Religions

Religions
and the Sanctity of the Human Soul

RELIGIONS Journal

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RELIGIONS is an annual and bi-lingual (English and Arabic) publication in interfaith studies published by the Doha International Center for interfaith Dialogue with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue and the relation between Islam and the other faiths.

In a world of the religious misunderstandings, violence and hijacking of religious faith by political ideologies the *RELIGIONS* intends to provide a welcome space of encounters and reflections upon the commonalities and shared goals of the great religions of the world. The title of the Journal suggests religious diversity, while suggesting the need to explore this diversity to develop keys to both a deepening of one's faiths and a meaningful opening to other creeds. The Quran suggests a commonality of faiths and a striving for the Truth within the context of religious diversity:

"To reach among you, we have prescribed a law and an open way. If God had willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His Plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so, strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.» (The Table Spread: 48, version of Yusuf Ali).

As a refereed international publication published by the Doha International Center for interfaith Dialogue, *RELIGIONS* finds its inspiration in the universal message of the monotheistic broadly understood, while engaging the various religious faiths that share common principles and values within this broad defined context.

RELIGIONS encourages comparative studies and interreligious exchanges in a spirit of dialogue and mutual enrichment. Its aim is to promote understanding between religious faithful of various traditions by exploring and studying the rich field of their theological and spiritual common grounds, their mutual and constructive relationships, past, present, and potential future, a better understanding of the causes of their conflicts, and the current challenges of their encounter with atheism, agnosticism and secular societies.

In addition, *RELIGIONS* wishes to highlight and revive the universal horizon of Islam by fostering studies in the relationship between Islam and other religions and civilizations in history, the arts, and religious studies. This is also away to revitalize intellectual discourse in Islam, within the context of an interactive and cross-fertilizing engagement with other faiths.

 The essays published in *RELIGIONS* exclusively engage the intellectual responsibility of the authors, and necessarily reflect the views of the **DICID**. They are published as part of an ongoing dialogue on religions, and should not be construed as the expression of the positions of any sponsoring organizations.

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Editorial

In advancing the legacy of the *RELIGIONS* journal in presenting in-depth scientific research specialized in humanitarian issues from the lens and perspective of religions by groups of diverse researchers of different cultures and religions specializing in interfaith relations and intercultural communication between civilizations, we place in your hands, dear reader, the fifteenth issue of *RELIGIONS* published by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, under the title **«Religions and the Sanctity of the Human Soul»**. You will find that this issue is distinguished in its subject matter and selected research. Despite the diversity of intellectual and cultural perspectives in both the Arabic and English research, all religious traditions agree on the complete affirmation of the sanctity of the human soul. Allah says in Quran:

"whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely."

(Surat Al-Maida : 32)

The subject of this issue was chosen in order to provide concrete academic studies that would highlight the real picture religions have towards acts of killing and infringements upon human life; especially in a world that is experiencing a real crisis steeped in violence of all forms that claim the lives of many innocent people in conflicts that have no justified grounds at all. Unfortunately, these reprehensible actions and behaviors often hide those responsible behind allegations

attributed to religious intolerance, extremism and ignorance, while religion is infact innocent of them. Religions affirm that God Almighty has honored man, made him inviolable, and granted him - as a human being - the right to a secure life far from intimidation, violence, aggression and brutality. There is no greater sin and crime than killing a soul unjustly, or intimidating and assaulting it; if a person has the right to live on this earth, he also has a duty to preserve his life, whether it is his own life or the lives of others.

You will find in this voluminous issue research papers in Arabic that discuss various issues such as the right to life and the prohibition of killing the human soul in religions, issues of suicide and euthanasia and

the position of religions towards them, and tacking its cognitive and religious treatment. As for the English research, it includes the right to abortion in light of the teachings of the three great monotheistic religions, suicide in ancient Hindu scriptures, towards a social and economic practice of the sanctity of the world, suicide and teenagers, and Reflections on the human soul in Jewish thought, along with various other research papers that we were keen on choosing to take note of this important   issue.

Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi

Editor-in-Chief

Chairman of the Board of Directors of   the Doha International Center for Interfaith   Dialogue

A Dialogue between "*Religions*" and

His Excellency, Prof. Ivo Josipović

President of the Republic of Croatia (2010 to 2015)

Dialogue conducted by:Dr. Senad Mrahorović

Religions: The world is experiencing a series of crises steeped in the rise of racism, xenophobia, far-right nationalism, ethnic and religious genocides and wars - claiming the innocent lives of many. What in Your opinion and expertise as jurist and former President, are the root causes for the dehumanization of minority groups facing persecution?

Prof. Ivo Josipović The causes of racism, xenophobia, violence and hatred are many. First of all, there are huge economic interests of certain social groups, including states. Today we can see how specific resources, such as oil and gas, or rare metals, are key tools for generating wars and all the evil that comes along. Furthermore, there are historical roots of some of the above phenomena, most often former wars and unfinished processes of reconciliation between peoples, cultures, religions and states. Additionally, many leaders do not adhere to the international or local laws in pursuing their interests. On the other hand, some political doctrines and distorted or abused religious messages can also lead to violence, hatred and discrimination. In fact, it is almost unbelievable how many people for certain interests or poisoned by hatred, often irrationally are willing to do evil, even genocide against the other.

Religions: How, in Your opinion can governments intervene to combat these widespread violations against human life, both locally and internationally? And what role in Your opinion can interfaith dialogue play at the grassroots and higher levels in fostering tolerance?

Prof. Ivo Josipović: Of course, governments can do a lot to eradicate hatred and violence, both in their own countries, and internationally. Unfortunately, it is actually some governments that often encourage or at least, tolerate discrimination, hatred and conflict. Every constructive dialogue, especially the one between religious communities, can be a valuable contribution to peace, coexistence and mutual understanding. This relates particularly to those societies where religious leaders hold a great influence on their communities. I personally believe that such leaders have an enormous responsibility to keep and promote peace, both, locally and globally. In this regard, it is important in the spirit of ecumenism and mutual appreciation to properly raise young generations. Of course, it is of vital interests that all people, especially youth, are given the opportunity to live, learn and work within the conditions that are worthy of civilized human being. Radicalism is often associated with poverty and

the absence of education of youth. Uneducated and ignorant people are much easier to manipulate or abuse their feelings. When it comes to raising new generations, the media, especially the internet, represents a huge challenge. On the one hand, it can incite hatred and crime, on the other hand, it can be a powerful channel for mutual acquaintance, understanding and building friendship. Therefore, the great power is certainly concentrated in the media as the great responsibility lays in the hands of those who control them. It is imperative that the media scene is overseen by an independent, democratic regulators who, among other things, are to be tasked with preventing hate speech and indoctrination through hatred of others, especially youth. Surely, according to the best criteria of a democratic society, this care should be taken not to jeopardize press freedom which as such, does not encompass the incitement of hatred, violence and war.

Religions: Between top-down and bottom-up approaches, which would be most effective in protecting and preserving the lives of marginalized and persecuted ethnic and religious groups from extreme ideologies?
Prof. Ivo Josipović: Surely, education and good life prospects, such as

employment and a decent life are very important in this regard. From an early age, children should be taught ecumenism, multiculturalism as well as the meaning of equality between different people and the notion of respect. Mutual respect for dignified human rights such as religious feelings and freedom to believe or not to believe, is extremely important and must be part of the culture of all societies.

Religions: Religions have long been manipulated and misconstrued to justify violent killings and crimes throughout history. The ongoing religious extremism or terrorism or the Balkan wars of 1990s may be taken as recent examples. Should governments play an active role in countering the misuse of religious teachings to support criminal and violent activities and in what ways?
Prof. Ivo Josipović: Unfortunately, there are many cases of conflicts and crimes that have occurred through various abuses of religion. In some instances, incentives for hatred and crime were initiated by religious circles, in others, religious circles were seen as close associates with certain politics. But in all cases, abuse of religion and politics went hand in hand. Responsible governments certainly have a duty to combat

hatred and crime, regardless of their nature and origin. Of course, this is particularly related to those who abuse a specific faith. Incitement to violence, terrorism and killing is simply a criminal act, even though it might have been motivated by the misuse or misconception of certain religious doctrines. However, repression is always delayed. It is best to prevent crimes. In this regard, when it comes to possible abuses of religion, religious officials and believers themselves, play a key role. They have the best opportunity to prevent such abuses of faith in order to avert the spread of evil.

Religions: Numerous conventions concerning human rights have been issued by UN or other relevant institutions in order to protect the basic rights of mankind such as life, liberty, religious beliefs, freedom of expression, and alike. On the other hand, all religions teach that the human soul in its nature is sacred as it is a God-given entity and as such it ought to be honored and respected across the board. However, such a perspective on human life is disregarded and violated in ongoing conflicts and crimes where people suffer

unjustly, costing their lives. Where do You think the problem lies in the enactment of these conventions and religious teachings? It seems that some other interests and issues are prioritized over human dignity and rights.

Prof. Ivo Josipović: My personal understanding of faith in a modern society, about which I have at least some relevant considerations, is such that faith in God above all, should be turned to benefits of man. Needless to say, it involves the respect of human life and dignity. I simply cannot understand how anyone who believes in God can agree to commit crimes in the name of God. Likewise, even those who do not believe should maintain within themselves a sense of

humanity and a desire to live in peace and love. It is up to religious leaders to interpret their faith as a faith of love and peace. The differences that exist in the world today regarding understanding of human rights and freedoms, morality, various customs and lifestyle, should have not been taken as a reason or justification for war, terrorism and crime. This is particularly important in cases where the misuse of a specific religion is intended to cover certain secular, economic and political interests. We must also be able to accept differences between us and to seek in the dialogue between people of different religious orientations constructive modalities for the coexistence and progress of humanity.

Religions: Do You believe that religious teachings and values on the sanctity and preservation of life should be considered a useful resource for mitigative policies on human conflicts?

Prof. Ivo Josipović: Of course! The sanctity of human life is a concept maintained by all faiths and also by people who are not necessarily believers. It is a distinguished doctrinal and moral foundation on which people around the world can and must build the concept of a society, free from wars and violence. Maybe today it looks like a utopia due to the fact that even after the relatively new experiences of the First and Second World Wars, and the multitude of smaller but no less cruel and terrible wars, humanity has failed to build lasting peace. Today, unfortunately we are still witnessing that people in large numbers are killed in wars and acts of terrorism. My country Croatia, as well as neighboring countries at the end of the twentieth century, experienced the horrors of war. Likewise, at the end of the twentieth century, the Srebrenica genocide was committed on the soil of Europe. Due to the wars in which neither believers nor churches have thought enough about the sanctity of life and the need for peace, and where certain politics were waging conquering wars, the Balkans has

been badly wounded. However, today we have achieved some sort of peace and stability, but many other nations have not. People elsewhere are still dying, towns and villages are being destroyed, cultural heritage vanished, economy and quality of life reached to the edge, sometimes below the limits of humanity. Politicians above all, then religious leaders, believers and all of those who care about humanity, should keep in mind the idea of the sanctity of human life and the dignity of man.

Religions: Is it justifiable for media, popular narratives and political parties to single out the Islamic religion as a scapegoat in relation to present-day religious extremism and terrorism when in fact, all religions, including Islam, fully affirm the sanctity of human life and as such confer honor and respect of human beings? Why do you think such narratives are influential in justifying genocides and persecution?

Prof. Ivo Josipović: It is true that wars and human suffering are led or caused in various ways by people of different faiths. When it comes to Muslims, I believe that they are the greatest victims of a distorted Islam being misused for violence and hatred. The nature of terrorism

based on the misconception of Islam as a religion, is primarily aimed against the majority of Muslims who understand Islam as a faith of humanity and peace. Therefore, it is completely wrong to accuse Islam and Muslims as a whole of terrorism, violence and cruelty. Unfortunately, there are Muslims who, in a distorted understanding of religion, go to wars and commit acts of terror, just as there are those from the Western world who do similar things, perhaps by slightly different methods. It is a grave mistake to generalize and attribute the crime to any particular religious community or people. Responsibility for a crime should always be treated as an individual case.

Religions: What role can the academic community play in resolving interreligious and intercultural tensions around the globe?

Prof. Ivo Josipović: It is essential that young people in academia are raised on the fertile ground of ecumenism. This is only possible if we learn about each other and from each other, that is, through a constant and constructive dialogue. Academia by its very nature, should be the best place to learn and engage in dialogue. In due course, it would be completely wrong to use in order to convince others of the correctness of a particular faith, and implicitly to pint out the faults of other. Such dialogue necessarily leads to conflict. Getting to know each other and the discussion should always be presupposed by accepting and respecting other people's religious or other views. Such a perspective should lead us globally as well as locally, especially in those multi-confessional communities, we live and work together in a friendly and peaceful environment.

Religions: How impactful in Your opinion and experience is interfaith and intercultural dialogue in resolving issues, especially related to the emigration and assimilation of refugees in EU countries?

Prof. Ivo Josipović: To answer this question on a paper is much simpler than the real problems that, both migrants, and their new communities wherein they are considered as minority, actually face. The complex issues of faith and cultural identity of each individual in a new and different environment create problems on both sides. The ideal solution for me would be to find a sufficient level of integration so that migrants in their new homeland can function as equal members of society in the long run. This would be possible by accepting the fundamental values of the society

they are to be integrated in. On the other hand, one should never think that a migrant, by a process of assimilation should lose his or her national, cultural and religious identity. Yes to integration, no to assimilation! As long as a migrant by arriving in a new environment, enriches his or her new community with new knowledge and culture. The experiences of European countries, not only recently, but also over many decades, in this regard are different. It turned out that the concept of accepting migrants in a way that they become isolated from the rest of society in their new environment, is not a good practice. Just as migrants need to be ready and accept their new environment, the society that receives them must be ready for dialogue and acceptance of a diversity.

Religions: University of Birmingham has established the Global Philosophy of Religion Project to make philosophy a truly global field. "The philosophy of religion addresses the most fundamental issues concerning religious concepts, beliefs and practice. Among these are the existence and nature of deities, evil and suffering in the world, religious and mystical experiences, and death and the possibility of immortality…" Similarly, the Georgetown University has its own Religious Freedom Project that also engages in academic investigation of religious discrimination and violence. How significant are these projects, and do you think that parallel projects should be fostered in other parts of the world in order to address and bring better understanding of issues concerning religions and cultures?

Prof. Ivo Josipović: The projects of these universities are on the trail of learning and understanding different faiths and embracing diversity in general. It is especially important that the widest circle of people develop a sense of the need for dialogue and mutual acceptance. Discrimination on any grounds, religious, ethnic or other, directly affects members of minor communities, but also drastically harms society as a whole. History teaches us that discrimination and violence against a minority group tends to spread to others. That is why the projects you are talking about are particularly good examples of how bridges are built between people, religions and cultures; how ecumenism is built and a community life worthy of human being.

The Soul's Precedence in Everyday Communications

Alena Demirović
General Secretary at the Institute
for the Research of Genocide

Dr. Mustafa Sefo
Assistant professor at the University of
the Political Science in Sarajevo

Abstract

This article presents a theoretical analysis of the influence and religious importance a person's soul has in the realm of everyday discourse. The ability humans have to communicate is viewed as one of our species defining characteristics. Being that the human soul and spirituality play a significant role in all religions, it is understandable that we would accord «pièce de résistance» to the art and skill of humanity's ability to communicate.

Introduction

Human communication is the complex process of sending and receiving information. Communication involves a person's physical behavior and speech. The most profound schools of philosophies such as Taoism, Logical Positivism, and Rationalism, to name a few, present that the only security of human fate is to perish. However, religious ideologies present a way for a human identity to live on, the soul. In the end, only a human's soul is immortal, as no man has ever received the gift of physical immortality. God grants immortality when the gift of a soul enters a corporeal form at conception. A soul does not disintegrate with the physical condition but emerges after death to go back to its creator, to the one who knows its purpose - God. Such a process is known as the full circle of communication between the creator, God, and the human soul: «O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him), So enter among My servants and enter into My garden.»[1]

A Gift of Communication

The concept of a soul is perceived uniquely by various religions and scientific disciplines such as philosophy, psychology (which is often defined as the science of the soul) and sociology. Throughout history, scientists such as Aristotle, Plato, Ghazali have studied the nature of the soul. The human soul occupies a central place and importance over other human attributes. The soul is seen as eternal, constantly present with the ability to travel to the Better World with the help of the angel Azrail. It is seen as an integral yet separate piece of a human being: «Say: The angel of death who is in charge of this, he will take your souls.»[2]

Man was created by combining the body/material and the soul/spiritual; the tangible/physical and the intangible/ non-physical make a man. Man as such is composed of these two dimensions that form a single whole. A body without a soul is neither living nor a human being because it is the soul that grants life to the body. The soul maintains and reflects our energy. It contains our specifics and characteristics. It is composed of our peculiarity, personality, and personal elements. It is what makes us unique. The soul is the content of our body. It fills and gives life to our material form. God's

chosen creature is the human being. He gifted humans with advanced communication skills. Thus, it happens that two souls, without any communication, approach, or move away from each other, are attracted or repelled by the nature of the energy that the soul radiates. Modern times have imposed many daily cares and burdens upon man. This plight does not offer time for contemplation of the soul. Therefore, when people talk about the soul, they should examine their manner of intrapersonal communication. This inner dialogue precedes other forms of communication. It represents an internal contemplation, harmony of physical sensations or feelings that constantly occur in the mind and heart of everyone. This communicating is precisely the situation where a man enters the depths of his soul, where he engages himself and realizes his place in relation to other people. The products of intrapersonal communication are a person's thoughts, emotions, meditations, dreams, intuition, premonitions, anxieties, and hopes. We communicate within the confines of our mind the moment we form a thought, when we begin to write, when we prepare for a meaningful conversation, analyze our actions, or are ready to make important life decisions.

The intrapersonal communication

segment occupies a vital place within the communicative observations, especially from a religious standpoint. It is man's obligation to remember God and express his thankfulness towards Him. He reflects on his good behavior towards other people, his responsibility to society and the world in which he lives, his actions and deeds, all of which are a form of intrapersonal communication. Unfortunately, the average modern man is often unaware of this as Chittick puts it: «The intellect is luminous and seeks the good. How then can the dark ego vanquish it? The ego is in its own bodily home, and your intellect is a stranger; At its doorstep, a dog is an awesome lion.»[3]

Constantly re-examining one's deeds, whether they have been done or yet to be done, is both a human need and an obligation. People, who have been given the grace of light with reasoning and are endowed with such intellect, have the responsibility to have an inner conversation and reconsider their actions. We, as intelligent beings, must oblige to use such reasoning every day. The soul is the natural and safest refuge for a man from the world around him, but it is also a connection to that world. "Heart (in) sight is a deep, permanent contact of a created being with the creator, continuous and in the transcendent realities that the

creature is aware of. The best way for this self-control is for a person to try to follow himself constantly and be constantly ashamed and away from everything potentially bad. Vigilance over our heart and over our ego, our «I» leads us to purification, expurgation. All this can be achieved by cognizance (mind). It is possible to master in direct contact with God, prayer. That's the way."[4]

Man exists in a globalized world organized and regulated through technology and the media. These outside intermediaries form other avenues of sending and receiving communication. These interventions should help people orient and function in an abundant amount of information people receive every day. Yet, there is a moment when a person breaks away from the natural body and soul harmony and indulges in technology. Formal and mechanical communication with the help of technology, with all its features, is not natural to man. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the primary and natural contact that are part of man's biological needs. This need is reflected and met in all aspects of his life, which signifies the integrity of human relations and enables the connected action of people on various issues. Therefore, people communicate in different ways and for other reasons and needs.

A Way of Communication

Communication in religion is a specific phenomenon. This form of communication is infinite. It manifests itself in various ways; however, it has only one goal: it expresses an awareness of the Lord. Religious communication is performing duties to God and other people according to pious regulations. It is an awareness of duties to oneself, remembering God, mentioning God's names, thanking God, and praying to God for various life situations and against temptations. The human soul has a significant role and task in this communication. Its goal is to maintain a constant connection communicating with God. The soul's connection while communicating to God helps man remain pure, sincere, and devoted to Him (Muslim: devoted to God): "Indeed, he prospers who purifies it. And indeed he fails who obscures it."[5]

Communication precisely is the connection that enables devotion to God because, as an elementary process, it is present from the earliest stages of life, from the creation of man right up to the world's disappearance, known as the Judgment Day. Human society stems from all types of communication because it enables the joint social actions of people, which is the basis of all social phenomena. The relationship to oneself and to the society in which one finds oneself forms based on communication.

Communicologist Paul Watzlawick (1974) believes that communication is a «condition sine qua non» (a condition which without one cannot live) of human life and social order.

From this ascertainment, we can conclude that absolutely everything starts with communication (good or less good) and depends on it. Our every movement, gesture, sigh, intentional or unintentional facial expression, body language, the clothes we wear, as well as the words we utter, express our current state towards something. There is a well-known Hadith in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: «A smile is alms.» Therefore, we understand that every detail of our behavior, every articulation of our emotions is our self-presentation to others. It impacts the people in our surroundings and based on that self-presentation, others judge us to either accept or reject us. Unfortunately, though, often, our presentations can be miscommunicated and then are misunderstood.

«Dialogue is a domesticated form and content of actions and reactions, different moments of coexistence, meeting, understanding, expanding horizons with or next to someone...»[6] With our behavior, speech, and the way we dress, we make someone happy, disappointed or insulted. *Akhlaq*, a word often used by Muslims, refers primarily to human morality and good behavior. Still, it also signifies a soul characteristic if

we look at it from a linguistic aspect. It depends on the very nature of the soul, how we will articulate some of our thoughts or intentions in practice, that is, how we will transform intrapersonal communication into interpersonal and convey that topic to others.

The characteristics of every man's soul are different, and he behaves accordingly to such. For example, someone needs more intrapersonal communication to prepare for an act, someone less, and some not at all, i.e., some are scrupulous in every detail of their actions, some less, some not at all, and some do so spontaneously. Indeed, these are reflections of various characteristics of the soul. These traits depend upon many environmental factors from genetics, the prenatal period, childhood, level of education, geographical location, living conditions, economics. There are no two souls with the same characteristics, and each soul is unique, specific to itself. From the Islamic point of view, faith is innate and natural to man. Therefore, the need for humankind to communicate is innate and natural. For a man to manifest, maintain and live one's faith, there is a need to communicate verbally and non-verbally with the world. Most importantly: to manifest one's belief in connection through communication with God. Continuity of these processes is confirmation of the naturalness of faith. Just as continuity of communication confirms the genuineness and quality of humanity because communication has no beginning nor end, it is the need of man, and it does not cease. Therefore, *Iman* or a belief itself contains obligatory and continuous communication. Both internal, intimate, intrapersonal, verbal, external, and interpersonal.

Verbally, (but also believing and manifesting within the soul) by naming villages, learning the Qur'an, dhikr, while non-verbally (mentally and believing) thinking about God, about oneself, one's deeds, attitude and obligations towards the environment, people around oneself. These two types of communications (whether we are talking about faith or life in general) indeed cannot exist without each other. They complement each other and crystallize a complete interaction that can result in the right way and with the desired effects. The grace of speech was given by God to people, however with it comes the obligation to use such grace with thoughtful, beautiful address with an imperative of goodness and virtue as is so often mentioned in the Qur'an as God's word and God's way of communication.

«The Islamic intellectual tradition has usually not seen a dichotomy between intellect and intuition but

has created a hierarchy of knowledge and methods of attaining knowledge according to which degrees of both intellection and intuition become harmonized in an order encompassing all the means available to man to know, from sensual knowledge and reason to intellection and inner version or the «knowledge of the heart.»[7] Human beings believe that one's existence is a journey through good and evil and that their life is just trials and tribulations set by God. Man was told that this world is not his main nor his eternal abode; instead, it is life beyond this, the Afterlife. Human life on Earth is a gift given by God to human beings, and in return, God has ordered man to prove his worth through the temptations and challenges of life. His good deeds will earn him passage to Paradise. Whether one is a Catholic, Christian Muslim, or has no religion, whether one believes in God or not, this is philosophically nonpareil: «God takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die during their sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.»[8]

The art of communication or its secret is the ability to feel other people's happiness and misfortune and knowing how to express that empathy to others in our society. We can undoubtedly achieve such by using the discourse of intellectual and established branches of interfaith learning to convey our messages and ideas to a broader audience and fulfill our goal of effective communication within interfaith communities and beyond.

The power of speech is that it works with a sender and receiver to understand how the names, things, and natural occurrences are all manifested. In addition to the above mentioned, human beings are God's only creation to whom the ability to speak was granted. God created speech for human beings to reflect on the beauty, compassion, evil, and goodness of the world and all humankind. Even for Aristotle, humor, laughter, and comedy were the means of catharsis, implying that all were ways of effective communication to purify all that is false, repressive, or too serious. When we combine our body, mind, and soul, we create glorious speeches that symbolize and reflect God's most chosen creature, the human being. The art and skill of communication is the humanity itself as they both transcend the immediate purposes of survival by strengthening the social bonds among humans. These bonds produce positive emotions of empathy, hope, and joy that hold societies together. They can provide

the comfort of imagined security and connectedness in times of uncertainty. One important message to convey for all to understand is that the art of communication is the connection between how we express ourselves and the state of our inner being and vice-versa.

When we speak or write the truth, it becomes liberating. Combining the truth with supporting evidence from religions and everyday life becomes something more; it becomes the soul-searching remedy that fortifies one's faith. It helps reveal the secrets of the ghayb or the spiritual world that many long for, which in return help bring serenity to present life and prosperity in the Afterlife. In Islam, the freedom to express oneself is a right. This right includes seeking, receiving, and imparting any information no matter what form it comes in, whether it is delivered orally, in writing, or by any type of media, we have the right to have it at our disposal. We as a society

should hold any kind of religious communication sacred. Valuable ways of communicating can and are lost when we limit what is said or written about God, our religious beliefs, and, most importantly, our fellow citizens.

