

Aqeedah Corner: Thinking Process

by Iyad Hilal

Introduction:

This is article 3 in a series that addresses how the Aqeedah is to be taken. Previously, it was concluded that the Aqeedah must be reached through the mind. Then the logical and scientific ways of thinking were discussed and shown to be invalid methods to reach the basic belief. In this issue, the rational way of thinking and role of the mind are discussed.

THINKING PROCESS

It was mentioned before that the process of thinking occurs when one or more of the senses falls upon a subject matter, which is then transferred to the brain and linked to previous information about that subject matter. After the linking with previous information and a judgement is made, that the process of thinking has occurred. Therefore, the necessary components of thought can be summarized as: a subject or subject matter, the senses, the able brain, and previous information. If there is an absence of any of these components, it is impossible for a thought to take place. We can illustrate this process by discussing a book written in the chinese language. If this book were being read by a person who had no clue about the structure, syntax, or even letters of the chinese language, it would be impossible for him to discern anything whatsoever from the contents of the book. There is a subject matter (the book itself), the sense of sight falls on the letters of the book and the images of the lettering is transferred to the brain. However, since there is no previous information regarding the chinese language, no thought can be generated regarding the contents of the book.

Today, humans get previous information from each other. The question however is where did the first man get his previous information from? This question is answered by the Quran, with the story of Adam (as). Allah the exalted informs us-in translation:

"And He taught Adam all the names, then He showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these if you are truthful. They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge except what you have taught us, Indeed you are the Knower, the Wise. He said: O Adam, inform them of their names, then He said: Didn't I tell you I know the secret of the heavens and the earth?"

So the Creator of the universe stated that He was the one who gave the first man, our father Adam, the previous information (names of everything). Today in the West, the scientists and scholars, are still at a loss in determining the mind, and its components. Thus, it is not uncommon to find articles in Time Magazine, or documentaries on public broadcast television, wondering, debating, or speculating upon the mind. The Communists came closest to determining the mind. They claimed that the mind was a reflection of matter on the brain, and they ruled out altogether the role of previous information. This was necessary for them since admitting the need for previous information to think is ultimately submitting to a Creator. Since communism is based on materialism, and it's evolution, thereby dismissing the role of a Creator, the previous information also had to be dismissed. The communist theory about the mind is also invalid because the brain does not have any ability to reflect information. It is not at all like a mirror, nor does it act like one, as they have defined it. So it is incorrect to say that the brain reflects information. Secondly, this hypothesis was put only to substantiate another hypothesis called Materialism or material evolution.

In the West, after the industrial revolution and the use of the scientific method of thinking which led to the success of the industrial revolution, the western scientists and scholars began to depend solely on the scientific way of thinking in all aspects of life. Science and the scientific method of thinking was not restricted to the physical and material sciences like physics, chemistry and thermodynamics, but went to cover fields like psychology, sociology, and anthropology. While the scientific method of thinking is valid in chemistry, astronomy and physics, it is invalid in psychology and sociology. The scientific method revolves around discarding any previous opinions about the subject being analyzed, then studying the object, taking it out of its natural environment,

observing its qualities and aspects, and then deriving formulas or conclusions based on the analyzed properties.

With regard to psychology, sociology, and any other science related to people, the scientific method is invalid because the behavior of people is controlled by their believed- in thoughts. So observing the actions of people with the intent of deriving conclusions or making generalizations may well lead to error. Without studying the thoughts which led to the action, or the creed and point of view of life which specified the thought, any conclusion that is derived is doubtful. Also it is not possible for emotions like fear, or greed to be placed under a microscope. One cannot study the components of the instincts, or isolate their location in the human body. Also this method cannot be used in policy analysis or in deriving divine rules. Consequently, the scientific method is limited to the areas and aspects that it can study i.e. the tangible matter. Western scientists and scholars, nonetheless use this method in all areas. This method is also an invalid method to be used in arriving at the Ultimate Conclusion. The Creator himself cannot be put under the scalpel or disector of the biologist, and consequently, this method is limited with regard to arriving at the Ultimate Conclusion.

