in the social domain can be one of three types: the agent of religious propagation is either an individual, or an intermediary group, or religious propagation is carried out at a macro social level. Religious propagation can be affected by other variables at these three levels. The social domains in which religious propagation or other social variables take place are described in the table below. Clearly the final product of the propagation of religion in any given temporal and spatial situation is the result of the systems of social interaction in this domain.

	individual	group	society
individual	*	*	*
group	*	*	*
society	*	*	*

Identifying the variables and social factors that affect the quality of religious propagation and analyzing these causes and their relationships with religious propagation are the primary goals of a sociologist who studies religious propagation. It is obvious that in different temporal and spatial situations, and in the presence or absence of other variables, these factors act differently. A given factor or variable might not necessarily always bring about the same effect; a factor may bring about no effect at all in a particular situation, because of the presence of other factors. For example, a missionary who has lived in a neighborhood for a long time and has been able to generate confidence among the residents through proper conduct and friendship can have more influence on his audience and make them accept many of his teachings. However, the same person might have little effect on an audience that does not know him, and whose trust and confidence he has not yet attained. Needless to say, various factors could be used by our hypothetical missionary in successfully convincing and influencing his audience.

### **Religious Propagation and Interaction Systems**

For many sociologists, social facts such as religious propagation (when considered from a social perspective and as a sociological phenomenon) are made up of the systems of interactions and relationships among actors, which are established by social institutions. Although great importance is attached to social constructs in this approach, effort is made to explicate the role of individual actions in changing social constructs. In fact, this kind of sociology seeks to develop special models to explain social facts, and to demonstrate basic mechanisms. What is meant by “model” here is “the recreation of the

state of competition among several variables and the study of the changes in behavior resulting from the changes in the situation of competition” (ibid: 15). Further, “one major goal of this kind of sociology is the analysis of the complex relationships is the construction of interaction system which is determined by social institutions, expectations and feelings and the actions of the social actors” (Boudon, 1383: 19).

The social actions in the three aforesaid levels of analysis are not comprehensible except with reference to the social context in which it takes place—that is, with reference to the construct of the interaction systems in which they are involved. For a sociologist who studies religious propagation, understanding the actions of missionaries, propagation organizations, and macro variables, such as social institutions, is as important as knowing the interaction system in which propagation takes place.<sup>1</sup>

This does not mean that the results of propagative action depend only on the interaction systems in which they take place; each propagation actor, depending on his personal characteristics, his mentality, and his information about his environment, tries to make the best possible decisions about his propagation activities. However, the sociologist who seeks to analyze religious propagation considers it permissible to examine the nature and quality of the effects of different factors in the propagative interaction system on the actions of social actors in the field of propagation. In the previous example, the causal relation is that the audience’s confidence in the missionary affects the effectiveness of the message, and the degree to which the audience is influenced by the missionary; this causal relation can be illustrated as follows:

Audience’s confidence in the missionary → the effectiveness of the message

There is a direct relationship between the effectiveness of the message and the peoples’ confidence in the missionary; in other words, the more confidence the people have in the missionary, the more effective his message will be, and vice versa. In other words, the credibility of the speaker in the eyes of the audience can cause the message to be accepted or rejected. For the same reason, audiences, at times, pay little attention to the content and analysis of the message; they are largely influenced by the speaker, and base their analysis on the credibility of the speaker rather than on the content of the message. It can, then, be said that there is a direct relationship between the trustworthiness and credibility of the propagation source, and the goal of establishing a relationship with the audience (Hakimara, 1384: 268). The existence of this kind of causal relation does not contradict the principles of independence and the free will of the social actor, because the causal relation can be acceptable only when it interprets the behavior of the actor as an attempt to attain a certain goal. “In other words, the causal relations among the parameters of the interaction system and the behavior of the

actors are not reasonable unless we regard them as the result of the purposeful behavior of independent actors” (Boudon, 1383: 24).

### **The Goal of Sociology of Religious Propagation**

As this discussion makes clear, a sociological analysis of religious propagation aims to identify the features of the interaction system that influence propagative actions at the three levels of analysis discussed earlier. Since these features incorporate detailed facts, statistical patterns, and specific relationships, they are explicable. It should be noted that the logical factor of analysis in the sociology of social actor propagation acts in the context of compulsions and social necessities which are formed according to temporal and spatial circumstances and it does not carry out its propagation activity in a normative and institutional vacuum. Although certain factors are imposed on social actor as social necessities, his conduct is not merely the result of these compulsions, because social compulsions are among the factors that make social actions comprehensible.

If we accept that sociological analyses are evolutionary and have a close relationship with comprehension and explication, when we consider sociologists’ studies and theories, we realize that a great deal of research is carried out through defining problems. Scientific curiosity in a field of study gradually leads to the development of theories and explicative models that are unattainable at the preliminary stages of research. It seems to be too soon to decide when and how scientific attempts to understand and explicate these issues transform into a specific epistemic field for religious propagation and the development of theories about it; however, there are signs that this process has begun.