A Way Forward

The theory of social responsibility and effective communication is the key to forming an individual's path to a prosperous life, full of successful results. Because the human soul is the most enduring and valuable aspect of us, it is the most examined human aspect in religion and science. Understanding of the soul; possessed by all, but mastered by few, is the most frequently sought-after ability by the faithful, miscreants, philosophers, virtuous, academics, lovers, haters, and to our surprise soon enough, it will be a necessary mastery in the politics and in the interest of a nation itself.

«In a human being is such a love, a pain, an itch, a desire that, even if he were to possess a hundred thousand worlds, he would not rest or find peace. People work variously at all sorts of callings, crafts, and professions, and they learn astrology and medicine, and so forth, but they are not at peace because what they are seeking cannot be found. The beloved is called dilaram because the heart finds peace through the beloved. How then can it find peace through anything else?"[9]

Lastly, we will quote some verses from the Qur'an that confirm the blessings of reason and speech given to man, as well as the obligation and imperative for their use:

«Then Allah taught Adam the names of all things...»[10]

«Do not mix truth with falsehood or hide the truth knowingly.»[11]

«When you speak, be just,…"[12]

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The Right to Abortion in Light of the Teachings of the Three Great Monotheistic Religions

By Balázs Puskás

Leading expert with the Saint Steven Institute, Hungary

Abstract

The three great monotheistic religions – Islam, Judaism, and Christianity – coincide in their teaching that human life is a God-given gift, and innocent lives are not to be taken by man. In this paper we examine whether this agreement is also true concerning the life of humans in the womb, especially considering recent events that signal a future global right to abortion. In the first part of the paper, we examine the opposing anthropological views regarding human dignity, assuming that these views lie behind differing opinions on abortion. The paper presents recent documents of the United Nations and the European Union – recommendations that seek to establish a universal human right for women to perform abortions without any restriction.

In the following, we analyze the teachings of the three great monotheistic religions on abortion, analyzing both the theological background and the existing positive legal measures in countries where Muslims, Jews, or Christians are in majority positions. As a conclusion, the paper presents a brief analysis of the common ground on which it seems possible to formulate a shared opinion about human life in the womb as a God-given gift that should not be subordinated to unrestricted abortion rights.

Keywords: life, abortion, monotheistic religions, Islam, Judaism, Christianity

Introduction – sanctity of life vs. body-self dualism

The three major monotheistic religions[1] – Islam, Christianity, and Judaism – teach that life was created by God,[2] and that given that it is "sacrosanct," it cannot be taken "unless it be a cause of justice."[3]

In societies today the dignity of human life at its beginning and at its end is widely challenged. As Robert P. George has put it a number of times, basic views on abortion and euthanasia are rooted in the different anthropological notions of the human person. There are those who hold that human nature is a God-given gift and, as such, is intrinsically sacred with a dignity that is inalienable from the person; on the other hand, there are those who advocate a "body-self dualism." According to the latter, humans do not have a dignity in virtue of simply being what they are, humans, but in virtue of some quality which they develop over time, usually consciousness.[4] Therefore there is no such thing as inalienable human dignity, but only certain human qualities from which human dignity can derive. This opinion consequently does not accept that human life is "sacred," or that it can be considered a gift. It is no coincidence, then, that this idea embraces the possibility of unrestricted abortion or – according to some, such as "contemporary utilitarian" philosopher Peter Singer[5] – even infanticide:[6] in the case that one accepts that human dignity depends on consciousness, this is a natural consequence.

Pope John Paul II expressed time and again that in our societies there are two countercultures: the culture of life and the culture of death. To his mind, modern debates on life issues such as abortion or euthanasia show us an entire view of the world that might lead us to slowly change our ideals of human dignity and equality and "revert to a state of barbarism."[7] In Evangelium vitae he describes how a new set of values has emerged that are subordinated to "efficiency" and the well-being of the "more favoured." He warns that this current

of thinking will unleash a "conspiracy against life" that will damage not only the life of individuals, families, and communities but also our societies on both national and international levels.[8]

In response to these above-mentioned challenges of modern-day societies Pope Francis and Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar issued a landmark declaration, the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.[9]

In it, they call attention to the fact that God has given us the "gift of life;" thus, it is to be protected "from its beginning up to its natural end." They therefore condemn "all those practices that are a threat to life such as genocide, acts of terrorism, forced displacement, trafficking in human organs, abortion and euthanasia" and "the policies that promote these practices."[10]

It seems clear that recent pursuits of the United Nation to establish a universal right to abortion[11] fall under the Document's condemnation of "the policies that promote these practices." But how can this proposed universal right for abortion be judged in light of the teachings of the three monotheistic religions?

In this paper we will have a glimpse at the basic international documents promoting the right to abortion.

Then we will analyze the teachings of the main monotheistic religions on the sanctity of human life in the womb. Finally, we will try to find a common ground in the teachings of these religions from which a path to common action might set off for promoting the sanctity of human life and through that, the common good of our societies.

1-The Right to Abortion

Although currently there is no existing, codified "universal right to abortion," there have been considerable efforts made to create globally binding statutory regulations that would unify existing State legislations, giving way to unrestricted abortion practices globally.

Worldwide nongovernmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch,[12] Amnesty International,[13] the Center for Reproductive Rights[14] and Planned Parenthood International[15] claim and advocate that a right to abortion is or should be considered a universal human right.

The United Nations' Human Rights Committee, in its General comment No. 36 (31.10.2018)[16] released a set of recommendations regarding the right to life, which is the most basic first-generation human right[17] (included in article VI of the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights).[18]

The recommendations are carefully phrased, but clearly take a stand for unrestricted abortion[19] regardless of the time or the circumstances of pregnancy or the conscientious objection of medical personnel.[20]

It is clear that the document wants to take a step closer to a universal right to abortion. Reading it carefully shows that the overall approach of the UN Human Rights Committee to the right to life includes the right to abortion (while according to the World Health Organization women's reproductive rights are considered a priority over fetal rights).[21]

The document suggests that Member States should not be allowed to determine their abortion legislation themselves. Although it supposes that Member States have a right to legislate abortions, they can do so only inasmuch this does not violate "the right to life" (the right to abortion) of the pregnant woman.[22]

Advocacy for the right to abortion also became very vocal in the European Union. On May 21 2021, the so-called Matic Report was presented on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the framework of women's health as a Motion for a European Parliament Resolution, submitted by the Committee on Women's Rights

and Gender Equality.[23] The report – just as the previously mentioned UN document – disregards the right to a proper jurisdiction of the Member States, and wants to override their right to the definition of their national health policy choices.[24] It also confirms the UN recommendation by rejecting the right to conscientious objection, in contradiction to Resolution 1763 of the Council of Europe (2010).[25] Finally, it explicitly attempts to introduce the recognition of a right to abortion, although – as mentioned above – no such right exists, nor can one be derived from either the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Hence it is obvious that the so-called right to abortion, based on women's right to life, is intended to be introduced globally as a fundamental human right by the United Nations and as a statutorily binding common right to be applied by all member states of the European Union.

2- Life in the mother's womb – the monotheistic religions' approach to abortion

a- A general overview

i- Most Islamic scholars agree that after the fetus reaches 40 days after conception, abortion becomes impermissible unless there is a legally

acceptable, serious cause. After 120 days of pregnancy abortion mostly becomes forbidden, with the sole exception of saving the mother's life. Nevertheless, in Islam, where there is a lack of a central, overarching authority, there is a wide set of views among scholars about when abortion could be morally acceptable.[26]

ii- In Judaism there is also disagreement among rabbis and scholars about abortion. There is a distinction between Reform Judaism and Orthodox Judaism: the former is "in support of broadening or protecting abortion access. Orthodox organizations, however, do not support broad legal protections for abortion."[27]

iii- In general, we may say that most Christian denominations oppose abortion rights. There are only a few of the sizable Christian churches that allow abortion under certain circumstances, and a small number of them support abortion with few or no limits.[28]

Table 1: Major religious groups on abortion[29]

b- Islam and abortion

i- Theological examination

In Islamic thinking, life is sacred, and must therefore be honored and promoted. Hadith 5988 reads as follows: "The Prophet said, 'The word *Al-raḥm* (womb) derives its name from *Al-Raḥmān*' (i.e., one of the names of Allah) and Allah said: 'I will keep good relation with the one who will keep good relation with you, (womb i.e. Kith and Kin) and sever the relation with him who will sever the relation with you, (womb, i.e. Kith and Kin).'"[30]

The importance of the womb is based on the life given to it, "by mercy of Allah."[31] In Hadith 7454 (Shahih Al-Bukhari, book 97, Hadith 80) the creation of life is described: during the first 40 days the collection of the matter of the body is in process. Then the creature becomes a clot of thick blood for another 40 days. That is followed by a third 40-day period when the baby exists in the form of a "piece of flesh," and after these 120 days of existence an "angel is sent to him (by Allah)… and then the soul is breathed into him."[32]

Although the sacredness of the womb and the life which forms in it is not at all called into question among scholars, given that the soul is breathed into the flesh after a 120-day period, whether interruption of pregnancy is permissible and if so, when, is open for discussion. There are Islamic scholars who are stricter and would allow abortion only in the first 40 days. There are some who would give permission (at any time) only when the life of the mother is

Major religious groups' positions on abortion

Opposes abortion rights, with few or no exceptions	Supports abortion rights, with some limits	Supports abortion rights, with few or no limits	No clear position
• African Methodist Episcopal Church • Assemblies of God • Roman Catholic Church • Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints • Hinduism • Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod • Southern Baptist Convention	• Episcopal Church • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America • United Methodist Church	• Conservative Judaism • Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) • Reform Judaism • Unitarian Universalist • United Church of Christ	• Islam • Buddhism • National Baptist Convention • Orthodox Judaism

Source: Pew Research Center review of outside literature

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Table 1: Major religious groups on abortion

in direct danger. There are others still who think it is permissible to perform an abortion up until the 120th day after conception. The variability of opinions is so wide that "there are some jurists who would allow abortion for social reasons, e.g. rape, or where continuation of pregnancy would affect a nursing child, or where a wet nurse was not available, or the father was too poor to afford a wet nurse."[33]

ii- Legal Considerations

The diversity in Islamic thinking described above evidently leads to differing abortion laws in Muslim-majority countries. As Aziz Al-Azmeh explains, "there are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it."[34] Investigating Islam's widely differing positions on the interruption of pregnancy shows that Islamic legislation neither encourages abortion nor directly prohibits it.

All Muslim countries allow for abortion in order to save a woman's life. 47 percent of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries legally permit abortion only for this one instance; 18 percent allow abortions in cases of physical and/or mental health, fetal abnormality, and/or rape and incest; and 18 percent permit abortion on demand.[35]

We can say that the common ground in Muslim-majority countries lies in

two circumstances: one is if the life of the mother is in danger, the other is the above-mentioned 120-day period.[36]

c- Judaism and Abortion

i- Theological Examination

Judaism, like Islam, presents differing views on the question of abortion. Reform Judaism and conservative Judaism are on the permissive end,[37] but even Orthodox Jewish teachings are less strict than pro-life Christian denominations, especially the Catholic Church: they give explicit permission to terminate a pregnancy in case of threats to a mother's life.

Orthodox rabbis might also provide rabbinic support for terminating a pregnancy in some other situations. Nonetheless, "there is a broad objection to abortion in cases that have no serious cause."[38]

"Sources in the Talmud indicate that prior to 40 days of gestation, the fetus has an even more limited legal status, with one Talmudic authority (Yevamot 69b)[39] asserting that prior to 40 days the fetus is 'merely water.'[40] Elsewhere, the Talmud indicates that the ancient rabbis regarded a fetus as part of its mother throughout the pregnancy, dependent fully on her for its life."[41]

In the Hebrew Bible we find no reference to intentional feticide. There is one passage describing a miscarriage as a result of a violent action: it is found in Exodus 21:22, and consequently, the perpetrator has to pay a fine.[42] The other text (Genesis 9:6) is widely contested, but some rabbis interpret it as a prohibition of killing the fetus: "He who sheds the blood of man, through man shall his blood be shed." In Biblical Hebrew, "through" can also be "in," so some interpret the phrase as saying, "He

who sheds the blood of man in man (kills a baby in the womb) shall his blood be shed." Others say that the true meaning of the verse is entirely different: the word "through" means "through a human court of law," consequently the phrase has nothing to do with abortion.[43]

ii- Legal Considerations

According to existing legislation, abortion is legal in the State of Israel. There seems to be little impact of Orthodox Judaism's more conservative teachings on the Israeli measures concerning the termination of pregnancy.

Any kind of abortion needs the approval of the Termination of Pregnancy Committee.[44] The Israeli legislation provides 6 justifications for abortion, making the procedure practically possible in any considerable case.

Though there is a time limit for abortion (the 24th week of pregnancy), the so-called Late Termination of Pregnancy Committees can give their approval even beyond that time, after a thorough investigation and a counselling process.[45]

d- Christianity and Abortion

i- Theological Examination

Christian churches – although generally among those that most consistently oppose abortion – represent differing positions. The largest Christian denomination,[46] the Roman Catholic Church, has the clearest teaching of all: it opposes all forms of abortion under any circumstances.[47] Even the sole exception (when the mother's life is in danger) is a non-exception so to speak: the life of the baby in the womb can be taken only as a "collateral consequence" of a life-saving procedure performed on the mother.[48]

Protestant churches generally are more permissive, although they have different positions: some Reformed churches oppose abortion with the exception of when the mother's life is in danger,[49] but the largest American Reformed denomination, the Presbyterian Church, takes a liberal stance on abortion.[50] Lutheran churches have different opinions as well. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America permits abortion until the fetus becomes viable (24th week).[51]

Hence Christian churches pose different opinions on abortion. But what does Scripture say? There are passages in the Bible which speak about the life of the preborn, showing how God loves human life even before its being born. In the Book of Jeremiah one reads: «Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'"[52] It is very similar to the prophet Isaiah: "The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name."[53]

Probably the most significant passage for Catholics and pro-life Christians can be found in Luke 1:39. There, Elizabeth's preborn child, John the Baptist, "leaped in her womb" noticing the presence of the preborn child of Mary, Jesus. For Catholics, this constitutes a sign that life in the womb – such as Jesus' – is precious.

ii- Legal considerations

In Christian-majority countries abortion laws vary from total prohibition – e.g. Andorra, Malta, Haiti, Suriname – to no restriction at all – for example, Italy, Spain, Puerto Rico. It is difficult to find a clear pattern as to why certain tendencies prevail in different countries, but in general one might observe that in those countries where conservative Christian views are more present not just in society but also in political representation – such as in Poland, Malta, or some Latin-American countries – abortion laws tend to be stricter.[54]

Conclusion – is there a common ground for an interreligious cooperation on the abortion issue?

In fact, this has already happened: in the 1994 Cairo Population Conference the Vatican and Muslim-majority countries formed an alliance in the attempt to protect their way of thinking regarding the sanctity of human life inside the womb. At that time, the media portrayed the supporters of the Cairo agenda as progressive, and the opponents as religious extremists. The Guardian went so far as to say that the Vatican and "radical Islamic forces" wanted to impose their "outdated morality on the world."[55]

Today this moral view is no less "outdated" than it was before. Also, today Muslims, Orthodox Jews, and conservative Christians share the same common ground that Muslims and Christians shared during the Cairo conference. The sanctity of the soul of the human person in the womb in general is not contested. There are differing views but there is also a guiding principle that might constitute a ground for common action:

God created man in the womb of his mother – and man has no right to take the life of the innocent person created by God unless there is a just reason – primarily when the life of the mother is in peril. The teaching of the monotheistic religions is incompatible with the right to abortion – and the demonstration of this could be a cause for interreligious action.

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1- Monotheistic religions believe in the existence of one God, and as such they are distinguished from polytheistic religions or from atheism. Monotheism mostly "characterizes the traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam" (https://www.britannica.com/topic/monotheism), although many other smaller religions also hold some elements of the main characteristics.   Last accessed 02.06.2021.

2- Genesis 1:26

3- Quran 17:33

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5- According to Peter J. Colosi there are two main existing views on personhood: "One of these views is held by a school of thought that I will refer to with the term 'contemporary utilitarianism,' and Singer is its most prominent figure." (Peter J. Colosi: Personhood, the Soul and Non-Conscious Human Beings: Some Critical Reflections on Recent Forms of Argumentation within the Pro-Life Movement – Life and Learning XVII (2007) p.298). Last accessed 02.06.2021.

6- "Normal adults and children, but not fetuses and infants, are persons; that is, they are self-aware and purposeful beings with a sense of the past and the future. They can see their lives as a continuing process, they can identify with what has happened to them in the past, and they have hopes and plans for the future. For this reason we can say that in normal circumstances they value, or want, their own continued existence, and that life is in their interest. The same does not apply to fetuses or new-born infants. Neither a fetus or an infant has the conceptual wherewithal to contemplate a future and to want, or value, that future." Peter Singer, Unsanctifying Human Life, ed. Helga Kuse (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 2002), p. 239.

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8- Ibid, n. 12.

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13- "Access to safe abortion services is a human right. Under international human rights law, everyone has a right to life, a right to health, and a right to be free from violence, discrimination, and torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment." Amnesty

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15- According to IPPF "access to sexual and reproductive healthcare is not only a basic human right, it saves lives" – consequently its mission (among others) is to "provide access to safe abortion."

16- CCPR/C/GC/36, advanced, unedited version last accessed 05.06.2021.

17- According to scholars there are three generations of Human Rights: the first are civil and political rights, the second are economic, social and cultural rights, and the third are collective or solidarity rights.

18- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6: "1. Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life."

19- CCPR/C/GC/36 Paragraph 8: "Restrictions on the ability of women or girls to seek abortion must not, inter alia, jeopardize their lives, subject them to physical or mental pain or suffering." Last accessed: 05.06.2021.

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38- "Abortion and Judaism" in: myjewishlearning.com. Last accessed 12.06.2021.

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To Live or Not to Live: Suicide in Ancient Hindu Scriptures

By Nahla Mohamed Fahmy

Researcher at the (DICID)

Introduction

Questions on human agency along with abstract ideas of life's beginnings, ends, purpose and utility have unquestionably been a large part of man's preoccupation, in history as well as in today's world. Such ponderings, apart from being engrained in our very nature, have been evidenced in ancient literary works as old as the Vedic scriptures dating back to 1500 BCE. Yet while such works have left behind wisdom for the ages, it seems to have set its limits for the issue of suicide. As Albert Camus stated,

"There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest-whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories-comes afterwards."[1].

Thus, suicide and its rationality (or lack thereof) and life and its sanctity and preservation have been debated through and through to conclude by all major religious philosophies with heavy condemnation. In Western religious philosophies, from Judaism to Islam, suicide has been dogmatically forbidden for being selfish, irrational, disobedient and a violation of the gift of life[2]. The same position can be found in most western philosophies, with Stoicism and Epicureanism being one of the

few exceptions where death is one's own choice[3].

It seems quite obvious at first that any kind of self-harm should be legally, socially, religiously and morally condemned. However, present day suicide literature in contrast has moved away from arguments of whether or not suicide is right or wrong and has instead focused on suicide ideation as a consequence of deteriorating mental health, its diagnosis and prevention[4]. As such, attitudes towards suicide today is one of empathy. Suicide is in the leading top twenty global causes of death between 1990 and 2017, among four other injury-related causes: road injuries, suicide, homicide and drowning - the rest are caused by disease[5]. It is empathy that has brought about pressure upon governments to decriminalize suicide (initially criminalized based on religious sanctions) in recognition of its tragicality with forty five of one hundred and ninety two countries
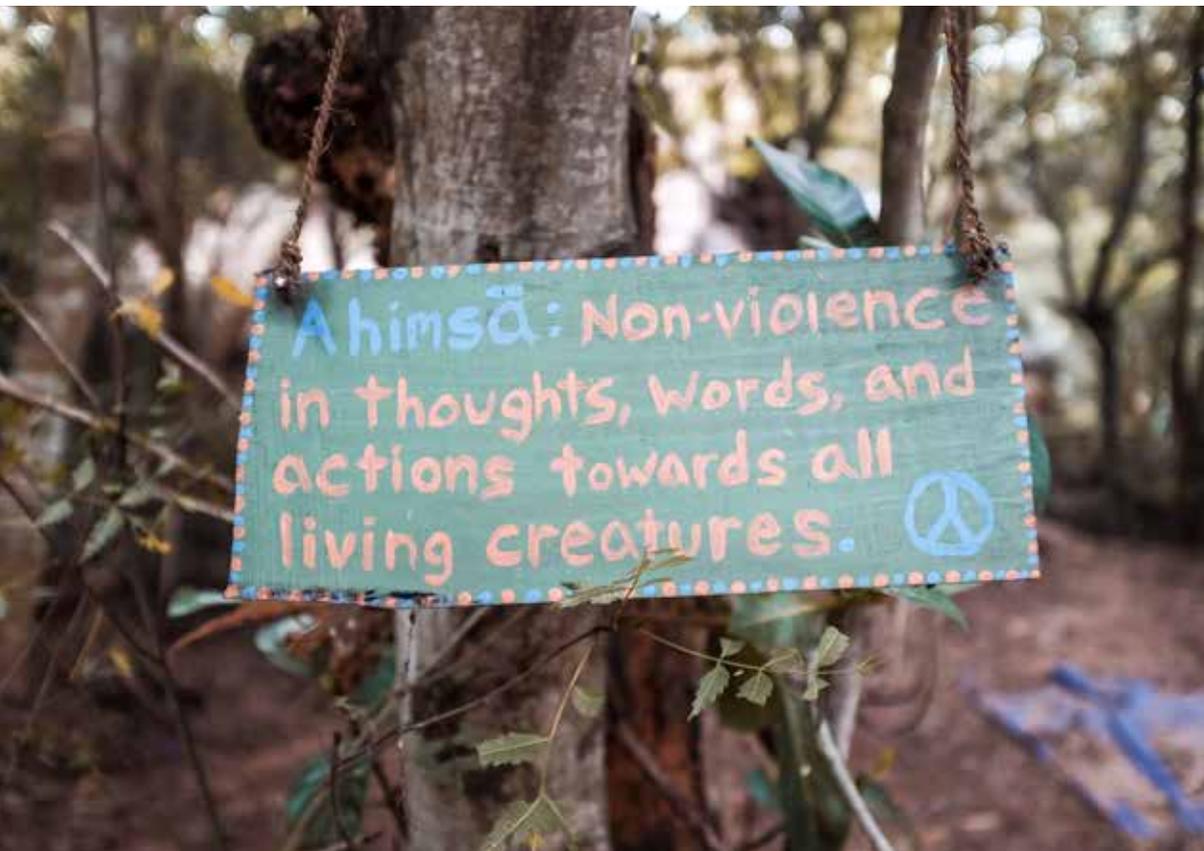
today yet to decriminalize suicide[6]. In just the past two decades, suicide rates have become more or less consistent, averaging to 700,000 deaths per year globally[7]; twice the number of deaths by homicide and more than five times more than the recorded deaths by conflict and terrorism[8]. Thus, suicide has transformed from being perceived as a criminal act to being perceived as a tragic consequence of mental illnesses.

The act itself is however far more nuanced and complicated a matter. It involves a complex web of motives and actors which determine its perception recorded in history, on occasions, even considered as acts of resistance, opposition, honour, dignity and sacrifice.

To limit the discussion of this paper, suicide is defined as 'an act intended to bring about one's death, made willingly under no direct or indirect threat by one's own action', ruling out suicides made under mental, economic, social and emotional distress. This allows to refine the question of suicide as a problem of free will. Suicides committed by this definition seem to have religious justification in Hindu philosophy. We find key figures in Hindu scriptures like that of the Pandavas who committed suicide in order to reach complete spiritual liberation or moksha. Similarly, Buddhist teachings also permit suicide by self-immolation as seen very frequently by the Tibetan monks, 150 of whom have immolated in the last ten years[9].

The paper thereby seeks to answer if human beings could, with the power to act and think freely, determine their own death as an ultimate testimony of free will in action and if suicide had always been shunned or if it remains to be the norm that we subscribe to today, what differences exist in eastern religious philosophical thought on suicide, can suicide ever be rational or is it purely a reflection of mental imbalances and how do Hindu philosophies make room for suicide? The following sections of the paper outline the attitudes towards suicide and its limitations in the Hindu religious philosophy in an attempt to expound on the complex human history of death, dying and life in social and religious entanglements.

The Hindu scriptures are some of the oldest religious scriptures dating back to 1500 BCE, providing a glimpse of the social and religious norms of the East at the time. Likewise, it is important to bear in mind that the suicides recorded within these scriptures reflect an entirely different set of values and meanings, unlike how we understand suicide today. It

is the aim of this paper to shed light on these nuances and contribute to a deeper historical and religious understanding of it.

Condemnations of Suicide in the Hindu Scriptures

Most major religions categorically condemn the act of taking one's own life for purposes that concern only oneself. The Hindu Scriptures are no different. The Upanishads, which were composed between 700 and 300 BCE[10], strongly condemn suicide. The Isavasya Upanishad, written in 1 BCE, states,
"he who takes his self, reaches, after death, the sunless region covered by impenetrable darkness"[11]

References to the darkness as the abode of those who commit suicide is also present in the Vājasaneyi Samhitā, the Mahābhārata and the Parāsara, which mentions that they will remain in a darkness full of blood and pus for sixty thousand years[12]. We also find condemnations in the Yama Smriti, written around the 6th to 7th century BCE[13] where it mentions that the bodies of those who commit suicide should be smeared with impurities. In the case where the suicide was not completed, a fine of 200 panas was to be issued and a fine of 1 pana each to his/her friends and sons (if the suicide was completed)[14]. The Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, dated around the 3rd century BCE, denies the performance of ritual burial rites on those who commit suicide[15] and those who do so eitherway should undergo fasting and to drink only hot

liquids for three days (Manusmriti, 11.214). Prohibitions on drink is also mentioned in the same text as punishment for those who commit suicide (Manusmriti, 5.88).

