



SOCIETY AND HISTORY

By:
Martyr Murtaḍā Muṭahhari

Society and History

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Translated from the Persian by

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Publisher's note:

This book, one of the many works of Ayatullah Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, has been for the first time translated and inserted in the English Al-Tawhid journal.

Considering those readers who do not subscribe to the journal, we are reprinting this book, hoping that it will help them see through the misleading ideologies that the Communist and other schools of thought propound.

**Department of Translation and Publication,
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Translator's Preface

The *Society and History* (*Jāmi'e wa tārikh*) is one in a series of seven books by Martyr Murtaḍā Muṭahhari, which together constitute his important work *Introduction to the Islamic World Outlook* (*Muqaddameh ī bar jahān binī-ye Islāmi*). The other six in this series are: *Man and Faith* (*Insān wa Īmān*), *The World Outlook of Tawhīd* (*Jahān binī-ye tawhīdi*), *Revelation and Prophethood* (*Wahy wa nubuwwat*), *The Human Being in the Qur'an* (*Insān dar Qur'an*), *Imāmah and Leadership* (*Imāmat wa rahbari*), *Hereafter, or the Eternal Life* (*Zindagī-ye jāwid yā hayāt-e ukhrawi*).

The *Introduction to the Islamic World Outlook* is an attempt to expound the different aspects of the all-embracing view of Islam about man, his destiny, the meaning and purpose of life, man's relation with God and the universe, his role in society and history, etc. For this purpose, Martyr Muṭahhari relies mainly on the Holy Qur'an and to some extent on *hadīth*.

The first part of the book on society discusses various existing views on the nature of society and its relation with the individuals, and explains the Qur'anic viewpoint. In the second part on history, it appears, that the author had planned to write it in two sections. The first section was aimed as a refutation of historical and dialectical materialism, and in the second, which is incomplete, the author wished to discuss the philosophy of history of Islam in the light of the Qur'an. Martyr Muṭahhari devotes much space to refutation of the Marxist doctrines regarding history and society, because he considers Marxist ideas as not only an ideological threat but also as a problem of intellectual pollution. As can be seen from the second part, where, after attacking historical materialism, his criticism is directed towards Muslim intellectuals who under the influence of Marxist notions have tried to read the dogma of historical materialism into the Qur'an itself.

It is unfortunate that the author could not complete his book as he wished, due to his martyrdom on 6 Jamādī II, 1399 (May 1, 1979), about three months after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Reportedly he had withdrawn the present book, together with *The Human Being in the Quran* and *Hereafter, or the Eternal Life* for the purpose of making elaborate additions to them.

Most of the quotations made by the author in this book have been traced to their English texts or translations, except those quoted from Persian translations of *Marx and Marxism* by Andre Peter, and *Historical Materialism* by P. Royan.

Mahliqā Qarā'i

Introduction

THE outlook of a school of thought regarding society and history and its specific approach to them, plays a decisive role in its ideology. From this point of view, it is essential, in the context of Islamic world outlook, to throw light on the Islamic approach to society and history.

It is evident that Islam is neither a theory of society nor a philosophy of history. In the sacred Book of Islam, no social or historical problem is dealt with in the technical jargon of sociology and philosophy of history. In the same way no other problem, ethical, legal or philosophical, is discussed in the Quran, either in the current terms or according to the traditional classification of sciences. However, these and other problems related with various sciences can be deduced from the Book.

Islamic thinking on society and history, because of its special importance, is a topic that deserves to be studied and investigated properly, and, like its many other teachings, reveals Islam's profoundness in dealing with various issues. Since the problems that deal with society and history are closely related, and since we wish to discuss them briefly, it was apt to discuss them together in a single book. However, we shall discuss the problem related to society and history only to the extent that would help in understanding Islamic ideology.

We shall begin with society and then proceed to discuss history. Following are some of the questions that can be raised about society:

1. What is society?
2. Is man by nature social and gregarious?
3. Is it true that the individual is primary and society is secondary, or is the truth contrary to it, that is, society is primary and individual is secondary in importance? Or is there any third possible approach?
4. The relationship between society and tradition.
5. Whether the individual is free or if he is determined by society and the social structure?
6. In what institutions, poles, and groups is society classifiable according to its primary divisions?

7. Whether human societies are absolutely of the same nature and essence, their differences being similar to the differences among members of the same species? Or if they vary according to geographic variations, temporal and spatial conditions, and levels of development of their culture and civilization, assuming different forms and essences with each calling for a separate sociology based upon its particular ideology? In other words, is a single system of sociology, ethics, and ideology applicable to all humanity, in the same way as a single system of medicine and laws of physiology applies to all human beings regardless of their geographic, racial and historical variations?

Does every society, according to its regional, cultural and historical background, require a special sociology and affirm a particular ideology?

8. Are human societies, which from the dawn of history up to the present day have been diversified and grown independent of one another, with a kind of pluralism governing them (at least in an individual if not in a generic sense), moving from plurality and diversity towards attainment of unity and homogeneity? Does the future of humanity lie in attaining one society, one culture and one civilization, and whether at the end its plurality will be replaced by a stage of homogeneity in which all its contradictions and conflicts would be overcome and resolved? Or, contrarily, is humanity eternally condemned to multiplicity of culture and ideology, and to a pluralism that reinforces the social identity of its particular, units?

In our view, these are the relevant problems which need to be discussed from the Islamic point of view, so that these issues are brought to light and put in a proper perspective. We propose to deal briefly with these issues one by one.

Part One: Society

What is Society?

