Eternity of Moral Values

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Preface

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Before entering the discussion concerning the eternity of moral values it should be noted that according to the philosophies of `being' reality and knowledge as well as moral values are considered to be permanent. Though here I will not be concerned with the permanence of reality, but it is necessary to deal with the question as to why reality and ethics are dealt with separately. What is the difference between moral principles and other principles which we refer to as `reality'?

After all moral values also constitute certain principles and that which is said concerning scientific principles, that they are eternally true, should also apply to moral values. However, I also think that the right thing is to keep these two issues separate. But first of all I must refer to a minor issue to establish that the issue of eternity of moral values is very important for us and that it is closely related to the eternity of Islam.

Ethics comprises certain teachings, and if we believe the moral, humane, and social teachings of Islam to be transitory then the conclusion will be that the teachings of Islam dealing with morality and education are also subject to change. That is, it would imply that such principles had a validity in their own their time, and with changes in conditions these moral principles should also change and so should the basic teachings of Islam.

As a result the major part of Islam would be obsolete and should be abolished. Of course, the issue of evolution of reality is related to this matter, but the issue of relativity of moral values has a greater bearing on the eternity of Islam. Let us now proceed to clarify the point as to why the issue of ethics is separated from the issue of reality.

Speculative Wisdom and Practical Wisdom

Reality relates to theoretical principles and ethics deals with practical principles. In other words, ethics is subsumed under practical wisdom (hikmat-e `amali) and reality is subsumed under theoretical wisdom (hikmat-e nazari); therefore, we cannot apply the principles of practical wisdom to reality, for theoretical wisdom deals with facts as they are or were; whereas practical wisdom is confined to man and deals with things as they ought to be-that is, as to how man is to conduct himself-and hence is prescriptive (insha).

But the nature of theoretical wisdom is descriptive (ikhbar), that is, it deals with the question as to whether a certain proposition corresponds to facts or not, and if it is does, whether it is eternally true. But such questions do not arise in ethics.

In our philosophical literature, theoretical reason and practical reason are regarded as two different types of human faculties. But Muslim philosophers did not discuss their features and differences in sufficient detail. However, they have left useful hints concerning the issue. They suggest that the former faculty is inherent in the soul by means of which it tries to discover the external world; whereas the latter consists of a series of

perceptions of the soul, which administers the body, for the body's management.

Practical reason is considered to be a natural arm of the soul and theoretical reason as a metaphysical arm. Thus the soul possesses two perfections: theoretical perfection and practical perfection (the philosophers hold that the essence and nature of human being is knowledge and its perfection lies in knowledge, whereas the mystics do not consider knowledge as the ultimate perfection of man and are of the view that a perfect man is one who attains to reality not one who discovers it).

Regarding the faculty of practical reason, they hold that the soul as the administrator of the body is subject to certain principles for better governing the body as a prelude to its attaining perfection.

Early Muslim philosophers defined justice in terms of freedom (justice in body). The soul stands in need of-the body and it cannot attain theoretical perfections without it, but in order that the soul should be able to make the best use of the body, it must establish a kind of balance between its faculties. The faculty which establishes such a balance between soul and body is an active faculty. In case this balance is established, the soul is not dominated by the body, rather it is the body which is subordinated to the soul. They considered justice to be a kind of subordination of the body to the soul in which the body is controlled by the soul. This is all that our early philosopher have said on this issue. It seems that, relatively speaking, Ibn Sina (980-1030) has treated the issue of theoretical and practical wisdom more thoroughly than any other Muslim philosopher.

In the section on theology of his al-Shifa', Ibn Sinaa classifies wisdom into practical and theoretical. In the section on logic of the Shifa'; he treats it in more detail and probably in his Mubahathat he discusses it in greater detail than in any other place. On the whole these old discussions provide a good ground for study, but they have not treated the -subject sufficiently and there even exists some ambiguity about practical reason.

That which can be inferred from the statements of some of them is that practical reason is a kind of cognitive faculty of the soul. That is, they maintain that our intellect possess two kinds of cognitive faculties, one is the faculty of cognition used in theoretical sciences and the other is the faculty used in practical sciences.

But others like Mulla Hadi Sabzawari (1833-1910) hold that the term `intellect' (`aql) is used equivocally for theoretical and practical reason and that practical reason is not a cognitive faculty, that it is a faculty of action and not one of cognition.

Hence their statements do not make clear whether or not practical and theoretical reason are two cognitive faculties (regardless of whether they are two distinct faculties or two aspects of one faculty), or if one of these is a cognitive and the other a practical faculty. In the later case, using the term `reason' for practical reason is equivocal, that is, practical reason is not reason in the sense of a cognitive faculty.

Subjectivity of Normative Judgements

It should be noted that Allamah Tatatabais discussion of i 'tibariyat (subjective or normative ideas) in the sixth chapter of his book Usul-e falsafeh wa ravish-e realism (`The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism') is undoubtedly an invaluable and original idea (unfortunately I was not able to write complete footnotes on it).

Its only demerit is that he has himself conceived this idea and then followed it up without relating it to the statements of his predecessors which could help us in tracing the roots of these issues in the words of thinkers like Ibn Sina and others on practical reason and theoretical reason. It would have been better if he had started from their statements.

The reason for such a gap is that his point of departure was jurisprudence ('ilm al-usul) not philosophy. He was inspired by the ideas of the late Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Isfahani regarding itibariyat. Therefore, he did not relate it to the views of the philosophers.

Allamah Tabatabai maintains and this is of course my interpretation-that whatever we ascribe to practical wisdom relates to the world of i'tibari (subjective) notions. Thus, theoretical wisdom or objective truth consists of objective ideas which are the real face of things. Practical ideas are normative notions. Normative ideas comprise of commands and prohibitions and all those notions which are dealt with in 'ilm al-usul.

The Allamah considers all itibariyat of the type where an objective idea is extended and applied to something else; human reason or the soul as a cognitive faculty cannot originate or create a concept, as in its literal and metaphorical use of words. A metaphor consists of the application of the literal and non-metaphorical meaning in a metaphorical sense.

Whether we agree with Sakkaki's view and hold that the word retains its original meaning and some other thing is imagined as its instance, or disagree with him and believe that the word is used in another meaning, one thing is clear: that the intellect and the soul are unable to spontaneously create concepts like ownership. On the contrary it borrows a concept that already exists in its objective form and applies it in its metaphorical sense.

He started from this point and followed it up opening up a very extensive field. In this approach all moral concepts, including good and evil and the like, are considered to be itibari concepts. He has discussed in detail whether the notion of `good' is derived from `ought' or `ought' from `good.' Earlier in Najaf he had written an article in Arabic on the normative sciences ('ulum-e itibari) and the article in Persian (i.e. the sixth chapter of his above-mentioned book) is based on its contents.

Regarding the concept of `ought,' he arrived at the conclusion that all 'oughts' stem from the fact that nature in itself has some ends towards which it moves. In all activities in the domains of inanimate objects, plants, animals, and man, so far as they fall within the domain of instinct and are not voluntary, it is nature that moves towards its goal. At the human level there are certain acts which takes place by the means of volition and thought. In such acts, too, man has certain objectives which have to be attained voluntarily.

These ends are also the ends of nature, but it cannot achieve them directly but only through the agency of man's will and thought. It is here that a need for these normative notions arises and they come into existence spontaneously.