With regard to satī, a practice whereby widows self-immolate on their husbands pyre, it is interesting to note that during the Vedic period, it was uncommon for women to practice this type of suicide. It was only later in the post-Vedic period (1500-500 BCE) and the Smriti period (500 BCE – 500 CE) that verses such as Rg Veda (X 18.7) were interpreted to give satī religious merit. This is observed, as Lakshmi and Sujith note, due to a deteriorating social, religious and educational status of women[16].

Apart from scriptural condemnations, the key concepts of reincarnation and the doctrine of karma in the Hindu tradition discourage suicide on a metaphysical level. Karma, or 'action', is a moral cause and effect based on the goodness or badness of ones actions that can consequently affect ones present life and future reincarnations. It is of three types; karma of the past lives, karma of the present actions and karmic experiences for the future[17]. And so, should a person commit suicide, the Karmic balance is tipped and the person as a consequence is reincarnated as lower forms of life

thus impeding his progress towards moksha. Thus, suicide is not seen as an end to life's struggles but within the Hindu worldview, continues making suicide futile. A second key deterrent to suicide found in the Mahābhārata is it's prescription for mental pain or mānasaṃ duḥkham. It states that the cause for mental pain is that people have small minds (implying a lack of knowledge) and have had close contact with the undesired, separating himself from the desired[18]. In the sage's advice to the King Yudhishthira who mentions suicide from the mental pain of losing his kingdom, it states,

"Know, O prince, that those things which you regardest as existing are in reality non-existent. The man of wisdom knows this, and accordingly is never pained whatever the distress that may overwhelm him. Whatever has taken place and whatever will take place are all unreal. When you will know this which should be known by all, you shalt be freed from unrighteousness. Whatever things had been earned and acquired by those that came before, and whatever was earned and acquired by those that succeeded them, have all perished. Reflecting on this, who is there that will yield to grief? Things that were, are no more. Things that are, will again be (no more). Grief has no power to restore them. One should not, therefore, indulge in

grief." (Mahābhārata 12.104)

And so, the Mahābhārata discourages suicide and claims that those who think of such an action are lacking the metaphysical knowledge, awareness and wisdom. Suicide does not bear any credit religiously in this context.

Revered Suicides in the Hindu Scripture

In chapter 4 of the book, *Spirituality and Psychiatry*, it mentions that "There is less condemnation of suicide and the idea of eternal damnation is not found in Buddhism and Hinduism."[19] While there may not be an outright condemnation like that found in western religions such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism, we have seen previously that suicides are in fact deleterious to the Hindu striving for moksha. However, not all types of suicides in the Hindu scriptures stand the same.

The closest term to suicide in the Hindu Vedic scripture is '*ātmaghāta*', which means 'a killing of the self'[20]. Suicide was common during the Vedic period (1200 – 900 BCE) and hence its prevalence in the Vedic scriptures. The Brāhmaṇas outline two doctrines in particular that could suggest the reasons for the prevalent suicides during this time. It mentions what is considered a proper sacrifice i.e., a 'man's self'

and that his other sufferings are 'substitutes'. Additionally, in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, it mentions that the "human and universal sacrifices is the giving away…of his possessions…and his wandering into the forest…as…an early death"[21]. Thus the concept of a human or 'self' sacrifice on religious grounds did exist, although such sacrifices were rare[22].

Furthermore, the Hindu scriptures 'revere' certain types of suicide that outline specific bases for it to be deemed as a 'religiously moral' suicide. These acceptable forms of suicide are dying by starvation, entering a fire or falling from a cliff for older persons suffering illnesses, drowning in Holy Rivers, fasting unto death by ascetics and walking to the point of death, letting nature take its course. In Battin's voluminous work on historical records of suicides in religious traditions published in 2015, entitled, The Ethics of Suicide: Historical Sources, she presents the below translation of a section of the Jabala Upanishad, that states,

"(For one who is weary of the world but not yet fit to become a recluse the following are prescribed), he may choose a hero's death (by following he path of the warrior in the battlefield), he may fast unto death, throw himself into water or enter fire

(burn himself to death) or perform the last journey (walk on unto death). Then the wandering ascetic who (puts on) orange robes, who is shaven, who has non-possession, purity, non-enmity, lives on alms, obtains the state of Brahman. If he is diseased he can renounce by mind and speech. This is not to be done by one who is healthy. Such a renouncer becomes the knower of Brahman, so said the venerable Yajnavalkya"[23]

Lakshmi and Sujit in their paper, Is Hinduism ambivalent about suicide?, outline the religiously permitted suicides in some detail. Walking unto death, called the 'Great Journey' or Mahaparasthana, requires that one walk in the north easterly direction facing Mount Kailash, the dwelling place of Lord Shiva with only water to drink[24]. Among the key figures who dies by this suicide in the Hindu scripture, are the Pandava brothers, the oldest of whom is Yudhishthira recorded in the 17th and 18th books of the Mahābhārata. Despite being advised by the sage against it, Yudhishthira and his four brothers resolve to make the Great Journey towards the Himalayas but only Yudhishthira is able to die by a good death. His other brothers' lives were taken before completing the journey due to their sins. Yudhishthira then goes on to the Gariga River on his merit for passing two tests which

showcased his non-cruelty and kindness. Upon reaching the river, Yudhishthira drowns himself in it with the intention of doing away with his physical body and to join heaven in his true spiritual state with other divinities.[25]

Similarly, drowning in the Varanasi River or at Prayag (the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and the spiritual river Saraswati) while repeatedly uttering Vedic chants is believed to relieve oneself from the cycle of reincarnation and thus attain moksha when done at the astronomically auspicious time by one who has fulfilled all social obligations and duties. It is said that Lord Shiva whispers assurance of ultimate salvation in the ear of the one drowning, will not have suicide considered a sin and will have a good afterlife. Furthermore, ascetics can resort to fasting unto death in isolation at the Himalayas[26].

In order for one to under a religious suicide, there are stages that one must abide by. One cannot, out of an epiphany, decide to commit suicide for religious purposes. Rather, one must first move from the role of a householder to a semi-renunciation in isolation to then finally a full renounced state[27]. Yet the story of Yudhishthira moves directly in his case from a householder to a full renouncement, which provides exceptions to the rule. The 17th century commentator of the Mahābhārata, Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara states in his *Bhāratabhāvadīpa* that this exception was due to the fact that the Pandava brothers had already fulfilled their duties and had done all that they could have in their circumstance[28].

Discussion and Conclusion

From the above seemingly contradictory sections of the paper, we understand that the lines for what is acceptable and what isn't with regards to suicide are obscure. While there may be ritualized suicides, there are also exceptions. This is due to the very complex nature of suicide itself. Suicide is not simply the taking of one's own life out of hopelessness and despair as we have outlined. Suicide in the Hindu scriptures is a means to spiritual enlightenment. Why then can't any Hindu householder, who wishes to free himself from the tangles of this life, assume liberation via suicide? What distinguishes a religious suicide?

The distinguishing factor appears to be social obligations and duties. Religion is after all a social institution and suicide works for the detriment of society. Having sections of society committing suicide in attempts to join

the heavens will no doubt cause chaos on Earth. Duties such as fathering children, looking after one's parents and sick relations bears religious significance. And so, condemnations of suicides in the Hindu scriptures exist for suicides committed by householders whose social responsibilities are yet to be fulfilled. The punishments are outlined, even if the householder commits the suicide for religious purposes. It is for such individuals that have 'small minds' and require knowledge to fully understand the weight of the task they have been given; to play the part as a human being in society - only after which can one undertake the journey for the liberation of oneself.

Thus, the Hindu scriptures and metaphysical understandings address the existential dread and longing for heaven every human being has and it allows for a time whereby the individual as he progresses in age, to find this 'death' first spiritually and morally only then will it give him the right to find his death physically, not by his own hands, but rather left to the forces of nature. Additionally, the right to euthanize for Hindus have long been practiced and is not a moral or ethical question. However, even in such a death, its goodness is only in so far that the individual completely immerses himself in the remembrance of Brahman

until his last breath. Failing to do so would not ensure his ascent to Brahman. Hinduism, hence, does not freely allow suicide and heavy condemnations and consequences exist as deterrents.

The search for heaven spiritually while on Earth bringing about a 'spiritual death' is not uncommon among ascetics across the major religions. Even in the Hindu scriptures it mentions, "Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live; let him wait for his appointed time, as a servant waits for the payment of his wages" (Manusmriti, 6.45)[29]. This important distinction between wanting to commit suicide to end one's life versus wanting to reach heaven distinguishes the ascetic/religious suicide from that which is condemned. It is in this way that suicide is perceived within the Hindu tradition; allowable only for those who have completed life's obligations and do not fear life's troubles, thus preserving the sanctity of life. The term suicide thus takes on a different understanding to which the paper constructs previously. It elucidates the importance of including the cause of the suicide whereby the question is not whether to live or not to live but rather a question of duty and liberation. A religious suicide allowed in Hinduism can then be defined as, "an act intended to bring

about ultimate spiritual liberation only to those who have completed life's duties; seeking heaven through one's own spiritual and physical death, made willingly under no direct or indirect threat". Debates on whether or not this constitutes as violence against oneself and a breach of ahimsa (the doctrine of non-violence) or if it is religious fanaticism is a discussion beyond the scope of this article. The paper seeks to only diversity our conceptions of suicide and to highlight its complex and nuanced nature across religious and cultures.
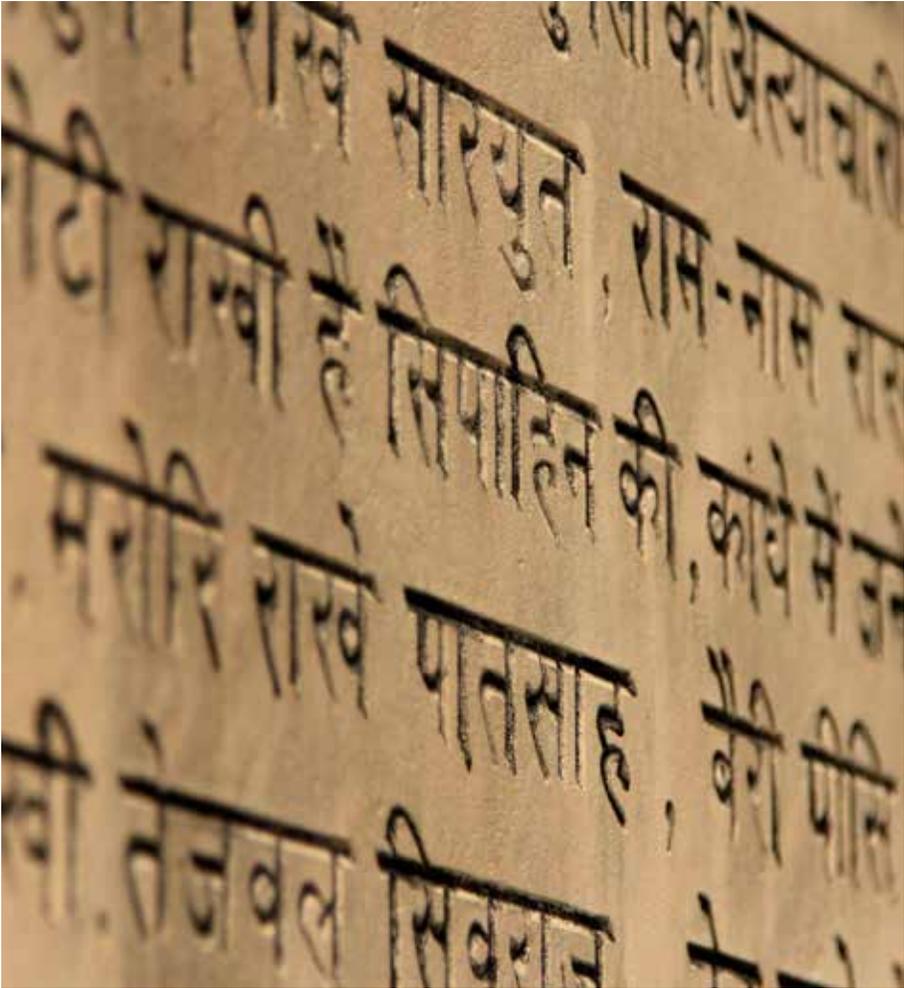
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The Sanctity of Human Soul:
Religious Perspectives from Pakistan

By Javaid William and Sara Khalid

Abstract

The sanctity of human soul is the fundamental principal that has been upheld by all major religions. However, a consistent pattern of religious patronage seems to have emerged from historical as well as contemporary violent factors in society that somehow have successfully justified their actions from religious codes. This research aims at providing an insight into the theological teachings of the four major religions in Pakistan and seek answers to this conundrum.

It also sheds light on the impacts of advances of science that has empowered men to create an end life upon will and what religions have to present to address this issue. The interviewees chosen for this research are renowned community leaders in Pakistan who shared their opinions on the contrast between the 'written' and the 'lived' religious teaching in Pakistan. The findings of this research revealed that the underlying theological teachings of all religious communities in Pakistan upholds the doctrine of the sanctity of human soul as a core preaching of all of the residing religious communities and if violence is used as a means of achieving one's goals, it is not the doing of a religion but the actions of individual beings.

Introduction

It is common knowledge that all the religions across the world teach the message of peace, love, and harmony and forbid hatred, ill-will and violence. However, modern human being with modern means of violence seems to have taken religion as an excuse for his malign acts. The religious theological text, in the above-mentioned context, becomes paradoxical; On one hand it teaches peace, assures sanctity of human life above all, and ensures salvation to the bearers of humanism and mercy, while on the other hand, historically, it has proven to be the source of massive destruction and misery and inflicted pain to humankind. The doctrine of sanctity of life however exists in all religions and is reiterated by the religious leaders to keep reminding their communities of their duty to another life. This research will focus on the historical and contemporary ideas around the sanctity of life as it is seen and understood by different religious of Pakistan.

Pakistan has four major religious groups, Muslims being the majority, around 90% of the population, and the major minority religions are: Hinduism, Christianity, and Sikhism. So, this research will focus mainly on the views on the doctrine of sanctity of life in these three

religions. The research is based on both the theoretical theology that is specifically discussed in the literature review along with the quantitative research one through questionnaires filled by the religious leaders of the two Aryan religions: Hinduism and Sikhism, and the two sematic religions: Islam and Christianity, on the details of the views their religions hold.

Literature Review

Whenever the discussion of the sanctity of life comes up, it begins with the Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, but the fact of the matter is that the monolithic and the Aryan religions have been propagating this idea for a long time, long before the declaration itself. In this section, we will discuss the literature present on the doctrine of the 'Sanctity of Human Soul' as ancient teachings in these religions that can answer the contemporary dilemmas.

There is no doubt that human life is one of the most sacred creatures of Allah, and ultimately it demands appreciation and respect from other fellow beings. There is a clear mention of the doctrine of the sanctity of human soul in the Quranic text, which is the fundamental core of Islamic teachings, as well as in the Hadith. The Holy Quran mentions

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in Chapter 6 verse 151: "…Do not take (anyone's) life, as God has made life sacred, unless it is to do justice or uphold law", which clearly references to the fact that Holy Quran is referring not only to human life but all life forms in general as a whole as sacred. It further mentions the right to life as a fundamental one in Chapter 5, verse 32: "if any one of you saved a person's life, it would be as if he had saved the life of all humankind." According to this verse, lifesaving becomes an obligation, and the unjust or unlawful taking of life becomes a heinous crime against all of the humanity. On the occasion of the farewell sermon, the prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, addressed the issue like this: "Your blood and your property are as sacred as this day, and this month, the holy month of Zilhaj. Dr. Anis Ahmed, the vice chancellor of Rapha University Islamabad (2014), talked about the issue of sanctity of life as 'The principal of protection of life, as one of the seven global ethical principles given by Islam. He quotes verse 32 of Chapter 5, mentioned earlier, the Quranic reference. This principle of sanctity of human soul is not only restricted to people of one faith, race, color or ethnicity, and the preservation and protection of life is a universal value to be observed at a global level. Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-

Islami, in his book *Human Rights in Islam*, 1976, stating that the first and foremost right is the right to live and respect human life. All in all, the holy text, the legacy of the Prophet of Islam and the respected scholars has all adorned the principle of the sanctity of life.

Christianity, the second sematic religion under discussion, God has given life to man as a sacred gift, and it should be cherished and protected. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ, was asked to comment on the ranking of moral obligations in the religious law. He gave his renowned answer that gained prominence in the has long been significant for the Christian ethic: «Love your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.› This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‹Love thy neighbor as yourself.› All following laws and the prophets erected their teachings upon these two fundamental commandments. In the twentieth-century Christian ethics, a new central moral norm emerged: the «sanctity of human life» (or «sacredness of human life»), specifically in the light of two concepts, i.e., abortion and doctor assisted suicide, or euthanasia aka mercy killing. Another context in which the doctrine of sanctity of human soul is used is the misuse of

religious text by extremist elements to justify their heinous crimes against humanity.

Hinduism is also clear in its stance on the sacredness of human life. Here are some teachings of Hinduism on the doctrine of "sanctity of life": It is the core belief of Hinduism that all life is sacred, and is special to God, I look upon all creatures equally; no one is less dear to me than the other and none are dearer. (Bhagavad Gita 9.29) Ahimsa is the core doctrine of Hinduism meaning 'non-violence'; which means that some Hindus may feel that certain fertility treatments, e.g., those which lead to the destruction of an unused embryo are to be avoided. The religion teaches the followers of Atman, which means that all living has beings have 'an atman', a soul, and that it is sacred and not to be taken away in bad faith and violence.

Finally, Sikhism also educates that life is sacred above all and its sanctity and value of life is of foremost significance. Sikhism propagates that life is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth which is known as the cycle of samsara. It is believed that everybody has a chance to reach Waheguru in Mukti. For humans to reach Mukti, they must live their lives with Waheguru in their mind all their life. This concept obliges them to act with love and compassion towards other souls and always keep the concept of sanctity of human soul in their minds. A Sikh is obliged by his religious beliefs to uphold the sanctity of human soul at all costs as it is part of the whole cycle of samsara.

The above-mentioned arguments clearly shows that the verdict of all these religions upon the sanctity of human life is common and life is sacred in all forms and needs to be protected and cherished in all forms. This brings us to the question of violence propagated by the religious factions that follow fanatics of violence and destruction and twist the words of their scriptures to validate their heinous crimes against humanity.

With the efforts of the inter faith dialogue promoted by the governmental and non-governmental organizations, it is seen that these religious communities in Pakistan are increasingly being aware of the common ethical grounds they share. The doctrine of Sanctity of Human soul is fundamental to the teachings of all these four major religions in Pakistan. This research will collect the data from the religious leaders of different religions in Pakistan and analyze their viewpoints on the doctrine in their faith as well as from the faiths of others.

Research Methodology

This research undertook an in-depth semi-structured, face-to-face interview with the religious representatives of the major four religions of Pakistan to gain an understanding of this subject matter vis-a-vis each interviewee. This was done to gain a direct knowledge of the more indigenized perspective of the doctrine of 'sanctity of human soul'. While undertaking this research, a structured interview guide was being formulated. In order to gain clear views from the participants, proper questions were developed regarding the subject matter. Finally, this study conforms to the international ethical standards and procedures. Informed consent to publish this manuscript was obtained in writing from all interviewees.

Religious leaders and representatives from the Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian communities were interviewed. All the interviewees that took part in the research had extensive experience and knowledge, and they had made substantial impact on the interfaith councils in Pakistan and the ethical committees. Informed consent was given in writing to use their

information and publish it.

The questionnaire that was designed for this purpose of interview conduction included the following five major areas:
The theological angle of the doctrine of sanctity of Human Soul
Religion's stand on the modern man's empowerment by science can create life in a test tube and cause death, e.g., through euthanasia and doctor assisted suicide, etc.
Religious validation of the violence and the mass destruction of last century that has made men impervious to the concept of 'sacredness of life.'
The capacity of the principal of

sanctity of human soul to put an end to the malice of religious extremism and religious intolerance.
Rising religious intolerance among the religious communities in Pakistan and the principle of sanctity of human soul, suggestions to improve interfaith harmony.

Results

Islamic preaching on the sanctity of human life is similar to that of Christianity and other religions' preaching. Two Muslim interviewees were shortlisted for their viewpoint from an Islamic perspective that projects the narrative around the aforementioned discussion.

Both Dr Sabahat Ramazan Sialvi, the Islamic scholar currently who is doing her MPhil thesis from Minhaj University, and Dr Masood Ahmad Mujahid, Assistant Professor at Minhaj University, affirmed their stance by going back to the original root word of Islam, i.e., is / slm/ meaning 'peace'. Dr Sahabat furthered her viewpoint by stating that the fact that the sanctity of life is maintained by Islam in 'state of war' as well as in 'state of peace', i.e., if a non-Muslim is killed in cold blood by a Muslim, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that he would not be able to enter Paradise', and this shows that humanity is above believers (Muslims) and non-believes. Moreover, there are clear laws of war given by the Prophet. She discusses that according to the Messenger of Allah, one of the three rights of every Muslim on another Muslim is to visit the sick, which eliminates the concept of euthanasia and doctor assisted suicide," The cause of illness is not the death as its effect", she says. She concludes on a point that in Islam abortion is allowed in Islam condition on a) risk of mother's death, b) pregnancy has not passed the ensoulment period, but overall, killing of babies, otherwise, is strictly forbidden. Dr. Masood mentions that "not only does the human soul, but the soul in all beings has gained rights from Islam

to thrive". He mentioned an anecdote where once Prophet harshly criticized his Companion Osama (RA) who killed a man in battlefield stating that he only tried to accept oneness of Allah to avoid death. This shows how Islam maintained the sanctity of human life even in battlefield. Dr Masood also quoted the Prophet who once said that the sanctity of a Muslim is greater than the Holy Kaaba, the house of Allah. On the question of violence in name of religion, he said that compulsion in Islam was never acceptable and fundamentalist forces in Islam today needs to see the religious freedom west has provided to Muslim minorities living with them and reciprocate these values. He finishes the interview with suggestion regarding promotion of interfaith ideology, that has long been lived in Islamic civilization, can be reinvigorated by interfaith dialogue and interfaith seminars.

Rev. Dr. Majid Abel and Rev.Fr. Dr. James Channan are religious leaders of Christian faith that were interviewed to get a perspective of these religious leaders as mentioned above. Both agreed to the fact that the message of love and peace is emblem of Christianity. Rev. Majid Abel, Moderator Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, started off his viewpoint by mentioning that soul is created by God and hence is sacred as mentioned

in the tenth commandment, 'thy shall not kill'. Upon the inquiry of place of euthanasia and abortion, he said that Christianity's stance is clear that 'life of a human being is not just of life, it is a lineage, and killing one life is killing the lineage, unless it is the case that life of mother is at threat, in no case, and no stage (or time limit) that the abortions are allowed in our faith. Science has invoked blunders in human life all the while trying to take life and death in its own hand, as God is the sole creator in the universe. Crusades and slavery were supported by Christianity for a long time, two examples of religion being used for personal agendas, by people with personal gains and political objectives. At the end, he concludes that Pakistan has a rather hopeful future in context of interfaith harmony and rising ratio of moderate people with tolerance in their behavior as they all find themselves having more things 'to agree on

than to disagree. Rev. Fr. Dr. James Channan, Regional Coordinator of United Religions Initiative (URI) and Executive Director of Peace Center Lahore, vehemently elaborated the topic by stating that, 'In Christianity, every person is holy since our God, our Heavenly Father is Holy'. He further mentions the famous commandment 'love thy neighbor' by stating that neighbor is not just the person living next door but is 'every human being'. 'All Christians are commanded to follow the path of sanctity of life,' he said, 'but people tend to misuse their religious freedom and tend to divert from their path of love and truth. This is because of human weakness, and it has nothing to do with the religious teachings. Most often than not it is 'politics' that corrupt the true spirit of religion and which leaves behind the danger of violation of rights of others.' Upon enquiring his insight on the question of euthanasia and abortions, Rev Fr Dr James answered that the current laws of most of the Christian counties are secular and hence these actions are not to be blamed on religion as they do not correspond to the religion. For example, Many American states have allowed euthanasia and abortions which are illegal in other states. These individual state laws are not in reflection to the religion of the majority people, i.e., Christians,

they have secular laws.' Finally, he commented on the current situation of Pakistan regarding the widening gap between the theological teachings of upholding sanctity of life and the actual 'lived religion' by its people who suffer the consequences of religious intolerance on daily basis. The answer to all this is equality of laws for all citizen regardless of the faith they belong to.

Amarnath Randhawa, President of Adhi Dharam Samaj Seva Punjab, is the Hindu community leader in Pakistan interviewed for this research went ahead with mentioning that like all religions, Hinduism is a staunch believer in sanctity of Human soul: "no one has a right to harm any form of life that exist around us, only Parmatama, the single source of energy and power running this whole world, has that right to take life away on the context of whole cosmic cycle." "Violence," he said, 'has no place in Hinduism, all the wars were fought for lust, throne, power and self-benefits and has noting to do with teachings of Dharam- religion. "According to Vedic literature and Shastra, every life being born on earth is with the will of Parmatama, so there is no exception of abortion and euthanasia in our religious teachings, and these are considered grave," said Randhawa. Moreover, he mentioned

that in our historical tradition, there was a proper shelter/institution for women with pregnancies out of wedlock and they gave birth to children under state sponsored nurses. This is unfortunately forgotten in our contemporary lives, he said. Lastly, he mentioned the forums of Interfaith dialogue conducted by government and non-government institutions in Pakistan having great potential for the propagation of values of religious tolerance and harmony.

Form Sikh community, Dr. Kalyan Singh, Assistant Professor in Punjabi Department at Government College University, was interviewed for an insight from perspective of Sikhism on the research being conducted. His stance on the sanctity of human soul was that the fact that unlike rest of the religions, who finds God up above the seven heavens, Sikhism inspire man to quest for God inside other human beings as God resides in them. This doctrine was later on taken by the Sufi-branch of Islam. He said, "Violence has never been taught by religions and not by Sikhism, even in wars and battles, Sikh male and female nurses used to attend to the injured; the concept of Langar (almonry) has been practiced for long by followers of Sikhism." He concluded on the comment on post coronavirus situation where Sikh community in Pakistan contributed in every way possible to address the situation, and interfaith dialogue and peace discussions are the only way forward for the Pakistani society to build the trust that is needed to uphold the principle of sanctity of human soul.