In the explication of interaction systems in the context of religious propagation, we face certain social factors. These either result from the concept of a functional system as a set of influential roles that complement each other, or from the concept of the interdependence of systems as a set of social interactions that result in a specific situation; an analysis of the nature and type of these interactions is the goal of the sociology of religious propagation. An important point in the study of the interdependence of systems is that social actors, both at an individual and macro level of analysis, carry out actions that eventually lead to the formation of a specific state of collective phenomena that was not exactly intended by the actors.

In fact, the accumulated unexpected results of the social phenomenon, which Boudon calls the emergent effects, are produced through the interdependence of factors in the system; they are not achieved as a result of the goals set by social actors. The influential elements are not organized *per se*.

When public sentiment demonstrates that the methods for the religious socialization of individuals are inefficacious, all influential actors encounter problems in interpreting their roles correctly. Innovative conduct on the part of relevant actors can aggravate or ameliorate the situation; this situation may be likened to the moment at which traffic lights fail to function and drivers face problems in interpreting their roles correctly. Here, the behavior of each driver can worsen the traffic jam – an unfavorable emergent result which each of them intends to avoid. In fact, the transition from an unorganized situation and system to an organized situation depends on the decision of the majority of the social actors to detect the unfavorable emergent effects and counteract them. As highlighted before, interdependent systems and social actors are not necessarily situated at the macro sociological level (in terms of the whole society); they can, however, be observed at intermediary levels, social groups, or propagation institutions. They can even be observed in the individual behavior of the missionaries. However, it seems that these levels do not have the same degree of effectiveness; the intermediary and macro interdependent systems are more influential in the eventual situation of the religious propagation and the achievement the intended outcome in any environment or society. “Whenever the external conditions to which an organizational system is exposed change substantially, the appropriate adjustment can be difficult to identify as the redefinition of roles is very likely to come up against a double obstacle: for the individual the redefinition of his role can involve considerable costs; for the system, there can be a period of latency. This situation can be conveniently described using Durkheim’s notion of anomie” (Boudon and Bourricaud, 1385: 710).

The emergent effects discussed above can reveal themselves in social phenomena and religious propagation in different ways; some appear to intensify and amplify effects, and some reveal themselves as the reverse of what was intended by the actors. Some missionaries might refrain from bringing up certain issues, or they might ignore these issues for personal reasons. However, when the audience realizes this sensitivity, they become more curious about these issues, and may attempt to learn more about them.

Some other emergent effects reveal themselves in the forms of contrasts. For instance, the kind of issues that are promoted by missionaries in deprived rural areas and the emphasis on equality among people result in an increase in urban migration and suburban expansion and related problems.

Some emergent effects of religious propagation appear as unintended results in the form of social innovation and novel phenomena. For example, an increase in religious doubts in particular eras has caused modifications in propagation methods; new methods have been designed to identify and resolve doubts and questions, and to utilize modern, up-to-date technologies.

Some interdependence systems result in deprivation and disappointment, so that actors become entangled in a social trap and are led to act in a way that brings about unfavorable results and regret. For instance, the propagation organizations, having been influenced by milieus in which university degrees are of great importance, encourage clergymen and missionaries to receive university degrees in order to enhance their social status. Having received such degrees, which are in general valuable, the clergymen and missionaries find more opportunities to work with non-propagative institutes, such as cultural institutes and centers. Consequently, propagation organizations experience a shortage of talented and highly qualified missionaries. Organizations, as the intermediary actors of religious propagation, are forced to rely once again on their traditional methods, which may lead to pessimism about science and new methods. In this example, part of the construct of the interdependent system experiences disappointment and only a limited number of the missionaries may be satisfied with the situation; however, finding more examples of the disappointments that occur in different layers of the interdependent system does not seem to be difficult.

Identifying and understanding independence systems can play an important role in the analysis of the sociology of religious propagation, because, as discussed earlier, these systems generally bring about emergent effects, unawareness of which prevents the attainment of the objectives that the social actors try to fulfill in the propagation of religion. In a Durkheimian analysis of social phenomena, the actions of social actors have the power to impose themselves on individuals, but it seems that when the functions of the influential variables are identified and well understood, these non-material powers turn out to be no more than a simple projection of interdependent constructs.

It may, then, be concluded that these constructs cannot be reduced to individual actions, and other layers of social actions should also be taken into consideration in understanding function of these constructs. Although historical aspects are of great importance in the study of these interdependent constructs, it is sociology that can best contribute to an understanding of the process involved in these constructs. The sociological analyses of the general characteristics of structures of the interdependent systems can bring the unintended outcomes of the interaction systems under control, and can aid in the achievement of the intended goals.

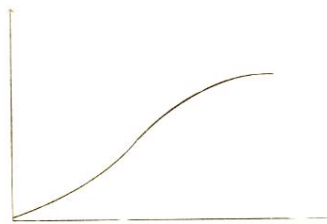
### **Social Changes and the Sociology of Religious Propagation**

In recent decades, sociological analyses, instead of predicting changes over the long term, have tried to understand the logic of changes and transformations in the



interaction systems in a limited way, by taking into consideration the data available for sociologists. In other words, the analysis of the changes in macro sociology is based, to a large extent, on the level of the analysis of individual actors in the interdependent systems (Boudon, 1383: 143).