For example, man's nature, like that of plants, needs food, but he should obtain it by means of volition and thought, unlike plants, which obtain food from the ground directly through their roots, and unlike animals, which are drawn towards food by instinct (whose nature is also not well understood). But man has to do this by conscious volition and effort, without being aware that the system of nature uses his apparatus of thought as its instrument in order to achieve its goals.

Man innately possesses two systems: the system of nature as well as the system of thought and will. The latter is subordinate to the former and it is directed to achieving nature's ends. The natural end is reflected in the form of a need or desire in man's soul, for instance, the inclination towards food.

Early Muslim philosophers defined the process of voluntary action as follows: first there is conception of the action, followed by judgement of its usefulness and inclination towards it (there were different views of it), then the stage of resolution, which is followed by emergence of will, after which the voluntary act takes place.

Allamah Tabataba i s agrees with this description, but he considers the role of judgement as fundamental. However, here the judgement of the soul is not the kind of theoretical (descriptive) judgment which earlier Muslim-philosophers used to call `assent of benefit,' but is a prescriptive judgement (You ought to do this).

He stresses mainly on the point that all voluntary acts contain a kind of command and a prescriptive and normative judgement, for example, "This ought to be done," "This ought not to be done." It is such oughts that cause man to be drawn towards the natural end. The Allamah probably conceives all acts of volition as terminating in knowledge.

These ideas came to the mind of Allamah Tabatabai and he followed them up independently without studying others' views in this regard. Once I even asked him whether what he says in this regard is in agreement with the ideas of the early Muslim philosopher regarding the difference between practical and theoretical wisdom and their view about the normative character of the notions of good and evil.

In their debates with the theologians (mutakallimin) our early philosophers mention certain basic criteria for logical argument and they mention good and evil as criteria that pertain to rhetoric and dialectics, and maintain that the notions of good and evil cannot be employed in logical arguments. They are of tile view that good and evil derive from custom and cite the example of Indians who consider killing of animals as immoral.

If one were to scan philosophical works one would not find a single instance, where the notions of good and evil have been employed to decide a theoretical issue. On the contrary the mutakallimin always base their arguments on the notions of moral and immoral. For instance, they hold that the rule of Divine grace is good and that such and such a thing is unseemly for God and that such and such a thing is obligatory for Him, and the like.

The philosophers consider these as normative issues which cannot form the basis of rational argument. Like Allamah Tabatabai, they also consider good and evil as normative notions. Another point which gives further importance to his statements is that others like Bertrand Russell, who claim to have originated a new approach in contemporary philosophy, also. have a similar viewpoint.

Undoubtedly Allamah Tabataba i was unaware of their views, and I myself, while writing explanatory notes on the Allamah's book Usul-e falsafeh wa rewish-a realism, did not notice that his view of the practical sciences and ethics is something new and identical with the latest views about ethics. Perhaps the development of such an idea in the Allamah's mind (about forty years ago in Najaf) was contemporaneous with the development of this view in European thought. In any case the Allamah was definitely unaware of their views.

Supplement 1

Among modern European philosophers, Bertrand Russell has elaborated this issue seriously. In his book A History of Western Philosophy, Russell states his viewpoint while discussing Plato's philosophy.

Plato has sublime ideas on the topic of ethics. In his view theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom are of the same kind and he looks at them from the same point of view. Regarding the concept of good in ethics he holds that morality means that man should seek what is good, and the good is a cognizable reality independent of the soul. That is, the object of human quest is the same in ethics and objective sciences, as in mathematics or medicine, which are concerned with external objects independent of the human mind.

According to Plato moral values are realities independent of man, so man should try to know them as he tries to know any other reality.

Here it becomes clear that early Muslim philosophers had selective approach in relation to the views of the ancient philosophers. They accepted some of their views and discarded their incorrect views without indicating what they were accepting and what they were discarding. So far as ethics is concerned, they accepted many of Plato's views but they rejected this idea of Plato, and with justification.

While discussing Plato's views, Bertrand Russell expresses his own viewpoint. He says that we have to analyze the issue of ethics and see where it leads to. How did Plato think when he said that the good exists independent of us. Then he proceeds to analyze in a way very similar to the Allama's analysis.

Russell holds that good and evil are relative terms whose meaning is determined by man's relation to objects. When we wish to achieve a goal, we say of a means that helps us attain that goal that `It is good.' Now, what is meant by saying of a certain thing that `It is good'? It means that in order to achieve that goal we ought to use this means. The very `ought to use is equal to saying `it is good.' Hence it is wrong to hold that the good is an objective quality inherent in a thing.

Plato thinks that goodness is inherent in things, like whiteness or roundness etc., while it is not so. For example, when we say `Honesty is good,' it is because of a goal which we have chosen. In other words, it is good for us for achieving our goal and therefore we ought to employ it. Yet, it does not mean that it is good for everyone. It is good only for those who have such a goal. Otherwise if one had an opposite goal it would not be good for him.

Bertrand Russell and other philosophers applied their logical analysis to ethics. They come to the conclusion that `good' or `evil' are normative in nature. The mistake of the philosophers down to the present day is that they have thought ethical issues to be like those of mathematics or science. Their approaches to ethics has been similar to their approach to mathematics and physics. For example, as in physics one studies the nature of the magnet to discover its properties, in ethics as well they thought that good and evil are discoverable properties of things.

Q: Ethical issues are like scientific issues with the difference that they belong to different realms; otherwise the criterion is the same in both the cases.

A: There is no difference between this domain or that. For example, when man speaks, his speaking is a concrete fact no matter whether what he says is true or false. Does this speech have an external and objective property called `good' or `evil'? No. Truth or falsehood do not have any objective quality called good or evil. Basically, the meaning of good and evil are determined in term of goals. Truth helps one to achieve one's goal, therefore, one must be truthful.

Here the property of goodness is attributed to truthfulness. Lying, owing to its effects, prevent individuals and society from achieving their goal. Therefore, one must not lie and lying is bad. Here one does not have anything except "one ought to say" and "one ought not to say" Good and evil are abstracted from `ought' and `ought not.' Of course, it does not mean that ethics is devoid of reality. Later on we will explain it.

The Europeans thought that they had discovered a very new idea and even today it is a live issue in European philosophy and enjoys wide acceptance. In their view, the ethical theories of Plato, Aristotle, Kant and the like are outdated. They have finally reached this viewpoint. As I said, the early Muslim philosophers also have dealt with this issue and a shortcoming of Allamah Tabataba i s work is that he does not relate it to their ideas.

According to Mr. Ha'iri, one of the questions he was asked to answer in a test (in the West) was concerning the relation between theoretical and practical sciences. As the theoretical sciences are related to the practical sciences, they are not isolated from one another. In modern terms, theoretical science constitutes world view whereas practical science constitutes ideology, as in the case of dialectical logic and materialist philosophy which constitute the Marxist world view and their ideology is also based on their world view.

Now the question is how can we derive a prescriptive and normative judgement from factual premises? If the premises are descriptive, no problems arises if the conclusion is also a descriptive statement. For example, we may say A is equal to B, and B is equal to C; therefore, A is equal to C. However, in the other case the reasoning will have this form: A is equal to B, and B is equal to C; therefore, it ought to be that . . . . How can we drive a normative judgement from a descriptive proposition? Is there any syllogism whose premises are factual and its conclusion is normative and prescriptive? I am not saying that there isn't. But if it exists, how should it be analyzed?