Conclusion

This research concludes that although, the religious leaders of the four major religions in Pakistan solely adhere to the theological teachings of sanctity of human soul, however, they collectively believe that the gap between theological teachings and actual practice can be filled through interfaith dialogue. By recognition of fundamental human rights on state level, especially right to life and freedom of religion, government can set the precedence for the religious communities of civil society of Pakistan to follow a pathway where sanctity of human soul supersedes all the differences. The research concludes that the modern human being of 21st century, who is more likely to consult science than religion for major life and death decisions, needs, now more than ever, the religious leadership to be equivocally on the same page to give him moral strength to value and celebrate life and all human race irrespective of their differences.

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Towards a Social and Economic Practice of the Sanctity of the World[1]

By Ernst Fürlinger

Head of Center for Religion and Globalization at Danube University Krems, Austria

"… the difficulty is to persuade the human race to acquiesce in its own survival. I cannot believe that this task is impossible."
 Bertrand Russell (1946)

Introduction

Our present world is marked by violent conflicts, crimes, militarization and wars, in different regions. Until now humanity has failed to solve the problem of violence and still risks self-destruction by nuclear weapons. The "doomsday clock", which was created in 1947 by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists and indicates the world's vulnerability to nuclear weapons and other catastrophes is currently set at 200 seconds before midnight (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 2021).

A particularly bitter and worrying dimension of this global phenomenon is the use of violence and terror by religious groups, based on religious fanaticism and intolerance (see Pope Francis/ Al-Tayyeb 2019). But by reflecting this problem, we should not neglect the deeper, often unconscious dimension of structural violence of contemporary societies and economies against nature,[2] the web of life, and non-human species.

It would be a mistake to reduce the topic "right to life" in an anthropocentric manner, and to take into account only the life of man and the sanctity of the human soul.

In this contribution, I would like to extend the topic of "sanctity" beyond the human soul, to the sanctity of the whole of reality. It is based on the conviction: The roots of our present, existential ecological emergency stem exactly from our modern Western anthropocentric view of reality and relation to nature. It is characterized by the dualism between an isolated "man" and an objectified, separated "nature", not more than a machine, or a container of "resources", which can be exploited, manipulated, maltreated and plundered for the needs of man.3 It is a "… world set on objectifying everybody and every living thing in the name of profit." (Mbembe 2016). To overcome this alienation, we have to find the way to a fourfold experience:

the bio-centric experience of reality where we see ourselves as an integral part of the living world, the dynamic web of life (Weber 2016), "… a cosmos of reciprocity in which we always participate, whether we want to or not" (Weber 2019, 33);

the experience of the sanctity of the human soul and body, which is much more than an objectified, separated "bodily thing";

the experience of the sanctity, the divine core of being and the living, of reality as a whole (part 4);

and finally the concrete social and economic practice through which this transformed view and experience of reality is implemented and realized in everyday life and institutional structures (part 5).

The Multiple Systemic Crises

The "Millenium Ecosystem Assessment Report" of the United Nations,[4] but also other assessment reports by global scientific institutions like the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 2019), and numerous other scientific studies (e.g. WWF 2020) come to the same conclusion: The planet, its biosphere and humanity face a severe multiple systemic crisis, in which several global challenges are related and intertwined in complex form. The climate crisis, accelerated biodiversity loss, water crisis, chemical pollution, and pandemics caused by zoonotic diseases are connected with conflicts, extreme and increasing social inequality and poverty.[5]

The existential threats to the biosphere foundations can be seen as the consequence of the "Great Acceleration" beginning in the 1950s, drastic changes in socio-economic trends: the extreme rise of global population, real GDP,

urban population, energy use, fertilizer consumption, water use, transportation, international tourism, paper production, building of large dams, etc. These trends had massive negative consequences for the biosphere and the climate, especially in form of the rise of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the rise of global surface temperature, ocean acidification, biosphere degradation, loss of tropical forests, rise of stratospheric ozone etc. (Steffen et al. 2018). In the last decades, societies – be it capitalist or communist - were busy with economic growth and development, at any price, but almost forgot the very basis of human economy and society: nature, the biosphere, the net of life.

In 2009, Johan Rockström, at this time director of the Stockholm Resilience Center, and 28 other scientists from different disciplines presented the concept of "planetary boundaries": the conditions under which earth remains habitable for human civilization.[6] The paper identified nine dimensions and its related biophysical thresholds: climate change, biodiversity loss, global freshwater use, interference with phosphorus cycle and nitrogen cycles, atmospheric aerosol loading, ocean acidification, chemical pollution, stratospheric ozone depletion, deforestation and other

land use changes (Rockström et al. 2009a; Rockström et al. 2009b). From the perspective of the scientists, a "safe operating space for humanity" exists only within these boundaries. They argue, for example, that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere should be reduced to the value of 350 ppm (June 2021: 418.94 ppm),[7] and the rate of artificial extinction of species should be reduced to the tenfold value of the natural rate of extinction (Rockström et al. 2009b). Research shows that three of the nine interlinked planetary boundaries are already been overstepped: rate of biodiversity loss, climate change and human interference with the nitrogen cycle.

Rockström and his colleagues expressed the warning:

"Although Earth's complex systems sometimes respond smoothly to changing pressures, it seems that this will prove to be the exception rather than the rule. Many subsystems of Earth react in a nonlinear, often abrupt, way, and are particularly sensitive around threshold levels of certain key variables. If these thresholds are crossed, then important subsystems, such as a monsoon system, could shift into a new state, often with deleterious or potentially even disastrous consequences for humans." (Rockström et al. 2009a,

472)

In 2019, the Alliance of World Scientists[8] declared together

"… with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergeny. (…) The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected. It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity (IPCC 2019). Especially worrisome are potential irreversible climate tipping points and nature's reinforcing feedbacks (atmospheric, marine, and terrestrial) that could lead to a catastrophic 'hot house earth' (Steffen et al. 2018)." (Ripple et al. 2020, 8f).[9]

Recently, these warnings were confirmed by the new, sixth assessment report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's leading scientific institution on climate change. The Working Group I contribution to the report was published at 7th August 2021 (IPCC 2021). The report warns that global warming because of increasing greenhouse gas emissions (especially carbon dioxide) will trigger so-called "tipping points" in the earth system, which will lead to widespread and potentially irrevocable disaster, unless quick and massive reductions

of emissions are undertaken. Tipping points are for example the melting of polar ice sheets, the melting of Arctic permafrost or the loss of the Amazonas rainforest (Lenton/ Rockström/ Gaffney 2019). The new assessment report underlines that we have to expect increasingly extreme weather events like heat waves, droughts, floods, with massive impacts on human and ecological systems.

In June and July 2021, when this text was written, the world experienced again a wakeup call, in form of extreme weather events in different regions, which are more likely and frequent due to climate change. Temperatures reached record highs in Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Saudi Arabia (Haddad 2021). The heat wave in Canada's western province British Columbia may have killed nearly 500 people (Cecco 2021). Climatologists fear that the "heat dome" because of blocked weather conditions in North America and Siberia in June 2021 could indicate a new dimension of the global climate crisis (Watts 2021). A study of the extreme heat wave in north-western US and Canada by the "World Weather Attribution" (WWA) scientific consortium presented the possible explanation that "non-linear interactions in the climate have substantially

increased the probability of such extreme heat". According to the researchers, these findings "provide a strong warning", that a "rapidly warming climate is bringing us into uncharted territory with significant consequences for health, well-being and livelihoods" (McSweeney 2021). Due to climate change, intense rainstorms and catastrophic floods - like in Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Northern Italy in July - are expected to be more frequent, because warmer air can hold more moisture (Kahraman et al. 2021).

"You Will Be Like God": The frightening power of man in the Anthropocene"

Humanity has entered a new geological epoch, which is in many ways dominated by humans: the Anthropocene. This concept, suggested by Paul Crutzen (Crutzen 2002), helps us to understand our current planetary situation: "This is not just an environmental crisis, but a geological revolution of human origin." (Bonneuil/ Fressoz 2017, xi) The "Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change" - the result of a

participative process coordinated by the "Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences" and launched at an International Islamic Climate Change Symposium in Istanbul in August 2015 - stated:

"The epoch in which we live has increasingly been described in geological terms as the Anthropocene, or 'Age of Humans'. Our species, though selected to be a caretaker or steward (khalīfah) on the earth, has been the cause of such corruption and devastation on it that we are in danger ending life as we know it on our planet. This current rate of climate change cannot be sustained, and the earth's fine equilibrium (mīzān) may soon be lost. As we humans are woven into the fabric of the natural world, its gifts are for us to savour'." (IFEES 2015)

This geological revolution has a religious dimension: The "Epoch of Man" replaces the epoch of creation – the religious conviction that the whole of reality and man is created by God (Quran 15,26; Genesis 1,1), and that God breathes his spirit into man (Quran 15,29; Genesis 2,7). The term "creation of the world by God" is connected with a certain human attitude: gratefulness and humility towards the gift of life; acceptance of the unavailability, gift-ness and finiteness of human life; care and mindfulness for the beauty of nature;

responsible planetary stewardship with a view of future generations; and respect and awe towards the sanctity of the human soul and all beings. The theistic concept "creation of the world by God" saves – like other, e.g. indigenous models - the wisdom of the cultural memory of mankind: We as humans are part of nature, live from nature and can only survive with respect towards nature and the secret of reality.

The heralds of modern industrialism at the beginning of 19th century were already aware of the religious dimension of this fundamental change. Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), representative of early socialism, wrote in 1830:

"The object of industry is the exploitation of the globe, that is to say, the appropriation of its products for the needs of man; and by accomplishing the task, it modifies the globe and transforms it, gradually changing the conditions of its existence. Man hence participates, unwittingly as it were, in the successive manifestations of the divinity, and thus continues the work of creation. From this point of view, Industry becomes religion." (Saint-Simon 1830, 219)

Part of this praise of modern industrialism is the view that man as a creator takes the place of God. The Hebrew bible sees this

as the fundamental temptation of humans: The snake in the paradise – symbolizing the counterforce to God – promises the first man "to be like god" if they eat the forbidden fruits in the midst of the garden (Genesis 3,5). Based on immense technical progress, humans can feel like gods: omnipotent and omniscient. Human technology, the "technogenic milieu" (Ivan Illich) occupies the place of the sacred (Ellul 1967).[10] Some feel like "climate gods" and think they are able to solve the climate crisis with geoengineering – grand deliberate technical interventions in the climate system by Solar Radiation Management or Carbon Dioxide Removal (Royal Society 2009).[11] The eminent biologist Edward O. Wilson warned in his book "Half-Earth": "… we're not going to have a secure future if we continue to play the kind of false god who whimsically destroys Earth's environment" (Wilson 2016, 51). To be wise means to recognize the difference between God and man:

"For no man should measure himself against the gods. If he reaches up and touches the stars with his head, his uncertain feet lose their hold, and clouds and winds make sport of him."[12]

Far-sighted thinkers and scientists like Rachel Carson, Ivan Illich,[13] Günter Anders, Donella Meadows (1977) etc. perceived the self-destructive and violent potential of the contemporary industrial and technological civilization already in an early stage. The German psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm (1900-1980) warned in his famous book "To Have or To Be?" in 1976:

"We have tried to solve this problem of our existence by abandoning the messianic vision of harmony between mankind and nature, by subjugating nature and transforming it for our own purposes, until the subjugation of nature became more and more its destruction. Our thirst for conquest and our hostility have blinded us to the fact that natural resources are limited and may one day run out, and that nature will defend itself against man's rapacity." (Fromm 1976)[14]

With the multiple systemic crises, which threaten the very foundations of human civilization on the planet, this utopian project of modern humanity "being like god" is in fact shattered and broken into pieces. We realize with fright that we aren't gods, supreme beings, but more like giants who cannot control their power and its destructive consequences.

The World as Theophany: Islamic, Christian and Hindu Perspectives

In view of the current threats to the future of humanity and of non-human species, immediate and far-reaching measures are urgent, above all

the rapid decarbonization of economy and society (Rockström et al. 2017),[15] halving CO_2-emissions by 2030 (IPCC 2018), supported by a significant price on carbon (Sharpe/Lenton 2021),

the enforced protection of nature and wilderness (Wilson 2016),[16]

the shift to mostly plant-based diets ("planetary health diet", see Willett et al. 2019),[17]

and to circular economy (see Ripple et al. 2021).

At the same time we must look for "leverage points" for a fundamental long-term systemic transformation, especially a shift in our worldview, a new great narrative about our species in relation to non-human species.

Donella Meadows, lead author of the famous report to the Club of Rome "Limits to Growth" (Meadows et al. 1977), defined leverage points from the perspective of systems analysis as "… places within a complex system (…) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything." (Meadows 1999, 1).

She identified twelve leverage points, in increasing order of effectiveness – with the mindset or paradigm out of which the system arises and the power to transcend paradigms as the two most effective leverage points (Meadows 1999, 3):

"The shared idea in the minds of society, the great big unstated assumptions – unstated because unnecessary to state; everyone already knows them – constitute that society's paradigm, or deepest set of beliefs about how the world works." (Meadows 1999, 17).

For a deep transformation, a shift of the world view, the paradigm (Kuhn 2012) - the very source of the system - regarding the essence of reality, the very nature of life, is necessary. According to Kuhn, such a shift is a progress away from less adequate conceptions of, and interactions with, the world (Kuhn 2012, ch.13). It is about nothing less than overcoming the project of European philosophers in early modernity like René Descartes (1596-1650) or Francis Bacon (1561-1626), we have followed in the last centuries: to conquer, control and master nature by science and technology, to reduce it to a mere background of human activities, and to adopt a mechanistic and materialistic view of the world (see Dijksterhuis 1964; Merchant 2006; 2008). In his Novum Organum

("New Instrument"), Bacon identified progress of mankind with the "restauration" of man's power and dominion over nature as he wielded it before the expulsion from paradise:

"Man by the Fall fell at the same time from his state of innocency and from his dominion over Creation. Both of these losses, however, can even in this life be in some part repaired, the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and science." (Novum Organum II, aphorism 52; quoted after Pérez-Ramos 2003, 133)

This shift of paradigm would mean to transform our understanding of enlightenment and to develop an "Enlightenment 2.0", overcoming its historically conditioned materialistic philosophy, exaggerated rationalism and narrow, scientistic form of rationality (Habermas 2019; Gruber/ Knapp 2021). Compared to different voices who call for a "new enlightenment",[18] the meaning here is: enlightenment and modernity, which is open for the spiritual dimension of reality and traditional wisdom, especially regarding the sacredness of nature and life. Without abandoning enlightenment and modernity and its achievements - especially science, rationality, secular liberal democracy, human rights and gender equality -, we have to rediscover and integrate the lost, forgotten, fought or low valued worldview of spiritual traditions and to translate its core for our modern societies (Bourg 2010;

2018). Many contemporary thinkers are convinced, that we can build a bridge between the knowledge of spiritual and philosophical traditions and the insights of contemporary natural sciences (Capra/ Steindl-Rast 1993; Capra 2000; Dürr 2009; Bäumer/ Srivastava 2020), for example between Taoism and quantum physics (Boff/ Hathaway 2009), and reach a scientifically based new vision of reality.

In different religions we find the belief that the world is the theophany of the Absolute, Infinite Reality.

According to Islamic mysticism, the Absolute brought forth the creation as a mirror for its manifestations (tajalliyāt): "I was a hidden treasure and wanted to be recognized; so I created the world" (Schimmel 1975).[19] In his masterpiece, the Dīvān, the Persian poet Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz (715/1315–792/1390) deals with the theophany (tajallī), the revelation of the divine reality in form of the phenomenal world (Dīvān, ghazals 107, 148, and 178; see Fouchécour 2018): "The reflection of your face came into the mirror in the goblet" (Dīvān, 107, 1). The inside of the goblet was covered with reflections, figures, and images. It was "your radiant beauty emanating in a luminous apparition" (Dīvān, 148,1).

Islamic mysticism explains the relation between God and world as a dialectics of revelation and hiding of the Divine Reality. "Theophany" is understood in a non-pantheistic way, underlining the non-identity of God and creation:

"… the Divine is present in all its manifestations, and in reality all manifestation is a stage of the Divine presence. Nature is theologically created by God, but metaphysically, although it 'negates' the Divine Reality by being a 'veil' (ḥijāb) that covers it, it also reveals that reality, being the manifestation of the Divine Principle and locus of the Divine Presence. Nature, therefore, is sacred but it is not divine. Moreover, although not divine but sacred, it must be respected and loved as such by those who believe in God and who love Him. As the Sufis have said, the wisdom of God is written on every page of the cosmic book and He is present everywhere in His Creation. The whole of Creation is the theophany (tajallī) of His Names and Qualities." (Nasr 2017, 4)

In the view of Sufism, the "Breath of the Compassionate" (nafas al-Raḥmān) is the very substance of all Creation, which God "blew" on the archetypes of all things (ibid.). This is the reason of the unity of the world: the manifold reality of the world is ultimately, in its essence, a single reality.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr draws the following consequence:

"Our responsibility toward Nature must include not only utilitarian and practical considerations, which of course have a role to play, but above all the rediscovery of the authentic knowledge of Nature in its spiritual aspects and its role not only in the sustenance of our earthly life, but also in its spiritual and even psychological function in our existence here on Earth as fully human beings." (Nasr 2017, 5)

The concept of theophany plays also an important role in Christian theology (see Welt 1998). Important steps are the text "On theophany" by Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century A.D. (Gressmann 1904) and the reflections of the Christian neo-platonist Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite in the late fifth or early sixth century, in his treatise "On the Celestial Hierarchy" (IV,3): In theophany the formation of the formlessness of God takes place, so that man can approach the divine (Heil/ Ritter 1991, 22).

The Irish neo-platonist philosopher and theologian John Scottus Eriugena (800-877) extended the meaning of theophany:[20] In his main work and masterpiece Periphyseon or "The division of nature", written 862-867, he explained: Being

itself and the whole creation is theophany, the self-manifestation of God (III, 19; Eriugena 1981, 166, 30f; see Welt 1998, 1117). Eriugena presented a dialectics between the poles of manifestation (lat. apparatio) and the hidden divine ground of manifestation, the "secret" (occultum). Out of goodness, the divine nothing, which is beyond all being, emerges from itself in an act of affirmation of its negativity (negati affirmatio) in the form of the multiplicity of being (Eriugena 1981, 166, 17-35).

"It follows that we ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For both the creature, by subsisting, is in God; and God, by manifesting himself, in a marvelous and ineffable manner creates himself in the creature…." (Periphyseon, III.678c)

The Divine is immanent in the creation - and at the same time the Divine remains transcendent as the ground of being (III,9; Eriugena 1981, 80, 33-82,1).The active manifestation of God in form of the phenomenological world is the manifesting of the non-manifesting:

"Everything that is seen and sensuously experienced is nothing other than the appearance of the non-apparent, the revelation of the hidden, the affirmation of the negative [negati

affirmatio], the comprehension of the incomprehensible, the utterance of the ineffable, the access to the inaccessible, the insight into the non-visible, the body of the incorporeal, essence of the super-essential, form of the formless, measure of the immeasurable, number of the uncountable, weight of the weightless, solidification of the spiritual, visualization of the invisible, localization of the placeless, temporality of the timeless, limitation of the boundaryless, circumscription [determination] of the indescribable." (Periphyseon III 4; 58, 12-19)

His work influenced thinker and mystics like Meister Eckhart and especially the philosopher and theologian Cardinal Nicholas de Cusa (1401-1464). In his early work De docta ignorantia (On Learned Ignorance) Cusanus developed the schema of enfolding-unfolding (complication-explicatio): God enfolds all things in himself – in God they are God. At the same time the Divine unfolds itself in form of the world (see Hopkins 1983; Shaffer 2013).

Interestingly, we find this conviction – the phenomenological world as the unfolding and shining of the Divine Reality – also in a completely different, non-monotheistic spiritual and philosophical tradition like non-dualistic Śaivism of Kashmir. It flourished between the 9th and 15th century in India, with Abhinavagupta as the most important representative (Sanderson 1990), "one of the most extraordinary figures, not only in the domain of Indian philosophy, but also in a universal context (…) (Bäumer 2011, 7). The second opening verse (maṅgala śloka) of his treatise Parātrīśika Vivaraṇa (PTV), a commentary on the short Parātrīśika Tantra, reads:

"I bow to that One Goddess (ekā devī) in the form of Self-consciousness (svātmasaṃvitti), in whom this universe that appears as an external objective existence in the state of manifestation, shines (vibhāti), on the disappearance of agitation (kṣobha), inwardly (antar) in the state of the Unsurpassable Reality (anuttarāyāṃ sthitau)." (Abhinavagupta 2000, 3).[21]

His disciple Kṣemarāja expressed this experience in the opening verse of his short treatise Parāprāveśika ("Entering into the Highest Reality"):

"We adore samvid,[22] which shines on in form of the Highest Energy (Śakti), the heart of the Highest Lord, which is identical with the universe and transcends it." (Kṣemarāja 1918,1)

The astonishing parallels among thinkers of different religious traditions, regions and times, concerning the divine deep dimension of reality, could indicate,

that we are not dealing with mere intellectual concepts and models, but with concrete human experiences on a spiritual level – maybe an union (skr. samāveša) with "that", just for a moment: the core of reality, of life, of everything, is divine - highest joy, highest light, highest freedom, highest creativity, highest beauty. "Enlightenment 2.0" would be based on a shift from religion focused on a certain political theology – God as the ultimate omnipotent "law-giver", which legitimizes authoritarian power and social order (Haker 2020) – to the spiritual core of religions.

Towards a Social and Economic Practice of the Sanctity of the World

It is clear: Such a perception of reality - a spiritual paradigm - is not universally shared in our plural, complex, and secular societies. The fact is that also the findings of natural sciences, especially biology, ecology (see Frischmuth 2021) and quantum physics provide a new view of reality, nature, life. The interconnection and interdependence of all phenomena is evident also from a scientific perspective.

According to the physicist Hans-Peter Dürr (1929–2014), close collaborator of Werner Heisenberg and his successor as the director of the Max Planck Institute for Physics and Astrophysics in Munich, quantum physics demonstrates: the primary thing is not determined matter, but relationship, open potentiality, creative dynamic processes, constant change (Dürr 2011, 22f):

"Reality is pure connectedness or potentiality. (…) This fundamental connectedness results in the world being a unity. Strictly speaking, there is no way to divide the world into parts because everything is connected to everything else." (ibid., 38).

There is no "particle" like in the mechanistic worldview of classical physics, but a "holistic structure of relationship" that makes reality a non-decomposable, non-dual whole (ibid., 27f). One consequence is: man and nature are, like everything, not separated.

The key is a twofold translation: to translate these insights into a new way of seeing the world, and to translate this new worldview in our everyday life – not only on the individual level, but on the level of the social and economic structures and institutions. From a spiritual perspective, the question is: What would a human society and economy look like that corresponded to the very nature, the "deep dimension" of reality – joy, light, freedom, beauty, power -, to the gift-giving, generous, plural nature of creation, the "primal ground of aliveness" (Dürr 2011, 36)?

That would require rethinking ourselves, and redirecting society, economy, science, work, education, "nature", … in a fundamental way (see Fromm 1976, ch.9). Many social and economic traditions, which represent an alternative to the hegemonic ideology of neoliberal capitalism are still alive.[23] Many elements of an alternative paradigm already exist. Many approaches and experiments for a deep, great transition are already realized, or beginning on a small, local scale. It is about a society and economy,

● in which humans understand itself as one element of the complex web of life (Moore Lappé 2011; Freeman 2020), not as gods but as a "biological species tied to this particular biological world" (Wilson 2016, 211), which is the prerequisite for our existence, and at the same time as beings with a spiritual dimension which connects us with everything;[24]

● in which humans realize a deep connection, encounter and empathy with the web of life (Bauer 2020);

● where we regain the lively connection and direct contact with nature, instead living mainly behind "the technological wall, the digitalized curtains that separate me from reality" in the "technogenic milieu" (Ivan Illich);[25]

● in which people nourish and promote the experience of aliveness and of "love as an ecological practice" (Weber 2017);

● where the Rights of Nature are institutionalized and guaranteed;[26]

● where the traditional knowledge, wisdom and the territories of indigenous cultures and people are finally honored, valued and protected;[27]

● embedded within the safe operating space of the "planetary boundaries", with the biosphere as its very basis and fundament (Raworth 2017) and oriented towards the "paradigm of the living", so that we "let the living become more living" (Dürr 2011, 51), in particular a "circular economy" with less resource consumption;

● where we shift from destructive, unsustainable, inefficient forms of industrial agriculture to organic or ecological agriculture ("agroecology") which ensures sustainable food security, healthy food, environmental protection and human dignity (Moore Lappé 2016);[28]

● a society and economy with a focus on the common good, equity and sufficiency, which guarantees the minimum requirements for a good life for all - without transgressing the planetary boundaries (Daly/ Cobb 1994; O'Neill et al. 2018)

● of a "simple well-being" (Serge Latouche), that breaks the fixation on economic growth, competition and expansion and follows alternative models for prosperity (Latouche 2009; Jackson 2009; 2021);

● a fair, sustainable and connected society of social solidarity, sharing (of transportation, housing, foods, goods, …), giving, cooperation, cohesion, care, connection, by using the new digital technologies in a constructive way (Schor 2014; Schor/ Fitzmaurice 2015; Adloff 2018; 2020) – a society of "conviviality" (Illich 1973; Gronemeyer et al. 2019), instead of the maximization of individual benefit and concurrence;[29]

● in which all people can satisfy their needs – basic needs (like food, housing, education, meaningful work, etc.) but also "dignity needs" (Louis-Joseph Lebret) like

understanding literature, enough space etc. as one form of personal needs;[30]

● a society in which all people – men and women, young and old - can realize their sanctity and dignity: unfold their talents, intellectual capacities, creativity, spiritual dimension, inclinations, their engagement for the common good;

● where people can do meaningful self-determined work, free from the struggle for economic survival - on the basis of publicly guaranteed economic security, an unconditional universal basic income as a complement to strong public services (Van Parijs/ Vanderborght 2017; Bregman 2017; Standing 2020a; 2020b), financed with public money by the state (Mellor 2017; Kelton 2020);

● where already the primary schools, but also institutions of higher education and enterprises cultivate creativity, methods of mindfulness, empathy, compassion, global citizenship, universal ethics (Dalai Lama 2002) - as an alternative to a lifelong learning for consumerism (Sivaraksa 2009; Great Transition Initiative 2021);[31]

● in which people understand themselves as part of a global, planetary "We" (Bauman 2017), that can survive only together, instead of "…a cool, comfortable and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment concealed behind a deceptive illusion: thinking that we are all-powerful, while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat." (Pope Francis 2020, no. 30).

