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Relevant Metaphysical Problems

By Dr Muhammed Fazlur Rahman Ansari (ra)

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“My Lord! I ask You for beneficial knowledge, and I seek refuge with You from non-beneficial knowledge.”

Moral consciousness seeks not only the Moral Good but also the realisation of the Moral Ideal, which consists in the triumph of moral good and the defeat of moral evil.

Both of these problems are ethical in character. But their solutions necessitate a metaphysics. Because they cannot be solved without a proper solution of the relevant problems concerning the nature, function and purpose of man and of the world, and the existence and Attributes of God, and the bearing of those Attributes on the working of the world and the life of man.

Now, in respect of the realisation of the moral ideal, the question emerges: what are the conditions that make it possible?

The answer that presents itself to the human reason is: The foremost condition is that man ought to be free to realise that ideal. But even if he is free, he cannot realise such a grand ideal in his short span of earthly life and with the obstacles that he has to face within and around him. He must, therefore, be immortal. But even if he is immortal, the realisation of the ideal remains inconceivable unless the world is so constituted as to admit of success in his moral struggle. But that it can be only if it has been created for that very purpose. The duality in human nature, however, which forms the internal obstacle in the realisation of the moral ideal, and the existence of insurmountable difficulties which seem to be embedded in the life of the world, both give the impression of incompatibility with it. Hence the need from the moral point of view for an all-Perfect Being, Who could, out of sheer Grace, remove this disharmony and incompatibility. That is, the realisation of the moral ideal would be possible only if God exists.

Thus: Freedom of the Will, Immortality of Man, Creation of the World, its Harmony with the Moral Struggle, and the Existence of God and His Gracious Interference to lead man to success, are the metaphysical implications of the realisation of the moral ideal, and form, therefore, the Metaphysical Basis of the Moral Code, — or, in other words, the Metaphysics of Morals.

In the discussion of these varieties, we shall proceed, on the basis of the Holy Qur'an, under the basic classification of Man, World and God.

THE MAN

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The following observations seem relevant in connection with our present discussion concerning the origin, function, nature, purpose and destiny of man:

1. Man should be a created being. Namely, he should possess no aboriginal nature independent of the Creator's design. In other words, his nature should only be that which has been conferred on him by his Creator in conformity with the purpose of his creation — the realisation of the moral ideal forming vital part of that purpose.

2. Man should be a purposive being and an evolutionary being, in order that struggle for some serious purpose and capability to rise higher and higher may form the very essence of his personality.
3. Man should be a moral being, in order to be capable of leading moral life and pursuing moral struggle.
4. Man should be supreme in Creation, in order to be able to mould the forces of the world around him for the realisation of the moral ideal.
5. But even if man is supreme in Creation, he is a finite being — an imperfect being — and his powers cannot be unlimited; and as such he must suffer from definite shortcomings and weaknesses. Moreover, he is a created being and, as such, dependent on his Creator. He, therefore, needs help from the Creator, Who, with all His Attributes of Perfection and through His Grace, should be prepared to help him in the realisation of the moral ideal. To obtain this Divine Help and Grace and to save himself from pessimism, despair and frustration, man should by nature be a worshipping being — namely, faith in God and quest for God should be ingrained in his nature.
6. Morality cannot be realised except in society. Man should, therefore, be a social being.
7. Man's nature should be essentially good in order that his struggle, for the realisation of virtue in his life and in the life of mankind should form the natural demand of his nature and be thereby rational (=reasonable) for him.
8. Man's personality should contain within it the conflict between Duty and Desire in order to provide the moral situation.
9. Man should possess Freedom of Will, without which moral struggle would be absolutely inconceivable.
10. Imperfect as the world and the human personality are, Man should survive his earthly existence with the selfsame Identity and should be subject to Resurrection and Final Accountability for his moral actions in this world — it being a necessary condition for the realisation of the moral ideal wherein virtue should be adequately rewarded and vice adequately punished.
11. The consequences of the realisation of the moral ideal should be such as to be capable of forming the highest aspiration of Man in order to provide the highest incentive for moral struggle in the face of hardships, sufferings and trials, which must always form vital concomitants of that struggle and which can sometimes assume the most poignant forms.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'AN

I. MAN — A CREATED BEING:

The Holy Qur'an says:

"But does not Man call to mind that We (God) created him before, when he was naught." (XIX : 67).

II. MAN — A PURPOSIVE BEING

AND AN EVOLUTIONARY BEING:

Purposiveness has been affirmed thus:

Deem ye that We have created you (O humankind!) in vain (i.e., with no serious purpose) and that unto Us ye are not to be returned (for account). So exalted be Allah, the True King ..." (XXIII :115, 116).

As for the evolutionary character of the human personality, it has been affirmed, among other verses, in the following:

Man We did create (at the earthly stage) from a quintessence of clay; then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature (— a creature who is not a mere animal but a being endowed with spiritual, moral, aesthetic and intellectual faculties and capable of pursuing ideals). So blessed is Allah, the Best to create! After that, at length ye will die. Again, on the Day of Judgment, will ye be raised up." (XXIII: 12-16).

Verily, We created Man from a drop of mingled sperm, in order to try him: So We gave him (the gifts of) Hearing and Sight (i.e., endowed him with responsibility).

We showed him the Way (of Right and Wrong): whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." (LXXVI: 2,3).

And surely He hath created you by stages (i.e., by various steps or changes from the original form till ye acquired the full stature of human personality)." (LXXI:14).

III. MAN – A MORAL BEING:

That Man has been created with the purpose of pursuing moral struggle has been affirmed thus:

(Allah) created Death and Life, that He may try you as to who among you is best in conduct." (LXVII: 2).

Elsewhere, the very purpose of creation of the world itself has been stated to be the pursuit of moral struggle by Man:

He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six (Cosmic) Days — and His Throne (of Authority) was on the Waters (from where life evolved) — that He might try you (as to) which of you is best in conduct." (XI: 7).

IV. MAN — SUPREME IN CREATION:

(a) Man is a creature honoured and honourable:

And assuredly We have honoured the Children of Adam (i.e., humankind)." (XVII :70).

(b) Man has been made the vicegerent of God on earth and, as such, supreme among all the creatures on the earth:

Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: verily I am going to place a vicegerent on the earth." (II: 30).

(c) The angels made obeisance to Adam, thus acknowledging Man's superiority in Creation:

And recall what time We said unto the angels: prostrate yourselves before Adam, they prostrated themselves. (II: 34).

(d) Everything on the earth has been created for Man:

He it is Who created for you (i.e., for your service, O humankind!) all that is on the earth." (II: 29).

(e) Everything in the heavens and on the earth has been made subservient to Man:

And He has subjected to you (O humankind!), as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on the earth. Behold! in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect.'" (XLV: 13)

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