The point is that this topic is a live issue in the West. Russell and his like-minded philosophers are of the view that eternity of moral values is meaningless.

Until this point my purpose was to clarify this point that good and evil are not objective and concrete properties of things that can be discovered, as is the case in theoretical sciences. That is, it will be wrong to investigate ethical principles by such a method, for it confuses between normative and

factual propositions. However, it may be asked whether there are two types of norms, one mutable and the other immutable. This is another point of contention which we have with them (European thinkers).

Incidentally Allamah Tabatabai is also of the view that norms are of two types, immutable and mutable. He has not discussed immutable norms-and the entire issue in general-in any great detail, but he bases his theory on two types of norms. For immutable norms he has given the examples of justice and injustice, stating that the goodness of justice and the evil of injustice are immutable, and there are many mutable norms as well.

Permanence of Ethical Norms

From this point onwards we shall take up the discussion about the issue of `ought.' No doubt some 'oughts' are particular and related to individuals. For instance, one person may need a certain kind of training, and he might say, "I should take this subject," while another who does not need it would say, "I should not take that subject." Basically, when two persons fight each other, each of them fights for the sake of a certain ought. There is no doubt that individual and particular 'oughts' are relative.

For example, when I say that this food is good for me, this statement has a theoretical and a practical aspect. My conclusion concerning the benefit of the food constitutes its theoretical aspect and `I .ought to eat that food' constitutes the practical aspect. In short, these kinds of oughts are particular and changeable.

An important question in ethics is, Are there any universal and absolute 'oughts' shared by all human beings? In case there are such oughts, how can such universal oughts be explained on the basis that every `ought' is directed towards some goal? Incidentally, we reach some fine conclusions at this point.

Concerning the difference between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom it is not sufficient to say that the formers deals with `is' and the latter with `ought.' This is not a sufficient explanation for practical wisdom. After all practical wisdom is wisdom and wisdom deals with universal issues.

Hence practical wisdom should be defined as dealing with universal 'oughts,' otherwise there are also certain 'oughts' in geometry, industry etc., but they have nothing to do with practical wisdom. What is to be noted here is that there are universal 'oughts' which are familiar to every mind. Therefore, such 'oughts' must be directed towards goals which are not particular and individual. If we could prove such 'oughts,' we will have to accept that they are rooted in the soul and that man is not confined to physical nature only. This will be one of the proofs of the immaterial nature of soul.

Kant also reached the immortality of the soul through moral issues: Man's physical nature has some needs which are limited and relative. The needs of one person differ from those of another person. The 'oughts' for meeting such needs are also different and often contradict one another. There are many 'oughts' which are opposed to other `ougths' and so such 'oughts' are not of an ethical nature. But man, by virtue of his soul, enjoys a station which-like man's physical nature, to which his outward will and thought are subject-draws him towards its own goals. Man's physical nature draws him towards its goals in order to attain its own perfection.

It needs food, and we say we ought-to eat food. According to Schopenhauer, we are made to feel pleasure and to be on look out for pleasure in the world of ideas, while we are unaware of the fact that within our inner being it is nature which seeks to achieve its ends. It is nature that moves towards its end, but it provides pleasure for us in order to make us serve its own purposes.

While in the world of ideas we are drawn towards pleasure, in reality we move to fulfill the goals of nature. For example, when the baby cries, it is nature which seeks to bring him up. When the baby cries due to the feeling of pain, it is nature which declares its need, having subjected the baby's feeling and mind.

Man enjoys a certain spiritual perfection and sublimity which is rooted in his God-given nobility and dignity (some 'oughts' are meant to achieve that spiritual perfection). When someone says, `I ought to do such and such a thing,' it means `I must attain to that excellence,' although such a goal may not be reflected in his outer consciousness. Those excellences are common to all men, and, therefore, in this respect all men feel the same kind of imperative. The second justification for universal imperatives is the issue of social spirit.

It is said that man is a social creature and he has certain oughts, to meet not his individual but his social needs. In the same kay that man is impelled to seek the satisfaction of his individual needs he is impelled to seek the satisfaction of his social needs. Had there been no relations between man and his fellow men, such oughts would not have arisen.

For instance, if I had no relations with anyone I would not make any efforts to feed other people. Such imperatives are related to a higher self, be it an individual higher self or a higher social self. That higher self seeks to achieve its goals. That self causes man to perform moral acts. Those acts which are performed for the sake of the higher individual self or the social self have permanent principles, which are, firstly, universal and same for all individuals and, secondly, are permanent and not temporary.

The other point which has been raised concerns the philosophy of being and the philosophy of becoming. According to the philosophy of being moral values are permanent and therefore ethical principles are eternally true. However, according to the philosophy of becoming moral values are relative and transitory; that is, they are valid during a certain time and invalid in other times.

This is a very important issue, for apart from ethics it touches other judgements as well. According to the philosophy of becoming no truth is permanent. Reality is transient and therefore prescriptions are also transitory, for the difference between truth and morality is that the former is descriptive and the latter is prescriptive, one is theoretical and the other is practical. Inevitably this question also arises in the case of all religious precepts and is not confined to what we mean by the term `ethics' (akhlaq). What they (i.e. Westerners) imply by `ethics' is a more general sense which includes all prescriptions and the notions of good and evil.

At the outset an objection may be raised here, that the philosophy of becoming does not necessarily imply that truth is changeable. For as we have said the philosophy of becoming relates to external reality, and even if one were to admit that there is nothing except becoming, it does not imply that truth (which is related to the mind) is subject to change. Of course, we accept the implication that should facts, which include human thought, be subject to change, consequently truth as human thought will also be subject to change. But they do not make such an assertion. We believe that truth,

which is the content of thought, is inseparable from external and mental existence except in conception.

For example, the statement "Zayd was standing on Friday" is always true This statement itself, apart from external or mental existence, is not something that may be said to be neither in the mind nor in external reality, a proposition that is eternally true. This proposition has either external existence or mental existence.' But when man thinks about it, he first abstracts it from mental existence, and after abstracting its meaning declares it to be eternally true. We believe that if thought itself were changeable, its content will also be changeable, and the statement "Zayd was standing on Friday" will not be conceived today in the mind as it was conceived yesterday. It will change into something else.

This was in relation to the permanence of truth. The same objection can be raised in relation to morals values. Suppose we believe in a philosophy of becoming, and it implies that truth is changeable. But morals and precepts are a set of prescriptions and these are normative in nature. The changeability of truth does not necessitate the changeability of norms. In an article, "Khatm-e Nubuwwat," ("The Ultimacy of the Prophethood"), I have pointed out that if anybody claims that all things are subject to change, then the ultimate prophecy and everlasting laws become meaningless.

Our position is that if truth be mutable it does not imply that prescriptions should also be mutable. For prescriptions derive from convention and the law of change of facts does not apply to prescriptions. Thus, it is wrong to assert that a philosophy of becoming will imply mutability of moral values. However, there is another argument that may be offered to support this view.

This other argument is that every prescription, ethical or non-ethical, is based on certain expediencies. This view coincides with the view of the theologians, and jurisprudents following them, who maintain that "religious obligations are subtle instances of rational obligations," or, in the words of Nary, certain benefits and harms underlie the causes of religious precepts, which are meant to achieve those benefits and are therefore subordinate to objective benefits and harms, like an effect subordinate to its cause.