The place where the Mur - the longest river in Austria - rises is a place of magic and symbolism. The Schmalzgrube, above 2000 meters in the Upper Tauern National Park consists of rocks and rubble. From a certain point you can hear the gurgling of the individual springs under the rock - the rocky hollowed underground amplifies the sound of the water. The small springs join underground, under the rocky surface, and in some tiny places they are already visible between the rock. At one point, the hard impenetrable rock bottom opens, and the young cold spring water suddenly emerges with great force, freshness and liveliness - the beginning of the river.

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Endnotes

1- This contribution is dedicated to Prof. Dr. Bettina Bäumer (Phulchatti, India), in gratitude and friendship.

2- On the evolution of the word "nature" in European languages and its several shifts of meaning in its history see Ducarme/ Couvet 2020.

3- On the modern Western concept of the relation between nature and humans see Görg 1999.

4- The key messages of the report are summarized in the statement of the board "Living beyond our means" (Millenium Ecosystem Assessment 2005). For the whole report see https://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html

5- For a summary see the white paper, which was published at the occasion of the first Nobel Prize Summit "Our Planet, Our Future" at 26-28 April, 2021 (Folke/ Polasky/ Rockström et al. 2021).

6- Website: https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html

7- NOAA, Global Monitoring Laboratory: Trends in Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide, Website: https://gml.noaa.gov/ccgg/trends/ (8 July, 2021).

8- Website: https://scientistswarning. forestry. oregonstate.edu.

9- In July 2021, the Alliance of World Scientist's published an updated version (Ripple et al. 2021).

10- On Ellul see Illich 1993.

11- For ethical reflections of geoengineering see e.g. Preston 2012, 2016; Gardiner 2012, 2017, Hourdequin 2018.

12- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, poem "Grenzen der Menschheit" (Limitations of Mankind), written 1781 or in the years before. English translation: Richard Stokes, https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/1519

13- The foundation "Convivial" in Wiesbaden (Germany) cares for the heritage of Illich:

https://www.convivial.de. See also the "International Journal of Illich Studies" founded in 2009 by Richard Kahn: http://ivan-illich.org/

14- Translated from the German edition (Fromm 1979, 21).

15- Decarbonization is especially challenging for countries with a high carbon footprint. In 2019, the top ten countries have been China, USA, India, Russia, Japan, Iran, Germany, South Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia (Global Carbon Project: Global Carbon Atlas, CO_2-emissions 2019). Website: http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/en/CO2-emissions.

16- The first draft of the UN Biodiversity Treaty (Global Biodiversity Framework) includes the target to protect at least 30% of global lands and waters by 2030, and to retain existing intact natural areas. The Treaty should be signed at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Kunming, China, 11-24 October 2021). These targets are championed by a coalition of 60 countries led by Costa Rica, France and Great Britain ("High Ambition Coalition of Nature and People"). See Campaign for Nature, https://www.campaignfornature.org

17- Summary of the EAT-Lancet Report (2019): https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/07/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf

18- See for example Dürr/ Fischbeck 2003, or the call for a "new enlightenment in the age of the Anthropocene", which is fitting for the "full world", in the new report to the Club of Rome (von Weizsäcker/ Wijkman 2018, ch.2).

19- Translation from the German edition: Schimmel 1992, 381.

20- On Eriugena see O'Meara 1988; Moran/ Guiu 2019. On "theophany" in Periphyseon of Eriugena see Beierwaltes 1994, 83; 120ff; 129ff; 198.

21- The text is based on the translations of Jaideva Singh (Abhinavagupta 2000, 3) and Bettina Bäumer (2011, 50). The verse expresses the core of the worldview of nondualist Kashmir Śaivism or Anuttara Trika: the non-duality of the consciousness of the Real Self (svātmasaṃvitti), the entire external manifestation (the universe), and the Goddess (Śakti), which is the dynamic, vibrating, shining, absolute free and joyful ground of everything

and the experiential dimension of the Absolute. Jaideva Singh comments: "The external world is like a reflection in the mirror of consciousness which, though not different from the mirror, appears as different from it." (Abhinavagupta 2000, 3). For a commentary on PTV see Bäumer 2011.

22- spirit, pure consciousness, spirit nature.

23- Examples for Africa: Sarr 2020; for Asia: Park 2013; for Latin America: Acosta 2015; Kothari et al. 2014.

24- See the famous speech attributed to Chief Seattle (1854): "All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man does not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself." This version of the speech was in fact written by Prof. Ted Perry for the documentary film "Home" on ecology (1972); see John Scull: Chief Seattle, er, Professor Perry speaks: Inventing indigenous solutions to the environmental problem. Website: http://www.ecopsychology. org/journal/gatherings2/scull.htm

25- "Existence in a society that has become a system finds the senses useless precisely because of the very instruments designed for their extension. One is prevented from touching and embracing reality. Further, one is programmed for interactive communication, one's whole being is sucked into the system. It is this radical subversion of sensation that humiliates and then replaces perception." (Illich 1993, 4).

26- The Constitution of Ecuador (2008) is the first, which contains Rights of Nature. See Art. 71: "Nature or Pacha Mama (Mother Earth), in which life takes place and reproduces, has the right to be respected holistically in its existence through the preservation and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and development processes." Art. 72: "Nature has a right to restoration" (Source: Acosta 2015, 25). On the Rights of Nature in the constitution of Ecuador see the presentation of Greene 2015; for a philosophical analysis see Knauß 2018; 2020.

27- Indigenous people care for a great part of the areas of the planet: "At least a quarter of the global land area is traditionally owned, managed, used or occupied by indigenous peoples. These areas include approximately 35 per cent of the area that is formally protected and approximately 35 per cent of all remaining terrestrial areas with very low human intervention." (IPBES 2019, Summary for policymakers, B6). Source: https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/ipbes_7_10_add.1_en_1.pdf?file=1&id=35329&type=node

28- The Global Report "International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development" of several UN-organizations and the World Bank (McIntyre et al. 2009) presented a strong endorsement of ecological farming, urging support for "biological substitutes for industrial chemicals or fossil fuels." (see Moore Lappé 2016).

29- See for example the Transition Town Movement (Hopkins 2008; 2013), the movements for a community-supported agriculture (Solidarity agriculture) or cooperative movements like the "Mondragón Corporación Cooperativa" - founded by the catholic priest José María Arizmendiarrieta (1915-1976) in Spain in the 1940s -, now the greatest cooperation in Spain, which is globally active (https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/en).

30   The French Dominican friar and former sailor Louis-Joseph Lebret (1897-1966) was the founder of the Economy and Humanism Movement in the early 1940s, with the aim of a "human economy". Together with Dom Hélder Câmara he wrote the draft for the encyclical Populorum Progressio (1967) of pope Paul VI. On Lebret see Bosi 2012. I would like to thank Professor Clemens Sedmak for the reference to Lebret (ORF, "Kreuz & Quer, July 27, 2021).

31- See e.g. the programs of the "Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama". Website: https://furhhdl.org/our-programmes/education-and-ethics/universal-human-values-ethics/

Suicide and Teenagers

By Neven Melek

Lawyer and a Human Rights activist

Abstract

There are some hard questions we need to ask about teenagers› suicide I don't believe there is anything wonder with teenagers having suicidal thoughts but is there something wrong with how we react to being thought about and should do everything in our power to prevent it.

A lot of people think about killing themselves and decide to die; adults and kids, sometimes things get really dark, most of them never tried, but some of them do. It's really hard to talk about suicide this silent killer, specifically to talk about teenagers' suicide. I believe that it needs to be common knowledge that suicide is not an issue of shame, and guilt to cover it, the most important thing we can do to support a loved one who is struggling is to learn to recognize the suicidal thoughts from the beginning, and understanding what it looks like in teenagers, and how to address that issue, then how to deal as well. Isn't it time we just start accepting that suicidal thought are something that happened and instead start talking openly and responsibly about it.

Keywords: Suicide, teenagers, health, teens, Adolescents.

Definitions/measurement and Phenomenology

Suicide is death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die. A suicide attempt is when someone harms themselves with any intent to end their life, but they do not die as a result of their actions.

Many factors can increase the risk for suicide or protect against it. Suicide is connected to other forms of injury and violence. For example, people who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence have a higher suicide risk. Being connected to family and community support and having easy

access to health care can decrease suicidal thoughts and behaviors[1].

As Cynthia Pfeffer, one of the leading researchers in prepubertal suicidal behavior, has stated, «Suicidal behavior is a developmental process that begins at an earlier phase of the life cycle than when this behavior manifests»[2]

Why Do Teens Consider Suicide?

Suicide is complex and rarely attributed to any one factor. Young people with mental health problems - such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or insomnia - are at higher risk for suicidal thoughts. Teens going through major life changes (parents› divorce, moving, a parent leaving home due to military service or parental separation, financial changes) and those who are bullied are at greater risk of suicidal thoughts[3].

Many teens that attempt or die by suicide have a mental health condition. As a result, they have trouble coping with the stress of being a teen, such as dealing with rejection, failure, breakups, school difficulties and family turmoil. They might also be unable to see that they can turn their lives around, and that suicide is a permanent response, not a solution, to a temporary problem[4]. Among younger children, suicide attempts are often impulsive. They may be associated with feelings of sadness, confusion, anger, or problems with attention and hyperactivity[5]. Among teenagers, suicide attempts may be associated with feelings of stress, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, disappointment, and loss. For some teens, suicide may appear to be a solution to their problems.

There's very little research into the reasons why teenagers suicide but the recent research that does exist speaks about how teenagers' high suicide rates are linked to things that increase the risk of suicide among teens include[6]:
● A psychological disorder, especially depression, bipolar disorder, and alcohol and drug use (in fact, about 95% of people who die by suicide have a psychological disorder at the time of death).
● Feelings of distress, irritability, or agitation.
● Feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness that often come with depression.
● A previous suicide attempt.
● A family history of depression or suicide.
● Emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.
● Lack of a support network, poor relationships with parents or peers, and feelings of social isolation.

- Exposure to violence.
- Impulsivity.
- Aggressive or disruptive behavior.
- Access to firearms.
- Bullying.
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness.
- Acute loss or rejection.

Prevalence

Although suicide is relatively rare among children, the rate of suicides and suicide attempts increases greatly during adolescence, it is estimated that suicide is one of the top causes of death among adolescents around the world[7], and that its prevalence in this age group has quadrupled in recent decades[8].The prevalence of suicidal thoughts and behaviors among youth varies across countries and sociodemographic populations,it is consequently being acknowledged

in the scientific community as one of the major public health issues in the world. As an orientation, in 2002 there were 877,000 suicides in the world, of which approximately 200,000 were adolescents and young adults[9].

● According to the WHO (World Health Organization)

● More than 700 000 people die due to suicide every year.

● For every suicide there are many more people who attempt suicide. A prior suicide attempt is the single most important risk factor for suicide in the general population.

● Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in 15-19-year-olds.

● 77% of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries.

● Ingestion of pesticide, hanging and firearms are among the most common methods of suicide globally[10].

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34, the fourth leading cause among people ages 35-44, and the fifth leading cause among people ages 45-54.3[11].

Latest Suicide Rates for Adolescents [12]

The pandemic has had a measurable impact on teen suicide statistics. Rates of suicidal ideation and attempts among teens were nearly twice as high during the first half of 2020 as compared to 20190 - illustrating the significant negative effect of the pandemic on adolescent well-being.

Studies examining depression and suicide among teens reveal the following troubling statistics.

In the past 10 years, suicide rates among young people ages 10–17 have increased by more than 70 percent.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the United States among the ages 15–24.

Current teen suicidal stats show that 17 percent of high school students have seriously considered suicide, and 8 percent have made failed suicide attempts.

More than half of the teens who try to commit suicide have never been given a mental health diagnosis.

The rate of suicide is four times greater for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, and two times greater for questioning youth compared to straight youth.

The number of teens admitted to children's hospitals as a result of suicidal thoughts or self-harm has more than doubled during the last decade.

Whereas suicide is a leading cause of death across all age groups, suicidal thoughts and behaviors among youth warrant particular concern for several reasons.

• First, the sharpest increase in the number of suicide deaths throughout the life span occurs between early adolescence and young adulthood (Nock, Borges, Bromet, Alonso et al., 2008; WHO, 2017).

• Second, suicide ranks higher as a cause of death during youth compared with other age groups. It is the second leading cause of death during childhood and adolescence, whereas it is the tenth leading cause of death among all age groups (CDC, 2017).

• Third, many people who have ever considered or attempted suicide in their life first did so during their youth, as the lifetime age of onset for suicidal ideation and suicide attempt typically occurs before the mid-20s (Kessler, Borges, & Walters, 1999).

• Finally, suicide death is preventable, with adolescence presenting a key prevention opportunity resulting in many more years of life potentially saved. By gaining a better understanding of how and why suicide risk emerges during youth, we can offer opportunities to intervene on this trajectory earlier in life[13].

Gender suicide rates

Sex presents a now well-established paradox in which adolescent girls are more likely to have experienced suicidal ideation and suicide attempt than boys, but adolescent boys are more likely to die by suicide. The sex difference in suicide death rates among youth tend to mimic those found among adults, such that boys and young men die by suicide at a rate of more than two times, and sometimes more than three times that of girls and young women[14].

Rates of suicide in most countries are higher in males than in females[15]. In recent years, several countries have experienced an increase in suicide rates in males, particularly in the younger age groups[16]. In contrast, suicide rates of females have declined, especially in older women, or remained fairly stable, particularly in the young[17]. With an overall rise in male rats and a decrease in female rates[18]. It suggests that causal factors and, possibly, protective factors have changed in different directions in the two genders. Social factors, especially linked to changes in gender roles, seem the most likely explanation[19]

Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors in Teenagers

Cognitive development and maturity

The variability of teenagers› cognitive maturity through prepuberty has implications for their understanding of the seriousness and finality of suicide.

Most of the research agrees that depression is the risk factor most commonly involved in suicidal behavior among young people. However, many authors also insist on hopelessness as a more accurate predictor. According to Beck, the state of hopelessness is defined as a system of cognitive patterns with the common denominator of negative future prospects. Under these circumstances, suicidal thoughts may be understood as an extreme expression of the desire to escape from what seem to be unsolvable problems or an intolerable situation. Indeed, adolescence is a critical period during which stressful changes take[20].
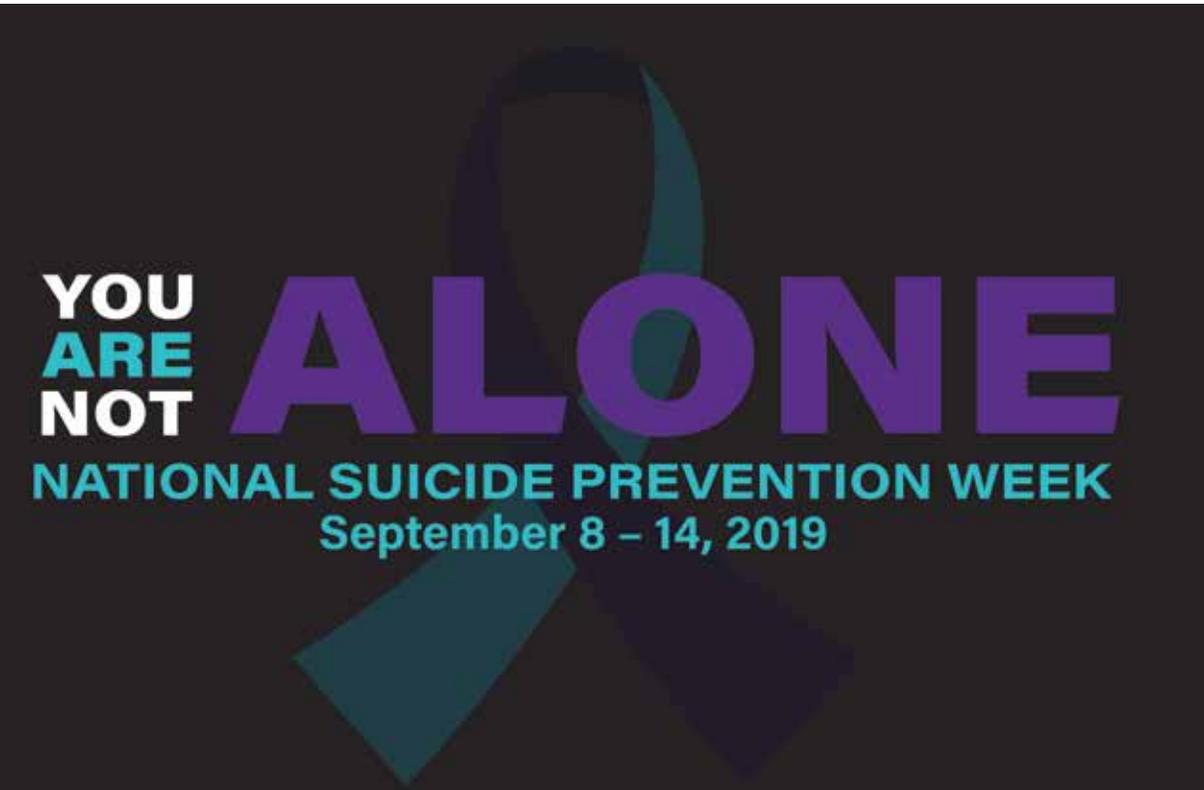
YOU ARE NOT ALONE
NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK
September 8 – 14, 2019

The relationship between psychiatric disorders and adolescent suicide

Much of the decrease in suicide ideation and suicide attempts seem to be attributable to nonspecific elements in treatment. For high-risk youth, cognitive behavioral therapy would offer better possibilities to prevent suicides. Mood disorders, substance abuse, and prior suicide attempts are strongly related to youth suicides. Factors related to family adversity, social alienation, and precipitating problems also contribute to the risk of suicide. The main target of effective prevention of youth suicide is to reduce suicide risk factors recognition and effective treatment of psychiatric disorders[21].

Warning Signs of Suicidal Thoughts

Knowing the signs and symptoms associated with suicide is a start to preventing teen suicide[22]; by studying and understanding the developmental processes of suicidal behavior and thinking, important information and Warning signs can be gleaned which

will inform suicide prevention and intervention efforts.

Warning signs associated with suicide can include [23]:

● Ups and downs more than anybody else.
● Acting differently than usual.
● Crying or getting angry for no good reason.
● Distraction focus.
● Not able to sleep or sleep too much.
● Shutting her friends out.
● Giving the stuff away.
● Acting recklessly.
● Drinking drugs.
● Staying out late.
● Changes in eating or sleeping habits.
● Frequent or pervasive sadness.
● Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities.
● Frequent complaints about physical symptoms often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
● Decline in the quality of schoolwork.
● Preoccupation with death and dying.
● Stop planning for or talking about the future. They may begin to give away important possessions.

Treatment and Prevention

We lived in a time where suicide wasn't considered something that you spoke about it was swept under the carpet, and a cause shame amongst families, nothing's really changed we still struggle to talk about it we label it as abnormal or unusual and we make them wrong for having suicidal thoughts, and because we think of it this way it stops us from being able to talk about it, and we stay silent instead and suicide remain shrouded in this stigma[24].

We can take steps to help protect your teen. For example[25]:

If you suspect that your teen might be thinking about suicide, talk to him or her immediately. Don't be afraid to use the word «suicide» Talking about suicide won't plant ideas in your teen's head. If you think your kid acting different, if he seems like a different person, in fact the best way to keep a teenager from killing herself is to ask straight-out: are you thinking about killing yourself?

Talk about mental health and suicide. Don't wait for your teen to come to you. If your teen is sad, anxious, depressed or appears to be struggling, ask what's wrong and offer your support.

Discourage isolation, encourage your teen to spend time with supportive friends and family.

Teenagers can't always ask for help; because they feel that asking for help will make them a burden. If they are struggling with anything they haven't told us, and can we think about how

we respond to that, how we choose to empathize with their pain, and make space for them and listen to them.

Share with your teen your feelings, let him know he or she is not alone and that everyone feels sad or depressed or anxious now and then, including moms and dads. Without minimizing his anguish, be reassuring that these bad times won't last forever. Things truly will get better and you will help get your child through counseling and other treatment to help make things better for him or her.

Ask your teen to talk about his or her feelings and listen. Don't dismiss his or her problems. Instead, reassure your teen of your love. Remind your teen that he or she can work through whatever is going on — and that you're willing to help.

Also, seek medical help for your teen. Ask your teen's doctor to guide you. Teens who are feeling suicidal usually need to see a psychiatrist or psychologist experienced in diagnosing and treating children with mental health problems.

Find someone can talk to about it someone who knows how to help; talk to a counselor at school. Make sure that your kid always has someone to turn to someone he trusts. Keep an eye on your teen's social media accounts; it can expose them to bullying, rumor spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives, and peer pressure. If your teen is hurt or upset by social media posts or messages, encourage him or her to talk to you or a trusted teacher. Encourage a healthy lifestyle. Help your teen eat well, exercise, and get regular sleep.

Conclusion

Suicide among children and adolescents is claimed to be a morbid process of neurobiological etiopathology, rather than the desires of the individuals themselves.

There is an overall tendency to try to find and classify the psychopathological aspects involved in suicide.

Gender differences in suicidal behavior clearly merit more research attention to induce information that can guide clinical practice and prevention strategies in ways during which will prove the handiest for preventing suicidal behavior in both genders.

Teenage suicide is often reduced or prevented through education.

Parents should be educated and encouraged to talk to their children about suicide, and ensure their children understand that their parents are there for them. Teachers, doctors, and clergymen mustn't be afraid to talk to children about suicide.

Children should be taught about suicide and encouraged to act if they believe one altogether their friends is

potentially suicidal. If there are more ways to induce out a message about suicide; like, television commercials, magazine articles, or even radio talk shows, then one would have more knowledge on the subject of suicide. If that happened then more people would be ready to recognize wondering suicide or was on the purpose of the kill.

Suicide is an occurrence that's preventable. By recognizing the signs and symptoms of suicide and knowing the available resources.

Endnotes

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Some Reflections on the Human Soul in Jewish Thought

By Rabbi Menachem Genack

Rabbi of Congregation Shomrei Emunah in Englewood, NJ

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. [1]

(Genesis 1:26–27)

Rabbi Akiva…used to say: Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God. As a gesture of special love, it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God, as it is said, "For in the image of God He made man."

(*Avot* 3:18)

I bring heaven and earth as my witnesses: whether Gentile or Jew, man or woman, slave or maidservant, it is in accordance with one's actions that the Divine Presence rests upon him.

(*Yalkut Shimoni*, Judges 42)

"Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation" (Num. 27:16)… Just as their faces are not the same, so are their minds not the same; each has a mind of his own.

(*Midrash Tanhuma*, *Pinhas* 10)

Man, unlike all the other animals, was created alone. Rabbinic tradition, recorded in the Talmud, interprets the reason for man's lonely emergence as follows:

Man was created singly to teach that whoever destroys a single life is considered by Scripture as if he

had destroyed an entire world, while one who preserves a single life is considered by Scripture as if he had preserved an entire world. And for the sake of peace among people, so that no man would tell his fellow man "My father is greater than yours." And to teach the greatness of God. For a man mints many coins from one mold and they are all similar to the other, but God minted all men from the mold of Adam and not one of them is like his fellow man. Therefore, each person must say, "For my sake was the world created." (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 37a)

The Qur'an too cites this idea:
"For this reason we have ordained for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a person, unless it be for manslaughter or for corruption in the land, it as though he had killed all men. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all men…"[2]

Both the Talmud and the Qur'an root this message in the context of the tragic story of fratricide between Cain and Abel. The Talmud states:
Know, moreover, that capital cases are not like non-capital cases: In non-capital cases a man may pay money and so make atonement, but in capital cases the witness is answerable for the blood of him [that is wrongfully condemned] and the blood of his descendants [that should have been born to him] to the end of the world. For so have we found it with Cain, who murdered his brother, as it says, "The bloods of your brother cry out" (Genesis 4:10). It does not say, "The blood of your brother," but rather "The bloods of your brother," meaning his blood and the blood of his descendants.

The Qur'an as well introduces the statement about one who kills a person or saves a life with the account of Cain and Abel (5:27-30):
"And recite unto them, with truth, the account of Adam's two sons… One said, 'I will surely slay you!' [The other] said, 'God accepts only from the reverent.' (…) Then his soul prompted him to slay his brother, and he slew him, and thus came to be among the losers."

Man was created alone to indicate his uniqueness and irreplaceability. In murdering his brother, Adam's son Cain failed to understand the uniqueness of man. The Talmud indicates that, remarkably, while all humans are made from Adam's mold, they are all different from one another. For the defining dimension of Adam is his distinctiveness; the essence of his mold is his uniqueness. Consequently, it is that quality which he imprints upon his progeny—they, too, are all different. In contrast to the

rest of creation, man is not defined merely as part of the class, but as a being in and for himself.

Man's rights to not devolve from the group or from society as a whole, but rather are the inherent endowment of each individual. In the age-old conflict between the rights of the individual and those of society, the depiction of man's creation clearly favors Thomas Jefferson's notion of the preeminence of the individual, as opposed to society. After all, the group or society only came forth subsequent to the creation of the individual.

