

Review Article/*Rencana Ulasan*

An Islamic Overview

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ABSTRAK

Dari segi pemikiran psikologi Jung, objektif psikologi ialah psikik. Bagi orang Muslim yang dibendung oleh kebudayaan dan tradisi Islam, objektif psikologi ialah menembusi alam psikik ke alam roh demi untuk memahami manusia dalam erti kata yang sebenarnya. Artikel ini membentangkan bagaimana kita harus menukarkan pemahaman kita tentang psikologi manusia ke arah konsep Islam yang sememangnya telah diturunkan oleh Allah s.w.t. di dalam Al-Quran.

ABSTRACT

For Jungian psychology, "the object of psychology is the psychic." For the Muslim living within the context of a religious and traditional culture, the object of psychology is to penetrate beyond the psychic into the realm of the spiritual, which is both the center and source of all that is vital to the understanding of man. This article shifts the concept of a human psychology away from the purely secular attitude that has evolved over the last hundred years in order to approach the study of man through a sacred psychology that takes root once again in the Quranic revelation and draws its understanding of man from the sacred knowledge of God.

INTRODUCTION

Are those who know and those who do not know equal?
(Quran)

In former times, when people lived in a traditional¹ environment and enjoyed the knowledge and sapiential wisdom that permeated such an environment, both God and man were known factors, and the nature of truth and its spiritual consequences was never fully in doubt. Today, however, we live in different times. The traditional environment has well nigh vanished and the certitude and security that accompanied the

traditional man's instinctive faith in God has eluded the modern man, who no longer acknowledges the knowledge of God through revelation and therefore no longer understands his own meaning and *raison d'être*.

For traditional man, God was not only the source and origin of all knowledge, he was the All-Knowing (al-alim). Similarly man was the human expression of the knowledge of God, at least in principle. By virtue of this knowledge he was a synthesis, and through devotion and worship he was a mirror reflection of the divine Attributes and Qualities. If God for traditional man was the Absolute Being, man was the relative being, or perhaps we can be permitted to use F. Schuon's phrase "relatively absolute" insofar as his intelligence could recognize the Supreme Intelligence of God and his free will could express a faith in that Absolute Being through conformity to the Divine Will. In short, through multiple revelations from Heaven, man already had the knowledge of a sacred psychology with which distinguish between truth and illusion, the sacred and the profane, beauty and ugliness, for without this knowledge who can claim to be normal.

If God for traditional man was the expression of unity (*tawhid*), then man was the expression of duality, a polarity, and a diversity that needed the synthesis and totality of the Divine Being to unify him once again. For modern man, however, the opposite is true. He understands himself primarily as an individual ego in an infinitely interesting and diverse world, but without the certainty and the objectivity implicit in the revelation and without the authority of Heaven. T. Burchardt, a well-known writer on traditional and cosmological themes, puts it quite succinctly. "The traditional vision of things is above all 'static' and 'vertical'. It is static because it refers to constant and universal qualities, and it is vertical in the sense that it attaches the lower to the higher, the ephemeral to the imperishable. The modern vision, on the contrary, is fundamentally 'dynamic' and 'horizontal'; it is not the symbolism of things that interest it, but their material and historical connections.

Traditional man understood himself to be both a veil and a key. He was a veil unto himself in which he must lift the barrier that exists between man's conscious, externalized self and his supra-conscious, inner core, but he was also a key capable of unlocking the psychology and spiritual forces that rest within the human psyche and soul. According to sacred tradition, to say that man is a psychology being really means to imply that he is above all a spiritual being.

The human being is of course a man and a woman, but also man and woman, a psychology being in his individual manifestation and a spiritual being in his higher, more universal and normative manifestation, a human symbol as it were of the Divine Self and a 'world in miniature' that is a replica of the entire universe. Therefore the question arises and must be

asked: In what manner is man psychology and in what manner is he spiritual? Where does his psychology aspect leave off in order to make way for his spiritual essence? Does modern psychology penetrate effectively the surface impressions that are a man and a woman, or have we unknowingly abandoned the knowledge of a sacred psychology that identifies man as such in his primordial, perfected and universal state of being, a knowledge that provides the inner disclosure of man's true nature and identity?