The benefits are facts and commands and prohibitions are based on conventions and norms. But the benefits and harms from which the commands and prohibitions stem are not permanent, for they are facts. Thus when the former are not permanent the latter also will not be permanent. The objection to the eternity of moral values takes another form in accordance with this argument.

Now we wish to make a fundamental examination of ethical criteria and confine our discussion to ethics in our own special sense. The question of religious precepts requires a wide-ranging study and has many ramifications pertaining to worship, social and financial issues and other matters.

In the sphere of ethics, one may maintain that moral values are permanent on the basis that moral values are identical with reality, in the sense that a moral act is good because it is essentially attributed with the quality of goodness. The immoral act is bad because it is attributed with the quality of badness. Hence every act is either essentially moral or essentially

immoral, although it may be said that there are some acts which are neither essentially moral nor immoral.

It means that moral goodness and evil are objective qualities of things inherent in their essences, and that which is essential is not mutable. That which is morally good is good forever and that which is immoral will always remain immoral. We should do that which is morally good and refrain from that which is immoral, and this is a self-evident and indisputable judgement of reason. This is one of the arguments that may offered in favour of the permanence-of ethical values. Such an argument is based on the essential character of good and evil which are considered as objective attributes.

Muslim philosophers have not discussed this issue but they do not believe in good and evil as being inherent in things. In logic, they consider any reference to morality or immorality as reference to popular convention which finds use only in dialectics and rhetoric. They even point out that morals vary with nations and they cite the example of Indians .who consider slaughter of animals as immoral. However they do not elaborate and do not explain why the notions of moral goodness and evil cannot be employed in rational arguments.

They do not explain why they are different from mathematical propositions and what criterion underlies this distinction. They only say that morality or immorality pertain to the rules of practical reason. However it is dear that practical reason develops such notions in order to achieve certain goals. In any case they have not elaborated upon this matter.

The Origins of Normative Notions

Among philosophers Allamah Tabatabai has treated this issue more thoroughly than anyone else. In the sixth chapter of his book Usul-e falsafeh wa ravishe realism, he has discussed profoundly this issue, which is related partly to philosophy in that it explains the process of development of ideas by the mind. However, the greater part of this discussion relates to jurisprudence (`ilm al-usul). There he has discussed the origin and character of the development of normative ideas, and this topic deserves to studied in greater depth and thoroughness. However, here I will give a brief summary of his ideas relating to this discussion.

He begins by asserting that one of the functions of the mind is that it abstracts certain ideas from external objects (an operation that does not involve any innovation) then applies them to another reality, that is, it applies the definition of one thing to another thing. In technical and literary terms, it invents metaphors. A metaphor, especially in accordance with Sakkald's view, is not simply the use of a word in some other meaning It does not simply involve applying, for instance. the word `lion,' after divesting of its meaning, to a person with a similar quality. No.

A metaphor involves a change in meaning not a change in word. Actually what we do is that we see, for instance, Zayd as an instance of the meaning of `lion,' then we apply the word `lion' to him. This is a kind of innovation of the mind. The late Ayatullah Burujerdi would make an interesting remark in this relation. He would say that when we say, "I saw a lion shooting', this statement is actually composed of the two following statements: "I saw Zayd shooting," and "Zayd is like a lion." lie agreed with Sakkaki's conception of the metaphor.

Such is Allamah Tabataba i s notion of the mind's capacity to formulate and invent concepts by supposing-not arbitrarily but in accordance with a certain basis-one thing as an instance of another thing.

Another observation that he makes (though I do not agree with its generalization) is that the difference between animals on the one hand and plants and inanimate things on the other is that the latter move towards their end in one predetermined direction alone. Nature, in the course of its normal movement, is equipped with means through which it moves inexorably towards its goal. Animals also, in respect of their physical and natural being (not as beings possessing cognition and mind), like plants move directly towards their end in the natural world. But in their case, in most of their activities, the means of nature do not suffice to direct animals towards their goals.

That is why they employ their mental and cognitive faculties to achieve their ends and in fact there emerges a kind of harmony between physical nature (which is unconscious) and the mind which functions in a manner enabling nature to achieve its ends. The mind is however directed to achieving a series of ends which are supposed to be different from the ends of nature and one imagines that the harmony between the two is accidental.

The cognitive nature of man and animal is such that when they perceive and conceive an object there arises a desire and appetite for it as [an expectation of] pleasure in attaining it and of pain in the failure to attain it.

This is followed by the motive to obtain the pleasure or to avoid the pain. For instance, man feels hunger and with his past experience'of the pleasure in eating food he seeks food in order to obtain that pleasure.

But at the same time in the process of this act nature too attains its end, for the body needs food in order to replace the materials it has consumed. Eating serves both the ends, the conscious purpose of pleasure is attained and at the same time nature also satisfies its need. Hence, the question arises: Are these two acts unconnected with each other and is their coincidence something accidental? Is it possible for the case to be otherwise, that is, a person might feel pleasure in eating stones while his stomach requires some other food?

Is it an accident that delicious foods which bring pleasure to one who eats also helps satisfy the nature's needs? Or is it the case that there is no accident involved here and there exists a kind of harmony between the two, where one is primary and the other is secondary? In case there is no accident involved here, is the conscious desire to obtain pleasure and to avoid pain the primary principle which requires an apparatus that may cooperate with it for the end of pleasure by digesting food and absorbing nourishing substances?

Or is the case quite the inverse and it is nature which constitutes the primary principle, having subjugated the conscious mind to its service. Undoubtedly, there is some kind of harmony between the natural and conscious ends. Hence every animal takes pleasure in what nature needs and nature also needs that which brings pleasure.

For instance, a woman is equipped with organs and glands required for child bearing and nursing and she finds pleasure in these acts. The animal that lays eggs takes pleasure in that act, and an animal that gives birth to a child takes pleasure in child bearing. There exists a strong harmony between them.

It is wrong to think that purposive movement is confined to conscious beings only When it is said that nature has certain ends, some people may raise doubts as to whether unconscious nature may have ends. In fact ends are related to that very unconscious nature and the conscious mind has ends which are incidental to the ends of nature. The end of nature is to move. towards its perfection. As remarked by Ibn Sinn, the possession of consciousness does not make puposive a being that lacks purpose. Purposiveness is related to the essence of a thing. Sometimes a thing is aware of its end and sometimes it is not.

Q: There is not always a harmony between pleasure and natural need. Many pleasures are harmful for nature and injurious to its perfection.

A: Deviant cases are not to be taken into consideration, particularly in die case of human being who act according to reason. What I mean is that there is a general harmony that exists to such an extent that it cannot be accidental. Exceptional cases, like that of the sick person who needs medicine without feeling any pleasure in taking it, arise out of a kind of difference between two exigencies, a topic which has its own details. An animal takes pleasure in eating its medicine because it acts according to

instinct, while the human being, who acts according to his reason, does not take pleasure in it.

Allamah Tabataba i says that the world of normative concepts begins here. The way he explains the issue it appears as if all animate beings including man and animals possess such ideas. But I do not agree with this generalization. According to him there is a necessary relation between nature and ends, like the concrete, objective and philosophical relation between cause and effect. Now in the world of conception man takes the objective relation of necessity-as opposed to the relation of contingency-between two things in nature and applies that relation to two things between which there is no such real relation.