The biblical story of creation celebrates the transcendence of the human spirit. Like God, man is lonely and alone; his majesty is manifest in his loneliness and singularity. His uniqueness is his defining quality. As such, each person is of infinite worth, a world in his own. We may therefore affirm, as we acknowledge the dignity and individuality of our fellow man, "For my sake was the world created."

In discussing the duality of man, as a social being on the one hand, while on the other hand, a unique entity who is incomprehensible to the outsider, the great Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik wrote:

It is paradoxical yet nonetheless true that each human being lives both in an existential community, surrounded by friends, and in a state of existential loneliness and tension, confronted by strangers. In each to whom I relate as a human being, I find a friend, for we have many things in common, as well as a stranger, for each of us is unique and wholly other. This otherness stands in the way of complete mutual understanding. The gap of uniqueness is too wide to be bridged. Indeed, it is not a gap, it is an abyss. Of course, there prevails, quite often, a harmony of interests— economic, political, social—upon which two individuals focus their attention. However, two people glancing at the same object may continue to lead isolated, closed-in existences…We frequently engage in common enterprise and we prudently pursue common goals, traveling temporarily along parallel roads, yet our destinations are not the same… We think, feel and respond to events not in unison but singly, each one in his individual fashion… In spite of our sociability and outer-directed nature, we remain strangers to each other. Our feelings of sympathy and love for our confronter are rooted in the surface personality and they do not reach into the inner recesses of our depth personality which never leaves its ontological seclusion and never becomes involved in a

communal existence.[3]

In this vein, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks comments:
Monotheism is not just a set of beliefs about God. It has deep implications for our understanding of humanity as well. Discovering God, singular and alone, humans discovered the significance of the individual, singular and alone.[4]

The biblical concept of the preeminence of the individual is the foundation of human rights. As Rabbi Sacks notes, while the Declaration of Independence boldly states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," this is not wholly accurate.

The irony of this sentence, as I have often noted, is that "these truths" are very far indeed from being "self-evident." They would have sounded absurd to Plato and Aristotle, both of whom believed that not all men are created equal and therefore they do not have equal rights. They were only self-evident to someone brought up in a culture that had deeply internalised the Hebrew Bible and the revolutionary idea set out in its first chapter, that we are each, regardless of colour, culture, class or creed, in the image and likeness

of God. This was one of Judaism's world-changing ideas.[5]

Reason alone, in other words, proves insufficient to the demand of sustaining the ideal of human equality. Ultimately, the foundational concept of democracy is based on religious faith. The greatest American president, Abraham Lincoln, recognized the centrality of the creed of the Declaration of Independence, and the necessity of faith in sustaining it. In his most famous words, opening the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln identified the "new nation brought forth on this continent" with "the proposition that all men are created equal."
But Lincoln recognized that the assertion of "self-evidence" required acceptance of axioms which cannot be rationally proven. In a letter written in honor of Thomas Jefferson's birthday, Lincoln remarked:

One would start with great confidence that he could convince any sane child that the simpler propositions of Euclid are true; but, nevertheless, he would fail, utterly, with one who should deny the definitions and axioms. The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success.
One dashingly calls them «glittering

generalities»; another bluntly calls them «self-evident lies»; and still others insidiously argue that they apply only to «superior races.» These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect—the supplanting the principles of free government, and restoring those of classification, caste, and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads, plotting against the people. They are the van-guard—the miners, and sappers—of returning despotism. We must repulse them, or they will subjugate us.[6]

Lincoln concludes his letter by acknowledging Jefferson's role in cementing this faith in human equality:

All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there, that to-day, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.

Perhaps it is the quasi-religious nature of the American creed which prompted Lincoln elsewhere to refer to Americans as the Almighty's "almost chosen people."[7]

This Biblical creed to which Lincoln refers extends to all humanity.[8] The Hebrew Bible contains not only the particular covenant between God and the people of Israel, but also the universal covenant between God and the "children of Noah," in other words, all of humanity.[9]

The early chapters of Genesis relate to the tension between man as an unbridled individual and man as a part of society. The Great Flood described in Genesis is a result of an extreme individualism which leaves no room for the rights of and obligations toward the other. Society at the time of the Flood was characterized by violence, licentiousness, and anarchy. The bonds of civil society had unraveled. While man was created as an individual, man's purpose is to create a just society. Man who could not live as part of society was not worthy of having been created. God thus brought the Flood, which eradicated all humanity, saving but Noah and his family.

In the aftermath of the Flood, God re-established His covenant with humanity, which takes the shape of the seven laws of Noah, a universal code of law for humanity, sometimes identified as a form of natural law.[10] The central tenet of these laws conveys the sanctity of the human individual, as a reflection of the Divine image, and the resulting obligation toward him: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, By man shall his blood be shed; For in His image Did God make man" (Genesis 9:6).

Following the Flood, the Bible recounts the story of the Tower of Babel in a brief account which is shrouded in mystery (Genesis 11:1-9):

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of

all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

We may speculate that if the sin of the generation of the Flood was rampant individualism, the post-Flood generation, seeing the disaster that an anarchistic society had brought, moved in the opposite direction. It created an Orwellian, homogenous, centrally controlled society, substituting the centripetal force of totalitarianism for the centrifugal force of anarchy.

Yet both the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Tower failed to understand God's message. The individual was of little value; only the faceless mass was significant. The pithy description of the devaluation of the individual, reported by the Jewish Midrashic tradition, is noteworthy. If a brick fell from the top of the Tower, the Midrash states, people would mourn, for it involved so much effort to get it to the top. But if a *person* fell from the Tower, it was of no consequence. Only in the cohesiveness of the whole, the people thought, could they avoid the fate of the generation of the Flood.[11]

God's dispersal of the society of Babel was not a punishment or retribution as much as it was a plan to free the individual from the bonds of a stifling society and affirm the diversity of the human experience, now represented and enhanced by the multilingual cacophony. No longer enslaved by a society of the Tower, which crushed the individual, the human experience would spread to new places and climes, precipitating new cultures and new mediums of human expression.[12] This, claimed my teacher Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik, is what the rainbow symbolized. What God seeks is not the monochromatic world of the valley of Shinar, but a multicolored one, in which the diversity of the human experience enhances and ennobles man, created in the image of God.

We believe, as part of our human limitation imposed on us by God, that no one has the whole truth. Because we don't possess the whole truth, we believe life is a journey and everyone counts.

A beautiful passage in the Talmud conveys the same idea, by offering insights on two Hebrew words. The word for "truth" is *emet*, אמת. The first letter, aleph (א), is the first letter of the alphabet. The second letter, mem (מ), is in the middle of the alphabet, and the third letter, tav (ת), is the final

letter of the alphabet. The word for "falsity" is *sheker*, שקר, and it is also three letters. Unlike the letters in the word *emet*, however, the letters in the word *sheker* are adjacent to one another.[13]

Sheker, or falsity, results when someone with a narrow perspective claims he has the whole truth. But truth for us humans is diffused. Each of us can never capture the full truth because we are existentially limited; each of us reflects only part of God's whole truth. Thus truth must be linked to humility. Genuine truth, *emet*, is the result of bringing different points of a spectrum, in this case the Hebrew alphabet, together.

The Qur'an (5:48) states as well: "For each among you We have appointed a law and a way. And had God willed, He would have made you one community, but [He willed otherwise], that He might try you in that which He has given you. So vie with one another in good deeds."

In the aftermath of the Flood, humanity had still not learned its lesson. The rampant individualism of the generations before the Flood gave way to the stifling totalitarianism of the generation of the Tower of Babel. In the words of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "just as there are no leaps or sudden transformations within the cosmic process, there are no leaps in human nature. A catastrophe, even of such enormous proportions as the deluge, cannot have a redeeming effect upon man."

How then can humanity emerge from this conundrum? Rabbi Soloveitchik explained that the solution to humanity's problem would not come in an instant, but would rather be an ongoing process of education and gradual change. This process was initiated by Abraham, about whom God said, "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19).[14]

What is the alternative to instantaneous, redemptive catharsis…? The answer, I believe, is to be found in the idea of the parent-teacher—in Abraham, the "father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5). In Judaism, "parent" means "educator," just as "disciples are called children" (*Sifri*, Deut. 34). Man may progress and grow if he is treated like a child whose talents, aptitudes, and moral qualities are gradually developed and sensitized by education. The Torah ruled out the possibility of a miraculous spiritual ascent by man through transcendental intervention and resigned itself to piecemeal elevation of the *homo sapiens*. An immanent process of education inspired by the parent teacher is the way catharsis may be attained.

Man is entangled in wickedness; he is quite often guided by unclean and base instincts. Yet there is in him a great potential to attain the good and sublime. No human being, however deep his fall from God may be, has lost this divine endowment, the invisible and hidden treasure entrusted to him at creation—the image of God embedded in the most hidden recesses of his existential awareness. Therefore, no one, not even the most coarse and immoral individual, is immune to educational techniques and influences… Man was created with a capacity for growth and development—not in a natural sense but spiritually—through education… This potential, the hyletic element in man, is present in everyone.[15]

Through Abraham, God began the process of educating humanity.[16] Abraham taught the world about God's oneness, and God's uniqueness is reflected in the uniqueness of every human being, who is created in God's image. Human governance must be predicated on this truth, taught to us by the Bible and promoted by a much later Abraham: "the proposition that all men are created equal," because we are all created in God's image. But we also recognize that no single human possesses the totality of the Divine truth; only by respecting the multivocal truth which emerges from humanity as a whole can we approach the truth of the Divine.

KNOW ALL THE
THEORIES
MASTER ALL THE
TECHNIQUES
BUT AS YOU TOUCH
A HUMAN SOUL
BE JUST ANOTHER
HUMAN SOUL

———

Endnotes

1- Maimonides, in his Guide of the Perplexed (I:1; trans. S. Pines, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1963), explains the meaning of the terms "image" and "likeness" in this context: "Now I say that in the Hebrew language the proper term designating the form that is well known among the multitude, namely, that form which is the shape and configuration of a thing, is to'ar… Those terms are never applied to the deity, may He be exalted; far and remote may this thought be from us. The term image, on the other hand, is applied to the natural form, I mean to the notion in virtue of which a thing is constituted as a substance and becomes what it is. It is the true reality of the thing in so far as the latter is that particular being. In man that notion is that from which human apprehension derives. It is on account of this intellectual apprehension that it is said of man: In the image of God created He him… As for the term likeness [demuth], it is a noun derived from the verb damoh [to be like], and it too signifies likeness in respect of a notion. For the scriptural dictum, I am like a pelican in the wilderness, does not signify that its author resembled the pelican with regard to its wings and feathers, but that his sadness was like that of the bird… Now man possesses as his proprium something in him that is very strange, as it is not found in anything else that exists under the sphere of the moon, namely, intellectual apprehension. In the exercise of this, no sense, no part of the body, none of the extremities are used; and therefore this apprehension was likened unto the apprehension of the deity, which does not require an instrument, although in reality it is not like the latter apprehension, but only appears so to the first stirrings of opinion. It was because of this something, I mean because of the divine intellect conjoined with man, that it is said of the latter that he is in the image of God and in His likeness, not that God, may He be exalted, is a body and possesses a shape."

2- Qur'an 5:32. See Ephraim Urbach, "'Kol Ha-meqayyem Nefesh Aḥat...' — Development of the Version, Vicissitudes of Censorship, and Business Manipulations of Printers," Tarbiẕ, vol. 40 (1971), pp. 268-284 [Hebrew]; Menachem Kellner, "A New and Unexpected Textual Witness to the Reading 'He Who Kills a Single Person — It is as if He Destroyed an Entire World,'" Tarbiẕ, vol. 75 (2006), pp. 565-566 [Hebrew].

3- Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," in Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought, 6:2 (1964).

4- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Essays on Ethics: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible (Maggid Books and OU Press, 2016), xxi.

5- Ibid., 3. See also a defense of the wording of the Declaration of Independence in Michael Zuckert, "Self-Evident Truth and the Declaration of Independence," The Review of Politics, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer, 1987), pp. 319-339. See Professor Joshua Berman, "The Biblical Origins of Equality," Azure, no. 37, Summer 5769/2009, who proposed the same argument as Rabbi Sacks. Berman illustrates the Hebrew Bible's revolutionary doctrines of equality in such areas as property ownership, debt forgiveness, and taxation, in which the system of the Hebrew Bible represents a radical break with its time, forming a society modeled on the principle of every man's equality before God and His law. See also the book-length treatment of this subject in Joshua Berman, Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought, Oxford University Press, 2008.

6- Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Henry L. Pierce," Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865: Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings, Presidential Messages and Proclamations (The Library of America, 1989), Volume 1, pp. 18-19.

7- Abraham Lincoln, "Address to the New Jersey Senate at Trenton, New Jersey," Collected Works, Volume 4, pp. 235-236: "I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle."

8- Elsewhere, Lincoln referred to "something in that Declaration giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time...This is the sentiment embodied in that Declaration of Independence" ("Speech in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," Collected Works, Volume 4, p. 240).

9- For an interesting perspective on the relationship between these two covenants, see Elijah Benamozegh, Israel and Humanity, M. Luria, ed., Paulist Press, 1995. See also R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Abraham's Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch, D. Shatz, J. Wolowelsky, and R. Ziegler, eds., Toras Horav Foundation, 2008, pp. 182-183.

10- The Noahide laws are enumerated by Maimonides in his Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Melakhim,

chapters 9-10. On the controversial statement of Maimonides, ibid. 8:11, see S. Schwarzschild, "Do Noachites Have to Believe in Revelation? (A Passage in Dispute between Maimonides, Spinoza, Mendelssohn and H. Cohen). A Contribution to a Jewish View of Natural Law: The Textual Question," The Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Apr., 1962), pp. 297-308; Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jul., 1962), pp. 30-65; Jacob I. Dienstag, "Natural Law in Maimonidean Thought and Scholarship," The Jewish Law Annual 6 (1987), pp. 64-77. See also R. Hanokh Teitelbaum, Responsa Yad Hanokh, 62.

The question of the correct version of Maimonides' text regarding one who fulfills the Noahide law based on reason alone relates to the question of "self-evident truths." In the context of the American founding, John Adams addressed this very point: "My friend, again! the question before mankind is—how shall I state it? It is, whether authority is from nature and reason, or from miraculous revelation; from the revelation from God, by the human understanding, or f rom the revelation to Moses…" (The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States, Volume 10, Little, Brown and Co., 1856, p. 170). See Zevulun Charlop, "God in History and Halakhah from the Perspective of American History," The Torah U-Madda Journal, Vol. 1 (1989), pp. 43-58.

11- For relevant sources, see, e.g., Jeffrey Saks, "The Language of Babel: At the Tower with Rashi, Ramban, Netsiv, and Orwell," in Rav Shalom Banayikh: Essays Presented to Rabbi Shalom Carmy, H. Angel and Y. Blau, eds. (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2012), pp. 255-265.

12- This "perspectivism" is consistent with certain counter-enlightenment philosophers. For Vico's critique of a universal natural law, see Isaiah Berlin, "The Philosophical Ideas of Giambattista Vico," in Three Critics of the Enlightenment (Princeton University Press, 2000), 131-132.

My nephew Rabbi Yaakov Nagen has also written about the message of the Tower of Babel from a kabbalistic perspective. See his Be, Become, Bless: Jewish Spirituality between East and West (Maggid Books, 2019), 8ff.

13- See Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 104a: "Why are the letters of the word sheker adjacent [to one another in the alphabet, while] the letters of emet are distant [from one another]? Because falsehood is common, and truth is uncommon. And why do [the letters that comprise the word] sheker all stand on one foot, and [the letters that comprise the word] emet stand on bases that

are wide like bricks? Because the truth stands eternal and falsehood does not stand eternal." See also Midrash Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiva ha-Shalem (Jerusalem, 1914), p. 66: אמת יש לו רגלים ושקר אין לו רגלים ("Truth [אמת] has feet [on which to stand], whereas falsehood [שקר] has no feet"). Both the Talmud and the midrash refer to the orthography of the letters in the words emet and sheker – properly written, each letter of emet has a wide base, while each letter of sheker rests on a single point. For the history of the aphorism שקר אין לו רגלים, see Shmuel Ashkenazi, Alpha Beta Tinyeta di-Shemuel Ze'ira, vol. 2, 884-888.

14- Rabbi Yaakov Nagen pointed me to the early kabbalistic word Sefer HaBahir which notes that the numerical value (gematria) of the Hebrew name Abraham is equivalent to "betzelem Elokim," the words used in Genesis for the creation of man "in God's image." Both equal 248 (which is also the number of positive commandments in the Torah and the number of limbs in the human body). Abraham, who cared for all of his fellow humans created in God's image and brought all of humanity the message of the singular God, epitomizes the divine image in man.

15- Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Abraham's Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch, pp. 91-93.

16- Regarding the gradual process of humanity's education through the means of the Torah, see also Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch, Mesilot Bilvavam: Pirkei Hagut—Ha-Yahid, ha-Hevrah, ve-ha-Medinah bi-Re'i ha-Torah (Maaliyot, 2015; English edition forthcoming):

The giving of the Torah broadened, deepened, and enhanced the rise of the natural moral inclination… The Septuagint, the translation of the Torah into Greek, was completed during the Second Temple era. Scripture has since been translated into virtually every human language. There are several languages that had no written form, for which translators created a script so that audiences might be able to access Scripture in their native tongue. It is a matter of historical fact that the translation of Scripture into English helped bring the Torah's moral values into Western culture, thus laying the foundation for democracy and for individual freedoms. The Torah indeed attests of itself: "it is your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of other peoples" (Deut. 4:6). Long before the age of King James, Maimonides (Hilkhot Melakhim 11:4) noted: "The world has become filled with speech about the messiah, with the words of the Torah, and with talk of mitzvot. They have spread to remote islands and to many nations with insensitive hearts, who now discuss these matters…."

The Insult to the Islamic Principles of Protection of HumanLife and Dignity by the Jihadists: The «Islamic» legitimatization of suicide"

By Michalis Marioras

Associate professor, history of religions, national and kapodistrian university of Athens

Abstract

The jihadists› obsession with abusing the name of Allah in their terrorist attacks is done to legitimize the death of terrorists and their heinous acts. In reality, however, terrorist attacks brutally violate Islamic and universal Human Rights values of the protection of human life and dignity. At the same time, these acts are directed against Islamic teaching -as well as other monotheistic religions- which strictly forbid suicide. In fact, in a distorted way, suicide is sanctified and accepted as a divine act for the glory of God, as the "Ethics of Belief" traps the perpetrator in a spiritual impasse. Finally, all these acts of terrorist religious violence are directed against Islamic principles and teachings.

Keywords:

Human dignity, jihadists, Islamic neo-radicalism, legitimatization of suicide, Ethics of Belief, Ethics of Responsibility, suicide, religious violence, self-consciousness of the jihadist, Islamic terrorism

A) Introduction

The basic principles of Islamic teaching on human dignity -like all matters in Islam- are contained in the Qur'ān. They come entirely from absolute divine authority, and in general there are several similarities with the corresponding Christian

teaching.[1] Human rights in Islam have been granted to man exclusively by God and not by a king, other authority or legislative group. Everything that comes from people can easily be abolished, but since in Islam human rights have been granted by God, then it follows that no government or human group can violate or abolish them. Every devout Muslim or ruler who wants to be a true Muslim must accept, recognize and protect them, since they are the Law of Allāh. This parameter is so strict and imperative that if the leader does not apply them, then according to the Qur'ān he is considered unfaithful and illegal: "*And do not obey the command of the extravagant. Who spread turmoil on earth, and do not reform.*"[2]

In this context, the Qur'ān introduces very serious provisions that ensure human rights in general, but especially and above all that of human life: "… *that whoever kills a person—unless it is for murder or corruption on earth—it is as if he killed the whole of mankind; and whoever saves it, it is as if he saved the whole of mankind*".[3] Or in the same context: "*And do not kill the soul which God has made sacred, except in the course of justice.*"[4] The value and dignity of every human life[5] stems from the love of Allāh and the creation of man as the representative of Allāh.[6]

The Qur'ān unequivocally recognizes the value of man: "*O people! We created you from a male and a female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another*…"[7] But at the same time also recognizes equality and natural kinship between people: "*O people! Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created from it its mate, and propagated from them many men and women. And revere God whom you ask about, and the parent.*"[8]

It is under this interpretive framework that the guarantee of Human Rights for all people arises.[9] Therefore, the recognition of human dignity plays a very important role in the debate on religious freedoms in Islam, as this principle is at the basis of both the moral documentation of Human Rights in the Western context and Islamic teaching respectively. As Kamali aptly stated: "To take dignity as the goal and purpose of human rights would be to enrich the caliber and substance of these rights. Islam's perception of human rights is rooted in human dignity and it is, at the same time, intertwined with human obligation."[10] According to the Muslim view, it is precisely this human value recognized by Allāh that derives both freedom of conscience and a plethora of other human rights.[11] However, the religious terrorist action that results from

the extreme Islamic radicalization violates brutally and goes against the above authentic Islamic principles and teachings on the value of human life and dignity.

B) "Islamic" terrorism

The religious terrorist action that is supposed to take place in the name of Islam is totally different from other types of mass, so-called «secular» terrorism. Extremely interesting and very characteristic is the fact that there is no international, generally accepted definition of terrorism, other than the «academic definition» accepted by the United Nations: "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands,

or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought."[12]

The apt codification of the evolution of modern terrorism by Rapoport, who introduced the "wave theory", remains exceptional[13]. In short, according to the "wave theory" from the end of the 19th century there were four waves of terrorism: 1) the anarchist, 2) the anti-colonial, 3) the new left and 4) the religious. All the waves first appeared in a specific country, but in the process they spread to other countries with a life cycle of about 25-30 years. The various waves of terrorism emerged as a result of political ideas, as each wave was inextricably linked in Rapoport's view with a corresponding radical political movement that led to the gigantism of this particular wave.

The above well-known "wave theory" must be approached in parallel with Neumann's important work,[14] which adds another, the "next wave" of terrorism that specifically concerns the jihadists and the multi-level cycles of action of the Islamic State with the well-known tragic and world-historical, global consequences. Terrorist activity in the vast majority of cases aims to violently overthrow the political situation in a country. Respectively, the ideological reason that terrorism

employs justified as an issue - with more or less political terminology- the attack on the state structure and its actors.[15]

On the contrary, Islamic terrorism promotes the ultimate goal of the complete replacement of secular power with religious power (Theocracy), in the sense of the full and complete application of Islamic law (Nomocracy),[16] i.e. the unconditional rule of Sharī'ah at all levels. In the final analysis, the unconditional application of Sharī'ah to Muslim states and its corresponding extension to the rest is a dominant issue in the argumentation of the most important theorists of Islamist discourse over time. Certainly, it must be fully understood that Muslims, who for whatever reason choose to radicalize and end up as terrorists, are only a small minority in the Muslim world. As Precht concludes: "Most Muslims...do not turn into terrorists. In general, Muslims and converts are law abiding, peaceful citizen, who support the values of society and only a small minority have the potential to become radicalized."[17] This conclusion is largely valid. However, vigilance and a multifaceted response to Islamic radicalization are always needed, especially where it is manifested, for example in Western countries. In any case, the vast majority of Muslims remain peaceful

and far from choosing violence and terrorism as the means to achieve any of their goals.

At European level, the term "Islamic neo-radicalism"[18] has been mentioned for the last decade by certain groups of Muslims in Europe with key features also the strict adoption and full implementation of Sharī'ah in all its areas of public, social and personal life. See, for example, the apt codification of the main features of "Islamic neo-radicalization" at European level -at least- from the Report of the Directorate-General for Information and Security of the Netherlands, as far back as 2007: "Contemporary radical Islam does not express itself only through violence, however, although that is sometimes very much the impression one might gain...These movements have their origins in the Islamic world, operate according to a strongly religious agenda, are outspokenly hostile to the values of Western democracy in a whole range of respects and reject the idea of integration into a society built upon those values. In no way, however, do they propound the use of violence in order to achieve their objectives. Their message does very much seem to strike a chord with groups of young Muslims...who are currently struggling with issues of identity."[19] But at the same time

these Muslim groups in Europe reject consciously, intensely and definitely in public the violence of all forms and therefore any terrorist action. The investigation of the modern and highly complex phenomenon of "Islamic neo-radicalization" -especially at European level- is an extremely important issue that will concern both scientific and sociopolitical current affairs from now on.

C) The Unjustified Acceptance and Legitimatization of Suicide

Undoubtedly, the practical implementation of the ideology of the neo-terrorism jihadists accepts and legitimizes the use of force but also the death[20] of both the enemy and -more often- the terrorist himself. But this acceptance has the practical effect that religion, that is monotheistic Islam, accepts and purifies suicide by sanctifying it. However, it is strongly noted that the dogmatic theology of all three monotheistic religions rejects suicide even with very strict terms and argumentation.[21] It seems then that a whole systematic framework of theological documentation is being developed for the "transformation" of the anti-Islamic suicide of the terrorist into something else,

certainly superior, holy and definitely acceptable by Allāh himself. As a result, the generally unacceptable and absolutely condemnable acts of violence –murder and suicide- from the morality of monotheistic religions are accepted in a totally twisted way. In fact, absurdly and upside down the same deeds emerge as divine, imposed from above to be triumphantly accepted as sacrificial acts at the command and for the glory of Allāh.

In this sense, violence is accepted because it is sanctified[22] with specific theological evidence from important Muslim thinkers. Murder and suicide are atoned for, as the death of the terrorist and the victims is characterized as a sacrificial act to undermine the greatness of Allāh. Especially in Islam, unacceptable unholy suicide deprives the faithful Muslim of Paradise, while acceptable sacred suicide directly secures the jihadist a privileged position in Paradise next to the Prophet before the Day of Judgment. However, to be fair, the sanctification of violence, the acceptance of murder and suicide for a higher purpose are not the hallmarks of Islamic radicalization alone. There is no doubt that historically people of different religions, cultures, places and times, accept violence, especially collective, to serve supposedly high ideals and higher goals.[23] In reality,

however, the result is always the same that is the absolute expansion and domination of Evil in the world. In fact, in a much more tragic way, since the purpose has sanctified the means and the Evil has been refined dressed a religious (national, political, social etc.) mantle according to the circumstances.