For example, Rashad Khalifa tried to use the scientific method in relation to the Islamic Aqeedah. He denied some ayats of the Quran, since it did not conform to his theory of the number 19. After this he claimed that he was a messenger, saying that Allah took a covenant from all the messengers, about his messengership. (We seek refuge in Allah from believing this). It must be understood that the Quran is not a math book, a physics book, or a biological book. The messenger of Allah (saaws) encouraged the people to study and observe in the laboratories. However, when it came to halal and haram, the human mind had no say in their legislation. We find other muslims, overloading, stretching, and contorting certain ayats to conform to certain biological findings and astronomical breakthroughs. For example, the ayat from Surat-ur-Rahman where Allah says-in translation:

"O company of Jinns and Humans, if you can get out of the heavens and earth, then do so, but you cannot do it except with an authority (sultan)." (Surah Rahman: 33)

When the superpowers built their rockets and space shuttles, some muslims used this ayat as a proof to claim that their efforts in space technology was in vain, since Allah said that they would not get out of the heavens. When the Saudi prince Sultan, flew in one of the space shuttles, we find some muslims saying that now it was possible to get out of the realms of the heaven and earth, because this is the Sultan that Allah mentioned in the ayat. (We seek refuge in Allah from having this defeated mentality.) The ayaat are talking about the Day of Judgement, and Allah is informing mankind and the jinns that they will not escape giving account on this Yawmil Hisab (day of reckoning). Since the Quran is not a science book, we should not try to understand it as one. To be able to understand our responsibility toward Islam and toward the Quran, it is necessary to discuss and understand the role of the mind in Islam.

ROLE OF THE MIND

When the West embarked upon its Renaissance, Reformation, and industrial revolution, the world witnessed a change in the role of the mind. Up to that point, when the Islamic State was the super power, there was a certain role that the mind played in life, but after these events and occurrences, when the West wrestled the role of superpower away from the Islamic State, this role also switched. The West was now implementing the democratic form of ruling, where humans were determining and legislating rules for other humans. We find for example in America, an assembly was formed from the influential people, which drafted a constitution. This assembly then dissolved itself to be replaced by the authority of the constitution. This new role of the mind, a role where the mind was now the legislator of rules and laws of the land, became widespread throughout the West. When the West attacked and dismantled the Islamic State, educated the puppet rulers, ministers of state, and

other influential people in the Muslim lands, Muslims witnessed a change in the role of the mind in the Muslim world.

The earliest instance of this new change became apparent in 1857 A.D. (1275 A.H.), with the introduction of the Ottoman penal code, and one year later, the Laws and Rights and Commerce. These codes were not implemented at all and only rules that were based on Islam were being implemented in the Islamic State, but we bring this example to illustrate the change in the role of the mind in the Islamic world.

From the time of Prophet Muhammad (saaws) up to 1918, with the coup that ousted Sultan Abdul-Hameed, the Muslim world was ruled by Islam. The shift in the role of the mind in Islam is undeniably attached to this fact.

Islam as an ideology is comprised of two parts, aqeedah and systems (which emanate from the aqeedah to organize and systemize man's affairs in his life). These systems are nothing more than a collection of rules present in a source called the Ahkam Shareeyah (divine rules). Islam has also predetermined roles for the mind in both areas, the aqeedah and the systems or divine rules.

As it has been already stated in earlier chapters, Islam obligates the use of the mind and the rational method in arriving at the Ultimate Conclusion (belief in Allah). Have also been mentioned are various examples of Prophets and other people who used this rational method in arriving at the Ultimate Conclusion, and in proving it to other non-muslims, as in the case of Abu-Haneefah and Ibrahim (as). Consequently, the mind is an imperative condition towards arriving at the aqeedah.

As for rules in general, they are designed to treat and settle needs and problems which the human faces in life. The human being needs to eat, sleep, wear clothes, and have a roof over his head. These biological needs have to be satisfied or else the human being would die. The human being also desires to own things and naturally seeks to protect himself, he also has urges towards the opposite sex and seeks to perpetuate himself and his species, and he also has urges to worship things that he feels are greater than himself. All these instincts, although manifested in different emotions, need to be satisfied or else misery and chaos will occur to the human being; not death. Because if instincts were not satisfied in one way, they would manifest themselves in other ways. Consequently, their satisfaction requires rules and treatments that organize, satisfy and makes the human being content.