For example, he applies the term `lion' to a brave man. Here, too, man applies the term `necessity' as found in external nature to the relation between himself and his goal. Such necessities and oughts created by the mind, arise out of such conceptions. The Allamah is of the view that such oughts exist in every voluntary act and in every conscious animal.

The earlier Muslim philosophers did not believe in such an ought or imperative. They only held that man first conceives the benefit in something, then there arises a desire for it, followed by a resolution. They described its various stages stating that first there is conception followed by a judgement of the benefit. This judgment in their view posits something objective, that is, a certain object has a certain benefit. The final stage is the stage of volition. However, they did not believe that a normative judgement was involved here.

But Allamah Tabataba i holds that such a conception and imperative is involved here and the statement that something is good has no other meaning. When we say that it is good to do something, its `goodness' arises from here. There is another issue involved here as to whether `good" arises out of `ought' or the case is the reverse. As the Allamah holds that `ought' is the first formulation (itibar), he holds that `good' arises from it. "It is good to do so" signifies a kind of inclination towards something and it is as if one were attributing objective and concrete qualities to human actions.

The Theory of Employment

Then he has some other views to which he repeatedly refers in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, al-Mizan, and in other places. He holds that one of the normative formulations is that of `employment' (istikhdam). To explain, man has a certain relation to his limbs and faculties and this relation is objective, real and concrete. My hands are at my service. All bodily organs of man are owned by man and form an integral part of his being and are really at the service of man. He says that every external object may-take the form of a tool in the service of man, and in the same way that his hands belong to him he considers other objects as his own. This kind of extension is what typical of subjective formulations. (itibar).

Man extends the boundaries of that which is limited to his existence to other beings. He considers such a human tendency to extend concepts as something instinctive Then he adds that this kind of conceptual attitude is not limited to inanimate objects, plants, etc.; rather man views even other human beings from the viewpoint of `employment.'

Man is created an exploiter and this is a natural tendency in him. He accepts social and moral issues as secondary principles. However, in this chapter he does not discuss this issue in detail but he does so in his exegesis, al-Mizan, under verse 2:213, "Mankind were a single nation". Perhaps there is apparently a contradiction in his statements in different places.

At one place he says that `employment' is a natural principle and that social justice is at the same time natural to man but is modified by the other natural principle. Sometimes in his exegesis he is explicit that man is not social by nature but social by adaptation. In the sixth chapter of his Usul-e falsafeh wa ravish-e realism, he states that man is social by nature, but what he means is by adaptation, as mentioned by him elsewhere. So he does not hold that man is social by nature.

His socialization is outcome of the result of equilibrium between two opposite instincts. His statements appear in this regard to be similar to the views of contemporary evolutionists and Darwinians who believe the struggle for survival to be fundamental in man.

The principle of employment is a respectable form of the Darwinian idea, for according to it struggle for survival constitutes the basis of the human being and cooperation arises out of struggle. Man struggles for survival, but the enemy is not always of one kind; when several men face a common enemy and feel that they cannot defeat him individually, cooperation is the only way to survival. Here cooperation is like political treaties between states, meant only to deter the common enemy In fact such cooperation arises out of struggle.

Hence when there is no more a common enemy, conflict begins among apparent friends. Again after some dine differences arise within the dominating group and grow into a war among them. If finally there remain only two individuals they fight against each other until the fittest survives. If we trace the roots of moral rules on cooperation, friendship, and unity, they will be seen to stem from conflict.

The implication is that if you want to survive in your confrontation with the enemy (whether it is nature or something else) you should be honest,

truthful and so on. This is the viewpoint of the evolutionists, and the Allamah's ideas lead to such a conclusion, though he does not say so explicitly.

Q: Does man have a natural inclination towards evil?

A: That is what it means. However, evil is relative, and from the viewpoint of the individual it is good. Every individual has a natural tendency to seek his own good, which makes him treat others as tools (such is the Allamah's view). Man cannot refrain from treating others as tools.

Q: Struggle for survival is not the same as `employment.' Sometime they may coincide and sometimes not.

A: I did not say that the two concepts are identical. What I means is that both of them lead to the same conclusion. When we say that every individual tries to treat others as his tools and to use them, when such a tendency is universal it will automatically lead to conflict.

The Allamah continues his discussion on normative formulations and most of it has greater relevance to jurisprudence than to ethical philosophy and its relevant part was that which we have described.

He further holds that man formulates the oughts and ought nots to attain certain ends. Since these ends are transient, precepts and laws will also be subject to change and as long as those ends remains the ought will remain as well, and when the end changes, the ought will also change. Thus the Allamah holds that normative conceptions, unlike objective conceptions, are transitory and impermanent and almost concludes that moral values cannot be eternal. Nevertheless, it is to be pointed out that he maintains that there are certain normative principles which are immutable, which are five or six and these are permanent and the rest of them are subject to change.

The principles which he regards as permanent are not of much relevance here, like the principle of necessity in general, the principle of employment and other similar things whose discussion will be fruitless here.

Will and Natural Urge

An explanation that is necessary here is that his application of the principle of employment to all animate beings is not acceptable. In my footnotes to the chapter I have discussed the issue in a manner which does not assume such a generalization. It is not even true of man in all his voluntarily acts but only of some of his voluntarily actions which are performed thoughtfully. It is here that the issues of moral imperative and the rational character of what is moral and immoral arise. The acts of immature persons, like infants taking milk, are rather derived from instinct.

Elsewhere I have drawn a distinction between urge and will. The animal, contrary to what is said loosely that an animal is that which moves voluntarily, acts according to inclination and urge. In a mature human being there is a relation between will and reason on the one hand and between inclination or appetite and reason on the other. Urge is a passive state.

In an animal or man that acts under urge, the greater the influence of urge the lesser is the role of thought, consciousness and reason and the action takes an involuntary form. For example, when man sees food, he feels inclined towards it and it is as if there were something external that draws him towards itself. On the contrary, when man acts according to his will, he withdraws from what is external to his being and his decision arises from his inner being.

For example, if he has feels an inclination for a certain kind of food, he thinks over its consequences and then decides to take some other food for which he feels a lesser inclination. He controls himself by his will and it is his will which enables him to dissociate himself from that which is external to his being.

Hence will is identical with freedom. Reason and will liberate man from the tyranny of urges and make him rely upon himself. Of course, sometimes both inclination and will may be present. That is, one may be inclined towards something which may be the object of one's will due to the judgement of reason.

Q: Is will totally absent in cases where there is an inclination, or is it only weak?

A: Will is there, but it is weak. What I want to point out is that will and inclination are two separate things. To the extent that man is subject to inclination, his will is proportionately weak. I do not agree with Mulls Sadra (though elsewhere he has expressed an opposite opinion), Mulls Had! Sabzawari and Ibn Sina in considering inclination and will as one thing. Elsewhere they, including even Ibn Sina, have drawn a distinction between the two. Will is the state of self-possession of the soul, a state of resolution, where reason is involved and rational calculations are made and the judgement of reason prevails.

Moral imperatives relate to man as a rational being (in the same way as early Muslim Philosophers consider them as part of practical reason), not to the soul from a practical aspect. Moral approval and disapproval are judgements of practical reason (the contemplative faculty which comprehends universals) from the aspect of the government of the body.

Otherwise moral norms are irrelevant to animals or to man from the viewpoint of not being subject to the judgements of reason.