Swedish sociologist Hagerstrand's model of the diffusion process is provided here as an example.<sup>2</sup> In this model, the diffusion of an innovation is very slow at first. Then it speeds up, before slowing down gradually:



In the last few decades, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, religious propagation grew significantly in the mass media. This growth was in part a response to families' need for the media as a means for the socialization of children. When face-to-face propagation grows in importance, and the limitations of the media (in convincing the audience and producing religious faith in individuals) are realized, the media plays a less important role in providing people with religious teachings. "The most important achievements of new means of communication for propagation have been the speed and the continuity of the propagated messages and their universality for the audience, and also the presence of new frameworks for expressing and instilling a specific subject" (Motamednejad, 1355: 19). What is experienced in this process can be conceived as the emergent effect of the interdependent system of religious propagation in Iranian society in the last three decades. These characteristics of the system have not been derived from the will and resolution of those that constitute the interdependent system, such as families, mass media, missionaries, cultural policy makers, and so on. In other words, the actors involved in this interdependent system did not intend to decrease the popularity of the mass media as a means of religious propagation. Yet, changes in the process have occurred as a result of the decisions made by these social actors.

A sociological analysis of this process reveals that in the previous decade we witnessed an emergent effect in the interdependent system that was the result of the accumulation of individual and collective actions, and had nothing to do with the intentions of the actors. To analyze the explication of the changes and transformations, sociologists use the following elements: the first element is the interdependent system, which is the central element of analysis and includes all social actors. The second is a

group of variables that can be included in this category in terms of their spatial and temporal aspects; finally, the output and the products of the interaction system constitute the third element of this process. Clearly, what is achieved in these processes will to some extent explicate the state of changes, and will be applicable to other cases depending on their similarities and differences.

The cumulative process is a kind of social process in which the output of the interaction system has recursive effects on the interaction system itself. Recurrence and effectiveness are repetitive and constant at times; and sometimes they are fluctuating. In other words, the reordering of the interaction system (after receiving the effects of the output) has a fluctuating trend; “generally any social system prefers to move at a logical speed and transmute the changes in a section by making adjustments in their other sections” (Tim Delaney, 1387: 369).

Fluctuating processes usually occur when social actors implement their decisions in uncertain situations. Actors tend to apply the information that is valid in the present to the future. Some social actors believe that the present will be reproduced in the future; consequently, when the same mechanism is repeated, the future of tomorrow turns into the present of today and there will be a fluctuating process (ibid: 189).

In certain situations, society becomes involved in specific issues of propagation. The population structure of Iran has experienced surges in particular eras because of changes in the birth rate. Depending on the stage at which this growth occurred, specific needs can be identified. When this surge occurs in the population of teenagers and youth, cultural and religious needs arise, some of which must be addressed by religion. Naturally, the organization for religious propagation requires missionaries who are able to provide answers to individuals’ questions about religious issues both in their childhood and in their youth. Clearly, establishing a successful relationship with this spectrum of society requires special skills, which can only be acquired through training. Therefore, the authorities and policymakers of the propagation organizations try to design special educational courses, recruit missionaries, and train them. If we suppose that this process takes three to four years, the aforesaid teenage population will by then have turned into a young adult population; the issues relevant to them will have changed completely. As a result, there will be a large number of missionaries whose skills are no longer relevant, because the decisions for the future were based on the information and knowledge of the present. In an ideal situation, organizations address such needs through prudent management and farsightedness.

## **Conclusion**

A set of processes results in changes in the interaction system, which can be directed

toward specific ends only when they are properly controlled and analyzed. Regarding the endogenous or exogenous quality of these changes and transformations, the endogenous/exogenous change binary should be discussed as a whole, because an outward transformation that is influenced by external factors always results in a chain of somewhat complicated outcomes that, in turn, bring about inward changes. Therefore, it can be said that changes in social phenomena, based on their nature, can be more or less influenced by inward or outward factors, under certain circumstances.

If we consider the rapid growth of the mass media in the last few decades and the removal of religious obstacles in using the mass media in Iran as exogenous, the changes in traditional propagation and the methods of face-to-face propagation can be regarded as changes inside the religious propagation system. It should be noted that paying attention to social phenomena and religious propagation is inadequate when it does not result in the description and explication of these phenomena. Descriptive studies further the development of sociology because they reveal the unknown signs of an important issue. These studies, even when conducted in a limited way, can contribute to the clarification of the phenomena that need to be understood in order to allow the explication of some other phenomena. For example, the results of surveys, which are mostly conducted for simple descriptive purposes, can be used in the formulation of important hypotheses, and in the explication of certain phenomena. Although descriptive studies of different propagation aspects have not been substantial,<sup>3</sup> some hypotheses can be proved or rejected using secondary analyses of the descriptive data—this path can lead us to the explication of phenomena. In sociology when we talk about the explication of a phenomenon, we mean that there is a kind of consistency between a set of observations of one phenomenon and those of another. Although most of the methods for the observation and confirmation of the consistency between these phenomena are statistical and quantitative, qualitative observations can also result in the explication of phenomena.

It should be highlighted here that by employing popular methods and tools in sociology, and by adopting new analytical viewpoints in religious propagation, religious teachings can be made more effective and can be more carefully designed to reflect the requirements of a particular context.