No one would deny that truth runs through the human entity like an invisible thread, but some may doubt that it ties humanity irrevocably to a Reality (al-haqq) both unifying and unique. To misunderstand the nature of truth and the compelling reasons to acknowledge its existence as an all-embracing reality is to forfeit the knowledge of God. To want anything less than the truth and its implications is of course to want the wrong thing. That having been said, it should be added that every man needs to include within his perception of reality that which is not within the grasp of our physical senses only. The true journey is inward toward a state of consciousness and a state of awareness in which God is infinitely close to man, both as a spiritual reality and as a valid existential experience for man.

SURFACE IMPRESSIONS

A well-known saying of the prophet Muhammad, upon him blessings and peace, is as follows: "Worship God as if you actually saw Him, for even if you don't see Him, nevertheless He sees you." Alas, the two words *as if* form the critical existential conditional for modern man who lives as if God does not exist. The traditional man, who was a spiritual being above all, worshipped God with a faith and a vigilance that implied an inward seeing with the "eye of the heart" (*'ayn al-qalb*), a direct and convincing vision if there ever was one. In the present time cycle, however, as we gather ourselves together to meet the end of the century as well as the millennium, we as contemporary man act *as if* we are purely psychological beings who define themselves and find their meaning through purely human reasoning alone. In the contemporary view, the psychological aspect of man's life is reflective of a purely mental process which is in fact an extension of physical energies rendered profoundly mental through the human psyche.

Modern psychology represents the study of man from the human point of view. It seeks solutions to the problems of modern man by an analysis of man through the humanities in general and through the sciences dealing specifically with man such as sociology and anthropology. In particular, modern day psychology and these other social sciences are supposed to provide an insight into the very concept of man and his human "nature", on its own so to speak, without the authority of Heaven. The rebellion of man against Heaven that began during the Renaissance in the Western

world has reached its logical conclusion during these times in which man has invested everything in the power of human reason alone to sift the data of the human senses to provide the definitive norm.

Needless to say, from the spiritual point of view which we are presenting, modern man has serious problems. Because he has lost the direct knowledge of God through a failure to acknowledge and value not only revelation itself but also its possibility, he has also lost the direct knowledge of himself that is the necessary by-product of the knowledge of God.

Without the totality of the knowledge of God, who is the All-Encompassing (*al-wasi*), he must rely on knowledge not *of* himself but *by* himself, with a reliance on the externalized, indirect knowledge of the self that he is able to gather by reason through the senses. Alas, while the knowledge of the senses may be immediate and poignant enough, this knowledge is also superficial from the spiritual point of view, a knowledge of the surface only or merely surface impressions. Fragmented knowledge can be related to the whole only when there is already an intellectual vision of the whole.

Man was intended to embrace the truth wholeheartedly and not at some mid-way point, halfway between heaven and hell. The modern psychological and psychoanalytical point of view tries to reduce all the higher elements of man's being to the level of the psyche, and moreover to reduce the psyche itself to nothing more than that which can be studied through modern psychological and psychoanalytical methods. Thus, modern man, both in concept of self and in the execution of a methodology in keeping with that concept, is reduced to a place mid-way between the truth, making himself a human lie and a false god at the same time.

Modern psychology behave like every other science of the modern times. It utters judgments and proclamations about man and the environment and actually believes in their validity, as if these pronouncements were based on truly objective facts and represented an innate certitude. What modern psychology lacks entirely is criteria allowing it to situate the aspects or tendencies of the soul in their cosmic context. In traditional psychology these criteria are provided according to two principal "dimensions," namely, on the one hand, according to a cosmology that "situates" the soul and its modalities in the hierarchy of states of existence, and on the other hand, according to a morality directed toward a spiritual aim.

For example, Titus Burckhardt includes in his well-written essay entitled *Cosmology and Modern Science* a fitting example of how traditional man can untie the psychological knots that suffocate his inner being. He prefaces his remarks by noting that modern psychologists, who have replaced the role of the priest, have replaced the confessional too by

the bursting of the complexes under the guise of letting it all “hang out”, viewing most of the traditional morality as nothing more than a “psychic damn”. He points out that within the Christian context, the “spirit” of the confessional with the priest as an impartial yet human truth liberates man from the downward pull of the psyche by allowing the penitent to “objectivize” in some sense the “psychic tendencies” that his sins represent. In this way he can bring them to the surface, give voice to his repressions, and possibly view them from the distance, thus detaching him from their downward drag.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

The Quran tells us that mankind was created for one purpose, and that is none other than to praise and worship the Divine: “Call upon Me, and I will answer you” (IL 60). Human worship, unlike the worship of the rest of the creation, represents a consciousness that is projected outward and upward, thus liberating both the human psyche and the soul from the centrifugal drag symbolically represented by the gravity of the earthly sphere. The rest of the creation praises (and prays), but unconsciously by simply being what they are in essence. Man alone is capable, indeed must, give voice to his inner aspiration and his gratitude unless he wants to betray the sacred trust that exists between the human soul and the Divine Spirit. “Am I not your Lord.” God asked the pre-human soul of man, who accepted the “burden” and responded “Yes. We witness You” (VII, 172).