In this context Stein very aptly describes the sanctification of the means according to the purposes regardless of the special circumstances: "Collective evildoers often believe that they are accomplishing benevolent acts: they are saving Germany from the lethal parasites breeding on its body, they are bringing about the revolution that will liberate mankind, they are redeeming the Promised Land from its heathen inhabitants, they are helping God's Kingdom to reign on earth, or they make mankind submit to Allāh's will. It seems that the differences between "good" and "evil" cannot be unanimously and transhistorically adjudicated."[24]

Of course, it is clear that the above analysis of the behavior and beliefs of the jihadists concerns the terrorists, who -according to themselves- are driven by purely religious motives and not the rest, who simply satisfy other goals and aspirations long away from any religious-moral dimension.

In general, there are no good motives for any kind of terrorist, and therefore not for jihadists either. On the contrary, the causes are purely psychiatric and for this very reason they must be sought elsewhere. For example, Armstrong examining the stages that the believer has gone through until he reaches the manifestation of extreme behavior, considers that he initially desperately seeks various spiritual supports to face a world that is increasingly stripped of moral values and ideals[25]. Precisely because he cannot manage this situation, he is forced to adopt hard-core positions that help him cope with reality by covering his problematic mental structure by joining specific groups of people and taking on similar responsibilities and actions that are often disgusting. Beyond any doubt, monotheistic religions cultivate and promote moderation and goodness, avoiding the extreme demands, urges and pushing of people to extremes and evil. Quite the opposite is often true of religious leaders, who on numerous occasions have led the faithful to extreme behaviors and actions inciting archaic passions of the human soul.

D) The Ethics of Belief and the Ethics of Responsibility

The complete paradox is that in his perception the terrorist ignores the act of suicide, as he perceives his action as heroic and even imposed by

Allāh himself. It is quite enlightening Ruth Stein's thesis that this kind of terrorist moves more out of his love for God than out of his hatred for unbelievers. In practice he kills the enemies of God, to express his "manic" love and his unconditional surrender to Allah[26]. The terrorist is persuaded and follows the orders of his current leader, who is supposed to function as an interpreter of God's commands: "…The jihadists, cohere around a transcendent, divine project and drive the religious impulse ad absurdum. They obey…(these) archaic patterns (that) are reanimated by charismatic leaders and promoted by cultural crises into the idiom of totalitarian religion."[27]

Eventually the terrorist's choices and actions inevitably lead to a completely irrational state of death and bloodshed. In this way the terrorist adopts the "Ethics of Belief". The religiously radicalized, then, like any extreme hardliner, absolutely extorts his beliefs into practical application. The consequences of his actions result in problematic behaviors that are generally dangerous for society as a whole. Individuals with these specific personality traits are unable to distinguish between "Ethics of Belief" and "Ethics of Responsibility". Schematically, those who follow the "Ethics of Belief" obey and apply only their faith,

ideology, values, without giving any importance to the consequences of their actions. On the other hand, those who choose the "Ethics of Responsibility", attach special importance to the consequences of their actions, without this of course meaning that they do not have values, faith, ideology, etc.

The radicalized person focuses exclusively on the "Ethics of Belief" and is interested in nothing but the realization of his purpose. On the contrary, the rest of the believers -although they also have strong beliefs- take very seriously the consequences that their actions may have when deciding or planning how to accomplish their purposes. In this sense, the hardliner has only one strong belief that completely overshadows everything else, while the rest of the people incorporate any of their beliefs into a broader value system[28]. In the value system of every balanced person and believer, his dominant belief must at the same time be harmonized with other side beliefs that ultimately shape the harmoniously developed man, defining the complex and multilevel regulatory framework of his behavior and actions.

In this sense, every conscious and deeply religious believer -more or less- experiences his faith with similar unconditional and non-

negotiable terms. The difference, however, is that the conscious and well balanced believer never ends up committing heinous acts under any circumstances and for any reason. As a result the faithful Muslim does not go beyond the very boundaries that define human society and determine the peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations in the name of his religious beliefs. This is precisely because the notions of the value and protection of human life -as defined by the true teaching of monotheistic religions- do not provoke or lead to such acts, provided of course they are interpreted authentically.

Difficulties and problems arise when extreme, hard-core beliefs are served piecemeal without any other condition or relevance. As a consequence, religious beliefs form exclusively in the believer the "Ethics of Belief", which automatically functions as the sole motivation and guide for the fanatic without any other consideration. The believer then applies in practice one-dimensionally the "Ethics of *his* Belief", ostentatiously ignoring anything that may hinder, alter or change his purpose. In fact, the

radicalized person is self-evident that he does not expect any consequences for his actions no matter how tragically bloody may be for himself and other people, because he perceives his actions as purifying and godly inspired.

In fact, the majority of people's beliefs are put in a relative context, in the sense that -although they are still very strong- they do not reach the level that the fanatic's commitment to defending his purpose can reach. For example, we will easily agree that lying is bad, but we will hardly come to the complete, non-negotiable and unconditional application of this perception. We will also agree that freedom is a necessary principle and right of every human being, but when implemented in the above unconditional way, it will end up at least contradictory, while if anyone wants to extend his freedom uncontrollably it will end up in innocence, harmful to other people, society etc. In the vast majority of cases, that is, the faithful lack the one-dimensional absoluteness of commitment and the cold indifference of the radicalized Muslim -like certainly any other fanatic- to the

consequences of his heinous acts which are inconceivable.

E) The Self-Consciousness of the Jjihadist

In his conscience, then, the would-be terrorist is absolutely at peace, precisely because he submits and obeys the will of God motivated by his love for God, but also expecting a "divine" reward for his sacrifices and efforts: "Fundamentalism, however, is the self-rejecting submission to an ideal authority...This kind of submission promises great benefits to those who submit, namely, achieving not only safety in life but attaining an ostensibly far greater reward."[29] His spiritual blindness, then, obscures his judgment and he fails to realize the fact that his actions are in essence damaging authentic religious teachings aimed at protecting human life and dignity[30].

In addition, the would-be terrorist -a "faithful" servant of Allāh- reverently follows a systematic ritual during his preparation before the execution of the act, in order to become ritually pure, calm, serene, determined, fearless and certainly indifferent to the consequences of his heinous act.[31] Through the ritual preparation, the terrorist delimits his mental order, perceives his act as providential and purifying for the whole world, as a result of which he feels good.

Ultimately, in his self-consciousness the terrorist identifies himself as an instrument of Allāh with a specific mission: to ensure the absolute sovereignty of God over all kinds of unbelievers, who by their actions turn against Allāh, infecting everything with satanic characteristics, so that Evil may prevail. In this sense, the jihadist realizes that the war he is waging is sacred, just as all his actions are sacred, because his trustee is Allāh himself: "The terrorist thus is no longer a self but an instrument; he is no longer a center of being but a projectile aimed against nonbeing which is incarnated in the sacrificial object ("God's enemies," the "infidels")."[32]

Therefore, his suicide -as well as the death of others- is sanctified and purified at the highest level by Allāh himself, who in this way makes the acts of the jihadist sanctifying. Under these conditions, however, the ultimate human limit –i.e. death- is abolished. Death loses its oppressive power over people. On the contrary, it is offered to them as the pre-eminent means for the conquest of the ideal, healthy and God-sanctified life, the only one that is actually worth enjoying by man: "Death is a final solution and an arch-answer to the refusal to embrace life and its limits... Rather than the end of existence and sentience, death became the threshold

SEPTEMBER 10
WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION Day
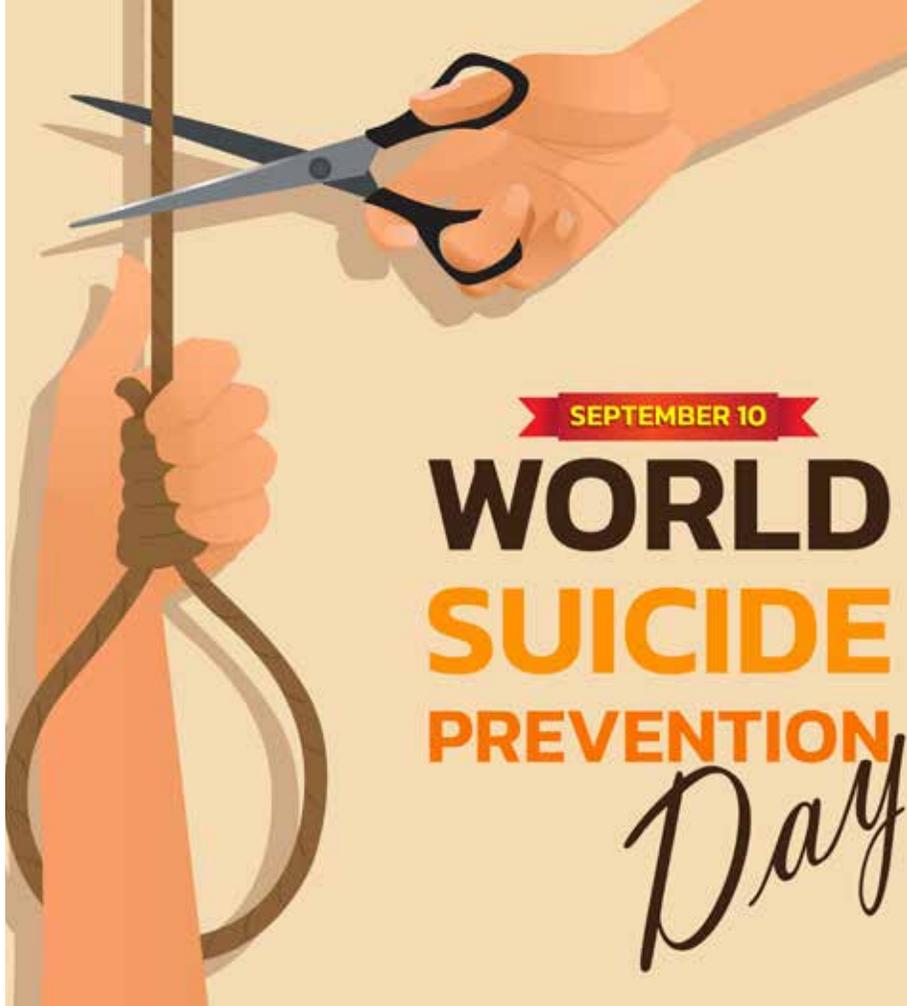
to a new, purer, worthier life."[33]

In this sense, then, the holy war has a sacred purpose: to redress all injustices and inequalities against Allāh, Islam and Muslims. In practice, that is, it is the re-establishment of world order and harmony that is definitely Islamic, predetermined and guaranteed by Allāh himself. Thus, the unquestionable victory of the Good and its spread throughout the world is ensured.

In any case, it becomes absolutely clear that the profile of the Muslim extremist has various peculiarities that make the description complex and multi-layered -especially its analysis. Of course, this is a man who has accepted religious extremism in his life without any other restraint, footnote or anything else that would prevent him from practically completing his sick beliefs with the manifestation of more or less terrorist or other violent action. Maximizing the number of human casualties and material disasters is always the ultimate goal.

Endnotes

1- Very characteristic in this context is the discussion introduced by Franz Wolfinger about the still unknown "alliance" between religions, see Franz Wolfinger, Die Religionen und die Menschenrechte. Eine noch unentdeckte Allianz, Band 2, Don Bosco. München 2000 and cf. Hans Kiing, Ja zum Weltethos. Perspektiven fiir die Suche nach Orientierung, Piper. München 1996, especially pp. l4-15.

2 - Qur'ān, 26:151-152.

3- Qur'ān, 5:32.

4- Qur'ān, 17:33.

5- See indicative of the Islamic conception of human dignity Mohammad Hashim Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, Islamic Texts Society. Cambridge 2002, where extensive literature and cf. James Piscatori, "Human Rights in Islamic Political Culture", in Thompson K., (ed.) The Moral Imperatives of Human Rights: A World Survey, University Press of America. Washington 1980.

6- For man as a representative of Allah (khalifa) see Michalis Marioras, The Dialogue of Muslims and westerns scholars about Sharī'a, vol.i, Prophet and Law in Islam, University of Athens. Athens 2014, pp. 245 and 252.

7- Qur'ān, 49:13.

8- Qur'ān, 4:1, see also 39:6 and cf. 8:58, 2:195, 4:36, 7:32.

9- As Christopher Weeramantry comments: «There could be no affront to the human dignity of any single person without there being an affront to the dignity of all», Christopher Weeramantry, Islamic Jurisprudence: An International Perspective, Palgrave Macmillan. New York 1988, p. 64. See also Majid Khadduri, The Islamic Conception of Justice, John's Hopkins University Press. Baltimore/London 1984, p. 233 and James Piscatori, "Human Rights", pp. 139-142.

10- Mohammad Hashim Kamali, The Dignity of Man, p. xv. This exactly innate human value that Allah has given to man "…provides the basis of modern doctrines of human rights…", Christopher Weeramantry, Islamic Jurisprudence, p. 64.

11- For details on human value as the basis of human rights, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, The Dignity of Man, where extensive documentation from the Qur'ān and the sunna of the Prophet.

12- As cited by Alex Schmid-Albert Jongman, Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature, Routledge. London/ New York 2017, p. 24.

13- See about the important article of David Rapoport, "Modern Terror: The Four Waves", in Audrey Cronin and J.Ludes (eds.) Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy, Georgetown University Press. Washington 2004.

14- See in detail the very interesting work of Peter Neumann, Die Neuen Dschihadisten IS, Europa und Die Nächste Welle Des Terrorismus, Ullstein Verlag. Berlin 2015, which is of great importance for this issue, while for the "next wave" and its "waters" see especially pp. 79-230.

15- For "political" terrorism, its terms, practices and theoretical development see, inter alia, Martha Crenshaw, Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind, Johns Hopkins University Press. Maryland 1990 and cf. Keith Jeffery-Paul Arthur, Northern Ireland Since 1968, Wiley-Blackwell. Oxford 1996.

16- For Islam as a Nomocracy see details Michalis Marioras, The Dialogue of Muslims and westerns scholars about Sharī'a, vol.i, Prophet and Law in Islam and vol. ii, Sunna and Sharī'a in Islam, University of Athens. Athens 2014, where the relevant discussion on the similarities and differences with Theocracy.

17- Tomas Precht, Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: From conversion to terrorism, Danish Ministry of Justice. Copenhagen 2007, p. 49.

18- For "Islamic neo-radicalization" see among others, the extremely interesting article by Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Promoting Exit from Violent Extremism: Themes and Approaches", in Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 36(2):2013, pp. 99-115 and cf. Tahir Abbas (ed.), Islamic Political Radicalism: A European Perspective, Edinburgh University Press. Edinburgh 2007.

19- Annual Report 2007, General Intelligence and Security Service AIVD. p. 9.

20- Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism, Stanford University Press. California 2009, refers to "death cultures" in an apt and very interesting way: "The means for attaining these ambitions pass through cultures of death, nurtured over centuries by theological writings", p. 11. According to the author, it is indisputable that the cultures of death are introduced, cultivated and developed in religious soil with serious theological documentation. This study is

extremely interesting, as it psychoanalytically investigates the terms, conditions and consequences of the suicide of terrorists, especially modern jihadists.

21- For this absolute and non-negotiable basic position of all three monotheistic religions, see a variety of related introductory works.

22- In this context, for the sanctification of violence through its sacrificial legitimacy, see the relevant, classic work of René Girard, La violence et le sacré, Éditions Bernard Grasset. Paris 1972. Especially the problematic and the discussion on "forbidden violence" and "holy violence", from which interesting facts and conclusions on our subject emerge, but also the positions of important thinkers on the subject of violence, prohibitions, deviations , acceptance etc.

This study, although it has lost a significant part of its impact in less than a decade since its publication. Several great scientists have identified a rather one-dimensional approach of the author, however it remains important for the introduction to this discussion. In addition, cf. René Girard, De la violence à la divinité, Grasset. Paris 2007 for an overview of the author's work with all his texts on the relationship between violence and sacrifice and its derivatives, as well as relevant literature.

23- Regarding the transformations or, we would say, the distortions of the Sanctuary from a sociological point of view cf. Niki Papageorgiou, Metamorphoses of the sanctuary. Sociology and religion in the work of Marcel Mauss, Pournaras. Thessaloniki 2005. The author presents and explains various options of the above misunderstandings on the part of the believers through the penetrating, if not prophetic -in our estimation- perspective of the great Marcel Mauss.

24- Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father, p. 62.

25- Karen Armstrong, The Battle for God, Knopf/HarperCollins. New York 2000. In this direction see Gabriel Almond-Scott Appleby-Emmanuel Sivan, Strong religion: the rise of fundamentalisms around the world, University of Chicago Press. Chicago 2003. The authors highlight the importance of intense and extreme religiosity in the formation of hard-core positions that are gradually relatively easy to reach the radicalization of the believer. Also, see Ahmad S. Moussalli, Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb, American University of Beirut. Beirut 1992. In this book the author which explores the influence of Sayyid

Quṭb's theoretical teaching in the same direction. For the importance and impact of Sayyid Qutb cf. Michalis Marioras, Islamic Radicalism: Historical and Theological Presuppositions of Jihad, Pedio. Athens 2020, pp. 159-210.

26- On the perceptions of love for Allah and their formation in the consciousness and unconscious of the jihadist terrorist, see in detail the work of Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father. From one point onwards it seems that the discussion should be conducted in strictly psychoanalytic terms.

27- Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father, p. 12.

28- For the conditions of shaping the value system of man, always depending on his moral choice between responsibility, belief and the intermediate stages, see inter alia Elliot Turiel, The culture of morality: Social development, context, and conflict, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 2002 and Thomas Lickona, Moral development and behavior: Theory, research, and social issues, Holt, Rinehart and Winston. New York 1976, from where we draw the above material. For the current relevant discussion see briefly Linda Skitka, "The Psychology of Moral Conviction", in Social and Personality Psychology Compass 4/4 (2010), pp. 267–281 and cf. more broadly her works.

29- Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father, p. 55.

30- For the importance and great value of human dignity in the religion of Islam, see Michalis Marioras, Islam: Seeking Ways with Muslims, Pedio. Athens 2019, pp. 163-190, especially 181-186.

31- For the ritual preparation of the jihadists and its effects on the fixation of their psychosynthesis during the final phase of the planning before the execution of the terrorist attack, see Hans Kippenberg-Tilman Seidensticker (eds.), Terror im Dienste Gottes: Die "Geistliche Anleitung" der Attentäter des 11. September 2001, Campus. Frankfurt/New York 2004, pp. 39-54, especially 36. Among other things, the author presents in detail the very indicative and famous case study of one of the protagonists of the 11/9 of the Egyptian Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Amir ʿAwaḍ as-Sayyid ʿAṭā.

32- Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father, p. 118.

33- Ruth Stein, For Love of the Father, p. 71.

The Sanctity of Human Beings According to the Traditional Islamic Perspective

Majdey Zawawi

Lecturer at Sultan Omar ‹Ali Saifuddien
Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS),
Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)

Senad Mrahorović

Lecturer at Sultan Omar ‹Ali Saifuddien
Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS),
Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)

abstract

The nature of a human being (insān) is one among the fundamental questions discussed within the islamic tradition from the very beginning of islam. the qur'an in its various connotations highlights the significance of a human as divine vicegerent (khalīfah), an honored being (karīm), enlightened by god ('ālim), a believer (mu'min), a surrenderer to divine will (muslim). the reason for such a distinction among other created beings lies in the fact that it is only to mankind that god has breathed spirit from his own. thus, human beings are dignified and placed into the highest rank of all creation. in this article we will discuss the concept of sanctity of human beings based on the traditional islamic sources.

Introduction

In her recent work entitled *fields of blood*: religion and the history of violence, karem armstrong has demonstrated groundbreaking facts about human conflicts directly or indirectly caused by their anti/ religious beliefs and practices from the earliest times recorded in history. the author has researched the given subject in all authentic religions from hinduism, buddhism, judaism, christianity and islam, providing rich and well documented reference for her study. a conclusion drawn from this book is that despite of the fundamental teachings about the peace and harmony prevalent within all religions, the violence and conflicts committed in the name of religions are due to "violence embedded in our human nature and the nature of the state"[1], either religious or secular. in this aspect, religion is to be understood as an organized system of beliefs and practices like any other political or social structure founded on certain principles that are expected to be followed by people. although a conflict is not a systematic and developed dogma by any religious tradition, its spirit is always emerging from within the corrupt and vicious nature of human beings who failed to fully develop its human potential and adhere to the higher principles of his or her spiritual or secular orientation. in other words, the flow of negative energy from one's self-oriented ego disables a soul of becoming noble or blessed on its earthly path of realization of the purpose of existence. however, in order to reduce the possibility of falling into the abyss of immoral and evil soul, capable of committing sinful and dreadful acts to itself and to others, all religions in their principal teachings as well as other spiritual organizations have provided certain standards and values that if properly understood and followed, will lead one to realization of the higher stations of a human being. in this study, we will analyze five aspects of human beings through which they are considered the most dignified and exalted of all created beings. the article is primarily based on the traditional islamic sources.

'*Ilm* (knowledge)

The concept of '*ilm* is certainly one of the most significant qualities that god himself has attributed to humans. due to this very quality, humans are honored to be the central beings in the

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universe on whom god has bestowed the title of the noblest order, that is, his vicegerency (**khilāfah**) on the earth. in this noble function, humans have been given all the intellectual and sensual capabilities "in order to lead the earth and to utilize it for their survival as well as understanding the glory and power as their lord".[2] it is for this reason that the concept of '**ilm** or knowledge is to be understood as well as the implications of how humans should view themselves. the qur'an contains close to 854 appearances of the term '**ilm** or its derivations, thus explaining how significant knowledge is within the

islamic intellectual tradition. among all the created beings, humans were honored by god for having divine blessing or **ni'mah** of acquiring knowledge. one of the most important aspects of **al-'ālim** (a knower) therefore, is to distinguish between god's attribute as **al-'ālim**,[3] the possessor of all knowledge, the all-knowing from the rest of intellectual beings. in other words, to distinguish between the absolute and the relative, between the infinite and the finite, between the reality and the illusion, for god is the ultimate source of knowledge, nothing is absent from his knowledge and all knowledge in

principle belongs to him.[4]

Al-Ghazzālī in his commentary of the divine name ***al-'alīm*** (the omniscient) stated that the meaning of it is evident: "its perfection lies in comprehending everything by knowledge – manifest and hidden, small and large, first and last, inception and outcome- and with respect to the multitude of objects known, this will be infinite".[5]

It is here that the distinction lies with what humans have been attributed with, so far as knowledge is concerned. for man, the qur'an becomes the source of where knowledge is contained regarding the meaning of existence for human beings. it is also through the qur'an a proper understanding of knowledge and its relationship with the role man

has been bestowed as ***khalīfatullāh***. Islam places knowledge as an obligation for every muslim, because through acquiring knowledge, the intellect will lead man to the path of righteousness and virtue. according to zarnuji, knowledge, if packaged as part of devotional worship ('***ibādah***) leads man to fear (***taqwā***').[6] the importance of knowledge lies in its ability to bring mankind closer to the realization of their creator.[7] therefore, ***zarnuji's*** concept of knowledge and to a certain extent, the '***ālim*** or the possessor of knowledge, is involved in a spiritual exercise to discover the truth toward a holistic life, both physically and spiritually.[8] this is where the ***tawhidic*** knowledge approach comes in, espousing for the

permanence of knowledge sources, in line with the ultimate and permaNENT faith and beliefs.[9]

With the concept of '*ālim* and *khalīfah*, a duality of responsibilities has been accomplished for man and his goal on earth. fulfilling the requirements of an '*ālim* than is conscious of his role as a successor, and as an inheritor of the earth, having the responsibility to safeguard and maintain every aspect of the earth, from the animals to the environment, and more importantly, the relations among his fellow man. humans represent "a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm or the cosmos contained within all the realities reflected in the created realm of the universe".[10]

Karāmah (Dignity)

One of the most beautiful divine names in islam is al-*karīm*,[11] the generous, the gracious. the name derives from the root k-r-m (*karam*) donating to generosity, kindness, hospitality, honor, veneration, bounty, nobility.[12] from the same root are the words *karāmah* (dignity, honor but also a marvel as a divine gift to saints [*awliyā'*] as it has been used in sufi and other literature throughout islamic world),[13] *takrīm* and ikram (honoring, tribute, respect, welcoming, kind reception etc.),[14] all of which are used in the traditional islamic sources. karam as an adjective has been ascribed in the qur'an not only to god but also to the qur'an itself,[15] the messenger (*al-rasūl*),[16] angels (*malāikah*, pl. of *malak*),[17] human stations (*maqāmāt*, pl. of *maqām*),18 reward for mankind (*ajr*),[19] divine provision to mankind (*rizq*),[20] and to human beings in general (*banū ādam*) in the following verse: "and we have certainly honored the children of adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what we have created, with [definite] preference" (qur'an, 17:70). Human beings are therefore honored by god for having a privilege to be preferred among other created beings as well as for sharing the same attributes with god himself. this aspect of distinctiveness certainly brings a note of the sacredness to human beings as well as to all other things to which nobility, veneration and honor has been attributed by god. commenting on this verse, *rashīd al-dīn maybūdī*, a great sunni commentator of the qur'an says that this bestowal of eminence and a tremendous honor god gave to those faithful children of adam was an enormous felicitation.[21] furthermore he continues "then, when they came into this world, he

gave them a beautiful form, a lovely shape, and a complete robe of honor, adorning them with knowledge, intellect, speech, understanding, and excellence. he did not hold them back from the outward success of struggle or the inner realization of contemplation and recognition. he opened the door of his mercy and generosity to them, and he kept them on the carpet of whispered prayer. whenever they want, they call upon him, ask from him, and tell him their secrets. it has been transmitted in one of the traditions that god said, "my servants, confide your secrets in me. if you will not, then whisper and speak to me. if you will not, then listen to me. if you will not, then gaze upon me. if you will not, then be at my door and lift up your needs before me, for i am the most generous of the generous."[22]

The fact that humans are distinguished among other created beings, apart from the abovementioned attribute of *karam*, suggests the following verse: "we have certainly created man in the best of stature" (qur'an, 95:4). the best of stature here in *maybūdī's* words refers to the most beautiful form in all aspects: "I created adam in the most beautiful form and chose him out from among all the creatures. I wrote the inscription of love on him and made him worthy of my carpet.