Metaphorical ideas are exclusive to man. His thought has reached the point where he can apply the term for something to another thing. For instance, he sees the moon and then sees a human being possessing beauty to whom he is drawn. He applies the term for the former to the latter and transfers to the latter his feelings evoked by the moon.

This act signifies man's developed nature and no animal is capable of such an act. This act is a kind of make up and adornment; i.e. man observes a kind of beauty in someone and then he adds to it by supplementing accidental graces, while he knows that these graces do no belong to that person but are charms borrowed from extraneous colour, water, and line but which heighten his feelings of attraction towards that person. This is what happens in metaphorical and poetical expressions.

When the poet refers to something with metaphors, that thing assumes a greater charm in his sight, as in the case of Rudaki who wrote those verses for the Samanid prince using those metaphors for Bukhara. Bukhara remained what it was but he projected the city in such charming terms that they moved the prince. These are miracles of the human mind.

Q: Is this the Pavlovian conditioned reflex?

A: No. Pavlovian conditioned reflex relates to the materialist approach to perception (not to normative concepts) which tries to give a materialist interpretation to human thought. Pavlov talks of involuntary human reflexes. The issue of conditioned reflex or association of ideas is different from the issue of values and metaphor. In the latter there is no succession and association. Here one sees something as something else. That is, he joins it to the other and applies the definition of one thing to another thing. There is no succession of ideas as in association. In metaphor there is a simultaneous unification of two things, not a succession of several things. This is what gives the power of passion and pathos to elegies.

Thus one of the objections against the Allamah's view is that he generalizes the faculty of normative formulation to all animate beings, whereas it is exclusive to man and that too to his practical reason.

Early Muslim philosophers defined practical wisdom, which includes ethics, as the science of man's voluntary actions in respect of how they ought to be and how they can be best and most perfect. This definition given by early Muslim philosophers is somewhat similar to that of theoretical wisdom which deals with the most perfect order and the question whether or not the existing order is the best and most perfect order possible. This question however relates to whether something exists or not, and in the discussion of man's voluntary acts the question relates to how something ought to be and how it can be most perfect.

According to modern philosophers ethics deals with the question, How should one live one's life, i.e. it does not deal with how men live but with how they should live. This almost amounts to the same thing with certain added qualifications. One relates to universality. When the early Muslim philosophers defined ethics as a science of man's voluntary acts they meant a universal prescription for all human beings, not for any particular person.

The other point that should be mentioned here is that when modern philosophers hold that ethics deals with how one should live one's life, a qualification is to added here-and they often add it themselves, thus coming closer to the viewpoint of ancient philosophers-stating that what is meant is a life imbued with sublimity and sanctity. The meaning of ethics is loaded with a sense of sublimity and sanctity, or value in contemporary terms.

Another point whose mention here is not without benefit is that when it said that ethics is the science of how one must live one's life, that includes behaviour and habit, that is, what kind of conduct and habits one must have to lead a worthy life.

Another point that is mentioned nowadays, which is also found in our philosophy, is that ethics deals only with how man should live and it is assumed that man's nature is already known, and it is with the knowledge of this nature that the question of how he must live so that his life possesses sublimity and sanctity arises.

As we know, the existentialists have certain views about the fundamentality of existence (Mulls Sadra's philosophy is also based on the fundamentally of existence) and they hold man to be a potential and indeterminate being. That is, his essence is not predetermined and it is man's acts which form his habits and these habits constitute man's identity and essence. Man does not have an essence apart from his habits and they constitute the substantial actuality of man's existence.

It is his habits and traits which make and determine man's being. More precisely, ethics is not only the science of how one should live but the science of what one should become.

When we talk of ethics as the science of how one should live, it is assumed that we know what we are and then go one to discuss how man with his fixed nature and essence, which is the same in all men, is to live. But if we hold that habits constitute the essence of man then ethics will take a new dimension. If man can shape his reality with his morals and habits, then his inner being and essence will change and accordingly ethics assumes a more profound meaning.

Men have the same form, but from the spiritual viewpoint their reality depends on their morals and habits. Hence the definition of `man' may apply to some persons in respect of form while in respect of their inner being the term `animal' may be true of them.

With this definition of practical wisdom let us follow up the foregoing discussion. We said that the issue of moral imperatives signifies man's relation to a certain act and stems from his feeling. That is man's nature seeks certain goals and in consonance with those ends certain feelings emerge in his conscious faculty. He desires what his nature seeks, and this finally leads him to declare, `I like that thing' and `It is good.'

Bertrand Russell and others hold-and Allamah Tabatabai's views lead to the same conclusion-that there can be no objective criterion for ethics. For instance, when I say that something is good, it means I like it, and my liking it does not mean that somebody else should also like it. Others may like something else. Those who lived in the past regarded what they liked as good, while today people regard something else as good.

Here a question arises: How can ethical issues be demonstrated?, How can we argue as to what is good and what is bad? The Allamah is of the view that these are indemonstrable, for normative matters cannot be proven. We can only test them on the basis of utility (futility). That is, the mind's normative formulations are meant to achieve certain goals and if they do not help one reach them they are invalid.

Moral issues cannot be tested except through the test of utility. They are not objective matters that can be proven by experiment or reasoning. They can be proven neither be deduction nor by the empirical method. In deduction the premises are based on self evident-principles, or on empirical experience, whereas practical wisdom is concerned with the concept of good and bad and these concepts are derive from ought and ought not, which in their turn depend upon likes and dislikes,

which are not identical in all people and vary according to their personal situation, interests, pursuits and their attachments to various creeds, groups, and nations. Therefore, every individual and groups likes certain things and therefore moral values are inevitably subjective and relative. Hence moral concepts are not objective issues susceptible to logical proof or deductive or inductive methods.

Three Ethical Theories

Bertrand Russell is one of the thinkers who arrived at the same conclusion through his philosophy of logical analysis. In his book, A History of Western Philosophy, while examining Plato's conception of justice and Trasymachus's famous objection against it, that justice is nothing but the interests of the powerful, Russell is of the view that this is the basic problem of politics and ethics: is there any criterion iii ethics to distinguish between good and bad except that which is meant by those who use these terms? If there is no such criterion then most of Trasymachus's conclusions will inescapable.

But how can one say that such a criterion exists? Elsewhere Russell says that the difference between Plato and Trasymachus is very important. Plato thinks that he can prove that his idea of republic is good. A democrat who accepts the objectivity of ethics may think that he can prove the Republic to be immoral; but anyone who agrees with Trasymachus will say: There is no question of proving or disproving; the only question is whether you like or not.

If you do, it is good for you; if you do not it is bad for you. It is like matters of taste; one may like a certain kind of food and say that this food is good and others may like another kind and say that, that food is good. There is no absolute good to compare other goods with. He further says that if you like it, it is good for you; if you do not, it is bad for you.

If some like it and some don't the matter cannot be decided by reason, but only by force. That which is said that justice belongs to the powerful, that is because when some people like something and others don't, those who have greater power impose their wishes on others by force and that becomes law.

The gist of Russell's statements is that the concepts of good and bad indicate the relation between man and the thing in question. If this relation is one of liking it is good and if it is one of dislike then it is bad. If it is neither liked nor disliked, then it neither good nor evil. We have written that the answer to Russell is that first we have to trace the roots of why man likes something and dislikes something else.