However, man does more than speak to God through his worship. Within the traditional frame, the power of the sacred trust and the worship implicit in that trust helps to loosen the inner psychological knots that must develop in today’s highly charged psychological world. Alas, our communication with God is more than just words. We act and feel and project the entire drama of our human existence through our thoughts and actions that amount to an externalized statement of the inner man or the psyche and soul projected outward into the world through prayer and other forms of worship. We could say that the process of “worship” is in the very nature of man to the extent that if man does not worship the Divine, then he must worship something else, either himself or perhaps the world.

We live in the manifested world (*al-dunia*), but we should not make of it a god, inclusive of our worship and praise. This is the ultimate evil in Islam, namely *shirik*, or the establishing of another reality beside the one and only Reality. *La ilaha illa 'Llah*, no god but God, no reality but the one Reality. When man worships God, his intelligence taps into the source of the Universal Intellect; when man worships “other than God”, his intelligence becomes a mode of discursive thought exclusively, without the aid of the intellect and thus without the aid of Heaven.

Modern psychology is not, like philosophy and theology, a passive modality both reflective and probing; rather it is an active intrusion into the psyche of man without possessing any criteria with which to discern the Truth as an objective reality. Once again we return to Jung who must remain the spokesman and source of modern psychological thinking. His psychology does deal with sacred, archetypal and phenomenal world, but in reality his thinking alters the concept of the sacred by confusing the spiritual and psychological domains and subverting the luminous and transcendent source of archetypes into what he has called the "collective unconscious."

Jung questions outright the relationship between the Eastern (Indian) concept of unconscious which he calls a "supra-personal, world-embracing unconscious" that makes itself manifest when an individual's own personal unconscious grows "transparent". He asserts that modern psychology knows that the "personal unconscious" is only the top layer, resting on a foundation of a wholly different nature which we call the "collective unconscious". He suggested that the images in the deeper unconscious have a distinctly mythological character, in other words, in form and content they coincide with those widespread primordial ideas which underlie the myths.

Perhaps these comments could pass undetected in the early part of the 20th century when the rise of modern psychology was perceived as young, exciting, innovative, and even liberating. But in the latter part of the century, the cracks in the wall of modern psychology as well as the other sciences are all too apparent, and particularly now during a time when there has been a renewed interest in traditional philosophy and psychology. Also there are a number of traditional writers such as F. Schuon, T. Burckhardt, S. N. Nasr and Martin Lings who are working to redefine the traditional and spiritual principles and beliefs in a modern context, and they will not allow the blatant affirmations of the modern perspective to go unquestioned. Modern psychology is based on the thesis of the infra-human origin of man and does not consider the cosmic dimension of his being, namely his "supranatural" nature. Burckhardt (1987) points out in his *Traditional Cosmology and Modern Science* that Jung developed his famous theory of the "collective unconscious" from his analysis of dreams, in which he distinguished between a "personal zone" that represented one phase of individual psychic life, and a "collective zone", made up of latent psychic elements of an impersonal character. Buckhardt goes on to point out that for Jung, the "collective unconscious" is situated "below", at the level of psychological instincts, and based his remarks on Jung's statements in his introduction of the work, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (New York, 1931). "... All conscious imagination and action have evolved on the basis of these unconscious prototypes and remain permanently attached to

them, and this is especially so when consciousness has not yet attained a very degree of lucidity, in other words, as long as it is still, in all its functions, more dependent on instinct than on conscious will, or more affective than rational.....”.

Modern psychology is not comfortable with the traditional concept of the soul and understandably so, since it is equally uncomfortable with the concept of God, much less God Himself in all His magnificence. This is no more apparent than in Jung’s statement that no one can understand the soul except by means of his own soul. The movements of the soul cannot be studied empirically from the outside looking in, based on a purely observational framework, in which the mystery of the human being is presumed to be fully explainable in rational terms. In order to understand the workings of the soul, man must be what he is in his nature, life has to be fully experienced, and the soul must express itself according to a truth that is in harmony with the destiny of man. In short, his meaning lies outside himself.