## Note

1. Obviously, certain aspects of a social context may be similar to other environments of interaction and systems of relationships; other aspects may be more specific or particular.
2. For more information about this model → *The Logic of Social Action*, p. 144.
3. For more information → *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions*, 1999.

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## **Ibn Khaldun and Indigenous Sociology**

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### **Abstract**

One way to indigenize the humanities is to refer to the legacy of knowledge from the era when westernization was not widespread and western theories had not yet dominated the humanities. Other than through the interpretation and analysis of the Book of God and the *sunnah* (the Qur'an and the practice of Prophet Muhammad), we can indigenize the humanities through a careful study of the ideas of Muslim thinkers. Ibn Khaldun is one of the prominent Muslim figures in sociology, whose ideas open up new possibilities for theorization in sociology. In the present article, some concepts of great descriptive and explanatory importance in modern sociology are traced to the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, and it is demonstrated that some of his ideas were the forerunners of important sociological concepts. The nature of his arguments and his analytical rigor are revealed through drawing comparisons with Western examples.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun, Social Theory, Humanities, Alternative Sociology, Western Sociology.

### **Introduction**

Abu Zayd Abdurrahman bin Mohammad, known as Ibn Khaldun, is a 14<sup>th</sup> century Muslim thinker who, as many Western sociologists have acknowledged, is the first social scholar to have studied the societies of his time in an organized scientific way. The contemporary American sociologist George Ritzer writes “there is a tendency to think of sociology as exclusively a comparatively modern, Western phenomenon. In fact, however, scholars were doing sociology long ago and in other parts of the world. One example is Abdel Rahman Ibn-Khaldun” (Ritzer, 1374: 8).

Although such an acknowledgment has more or less been made, Ibn Khaldun's analytical rigour in developing key sociological issues has not been compared with that of his modern counterparts, and the sociological concepts discussed by Ibn Khaldun have not yet been fully expounded. In his book, generally known as

*Muqaddimah (The Introduction)*, Ibn Khaldun deals with issues such as the city, urbanization, and the rise and decline of states. He discusses concepts such as *umran* (community) and *asabiyya* (social cohesion) using the cause and effect relationship and the scientific descriptive-explanatory methodology.

In *The Introduction*, Ibn Khaldun outlines his valuable research on the city and the principles for its establishment. He also puts forward new ideas about the concepts of the city and urbanization. He distinguishes communities of nomads from urban dwellers. *Umran* is equivalent to modern concepts such as community and society, and *asabiyyah* can be defined as a deep social relationship. These concepts are keys to social theories. Topics such as the state, the city, the village, *badiyah* (desert), *asabiyyah*, evolution, growth and decline of civilizations, culture, economy, agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, art, occupation, crafts, the pathologies of urban life, welfare and luxury (which are also discussed in modern sociology) constitute a major part of Ibn Khaldun's *Ilm al-umran* (the science of the community). It should be noted that, although the ideas and theories of Ibn Khaldun belong to 14<sup>th</sup> century North Africa, because of his scientific way of thinking and the theoretical framework of his thought, his ideas have been of considerable importance in other eras and places.

### **The Motivation for Social Analysis**

Modern sociology came into being when social thinkers tried to explore the deep social changes occurring in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, after the political revolutions of that era and the Industrial Revolution. As a result of these changes, numerous issues confronted European societies. The first sociologists of modern times were those who tried to understand, explain, and resolve the new problems of society (Ritzer, 1374: 5-11). Ibn Khaldun witnessed the decline of Islamic civilization, and was motivated to study and explain this gradual decline: "In the middle of the present century -- 8<sup>th</sup> century (AH) -- ... states have become feeble and old and are arriving at their closing stage... therefore, somebody is needed to describe different countries and races and communities" (Ibn Khaldun, 1369: 60).

### **The Application of the Scientific Method**

While experiential methodologies were not common at the time, Ibn Khaldun relied on observation and comparison for the analysis of historical data; these are among the methods utilized by contemporary historical sociologists. He, for instance, uses phrases such as "this can be observed in each tribe and experience shows that ..." to

explain the differences between the nomads, farmers and urban dwellers (ibid: 161). Similarly, he writes, “if we study this issue through induction, we will find numerous examples of what we have just discussed, among the societies before us” (ibid: 275).

### **The Methodology for the Analysis of Social Phenomenon**

Lay people generally tend to study and analyze social phenomena from a psychological point of view; in other words, they try to find individual, psychological causes for social issues. However, sociology could assert its independence as a scientific discipline only when it managed to distinguish between psychological causes and social causes. For example, Durkheim demonstrated that although suicide has numerous psychological causes, its social causes can be identified only when we consider it not as an individual issue but as a social one—that is, when we consider suicide statistics and the changes in them in different societies and over different periods of time. As will be discussed in the following sections, in explaining the formation of Bedouin communities, the establishment of states, and the development of urbanization, Ibn Khaldun highlighted factors such as earning a reasonable livelihood, the need for government, *asabiyyah*, and the development of sciences and crafts. However, he did not discuss the motivations and objectives of individuals in his explication of these issues.