Man likes anything that serves the purpose of life even if from a particular aspect. In other words, nature always moves towards its perfection and in order to impel man to carry out that which must be accomplished through his will and choice it has placed desire, liking and love in him in the same way that it has informed him with the notions of good and evil.

As nature moves towards individual perfection and expediency, it also moves towards the perfection of the species as well. Basically the individual's perfection is not separable from the perfection of his species. The individual's perfection lies in that of the species, and inevitably a kind of likes equally shared by all individuals take shape equally in all individuals. These similar, uniform, universal and absolute likes constitute the universal criterion of morality.

Justice and other moral values are the ends towards which nature moves for the perfection of the kind. In order to attain such ends through voluntary action it creates a liking for these ends in all individuals. By virtue of that

liking the oughts and ought nots appear in the form of a series of universal imperatives in die soul.

Accordingly, to have a universal criterion in ethics it is not necessary to consider good and evil objective entities like whiteness and blackness, roundness and squareness. Russell considers the ego in "I like it," as an ego solely concerned with its material and physical interests, not as an ego which is concerned with its spiritual nobility or as an ego that is concerned with the interests of its kind.

Here we will mention two or three hypotheses and then try to substantiate the above remarks. First we have to see whether or not there actually exists a set of common, universal and permanent imperatives in man's soul (this minor premise has to be derived through experience). That is, do there exist in the human conscience any notions commonly held by all individuals in addition to the temporary, particular, and individual notions of good and bad? I mean those universal imperatives that are devoid of personal preferences and tastes in which all that is relevant is personal interest. Do such imperatives exist according to which man makes judgements occasionally even despite his personal preferences?

One may say I don't know the analysis of such an issue, but I know this much that I and all people have certain universal precepts according to which we judge, for instance, that honesty is good in itself, whatever the basis of this judgement, or that it is good to return kindness for kindness. This judgement transcends all personal interests, and one cannot deny if someone says that a kindness returned for kindness a thousand years ago is praiseworthy or that anyone who ever returned evil for kindness is blameworthy.

Undeniably there are two kinds of acts involved here; one act is praiseworthy and valuable for man and the other is worthless or has a negative value. If one were to compare with a free mind two kinds of characters, such as Abu Dharr and Mu'awiyah, in order to make a judgement concerning them, he will see that Abu Dharr was a man to whom Mu'awiyah was ready to give everything to buy his loyalty and to make him relinquish his higher principles. He did not surrender to the devices of Mu'awiyah who had made everything a means of attaining his ambitions.

Here one naturally commends the former and condemns the latter. The same test may be applied in case of other characters and the result will invariably be the same. We are not concerned with the opinion that all judgements concerning goodness and badness derive from likes or dislikes. That may be true, but firstly we want to see whether or not there exist common and universal judgements. Secondly, if they do, how can we justify them? Are they justifiable according to what the A(lamah and Russell have said?

We said that there are two kinds of ought and ought not; one kind is particular and individual which we regularly come across in everyday life. For instance, I ought to eat such food, I ought to wear such a dress, and so on. The second kind of imperatives, of which examples were cited, is universal in nature.

Now the question is what is the basis of such universal judgements? If we do not agree with the theologians in considering goodness and badness as objective attributes and hold that these notions ultimately pertain to man's relation to a thing, then how can we justify universal moral judgements?

First Theory

There are three kinds of justification. According to the first, man has certain urges which serve to fulfill his individual needs. For instance when hungry, he feels an urge for food. Man has also another kind of urges which are species oriented. That is, man may desire something which is not for his individual benefit but for the sake of others. For instance, man does like others to, go hungry in the same way that he does not want to remain hungry himself. God has created man such. If we accept this justification, then the Allamah's view becomes implausible for he holds that man's motives are consonant with his natural urges. That is, man's motives are subject to his individual nature.

He holds the principle of employment to be a universal principle and this conflicts with the foregoing justification. For according to it a self-seeking act is ordinary and mediocre, but when the same act is formed for the sake of others it is considered to be sublime and sacred. Here serving others is a criterion of sanctity and self-seeking a criterion of its absence.

If an act is meant for one's own benefit it is for individual benefit and if it is for others it is for mankind in general, and such an act is moral in nature. Thus the criterion of the moral or immoral character of an act depends in one sense on its being for one's own self or for the sake of others, that is, in its purpose being individual or universal. It is universality that gives value to an act although in other respects it is no different from an act done for personal and individual motives.

Accordingly, it is true that `It is good' means `I like it', but sometimes I may like something for myself and sometime for the sake of others. Inevitably, what I like for others and for their benefit takes a universal aspect (for it is not for the sake of any particular persons among others) and is permanent value. Accordingly, moral acts are also universal and permanent. A moral act is one that stems from liking others' good and benefit. This makes ethics universal and permanent. This approach to ethics also justifies certain cases like lying for the sake of some beneficial purpose. Why is truthfulness good? Because the general good lies in truthfulness.

If truthfulness should prove to be injurious then it is immoral, for truthfulness is not good in itself. The criterion of goodness is service to others. In cases where truthfulness amounts to betraying others, it becomes bad. Here ethics assumes solely asocial dimension (nowadays `ethics' is usually considered to mean social ethics).

Accordingly, we arrive at a conclusion that there is a universal principle in ethics which is eternal and permanent, although. it may have changing instances. There is a diference between the impermanence of an ethical principle and the impermanence of its instances. The question is whether moral principles are permanent or not. Accordingly to our justification moral acts are reducible to one immutable principle, that is, service to others.

Q: In fact this principle is a kind of hypothesis, that is, it is assumed that ethics is service to others, then it is declared that it is universal and permanent principle. However, someone may make some other assumption and hold that ethics means self-help in which case he would produce another immutable and universal principle.

A: You have missed the first premises. As I said there are certain issues on which all men make the same judgement. That-is, all viewpoints are identical about a certain act. Besides, all consider it a valuable act. Service to others is something about which I and you have the same feeling. Moreover, I view it as something sublime and above personal interests in the same way that you view it.

Then we posed the question as to how such a universal principle could exist when values like goodness and badness stem from likes and dislikes, which are changeable. Yes, if all likes were rooted in selfish motives, as Russell believes and as can be inferred from the Allamah's words, then such an objection could be valid, but not if it is held that man is created with two kinds of motives.

Q: The word `others' in the foregoing discussion is somewhat ambiguous. It seems that it cannot be taken in an absolute sense. For example, a soldier who fights for the interest of foreigners, fights for others but his act is not ethical.

A: By `others' I mean mankind. That is, an act that is for the sake of mankind, not for the benefit of one individual and to the detriment another. We have an individual ego as well as a collective ego, which includes a person's family and relations (every tyrant is a benefactor for his family). Here the concept of the self is extended. Moral acts go beyond the limit of the ego and sometimes transcend even the domain of humanity (being for the sake of God). Morality begins where the confines of the ego are transcended.

However, this theory cannot be accepted due to the objections that arise against it on the basis of the Allamah's theory, which cannot be set aside so simply by conceding that there is a disharmony between man's conscious being and his individual nature. For that would mean that individual nature moves in one direction and his conscious being in another, solely pursuing the perfection of species without attending to individual perfection. The result would be that man's conscious being, which is at the service of his nature-and so it must be-will be brought into the service of the species without any concern for the individual's interests.