This once again raises the questions that modern psychology fails to adequately answer. Who is man? What is the nature of his human nature? What is his purpose, his meaning and his ultimate end? A psychology of man, whether it be modern or traditional, must respond effectively to these questions, otherwise it will fail to guide man towards an understanding of self that will eventually lead him back to the knowledge of God through the experience of his own being.

THE HIDDEN DISCLOSURE

God’s original upon which He originated mankind.
(Quran)

When I flowed out from God, all things declared ‘God is!’
(Meister Eckhart)

We have suggested that modern psychology represents the study of man by man and projects a conceptualization of man that excludes that which is most essential to the human condition, namely, the unifying principle of God. A sacred psychology of man represents the study of man that is based solely on a knowledge of God that descends to man in the form of revelation and is made up of divine truths rather than human theories that fluctuate with the ideological fashion of the times. A truly sacred psychology of man originates in the primordial time, or what some traditions refer to as the “Golden Age”, in which man was understood according to his “nature”, meaning none other than his true “human” nature. A psychology that puts its roots into a revelation from a divine

source of knowledge seeks to unlock the secrets that man contains within the very ground of his own soul. All is contained definitively in our own soul, whose lower ramifications are identified with the realm of the senses but whose root reach up to pure being and the supreme essence, so that man grasps in himself the axis of the cosmos.

Needless to say, if the knowledge of God demands the use of the key words “revelation” and man’s “nature”, then a sacred psychology of man must deal primarily with divine knowledge and human behavior in order to fulfill its role with regard to man. The revelation offers an essential knowledge of who God is and who man is, including their respective natures. In addition, it clarifies man’s position in relation to God and the other beings within the universe so that man can understand his place within the great hierarchy of being. Islam – and more specifically the *Sunnah* and *Haddith* literature featuring the sayings of the Prophet – offers a behavioral knowledge that not only allows man to be most truly himself as he was intended to be, but also to transcend the limitations of both himself and his own limited knowledge in order to achieve the perfection of soul and salvation of spirit in a paradisaal reality that entity in principle is destined to achieve.

. This is not to say that religion is *de facto* a sacred psychology, but it contains the elements of a psychology of man inasmuch as the religion reveals a concept of man that identifies his nature as primordial, permanent, universal and complete. In the Islamic perspective, man is his own priest and therefore his own psychologist, permitting a sacerdotal role for every man that brings the sacred psychology right down into the daily life. The Quran offers the Muslim a doctrine and thus a knowledge; his own being comes fully equipped with an intellect and a free will to respond to that knowledge; while the religion itself has the structural framework and contains a methodology in which man can discipline himself, come to know himself, and ultimately transcend himself. Once again, a famous saying of the prophet – “He who knows himself knows his Lord” – already emphasizes that man must look within toward his own human nature in order to understand both himself and his Creator, otherwise he will never get anywhere in terms of spiritual evolution, not to mention ultimate transcendence, but rather will commence a spiral descent into the world of psychological turmoil and spiritual darkness.

The question concerning man’s true human nature – namely, who is man? – is a question that modern psychology cannot rightly answer even if it must; whereas the spiritual perspective need not necessarily even raise the question for the very reason that it readily provides a meaning for man and a corresponding vision that is both total and complete. It is true that man’s “supranatural” nature is not as immediately apparent as are objects in the physical world that can be verified by the efficiency of scientific

observation; but it is immediately understandable, unlike the purely physical world which in reality offers no fully comprehensive explanation. In fact, we live in a world that does not fully explain itself and thus we are in need of the authority of God and the certitude of His knowledge.

According to Islam, man's nature identifies man. Thus, the Muslim is not contemporary man or psychological man or primitive man or modern man, at least not in principle; rather he identifies himself according to his inward nature. Because of who he is, he has the ability to transcend his earthly limitations to the extent that he can identify himself as primordial man, traditional man, universal man, and ultimately perfected man (*al-insan al-kamil*). "You are all the children (tribe) of Adam" Muhammad often told his people, and the Quran itself often refers to the *bani Adam* or the children of Adam.

MAN'S TRUE NATURE

One cannot presume to write about a sacted psychology that puts its roots in the divine revelation without referring to the basic dimensions that constitute the major colorations of the human being. These are namely the truth and meaning of man's nature (*fitrah*), his attitude of servitude (*abd*) and his responsibility as the vicegerent (*khalifah*) of God on earth.