### **Modern Sociological Concepts in the Work of Ibn Khaldun**

#### **Human Community, Society, and Sociology**

Durkheim established sociology as an academic discipline in order to demonstrate that society is an independent subject for study, has its own causes and consequences, and cannot be reduced to a group of individuals, or studied psychologically. Ibn Khaldun held the same opinion about society. In his discussion of *umran*, which he regarded as a distinguishing feature of human beings as distinct from animals, he writes, “another distinguishing feature of human beings is *umran*, that is to say, the ability to live together and dwell in cities, tents or villages, to become habituated to communities and groups and fulfill the needs of each other ... *umran* sometimes takes the form of nomadic life... and at times it takes the form of urban life... and communities of each of these social forms experience changes and evolution” (ibid: 75). He also discusses the nature and essence of each community, and argues that the study of the essential features of society is a means of examining the accounts of historians: “examples of such accounts (with unusual contents) are numerous, and to refine them we need to understand the nature of community” (ibid. 68). As Durkheim developed the discipline of sociology as distinct from the concept of society, Ibn Khaldun developed the

science of *umran*: “it seems that this is an independent field of knowledge, because its subject is the human *umran* and human community, and also it involves issues with qualities and features connected with the nature and essence of *umran*” (ibid: 69).

## Urbanism

An important point highlighted by Ibn Khaldun in his discussion of *umran* is the difference between *umran badawi* and *umran hadari*, or civilization. There are two important words in *Muqaddimah* that have different meanings: *umran* and *hadarat*. According to Ibn Khaldun, *umran* is the human community or the social life of human beings. Ibn Khaldun considers *umran* to be of two kinds: *umran badawi*, and *umran hadari*. According to him, *umran badawi* is a style of living, or a way of spending one’s life. Among the characteristics of *umran badawi* are the relative simplicity of life, and the satisfaction of the simplest and most essential needs. This simplicity in social life brings about certain physical and moral privileges. The term *hadari* (civilization) derives from *hidarah*, which refers to *hadar* (city and city accommodation). Ibn Khaldun employs this term as an equivalent for urbanization—that is to say, getting used to the customs of cities, accepting urban life, and becoming accustomed to luxury. Other derivatives of this word are *hadari* (urban), *haadirat* (big city), and *hudur* (city) (Mehdi, 1373: 249-250; Maluf, 1992: 139).

## Solidarity

The concept of solidarity appears repeatedly in modern sociology. Durkheim considers solidarity to be a requisite for social existence (Aron, 1364: 345). He divides solidarity into mechanical and organic, and states that this division serves as the criterion for differentiating between traditional and modern societies. Mechanical solidarity in traditional societies is based on the similarity of the population, the presence of a strong collective conscience, and a feeling of unity among the people; however, the organic solidarity of the modern individualist society is based on the interdependence of the specialized components of a differentiated system with a complicated division of labor. In his early work, Durkheim held that, due to their organic interdependence, modern societies need fewer common beliefs to connect their members together. But later he modified this view, and highlighted the fact that even developed organic societies need a common faith or a collective conscience to survive; once again, a universal system of common beliefs is necessary for solidarity (Cosser, 1372: 190-196). In other words, in the final period of his academic life, Durkheim came to the conclusion that organic solidarity is not real solidarity, and cannot be that which



connects individuals and creates a feeling of unity among them. Therefore, solidarity, in practice, is particular to traditional societies.

The role of *Asabiyyah* in the ideas of Ibn Khaldun is similar to the idea of solidarity in modern sociology. In *Muqqadimah*, *asabiyyah* denotes a deep social relationship which unifies individuals in a society and makes them consider others as themselves: “*Asabiyyah* is fulfilled through blood relations and the bonds between families, or a similar way” (Ibn Khaldun: 1369: 242); “issues such as alliance and allegiance are also the same... because the ethnic commitment of each person to his alliance is due to the bond he feels inside” (ibid: 243).

Unlike Durkheim, Ibn Khaldun always considered *asabiyyah* and solidarity to be specific to communities of Bedouins. He believed that living in cities, having access to urban facilities and “luxuries and extravagant lifestyles and habits, weakens *asabiyyah*” (ibid: 268).

## Function and Functional Explanations

Ibn Khaldun did not use a specific term for the concept of function; however, in his arguments he took social functions into consideration and explained different phenomena through a discussion of their functions. This means that he was well aware that certain social phenomena play an important role in maintaining order in a society, contribute to its survival, and satisfy important needs. For example, according to him, the function of cooperation and collaboration in society is to provide humans with a livelihood: “human beings have to cooperate with each other, and they cannot secure a livelihood unless they ensure cooperation and collaboration” (ibid: 78).

Also, according to Ibn Khaldun, the establishment of cities can fulfill two needs: “whenever some tribes succeed in establishing a state, they move toward big cities, because when tribes and Bedouins set up a monarchy and gain control over the country, two things make them dominate big cities: first, the motives that monarchy and statesmanship create for them, such as opulence, living a sedentary life and overcoming the drawbacks of Bedouin life; second, the dangers that insurgents and rebels might cause to the state. Because if the ruler does not bring the nearby cities under control, they will be turned into safe havens for insurgents, and those who intend to revolt against and overthrow the ruler try to bring these cities under control and use them as a stronghold to defeat the ruler...overcoming a large city is very difficult... and if there is not a large city nearby belonging to the allied tribes, such a city has to be established for two purposes: first, to complete the community and resolve the problems of nomadic life, and second, to create an obstacle for those who intend to revolt and disobey...” (Ibid: 676-677).