I made apparent in his frame the elements of sense perception, the pearls of holiness, and the sources of intimacy. then I gave this command to the proximate angels of the presence and the beings of the realm of creativity: 'put your foreheads on the ground before his throne and prostrate yourselves before him like servants, for he is the chief and you are the serving-boys. he is a friend, and you are servants."[23]

In relation to this commentary where clearly the notions of sanctity and uniqueness are ascribed to human beings, there is yet another interesting interpretation of the above cited qur'anic verse 82:6 by *maybūdī*. in asking the question what is it that deludes man from his generous, noble lord, god provides the answer or alludes to it by the idea of *karam*, thus, helping man to understands god's generosity and all what it entails with regards to human thoughts and actions. having in mind a desired comprehension of divine kindness, man may come to realization that it was precisely such a kindness that deluded man about god for were it not for his kind and generous nature, man would not have done what he did. then after the act was committed, god saw it, but disclosed it, as he predestined it and finally gave respite.[24]

Imān (Faith)

Imān is yet another concept in islam attributed to both, god and mankind. apart from its common denotation within the islamic theological context where it stands for faith or belief, the root of the notion of *imān*, namely, a-m-n in its various derivations also signifies security, honesty, assurance, realization and peace among others.[25] all of these nouns are closely connected with one another if they imply the sincerity (*taṣdīq*) as the fundamental condition for īmān. in islamic context, *imān* involves both sincerity and certainty in an object of faith that is the truth. in this regard, william chittick when writing about difference between faith and belief, especially in english language, stated

that "[w]hen we say that people believe in something, we mean that they have confidence that something is true, but frequently we are implying that they are mistaken and are flying in the face of all the evidence. in islamic languages, the word īmān has no such negative connotation. *īmān* involves confidence in a truth that is really true, not supposed truth. there is no suggestion that people have faith in falsehood."[26]

The faith in islamic theological context is not that of rational conclusion but rather the activity of heart or intellect.[27] in addition to that, *īmān* also imply verbal declaration and outward manifestation through acts of obligatory rituals or simply *islām*, that is submission to divine will by active participation in fulfilment of one's religious obligation. a person who possesses this concept of *īmān* is called mu'min, or the one who has faith in all the islamic principles revealed in the qur'an as well as in previous revelations. in this regard the qur'an states: "and whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed (qur'an, 4:124). commenting on this verse, *al-Qushayrī* suggests that "whoever does righteous deeds... 'whoever labors in our service (*khidmah*) will not be kept from

attaining our blessing (*ni'mah*). indeed, whomever we have made rich in seeking us, we honor him in finding us. whomever we have made to drink from the cup of longing for us, we bring him to the intimacy of meeting us.'"[28] here again the concept of *karam* appears in the sense of reward for one's faith and deeds on the path that ultimately leads to god.

Al-mu'min is also one of the most beautiful names of allah. the meaning of the term corresponds to the same denotation applied to a believer or faithful with the difference that the divine faithfulness is absolute, while that of the human is to be seen in relative terms. in the qur'an it is stated: "he is god, other than whom there is no god, the sovereign, the holy, peace, the faithful, the protector, the mighty, the compeller, the proud. glory be to him above the partners they ascribe" (qur'an, 59:23).[29]

Despite the different translations of al-mu'min, the meaning of each variation corresponds to the reality that the name in question implies. in his interpretation of this name, ibn '*abbās* said: "his created brings are safe from his transgression; it is also said that this means: his friends are safe from his torment; it is also said that this means: he is trustworthy regarding the deeds of slaves and trustworthy regarding what he can do to his created beings."[30] similarly,

al-ghazzālī in his explanation of the given name suggested that the faithful is the one to whom security and safety are ascribed because it is only he who conveys the means for attaining them and provides the full protection from any obstacles. "the absolutely faithful one is god – may he be praised and exalted" – says *al-ghazzālī*, "as the one from whose direction alone security and safety conceivably may emanate".[31] this view is in accordance with the qur'anic idea of *hidāyah* or guidance: "and whoever allah guides - he is the [rightly] guided…"[32] or "and whoever allah guides - for him there is no misleader."[33] these and other numerous verses clearly indicates that the guidance to the right path (al-ṣirāt al-*mustaqīm*) is provided by god alone as he is the one who leads whomever he chooses to acquire faith or realization of the unity of god and other principles provided by the qur'an. thus, in islam another divine name is *al-hādī* or the guide.[34]

Islām (Submission)

Having in mind two essential meanings of the concept of *islām*, namely, the one with religious connotation, referring to the religion of islam, and the other, with more universal implication relating to the linguistic meaning of the word, that is, to submit, to resign oneself, to turn

oneself over to, or in religious terms, to surrender to god, or to god's will,[35] we find yet another of those noble attributes ascribed by god to human beings. A *muslim* therefore is not only someone who traditionally belongs to the religion of islam, but more importantly the one who submits oneself or surrenders to divine will in all aspects of his life. the qur'anic verse "and i have been commanded to be the first [among you] of the muslims" (qur'an, 39:12), according the *Ghali*, refers in this context to the universal meaning of the word islām, that is submission.[36] however, in tafsir literature, we find that the given verse denotes the prophet's submission to god as the first among his followers, which corresponds to the commentary of this verse by ibn 'Abbās: "(and i am commanded) in the qur'an (to be the first of those who surrender [unto him]) the first of those who accept islam."[37]

In addition to the above connotations of the word *islām* as the *maṣdar* of the fourth verbal form of the root s-l-m,[38] there is yet another concept that shares the same root, that is, *salām* or peace. apart from its traditional usage as the islamic greetings, the word *salām* in the overall context of the submission depicts the peaceful state of a believer who has submerged entirely into divine will. this stage 'human' extinction in sufi literature is called

fanā', disappearance, annihilation in divine, or *baqā'* tranquility or subsistence in divine, as subsequent stage after annihilation which may be considered as rebirth or final return to god. "through the threshold of what the sufis call annihilation or extinction (*al-fanā'*), humanity is able to enter the garden of truth and to subsist in god (*al-baqā'*). the absolutely necessary condition for entering remains the realization that in ourselves we are nonexistent and that all beings belongs to god."[39]

This stage may be called the deepest realization of peace as one of god's beautiful names, which out of his mercy, he shares with his devoted believers as long as they remain in peace (*muslim*) with him and his divine will. the qur'an states: "allah is he, than whom there is no other god; the sovereign, the holy one, the source of peace (and perfection)…" (qur'an, 59:23).[40] here, yusuf 'ali translated the *salām* as the source of peace, while other translators preferred terms such as the flawless or the peace as such.[41] "*Al-Salām* is the one whose essence is free from defect, says *al-Ghazzālī*, "whose attributes escape imperfection, and whose actions are untarnished by evils. he is like that, there is nothing flawless in existence which is not attributed to him, and originates from him."[42]

Furthermore, *al-Ghazzālī* stresses that the servant of god whose heart is pure and free from all negative attributes, deserves to face his lord with the flawless heart. with this we are reminded of the famous *ḥadīth* wherein is stated: "none shall enter the fire who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of iman and none shall enter paradise who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed in his heart."[43]

Khilāfah (Vicegerency)

The quranic narrative pertaining to the creation of adam was narrated as a dialogue between allah and his *malāikah* (angels). in the surah al-baqarah allah says: "and [mention, o muhammad], when your lord said to the angels, 'indeed, i will make upon the earth a representative'" (qur'an, 2:30).

Apart from the spiritual implication involved in the human function as khalifah or caliph, muslim scholars have pinpointed this verse as the command for the political leadership as well. the term khalifah is therefore synonymous with the political leadership, with several scholars such as al-*Māwardī*, al-*Ghazzālī* and ibn *Khaldūn* opting the term as the head of the state. however, the understanding of the term goes much beyond its political concept. in terms of having the purpose of human

creation all possible connotations are contained within this concept of vicegerency. in this regard, the qur'anic usage of the concept of *Khilāfah* refers to the objectives and purposes of the earthy life of a human being as divine representative on the earth.

Khalafa in the qur'ān means 'to come after', referring to the order in which human beings come after all creatures and all grades of being are summarized in the state of a human.[44] another verse in the qur'an explains that god has subjected to human being "whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth".[45] several other verses in the qur'an highlight the notion of human beings as successors: "and remember when he made you successors after the ʿaad and settled you in the land, [and] you take for yourselves palaces from its plains and carve from the mountains, homes. then remember the favors of allah and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption" (qur'an, 7:74).

This verse implies the term successors as those who will come after and bear the responsibility to continue what was already done by those who came before them. it also indicates that being *khalīfah* is to be understood as a divine favor given explicitly to human being. but the given favor has also other purposes as stated in the *sūrah yūnus*: "then we made you successors in the land after them so that we may observe how you will do" (qur'an, 10:14).

This particular verse, however, mentions an aspect of how humans as the 'successors' are evaluated, not by the past but rather the ability to learn from the past. the term 'observe' in this particular verse emphasizes how human actions are manifested into existence through one's behavior.

Classical muslim thinkers have also pointed out that the term *khalīfah* in the context of political leadership, is synonymous for the concepts of *imām* (leader) and ʿ*ulul amr* (the authority).[46] the political connotation of *khilāfah* serves as continuing the prophetic mission in defending the faith and administering the world.[47] however, the objective of the *khilāfah* system has also been understood as being the *na'īb* (representative) of the prophetﷺ, the exponent of the *sharī'ah* and the protector of islam in this temporal world.[48] this is clear from the following verse: "o you who have believed, obey allah and obey the messenger and those in authority among you" (qur'an, 4:59).

The commonality between the different levels of successorship suggests that the term *khalīfah* cannot simply rendered as being a representative, nor does it imply as simply being an inheritor

of the prophetic mission. the responsibilities of human beings on this earth encapsulate all the concepts mentioned in the qur'an, complimented by what has been transmitted in the hadith tradition as well as what classical muslim thinkers have theorized. therefore, the different components of being a *khalīfah* could be dissected into three major aspects, encapsulating the objective of human creation and their responsibilities on earth.

At this point, the qur'an has been clear to the various aspects of humans' role as a vicegerent, most studies have focused on the term simply as a political concept; not often expanding the concept to what it was intended to be understood. when allah mentions it the qur'an: "it is he who has made you successors upon the earth…" (qur'an, 6:165), the first question that should come to mind is what actually human beings are successors of? in other parts of the qur'an, there is a question directed towards man on whether they have realized that allah is the one who has actually made them as inheritors of the earth: "is

he [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon him and removes evil and makes you inheritors of the earth? is there a deity with allah?" (qur'an, 27:62).

In this verse, the word inheritor is used to explain a derivation of the term khalifah. comparing the two uses of the term *khalīfah*, in addition to the above-mentioned verse 30 of surah al-baqarah, we can surmise that there are three different concepts of the *khilāfah* contained in a singular expression, namely, a leader, successor and representative, thanks to the beauty of the qur'anic language.

As leaders, the caliphs are considered as the '*ulul amr*, within all aspects of life, physically and spiritually. more important than just mundane leadership, a caliph in terms of spiritual guidance speaks loud on highlighting the *ṣirāṭ* (path) humans must journey in the realization of tawhid, underlined by the achievement of *falāḥ* (salvation) and *iḥsān* (beautification, perfection) in this life and the hereafter.[49] as successors, human beings are ordained as the *khulafā*' on the earth, bearing the responsibility for everything caused by their own action. as such, they continue ensuring that the responsibility of the vicegerency, also includes fulfilling the objectives outlined by the *sharī'ah*, namely

preserving faith, life, mind, wealth, and progeny.[50] as the representatives on the earth, *khulafā*' are inheriting the guardianship of environment and its inhabitants, both the physical and the spiritual.

Finally, in addition to the above noble qualities assigned to human beings by god, the crucial value added to human superiority over other created beings is their soul or spirit (*al-rūh*), which alone can justify the holiness of a human being. based on the qur'anic narrative, the spirit is considered as the otherworldly entity of divine order and as such does not belong to the temporary nature of this world. "they ask you about the spirit", the qur'an states, "say, 'the spirit is from the command of my lord'" (qur'an, 17:85).[51] the spirit here is to be understood, according to *maybūdī* as the intellectual faculty of contemplation whose nourishment is the direct vision of god.[52] this interpretation of the soul corresponds to the traditional islamic hierarchy of human intellectual faculties wherein the soul is placed at the very summit, according the hierarchy of being.[53]

According to ibn 'arabi, the spirit of human beings is also god's spirit as he attributes the spirit breathed into adam by pronouns his[54] and my[55] directly to himself. hence "this spirit is called 'the attributed spirit' (*al-rūh al-iḍāfī*), i. c., attributed to god".[56]

although this term may be ambiguous as suggested, for being at once divine and human, "the spirit possesses all the spiritual or angelic attributes such as luminosity, subtlety, awareness and oneness".[57]

Conclusion

The sanctity of human being as expressed above through a number of spiritual and intellectual aspects contained within men and women based on the traditional islamic sources, suggests that humans occupy the central position within the created order of reality. this is not to be confused with the anthropocentric concept of modern philosophies and sciences, but strictly in terms of the traditional islamic conception of man as the divine vicegerent on the earth in both physical and metaphysical domains. this vision of a human being, especially in the context of interfaith dialogue, is not reserved only to a specific religious group, but rather to all humanity as the abovementioned teaching with regards to man, is of universal nature, and as such is shared principally by all traditional doctrines of this kind. religions therefore should focus to facilitate their believers in attaining these noble qualities that will reflect the essential unity among human beings regardless of their racial, ethnical or religious background. in other word, instead of emphasizing the secondary teachings of a particular religious tradition that is usually mixed with numerous other political, economic or social agendas, causing all sort of different crisis of various orders, religion should put their accent to the primary doctrines which unite and bond not only human beings among themselves, but also the whole spectrum of the created universe with its ultimate source.

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18- https://quran.com.

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Endnotes

1- Karen Armstrong, Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence (London: The Bodley Head, 2014), pp. 360.

2- Md Yousuf Ali (2006). "Al-tawhid and its effects on man›s life". Jurnal Usuluddin, 23 (23). pp. 1-34

3- "He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed…" (Qur'an, 59:22).

4- The Qur'an states: "They said, 'Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise'» (Qur'an, 2:32).

5- Al-Ghazzālī, The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God - Al-Maqsad al-Asnā fī Sharh Asmā' Allāh al-Husnā', translated with notes by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995), pp. 81.

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9- Senad Mrahorović and Majdey Zawawi, "Religious Responsibilities in Times of Pandemics: Mutual Relationship between Spiritual and Physical Well-Being," Religions, no. 14 (2021), pp. 66.

10- Ibid. pp. 67.

11- "O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous (Most Beneficent? ['Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, the same verse])" (Qur'an, 82:6). The translation of the Qur'an used for this article is 'Sahih International' from https://legacy.quran.com/, except where it is indicated.

12- In relation to the divine name al-Karīm, al-Ghazzālī wrote the following: "The Generous (Al-Karīm) is one who forgives if he has the power, follows through when he promises, and exceeds the limits one could hope for when he gives; nor is he concerned how much he gives or to whom he gives. If a need is brought before someone else, he is unhappy; if he is treated badly, he reproves but does not pursue it. Whoever seeks refuge and support with him is not lost, and one may dispense with entreaties and mediators. Now the one who unites all this in himself, without affectation, is the absolutely generous one, and that belongs to God alone – may He be praised and exalted" (Al-Ghazzālī, Ibid, pp. 113-114.

13- For more on the term karāmah see L. Gardet, "Karama" in E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pallet (Eds.) The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), Vol. IV, pp. 616-616.

14- Rohi Baalbaki, Al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1996), pp. 360.

15- Qur'an, 27:29; 56:77.

16- Qur'an, 44:17; 69:40; 81:19.

17- Qur'an, 12:31.

18- Qur'an, 26:58; 44:26.

19- Qur'an, 36:11; 57:11; 57: 18

20- Qur'an, 8: 74; 22:50; 24:26; 34:4.

21- Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī, The Unveiling of the Mysteries and the Provisions of the Pious (Kashf al-Asrār wa 'Uddat al-Abrār), selections translated by W.C. Chittick (Amman: Royal Āl al-Bayt Institute of Islamic Thought; Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2015), pp. 291.

22- Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī, Ibid.

23- Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī, Ibid, pp. 547.

24- Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī, Ibid, pp. 535. Here one may be reminded of Divine mercy and generosity expressed in numerous Qur'anic verses and aḥādīth qudsiyyah (pl. of ḥadīth qudsī or holy saying) where God's forgiveness is expressed in a categorical triumph over His wrath such as in His famous saying: "My mercy prevails over my wrath" (Forty Hadith Qudsi, Hadith 1) at https://sunnah.com.

25- Rohi Baalbaki, Ibid, pp. 171.

26- Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, The Vision of Islam (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2005), pp. 37.

27- "Someone who has iman first knows or recognizes in the heart that something is true. The heart – a term which is often used in such context in the Qur'an – is not primarily the place of emotions. Rather, it is the specific faculty of spiritual organ that separates human beings from nonhuman beings. Usually we refer to it by words such as intelligence" (Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, Ibid, pp. 37-38).

28- Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt - Subtle Allusions [Suras 1-4], translated by Kristin Zahra Sands (Amman: Royal Āl al-Bayt Institute of Islamic Thought; Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2017), pp. 443.

29- Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed.), The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary (New York: HarperOne, 2015), pp. 1356-1357. The translation of al-Mu'min as a Divine name differs among translators. For instance, Yūsuf 'Alī prefers to render the name as t"he Guardian of faith", similar to M. Pickthall, while M.M. Ghali translates the name as "the Supreme Believer", similar to the abovementioned translation of the verse in Nasr's The Study Qur'an. For other variations see https://legacy.quran.com/59/23.

30- 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās; Muḥammad al-Fīrūzabādī, Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās, translated by Mokrane Guezzou (Amman: Al al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), pp. 660.

31- Al-Ghazzali, Ibid, pp. 62.

32- Qur'an, 17:97.

33- Qur'an, 39:37.

34- "And so those who were given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it. And indeed is Allah the Guide of those who have believed to a straight path." (Qur'an, 22:54).

35- Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, Ibid, pp. 3.

36- https://quran.com/39:12. According to W.C. Chittick, there are four basic meanings of the word islam based on the qur'anic usage of this term: "(1) the submission of the whole of creation to its Creator; (2) the submission of human beings to the guidance of God as revealed to the prophets; (3) the submission of the human beings to the guidance of God as revealed through the prophet Muhammad and (4) the submission of the followers of Muhammad to God's practical instructions" (Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, Ibid, pp. 6).

37- ‹Abdullāh Ibn ‹Abbās; Muḥammad al-Fīrūzabādī, Ibid, pp. 531.

38- E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pallet (Eds.), Ibid, pp. 171.

39- Seyyed Hossein Nasr, The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition (New York: HarperOne, 2007), pp. 134-135. In respect to this relationship between human beings and God, one may contemplate the following Qur'anic verse: "And Allah invites to the Home of Peace [i.e., Paradise] and guides whom He wills to a straight path" (Qur'an, 10:25).

40- 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an: Complete Translation with Selected Notes (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), pp. 576.

41- https://quran.com/59:23.

42- Al-Ghazzālī, Ibid, pp. 61.

43- Sahih Muslim, 91b, Book 1, Hadith 172 (https://sunnah.com).

44- Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed.), The Study Quran, pp. 21.

45- Qur'an, 45:13.

46- Gerhard Böwering, Patricia Crone, Wadad Kadi, Davin J. Stewart and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Eds.), The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), pp. 81-85.

47- Gerhard Böwering et al., Ibid.

48- Gerhard Böwering et al., Ibid.

49- Gerhard Böwering et al., Ibid.

50-Senad Mrahorović and Majdey Zawawi, Ibid, pp. 66.

51- Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed.), Ibid, pp. 730.

52- Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī, Ibid, pp. 293.

53- Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Science and Civilization in Islam [Second Edition] (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003), pp. 92-97. See also William C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn 'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination (Ney York: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 12-17.

54- "Then He fashioned him, and breathed into him of His Spirit…" (Qur'an, 32:9), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed.), Ibid, pp. 1011-1012.

55- "So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit…" (Qur'an, 15:29), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed.), Ibid, pp. 646.

56- William C. Chittick, Ibid, pp. 17.

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His Excellency, Prof. Ivo Josipović President of the Republic of Croatia (2010 to 2015) (Zagreb, 1957) served as the President of Croatia from 2010 to 2015. As a politician, he promoted reconciliation in the S.E. Europe, human rights and fight against corruption.

Before presidential mandate, he has been a university professor (international Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure), member of Parliament and composer. He has published several books and 90 scientific papers dealing with international criminal law, criminal procedure and human rights.

His Excellency
Ivo Josipovic

As a composer, Josipovic wrote some 60 compositions for orchestra and soloists, which have been performed and recorded by prominent artists.

Josipovic received honorary doctorate from Immanuel Kant University (Kaliningrad) and Istanbul University. He has received prestigious domestic and international awards for his work in the field of human rights, ecumenicalism and art. Among many recognitions and decorations, he received the European Medal of Tolerance from the European Union, the Premio Galileo 2000 Award, Grand Prix of the European Broadcasting Union, three Porin Awards for discography .

Alena Demirović

Alena Lena Demirović is a General Secretary at the Institute for the Research of Genocide, Canada as well as a member of Sandžak Council of America and a Project Manager for North America region of the Bosniak Cultural Community Preporod, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Alena has extensive experience in advocacy and training on the protection of civil liberties and political rights, the promotion of economic and social justice, and international human rights law.

She is in a process of receiving her AMP degree in Public Administration.

Balázs Puskás

Balázs Puskás is a leading expert with the Saint Steven Institute, a Hungarian Christian Democratic think tank. His research areas are religion, education and human dignity. Mr. Puskás earned his law degree at the Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest; he specialized in educational law at the University of Pécs. He is married and has four children.

Ernst Fürlwinger

PD Mag. Dr. Ernst Fürlinger is the Head of Center for Religion and Globalization at Danube University Krems, Austria. In 2013 Dr. Fürlinger habilitated at the University of Vienna in Religious Studies. His research includes religious studies, human rights and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Neven Melek

Neven Melek is an Egyptian lawyer and a Human Rights activist. She worked as a monitoring and advocacy manager and Head of International Relations at Doha Center for Media Freedom.

Prior to her social work, she was a humanitarian and community worker with organizations including the Association of Coptic Love and Peace in Egypt. She was an active human rights activist, a lawyer and she was a member of the Lawyers Association in Egypt.

Javaid William

Since 2010 working as a freelance consultant with INGOs and NGOs in Pakistan and serving as an Honorary Secretary General of Catholic Commission for Interfaith Dialogue & Ecumenism, and President of FACES Pakistan an NGO. Educational background: Leadership for Change (PhD in process), Masters in Political Science, Masters in Business Administration, writer and researcher of number of books and papers on wide range of topics.

Michalis Marioras

Dr. Michalis Marioras is associate professor - history of religions - national and kapodistrian university of Athens. His research interests, publications and teaching cover the field of History of Religions (especially the religion of Islam), Church and State Relationships in Greece, Religious Education, Specificities and Human Rights of Religious Minorities and Migrants.

Mustafa Sefo

Dr. Sefo was born in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1987.

He holds Bachelor and Master degrees from the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, Department of Communication and Journalism.

He received his PhD in 2016 from the Faculty of Communication Studies, University of Istanbul (Republic of Turkey) and in 2017 he was elected an assistant professor at the University of the Political Science in Sarajevo where he presently teaches: General Communication Studies, Modern Communication Systems 2, Contemporary Communication Theories and Public Opinion. He speaks French, Turkish and English.

Nahla Fahmy

Nahla Mohamed Fahmy is an aspiring academic and researcher at the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID). She holds a BSc in Biotechnology from the University of Nottingham and a MA in Islamic Studies with a concentration in Comparative Religion and Interfaith Studies from Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU). Her MA thesis focused on Contemporary Muslim Identities in Higher Education Institutes, presented and published partly in the Religions for Peace Youth Symposium and Journal. Her main areas of interest include: Intersectionalities of Religious Identities, Religious Conflict Transformation and the Role of Education. She hopes to develop her research at the doctorate level.

Rabbi Menachem Genack

Rabbi Menachem Genack is rabbi of Congregation Shomrei Emunah in Englewood, NJ, a rabbinic instructor at Yeshiva University and Touro College, and author of Letters to President Clinton: Biblical Lessons on Faith and Leadership.

Majdey Zawawi

Majdey Zawawi holds a PhD in Islamic Governance from the Institute of Policy Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and is one of the first in the world to have graduated with said degree and specialisation. His doctoral research titled "Power Dynamics between Religious and State Authorities: The Case of the Four Mujtahid Imams" employs the Islamic Governance Conceptual Matrix (IGC Matrix) as a conceptual tool for understanding the complex relational dynamics of power and authority between the four great mujtahids of Islam and their respective state authorities. diverse academic background (having been trained in three different fields) allow him to make use of a broad range of approaches in his thinking on Islamic Governance, Civilisation and Muslim politics. Although his research interests mainly revolve around Islamic Governance, Dr Majdey is keen on interdisciplinary research that traverses many disciplines.

Senad Mrahorović

Senad Mrahorović is a lecturer and tutor at Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). He also works as a researcher and editor for Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue DICID. Mrahorović received a PhD in Philosophy, Ethics and Contemporary Issues from International Center of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Malaysia. His research interests include Religious Studies, Sufism, Orientalism, Philosophy and Religious Art. He has edited four volumes of Conference Proceedings for DICD and published several academic articles in various publications.