Man's human nature is nothing short of a hidden disclosure consisting of four crucial elements that lend color and shades of meaning to man's conceptualization of the self. They serve as open as open doors to the perception of both man's and God's true nature and thus of reality itself. Based on the Quranic revelation, man's human nature (*fitrah*) could be characterized essentially as primordial, permanent, theomorphic, and universal in its scope.

The word *fitrah* can be understood in the Arabic to refer to the human "norm" from which, according to the Quran, humanity has fallen away. The Arabic word itself is derived from a root verb meaning "he created", or "he cleft asunder", and as such refers back to origins. The Quran is quite specific on this point: "So set the face to the religion, as a man of pure faith, God's original upon which he created mankind. This is the right religion, but most men know it not" (xxx, 30). In other words, the nature of man has been patterned on the nature of God (*fitrah Allah*) in terms of its original inception, and this of course cannot be altered in any respect.

Natural man is already perfect man, at least in principle, even if perfection does not come naturally to man. Primordial, Adamic man is simple, innocent, pure, free, predisposed to right and true to himself in his nature. Before his fall from grace, Adam was primordial because he already enjoyed the perfection inherent within man and he saw and understand the

world from within. Modern man can be called primordial insofar as he still has the same nature as Adam had together with the aspiration to return to this original purity that he is capable of; but he is now fully externalized and does not see and understand the world "from within." Primordality already adds a cosmic dimension to man's being that modern psychology does not even admit to as a matter of basic premise. Modern psychological man is "infranatural," while traditional man was always understood to be "supranatural" in nature. Needless to say, it should be noted that neither the Quran nor the sayings (*ahadith*) of the prophet offer us a flattering picture of human nature as it exists on earth, nor does the existential experience of living in today's world help us to understand man as primordial, pristine, and pure. The psychological challenge in today's world -as it has ever been - is to be what we are according to our given nature, however, much of this may elude our grasp.

Be that as it may, beyond man's primordality, which has a flavor of infancy and origins, lies the permanence of man's nature. His nature partakes of permanence in which the human soul originated in the Paradise and will make a journey of return to either paradise or hell where the soul will "live forever" (*Khalidina fiha abadan*). This also sharply contradicts the prevailing evolutionary concept that man has somehow "evolved", not only as a physical form but presumably also in the development of a human nature, from a lower species to a higher species, in which man is reduced to the sphere of accidental changes that affect only superficial man who is only accidentally human and most essentially animal. Alas, this runs counter to the spiritual perspective which admits only of a descent from the higher to the lower and not vice versa. In this view, and without the impediments of evolutionary thinking, man is understood to be "extra-spacial" and "extra-temporal" in nature in which he contains elements that are constant and permanent, and this is none other than an aspect of the *fitrah* of Allah. In other words, the human norm is measured by permanence. Thus, the goal of all human spirituality is to know and to return to that norm, to man's permanent and original nature, to his *fitrah*. Who is man and what his human nature proclaims him to be.

In addition, man's nature is theomorphic because it comes from God and is distinguished by the nature of God. Man can be a mirror of the divine attributes and qualities because of his theomorphic nature, which asks of us all that we are. Man's theomorphic nature requires man be to be true to himself "according to his nature" so that he does not "forget" his real nature. In addition, an important aspect of man's theomorphic nature is the fact that he has been given a knowledge that the angels don't have. The Quran teaches us that Adam learned "the names of things" (II, 31) which must mean that he understood implicitly the inner nature and quality of things in their essence. Even though man tries to float on the surface of

his being, far from his own center, still to be made in the image of God reminds him that he is the theophany of God's names and qualities. This is a reality that lies at the center of the human condition itself.

To say that man's nature is universal means to imply that it is based on a prototype of humanity that transcends time and space and provides the balance to man's eternal aspect of nature. Universal man is both perfect man and total man, perfect insofar as he reflects the nature of the prophet and total insofar as he reflects the totality in the nature of the Divine Being. The Muslim imitates the prophet both outwardly and especially inwardly, so that he can model and identify his own individual nature with the human nature of the prophet. Thus, he has the potential of knowing himself and enjoys a full conceptualization of man by imitating the prototype of human nature as exemplified in the prophet, who is the perfect man (*al-insan al kamil*) *par excellence*. It is said that to enter into the mold of the prophet's personality through the *Sunnah* and the *Hadith* is to enter into the very mold of the Quran, since his nature was "the nature of the Quran." In this way, the nature of man can approximate the nature of God, through himself, through the prophet, and through the Quran.