## Culture

Culture is another important concept in modern sociology; its growing importance can be seen in the popularity of sub-disciplines such as cultural sociology and cultural studies. In sociology, culture is defined as a style of living, or a connected set of obligatory methods of action, perception, and conception which is common to a large number of people, and turns them into a specific and distinct group (Rocher, 1367: 123). One of the defining characteristics of culture is the obligation it instills inside human beings. Ibn Khaldun highlights the internal controlling role of culture: “man is shaped through his habits and customs, not his nature and essence, and customs and rites turn into habits when he gets habituated to them, and finally these habits take the place of his nature and essence; if we examine people closely, we will find true examples of this” (Ibn Khaldun, 1369: 236).

## Social Typology

Durkheim considered the establishment of typical social forms and their classification as among the most important duties of sociology. This contrasts with the viewpoint of the nominalists, who negate any common aspect among human communities. It also differs from the realists’ extreme position of attributing the realities of all communities to human nature. Durkheim maintains that, first, communities should be classified based on the degree of their integration, and the community that is simple should be taken as the basis for classification. Next, different communities may be identified inside these classes, based on whether the sections of society are fully integrated or not (Durkheim, 1368: 101-111).

A similar classification and typology can be found in Ibn Khaldun’s works. He identifies two basic types of communities: according to him, communities are either *umran badawi* or *umran hadari*. The main criterion for their differentiation is the contentment or discontentment of the members of the community with the basic needs of life; in other words, the kinds of needs of the community, and the way they are satisfied. These two kinds of communities are the sources of many economic, political and cultural differences. According to Ibn Khaldun, the original type of community is represented by the Bedouins; urbanization, which is accompanied by the development of human needs, comes about after that. “The Bedouins’ way of life is the basis and cradle of society and civilization, and the cities and urban communities originate from the Bedouin communities...the Bedouins are content with the basic needs of life...but in the life of the city dwellers, there are luxurious things and needs, other than the basic needs of life... the nomadic

life is prior to urban life, because the primary desires of man are the necessities, and these desires turn into luxury and perfection when the necessities of life are fulfilled” (Ibn Khaldun, 1369: 229-230).

### **Sociology of Religion**

A significant point about Ibn Khaldun’s work is that, at the time when religious ideas were discussed only through religious approaches and using religious sources (such as *kalam* and *fiqh*), he applied non-religious, sociological approaches to religion. He took religion into consideration as a social institution. In other words, to study the social effects of religion, Ibn Khaldun considered the external realities of religion (popular customs and beliefs), and discussed the social functions of religion, the changes in a religion’s institutions, and the outcomes of such changes: “invitation to religion adds rigor to *asabiyyah*, which is among the major components of the state...religious ritual eliminates vying and jealousy among the authorities of *asabiyyah*, and draws the attention of people to God and truth. Therefore, when a group gains awareness and insight, no power can resist it... and it should be noted that when religious rituals change and perish...things are reversed, and then the domination should be assessed with regard to *asabiyyah*, and religion should be disregarded”(ibid: 302-303).

### **The Relationship between the Development and Social Division of Labor**

The relationship between underdevelopment and the simple sexual division of labor, and the connection between development and the complicated social division of labor, are among the sociological concepts first discussed thoroughly by Durkheim in his *Division of Labor in Society*. Ibn Khaldun was familiar with these concepts and had already discussed them: “when the community grows and the population of the city increases, the tools and instruments increase in the city as a result of the development of crafts and craftsmen, and the city reaches its final stage and attains perfection” (Ibid: 711). “It should be noted that when communities become larger and different nations dwell on a land and the population grows, the condition of people’s lives improves and more wealth is accumulated, and big states and countries are established; this is due to the growth of labor... and the development of *umran*, as a result of the development of labor, will produce considerable benefits” (ibid: 722-725). “Some city dwellers get involved in crafts to earn a living, and some get engaged in trade. The crafts and professions of the city dwellers are more productive, and improve welfare better than those of the nomads” (ibid: 227).

## Conclusion

This discussion has addressed some of the most important sociological concepts in Ibn Khaldun's *Muqqadimah*. A close study of his ideas shows that the relative ignorance of Ibn Khaldun and his marginality in modern sociological circles is due in part to the dominance of western sociological methodologies. Many of the sociological ideas that are of great importance in contemporary social analysis are also found in Ibn Khaldun's work, and were used in his descriptions and explanations of the society in which he lived. Therefore, it is fitting that the ideas of Ibn Khaldun should be studied along with those of western thinkers. Also, a study of the ideas of a great thinker such as Ibn Khaldun assures non-western and Muslim thinkers that they can rely on existing non-western sources of knowledge to describe and explicate the issues relevant to their societies. The important point is the possibility of conducting indigenous sociological research on Muslim societies, without having to rely on western ideas. *Muqqadimah* shows that there is considerable potential in the ideas of Ibn Khaldun for further indigenous theorization. For example, *asabiyyah*, as an important concept developed by Ibn Khaldun, is of great importance in social analyses. Ibn Khaldun's descriptions and analyses of urban and non-urban features are still applicable. And his description of the constitutive elements of societies, or the reasons for the decline of a society, can be used as the basis for the development of a sociology that is compatible with modern Muslim societies.