Since the human being is limited in the place he lives, and the time in which he lives and dies, Islam has determined that he does not have the ability to determine rules that treat and satisfy the instincts and biological needs. When man is left to do so, as history and our current situation shows, chaos and misery erupts. This is because man can only determine rules that at the most can satisfy himself and others like him in that particular area in which he lives. He does not experience the situations occurring in other parts of the world, or that will come in the future, and when he determines rules, these rules do not satisfy anyone else but him and others like him, but not all mankind. Since he tries to impose these rules on others, chaos erupts because these rules are biased to the one who determined them. Allah, since He created the human being, is the only One who is capable of legislating rules that treat and satisfy the instincts and biological needs in harmony. **"Verily, ruling lies with none but Allah."** (Surah Yusuf: 40). And He has done so by giving us the Divine Texts or the Ahkam Shareeyah. And He has also told us that Islam will be applicable to all mankind up until the Day of Judgement. **"Today I have perfected your Deen for you, and completed my blessing on you, and I have accepted Islam as your Deen."** (Maidah: 3). This means that these Divine Texts have the ability to treat and satisfy the biological needs and instincts of all humanity up until the Day of Judgement.

Consequently, the role of the mind in the areas of systemizing his life is not to legislate the rules, as the West has been doing. Rather the role of the mind in the systems, is to study each problem which man faces in order to deduce the correct rule that applies to each problem from the divine texts i.e.

Alqura'n and the Sunnah. The Divine Texts have the ability to treat any problem that man will face in this universe, but since man is limited, these rules are not always apparent to him, so he needs to study the problem and study the rules from the Divine Texts and derive the rule that will treat the problem.

It is unfortunate that today, we find muslims making statements like; "It is blasphemy to prove the existence of Allah, this cannot be done with the mind!!", and then they say, "Cutting the hands of the thief and stoning the adulterer to death is inhumane, I don't think it should be done now. That was for the old days when people were uncivilized." Such common statements show that the role of the mind has been switched among Muslims. And the result is that muslims are unable to think anymore, and as a result their thinking is done for them by their enemies. This is because there is a specific role of the mind. The mind has limits and areas that it can think into. Islam was sent to mankind and can only be implemented and applied and adhered to in the way that Allah has determined. This way conforms undeniably with the role of the mind. Consequently, since Islam is understood by the mind, the Muslim has to also understand the role of his mind toward understanding Islam. So that after we become convinced of the Aqeedah, we rush willingly to implement the rules which emanate and are based on this Aqeedah believing that they have the ability to treat all of our problems in life.

Consequently, when we go to the Divine Texts (Quran and Sunnah), we have to do so being always cognizant of the role of the mind. Thus there are certain ayahs in the Quran that cannot be thought into due to the lack of previous information. As we mentioned before, these aspects deal with the essence of Allah, like the shape, form or texture of Allah's hands or face. This does not mean that since we are limited in this aspect that we cannot prove Allah's existence. Also, there are other parts of the Divine Texts that contain stories about the previous peoples and prophets, and the intent here is to teach a lesson or to prove a point about Allah's omnipotence and his tawheed. Other aspects of the Quran are the encouragement and entreaty to mankind to ponder and contemplate the universe to arrive at the Divine Conclusion. And the last aspect is the aspect of divine rules to be implemented in solving our daily problems. It is quite unfortunate that today we spend an inordinate amount of time pondering the essence of Allah, whether He is coming or how does he descend, or the essence of his mercy; while on the other hand we do not make any effort whatsoever in deriving a ruling system, or even developing an Islamic global political angle with which we view the global political events. The origin of this problem lies with the switching of the role of the mind in the Aqeedah and Systems.

(to be continued in the next issue Insha Allah)

Ar-Raya Magazine, January 1993