MAN AS GOD'S REPRESENTATIVE

It is precisely because man has such an inborn nature that he can effectively fulfill the dual roles of both slave (*abd*) and vicegerent (*khalifah*) of God on earth. Along with the possibility of man's pure and innocent nature lies his responsibility as an earthly being and his attitude toward his Creator. "Behold," the Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on the earth." And the angels said: "Will You place therein one who will create trouble and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holy Name". And God replied: "I know what you do not know" (II, 30).

Since every Muslim is his own priest and celebrant of the sacred rituals, his sacerdotal character is no more meaningfully demonstrated than in his role as God's earthly representative. By exercising his duty as God's viceroy on earth, the Muslim comes to realize his role as the servant of God. In other words, in order for man to fully understand himself as *the* thinking being in God's creation, he must realize that he contains within himself two awesome possibilities: that of supreme significance in the *al-khalifah*, and that of utter insignificance in the role of *al-abd*. In the microcosmic world that is man, he is both master of himself and servant of the Lord at the same time, two modes of expression that complement one another and enhance the human experience, however paradoxical they may seem. The earthly representative of God cannot function properly without a clear understanding that he is also the human servant of God.

As *khalifah*, man is able to rediscover himself as having been created “in the best forms” (XCV, 4). His heart can become like a well-polished mirror in which the divine names and qualities can be reflected. It is indeed the spiritual ideal of the religion of Islam to transform the human soul of the Muslim into a pure crystal reflecting the Divine Light. This conceptualization of man reflects a psychology that is well-nigh spiritual insofar as the projection of the Divine Being into the human being is conceived on all levels, just as the spiritual world is superimposed on the human world, just as the vertical dimension intersects continuously the horizontal plane adding a fourth dimension of spirituality to a three dimensional world of form and science.

Master and slave are two modalities within man that lend a profound coloration to man’s understanding not only of himself but of his place in the hierarchy of being – higher than the angels yet capable of damnation because of who he is and what he is capable of. The master needs the slave in order to complete his own role, just as vicegerency itself is inevitably linked to slavery. They are two faces of the same coin, two attitudes that lend perspective and meaning to the human condition. According to the mystic and theologian al-Ghazzali (d. 505/1111), everything including the human creature has “a face of its own and a face of its Lord; in respect of its own face it is nothingness, and in respect of the face of its Lord it is Being.” Within the Islamic context, if man does understand his human identity to contain these two elements, then he also has failed to come to understand the reality of his existential situation in which he does have the intelligence and free will to act, but with humility in the Face of the Absolute.

In view of these two modalities, man is understood to be both a bridge and mirror. Man is a bridge to the Divine Being in his role as God’s agent and spokesman. Through intelligence and free will, he alone is capable of conceiving of God, comprehending the divine implications, and acting upon that knowledge to achieve a realization through an experience well lived. He is man, Allah’s thinking creature and the masterpiece of His creation. He was fashioned by God’s own hand and He breathed into him of His Spirit. He is conscious of himself, and as much as that consciousness refers back to the Divine Being, then is he also objective and absolute in his subjective and relative world. He is man who accepted the trust; he was taught (and knows) the names of thing; the angels bowed down before him, and through prayer he can speak directly with God.

Man is a mirror of the Divine Being in his role as God’s slave. Indeed his intelligence demands that he recognize his nothingness in the face of the Divine Reality as an earthly reality and not just as a vague sentimentality, and he has a will to prove this again and against by conforming to the Divine Will through surrender and virtue. He is a creature of dust, relative, transient, an exile from the paradise that he deliberately turned his back on

through pride and forgetfulness. Is this not reason enough for his abject humility before the Divine Magnitude? He is a little thing (brother to the ant) who walks briefly upon the earth from which he was molded, vulnerable to a pinprick and destined soon to be seized upon and taken to Judgment. He is a slave whose highest achievement is to obey without question his Master's Will or... to rid himself of everything that might appear to be "his", so that the Divine Will may operate through him without impediment.