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## Book Review

**Mohammad Amir Nouri et al, *Khums: Challenges and Solutions*, Mashhad: Boustan-e Ketab, 2005. 784 Pages**

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Tax is levied in different financial systems in order to meet public expenditure, and promote infrastructural investments and the redistribution of facilities and revenues. Government spending and large-scale national investments are also intended to improve the welfare of people, especially that of the underprivileged people. Most of the investments in different sectors are aimed at redistributing revenues and improving the quality of life. In Islamic financial system, numerous resources have been predicted to fulfill the same objectives and promote justice and equality in social welfare. This book is a comprehensive study of *khums* and the issues and challenges concerning its role in modern societies. Islam's instructions to pay *zakat* (Islamic tax), *khums*, *kharaj* (tribute) and *sadaqah* (voluntary almsgiving), teachings such as impermissibility of *riba* (usury), *israf* (wastefulness) and *tabzir* (wastage) and *ihtikar* (hoarding of goods), and recommendations to moderation and observing the rights of neighbors, are among important issues referred to in this book as means for fulfilling justice and social welfare. Decreasing class conflicts, which is a principle of Islamic justice, is of a much greater importance than the redistribution of revenues in the contemporary economical systems.

Justice is a fundamental theological and practical criterion in Islam. Verse 5:8 of the Qur'an reads "Be just: that is next to piety", and Prophet Muhammad says "justice is the balance of Allah on the earth" (Al-Nuri al-Tabarsi, p.317). Therefore, in the analysis of financial resources and uses from the viewpoint of Islam, "justice" is regarded as a strategic objective.

*Khums*, which is thoroughly discussed in this book, is one of the most important financial resources in Islamic system and Shi'a jurisprudence; therefore, its different aspects are studied in order to clarify its role in the fulfillment of economic justice. The

present study is composed of two theoretical and practical parts. In the first part, the reasons and challenges concerning the resources and uses of *khums* are discussed, in order to examine the ideas of *fuqaha* (experts in *fiqh*) about *khums*, using approaches and methods of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). In the second part the results of a research about the same issue are discussed.

The main questions and issues addressed in this study, using *fiqh* and economic resources and questionnaires (field research), are as follows:

- Resources and challenges of *khums*.
- The reasons for agreement or disagreement with *khums* in the time of *ghaybah* (Occultation).
- Can *khums* be regarded as a financial resource for the state? Can it be introduced in form of Islamic tax, or is it exclusive to specific groups?
- Problems of the traditional distribution system of *khums* and the development of a new solution.
- Can *khums* compete with income tax in terms of revenue totals?

What is the role of *khums* in economy and redistribution of revenues?

A field research was carried out to examine the function of *khums* and the possibility of its replacing income tax. The sampling was conducted in Mashhad, and the questionnaires were prepared using the survey methodology, and analyzed through statistical methodology.

In this phase, literacy and income level of *khums*-payers were determined through scientific methods, so that the following basic questions could be answered: is there a significant relationship between the theory and the function of *khums*? Are the *khums*-payers from the high-income groups of the society? Can the distribution of income be improved and social justice fulfilled, even if there is no significant relationship between paying *khums* and income?

This book is written in seven sections:

Section One: *Khums* and its Historical Evolution. In this part the authors have tried to discuss theories and ideas concerning the resources and uses of *khums* both in era of *A'immah* and during *ghaybah*.

Section Two: The Main Resources of *khums* and Some Challenges. This section includes discussions on the *khums* on *ghanimah* (booty), *khums* on mines, *khums* on interest, and the overlaps between *khums*, *anfāl* (spoils) and *ibahah* (permissibility). In addition to discussions on the resources of *khums* and ideas for and against it using the Qur'an and *riwayah* (narrations), some issues such as the overlaps between *khums* and *anfāl*, and the *ibahah* of *khums* for the Shi'a, have been addressed.

Section Three: The Philosophy of Tashri' (jurisprudence) and the Status of *Khums*

in Islam. The distribution of *khums*, the viewpoints of Shiite *fuqaha* in this regard, the views of the Sunnis about tax, and discussions about this issue with respects to social justice, comprise the main body of this section.

Section Four: Methods for Collecting Tax in Islamic Economics. This section discusses methods for collecting *khums* in the era of the *A'imma* and during *ghaybah*; it also deals with the advantages of Islamic tax system in terms of collecting taxes.

Section Five: *Khums* and its Effects on Some Economic Policies and Variables. In this section, written in 5 parts, the principles of contemporary tax system are discussed, and a comparison is made between *khums*, as Islamic tax, and the popular tax system, with respect to justice indices and economic efficiency and stability.

Section Six: Estimation of *khums* in Comparison with Income Tax. The important factors influencing *khums* are studied in this section, as a part of the field research. Also the estimated amount of actual and potential *khums* is compared with income tax, and the possibility of replacing tax with *khums* is examined. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that *khums* plays a substantial role in promoting equality and social justice.

Section Seven: Conclusion and Suggestions. In this part, the drawbacks and limitations of the plan are discussed and some suggestions are made about how to improve the methods of promoting and fulfilling justice.