Q: On the basis of what you have said, service to the species is also part of man's nature?

A: No. Service to species is not part of individual nature, but man takes pleasure in helping others and that is not without reason. For individual nature cannot derive pleasure without moving towards perfection. According to Ibn Sina if man feels pleasure, it does not mean that nafure and feeling move on different independent courses. Rather it is nature that achieves its perfection, and when that happens pleasure is felt if it is perceived through knowledge by presence.

That is, the very movement of nature from potentiality to perfection is identical with pleasure when perceived through knowledge by presence. Pleasure is nature's attainment to perfection when it is perceivable. It is impossible for man to take pleasure without nature attaining a perfection.

Second Theory

There is another theory advocated by some contemporary thinkers. According to it, it is impossible for man to desire anything that is unrelated to his own self. Whatever the individual enjoys doing is ultimately related to his own self. However, man has two selves: an individual self and a collective self. Biologically man is an individual, but from the social point of view he has also a social self.

The other point that Durkheim and others have made-and Allamah Tabatabai has derived it from the Qur'an without being aware of their ideas-is that society has also a self and personality which is real and objective. Society is not a sum total of individuals in the sense of a numericat totality, and it is not the case that it is individuals who are fundamental and they merely influence society.

Rather, society is a real and unique compound of individuals (of course, it is different from natural compounds in which individual elements totally lose their independent identity). In this kind of composition, individuals, who retain their separate wills and independence, share in a single self. Every member has a feeling of possessing two selves; sometime it is conscious of the individual self and sometime of the social self. According to some sociologists society reaches self-consciousness in the individual; that is, society is conscious of its being in the individual being.

The sufis and gnostics hold a similar view. William James also has a similar view. With certain a difference the gnostics believe in a kind of unity among the souls and hold that the real self is the universal self. They say that man mistakenly considers his own as a distinct self and they ultimately reduce the real self to God, believing that the individual self is nothing more than a manifestation of that real self. It is as if there were a universal spirit that reveals itself in different individuals and all these selves derive from the one Divine self.

William James also arrived at the same conclusion through psychological experiences. He holds that there is an inner connection between individual selves of which they are often unaware. One who purifies his self can get to know the contents of consciousness of other selves through that inner connection (like wells that are connected to each other under the ground while they are separate on the surface).

This connection stems from their union with the Divine source. But sociologists are of the view that individuals on merging in society develop a social self which is a real cultural entity. Sometime man is conscious of this self which is not his individual self but a universal social self. Accordingly man's has two kinds of activities those motivated by individual motives and others prompted by social motives.

According to the first theory man has dual motives, one of which is directed to serves his own self and the other to serve others. According to the second theory man has two selves and two sets of feelings: the

individual self and feeling which serve the individual self and another self and feeling which serve the collective self.

A moral act is one which is not motivated by the individual self but by the collective self. The collective self is permanent and universal. The conclusion that follows from the second theory is that every action that stems from the collective self is a moral act and that which stems from the individual self is not moral in nature. Of course, the instances of this principle may vary, but in any case this can be a universal and permanent principle.

Third Theory

There is a third theory according to which it is impossible that man should do anything which is unrelated to the domain of his self and has no relation to his personality, being exclusively in the service of something external and without being related to the realm of his being. Man, however, has two selves, higher and lower.

That is, man is a being with dual aspects. In one aspect he is an animal like other animals and in the other he has a higher reality. It is amazing why Allamah Tabatabai did not advance such a view, for it is consistent with his own principles including those relating to ethics. When we speak of `man's nature,' we mean man's reality, not merely his physical nature.

Man has an ontological reality and his emotional being is subordinate to that reality. The ontological being of man one plane consists of his animal being and on a higher plane of his spiritual being.

Man completely realizes this higher self in himself or rather considers it his more original self. When animal needs conflict with his judgement based on reason and will and he wishes to subject his animal needs to his reason there may be two kinds of consequences. At times he succeeds and at other time he fails.

For instance, in the matter of food and its quantity, reason has its own judgement whereas his appetite requires something else. When man yields to his appetite he has a feeling of defeat, and when he overcomes his appetite he feels victorious, while in reality he has neither been defeated by anyone nor has he been victorious over anyone.

Here one aspect of his existence is dominated r by another aspect. Apparently, he should feel either defeated or victorious in both cases, for both belong to the realm of his existence. But practically we see that it is not so. When reason dominates over appetite, he has a feeling of victory and when appetite overcomes reason he feels defeated.

That is because his real self is the one associated with reason and will, and his animal aspect constitutes his lower self. Actually the lower self forms a prelude to his real self. If we believe in such a duality in man's being then we can justify ethical principles in the following manner.

Man has certain perfections by virtue of his spiritual self. These perfections are real and not conventional, for man is not only body but soul as well. Any act that is consistent with man's spiritual perfection is valuable, and any act that is irrelevant to the higher aspect of our soul is an ordinary and mediocre act.

I agree with the Allamah, Russell, and others that good and bad, ought and ought-not derive from man's likes and dislikes. But the question is: the likes or dislikes of which self are to taken as the criterion, those of the higher self or those of the lower self? Moral value arises if it is the higher self that likes.

This is the reason why ethics is felt to have a higher station. That man sees one aspect of his existence and acts pertaining to it as possessing sublimity is not a mental construct or convention. Rather, that is because he feels that aspect to be a more perfect and stronger aspect of his being. All his perfections derive from that aspect of his existence and its intensity, and all defects derive from its weakness.

In accordance with this approach, virtues like honesty, truthfulness, kindness, mercy, beneficence and the like are notions which have affinity to the higher self. The philosophers have also said that practical wisdom relates to voluntary acts from the viewpoint of being more perfect and excellent.

They relate the matter ultimately to the soul, and maintain that the human soul possesses two kind of perfections: theoretical and practical. Theoretical perfection of soul lies in the knowledge of the realities of the world and the higher virtues are considered practical perfection of the soul. That is, they develop the soul practically and brings about a harmony in its relation with the body and pave the way for the real perfection of the soul.

Here we reach a most significant Islamic principle which has not been discussed by the philosophers. That principle is as follows: man has an innate nobility and sublimity which is the same as his spiritual being and the Divine breath. Subconsciously he senses that dignity within himself. In confrontation with actions and habits he ascertains whether they are compatible with his innate nobility or not. When he feels that there is a compatibility and harmony, he regards it as good and virtuous, otherwise as evil and vicious. In the same way that animals are guided by instinct to what is beneficial or harmful for them, the human soul has perfections transcending nature and some actions and habits are compatible with those perfections.

Universal values relating to good and evil, oughts and ought-hots may be justified in the following manner: Human beings are created alike in respect of that in which their spiritual perfection lies, with similar and uniform likes and viewpoints. Although physically and naturally all men live in different conditions and situations and with varying physical needs, but they are equally situated in respect to their spiritual perfection.

Inevitably, in that domain likes and dislikes and notions of what is good and evil assume a uniform, universal and permanent aspect. All moral virtues, whether individual or social, such as patience and the like, can be explained from this viewpoint. The two theories mentioned earlier can explain only social values like self-sacrifice, helping others, etc., but they cannot explain values like patience, fortitude and so on. The last theory on the contrary can explain all moral values.

Though I agree with the view that all perceptions of good and evil signify a thing's relation with its perfection, nevertheless such perceptions of good and evil can be universal and permanent.

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