Alas, the proper balance of these two roles of vicegerency and slavery makes it possible for man to be described as a central being, who already enjoys a human nature that is both perfect and pure in principle. Because he is both a bridge and mirror, he has the power to transcend all earthly limitations through the overwhelming possibilities of the Divine Reality. As *Khalifah*, man is a world (microcosm) within a world (macrocosm); as *abd* man is but an instrument in the Divine Hand of God. Thus, man is at once a contradiction and a paradox, master and slave, a meeting place and a bridge.

MAN AS WITNESS

The entire creation praises God out of an instinctive knowledge; but man consciously praise through prayer. Much has been and could yet be written about the role of prayer in the human context. We can only mention here in passing that the ritual of prayer, and the other four pillars of Islam for that matter, open a man's being to the channels of blessings and grace that flow through the arteries of the universe, blessings that have the power to cleanse both the psyche and soul. The ritual form of the prayer and the latent power of the sacred Quranic language are able to achieve a goal which the psychoanalyst seeks to accomplish with dubious success and instead often produces only dangerous results, for he lacks the power of the Spirit of God which alone can guide the human soul. Through prayer, the Muslim exposes himself, as he is at any given moment, to God. By virtue of his role as *khalifah* he is permitted to come into the presence, but once there, he is all humility, the ultimate slave in awe of the Master, hands folded and head bowed. Man is not alone because God has said: "I am with (My servant) when he remembers Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself..... And if he draws near to Me a hand's span, I draw near to him an arm's length; and if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him speedily". This is the promise of God, but once he is in the proximity of God, he becomes sheer responsibility.

Seen in this light, a sacred psychology within the context of a spiritual tradition such as Islam is nothing short of a sacred science designed as a

cure for the ailments of the soul. It has the capacity to untie the knots that entangle the soul and prevent it from coming into close proximity to the Spirit. In traditional literature this process was often referred to as "spiritual alchemy", meaning a transformation of the soul from the base metal that it is in reality to the golden light that it is in principle. This is actually what we call today psychotherapy, and is far superior to any modern psychotherapy, which claims to cure the psychic and spiritual ills of man without the healing power of the Spirit of God.

The doctrine of God in Islam sheds light on the doctrine of man to the extent that man is fully identified. Man is nothing before the Divine Majesty, but he is also the vicegerent of God by virtue of a theomorphic nature that can reflect the Names and Qualities of God in this world. He is *insan*, an intimate of God and a living symbol of all that can be "divinely human" in the world. Because of his primordial nature he has the capacity of becoming perfect once again, the universal man. Although in reality we are still far from that ideal, this does not deny us the possibility of becoming what we are intended to be and are in essence.

At one time, everything was a sign and a symbol, indeed a proof, of God. The seven heavens themselves offered a vast panorama of cosmic possibility and were inhabited by an entire hierarchy of beings including angels and jinn, but that alas has now been reduced to a series of astronomical theories and facts that prevent man from recognizing the divine signs therein. For nothing now reminds him that after all this whole universe is contained in him, not indeed in his individual being, but in the spirit that is in him that is at the same time more than himself and more than the entire phenomenal universe.

Man must discover his own meaning once again, and this is made possible through a sacred psychology already implicit in the religion that will lead him from the externalized self of the ego, toward the inner sanctuary of his soul and spirit, which alone endures. A sacred psychology of man demands that we make peace once again with Heaven, and this is made possible in Islam through faith in God followed by surrender to the Divine Will.

The Divine Affirmation that is implicit in the Islamic testimony of faith, the *shahadah*, that there is no god but God, (*la ilaha ill'Llah*), is the liberating 'yes' to a reality that is both within us and far beyond us. To make this sacred affirmation, to know God and to want to love Him, brings to the surface an impulse that lies embedded within man's nature, to proclaim the truth that man is most truly human just as God is most truly Divine. Implicit in the *shahadah* or sacred of Islam is a sacred psychology that has the power to shatter lower impulses and bring together the multiple fragments of man into a unity that already lies in the ground of his soul.

NOTE

¹The concept of tradition refers throughout the text to those immutable and eternal principles and truths that are explicitly of a divine origin. These truths descend from heaven to earth through a revelation so that man has knowledge of God and the means to return to Him and are then implicitly accepted by the society. "Tradition implies truths of a supra-individual character rooted in the nature of reality as such...." (S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, (New York: Crossroads) p. 68). Also F. Schuon has written extensively on the nature and import of the term "tradition"; see his *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts* (London: Farber & Farber), pt. 1; idem, *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (London: Perennial Books), chaps. 1 and 2.

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