This book, selected as the best book of the year in the field of research on religion and culture in Iran in 2005, sheds light on Islamic economic strategy, and therefore, is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in Islamic economics. The plan was executed by Mohammad Amir Noori, in collaboration with Abdolhakim Zia, Ahmad Rasekh and Mohsen Mirsondosi, as research associates.

**M.B. Akhouni & A.N. Ayazi, *Social Concepts in the Qur'an (on the Basis of Tafsir-e Rahnama)*, Mashhad: Daftar-e Tablighat-e Eslami, 1992. Three Volumes 2100 Pages**

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Whether some sociological statements can be extracted or inferred from the *Qur'an*, in order to produce theories based on them, is the fundamental question raised and

addressed by the authors of the book. In this study, which took ten years to finish, about ten thousand sociological statements were extracted from the Qur'anic teachings, using four interpretations of the *Qur'an*.

For this purpose, first the Qur'anic verses dealing with social and cultural issues were identified through an accurate understanding of the verses and their respective interpretations in *Tafsir-e Rahnama*, and relevant discussions in other interpretations of the *Qur'an*, such as *Partovi az Qur'an*, *Tafsir al-Mizan*, *Tafsir Nemooneh* and *Majma' al-Bayan*. Then the comments in *Tafsir-e Rahnama* and the discussions in other interpretations of the *Qur'an* were analyzed and divided into primary and secondary concepts. Identifying primary and secondary concepts was a relatively easy task; however, it was quite difficult to identify domains in which these concepts could pave the way for the development of new possibilities. In cases where it was not clear whether these domains, backgrounds and situations were social or cultural, subjective or objective, and structural or not, the background and the preceding and following verses were taken into account, and the above-mentioned interpretations were consulted as well. As a result of these analyses and divisions, some primary and secondary concepts were developed, their backgrounds and situations and the relationship between them were outlined, and finally they were delineated in sociological terms. Providing sociological equivalents for concepts in the *Qur'an* was the most demanding and time-consuming phase of the research; this was because the limitations of sociology made it difficult, and impossible at times, to provide sociological equivalents for the rich and sophisticated concepts in the *Qur'an*. The Qur'anic concepts analyzed in these interpretations can be divided into the following categories:

1. Some of these concepts can be easily provided with proper equivalents in sociology, such as commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil (*amr bi al-maruf va nahy ana l-munkar*), promotion (*tabligh*), ancillaries of the faith (*furū al-dīn*) and adhering to them. Equivalents for these concepts could be found easily by consulting books on the fundamental concepts of sociology.

2. The second group includes concepts that, because of the limitations of sociology, cannot be easily provided with proper equivalents, such *infaq* (charity) and its effects, *nifaaq* (hypocrisy) and its conditions, *ummah* (Muslim community), *qariyah* (village), *qawm* (tribe), *iman* (faith), and *taqwa* (piety). In this part, sociological resources and theories in different domains are extensively studied, and finally, with some indulgence and consent, some equivalents are provided for them, and in some cases these concepts are transliterated.

3. The concepts of the third group could not be provided with sociological equivalents, despite all the comprehensive studies carried out; examples of these



concepts are the turning points in social life, effects of these concepts on society and individuals, and the integrated system of religion. In these cases, the religious concepts are just turned into statements using a sociological methodology.

4. It is both difficult and complicated to find equivalents for the situations, backgrounds and the relationships among religious concepts, although not as difficult as in the case of fundamental concepts and elements. For example, in the interpretation of some Qur'anic verses, the situations are explained in a way that, with respect to the definitions of social structures, they can be provided with equivalents in the social construct.

5. An important point in this research is that since the interpretations of the *Qur'an*, especially *Tafsir-e Rahnama*, which is itself based on numerous resources, serve as the basis of the study, some of the concepts and situations provided with sociological equivalents, are not fully compatible with each other. For example, some of the statements about social contrast are not in harmony with each other in some cases, which is due to the difference in the interpretations of the *Qur'an*. However, attempt has been made to resolve this problem in the second phase of the research.

After harmonizing the concepts and providing sociological equivalents for them, these concepts are coded and presented as statements. It should be noted that in the axiomatization phase, the parts of the deduction, the direction and the kind of the relationship between them, are all extracted from the interpretations of the *Qur'an*. Although the logical inferences might not have been drawn from one interpretation, when all the points from the interpretations are considered, the direction and the kind of relationship between the parts of the deduction can be pointed out. When the axioms were developed in sociological terms, they were discussed, modified and harmonized, and finally endorsed by the supervisor of the study. On this basis, ten thousand statements were extracted based on the primary and secondary concepts, and were recorded in 3500 index cards to determine their major categories. The index cards were classified on the basis of subject. At the end of this phase, which took about two years, the major categories and the main trend of the research were classified in the form of 66 major sociological topics. Each of these topics are divided into sub-topics which all show good potential for theorization. Some of these topics have been raised in sociology for the first time, or at least the writer of these lines has not found examples of them in sociology so far.

This book can play a significant role in improving our understanding of social issues in the Qura'n, particularly the social concepts in well-known interpretations of the *Qur'an*. Thus it can of great help to Muslim sociologists and all those who are interested in the study of social concepts in Islamic texts.