A society consists of groups of human beings who are linked together by means of specific systems and customs, rites and laws, and have a collective social existence. Collective life is that in which groups of people live together in a particular region, and share the same climate and similar foodstuffs. Trees of a garden also 'live' together and share the same climate and the same kind of nourishment. In the same manner, gazelles of a herd also graze together, and migrate together from place to place. But neither trees nor gazelles can be said to have a social life, as they do not form a society.

Human life is social in the sense that it is essentially gregarious. On the one hand human needs, benefits, satisfactions, work, and activity are social in essence, and the social system cannot be maintained but through division of labour, division of profits and a shared common satisfaction of needs within a particular set of traditions and systems. On the other hand, specific ideas and ideals, temperaments, and habits govern human beings in general, giving them a sense of unity and integration. In other words, society represents a group of human beings, who, under the compulsion of a series of requirements and under the influence of a set of beliefs, ideals and goals, are amalgamated with one another and are immersed in a continuum of collective life.

The common social interests, and particular ties of human life unite human beings together, giving to every individual a sense of unity similar to that experienced by a group of people travelling together in an automobile or an aeroplane or a boat, heading towards the same destination, and sharing together the common hope of reaching the destination safely, the dangers of the way, and a common fate.

How beautifully the Prophet of Islam (S) has described the philosophy of 'enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency' (*al-'amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*) by means of the following parable:

A group of people board a ship that sets sail on the sea tearing apart the waves. Every one of them has a seat reserved for him. One of the travellers

claiming that the seat occupied by him belonged to none other than him, starts making a hole under his seat with a sharp tool. Unless all the travellers immediately hold his hand and make him desist from doing so, they would risk drowning not only themselves but would also fail to save the poor wretch from being drowned.

Is Man Social by Nature?

The problem regarding the factors responsible for the emergence of social life in human beings, has been raised from the ancient times. Is man born with the instinct of gregariousness, i.e. whether he was naturally created as a part of a whole, with an urge in his nature to be united with the whole; or if he was not created as a gregarious being, but external compulsions and determinism imposed upon him a collective life? In other words, is he by nature inclined to live freely, and is disposed not to accept any kind of obligations and restrictions which have been imposed upon him, although they may be essential for social life? Has he in fact learnt from experience that no one is able to continue one's life in isolation, and so he has been forced to surrender to limitations imposed by social life? Or, although he is not gregarious by nature, the factor that persuaded him to accept social existence was not compulsion, or at least compulsion had not been the sole factor? Or, was it by the ruling of his reason and through his faculty of calculation that he arrived at the conclusion that only through co-operation and social life could he better enjoy the gifts of nature, and, therefore, he chose to live in company with other human beings? Accordingly, the problem can be posed in three ways:

- (i) Man is social by nature;
- (ii) he is social by compulsion;
- (iii) he is social by his own choice.

According to the first theory, man's social life is similar to the partnership of a man and a woman in married life; each of the partners was created as a part of a whole, and, by nature, yearns to be united with the whole. According to the second theory, social life is like co-operation, such as a pact between two countries which are singly unable to defend themselves against a common enemy, and are forced to work out an agreement of co-operation and collaboration. According to the third theory, social life is similar to the partnership of two capitalists, which gives rise to a commercial, agricultural or industrial company aiming at attainment of greater profits.

On the basis of the first theory, the main factor is inherent in man's own nature itself. On the basis of the second theory, it is something external to man's essence and independent of it. And according to the third theory, the main factor responsible for social life is man's intellectual and calculating faculty.

According to the first view, sociability is a general and universal goal which man naturally aspires to attain. According to the second theory, sociability is a casual and accidental phenomenon, a secondary and not a primary objective. According to the third theory, sociability is the result of man's faculty of reasoning and calculation.

It may be said on the basis of the study of the Quranic verses that sociability is inherent in the very nature and creation of man. In the *Sûrat al-Hujurât* the Quran says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ...

O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes, that you may know one another [not that on account of this you may boast of being superior to others]. Certainly, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the most God-fearing among you... (49:13)

In this verse, besides an ethical precept, there is an implication which indicates the philosophy of social existence of man, according to which mankind is so created that it always lives in the form of groups, nations and tribes, and an individual is known through his relation to his respective nation and tribe—an identity which is an integral part of social existence. If these relations—which, in one way, are the cause of commonness and association between individual men, and, in the other way, are the cause of their separation and dissociation—did not exist, it would have been impossible to distinguish one man from another. As a consequence, social life, which is the basis of relationships of human beings with one another, would not have come into existence. These and similar other factors in social life, such as differences in features, colour, and physique, provide the ground for specific marks of distinction of an individual and impart individuality to persons. Had all the individuals been of the same colour, features, and physique, and had they not been governed by different types of relationships and associations, they would have been like the standardized products of a factory, identical to one another, and consequently could not be distinguished from one another. It would have ultimately resulted in the negation of social life, which is based upon relations and exchange of ideas, labour, and commodities. Hence, association of individuals with tribes and groups has a natural purpose. The individual differences among human beings serve as an essential condition of social life. It must not, however, be used as a pretext for prejudice and pride; for superiority is supposed to lie in human nobility and an individual's piety.

In verse 54 of *Sûrat al-Furqân*, the Quran states:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا....

And He it is who hath created man from water, and hath appointed for him kindred by blood [relationships by birth] and kindred by marriage [acquired relationships]. (25:54)

This verse reveals the purpose of birth-relationship and marriage-relationship, which together bind individuals with each other, as underlying the design of creation. It is through these relationships that individuals are distinguished from one another.

In *Sūrat al-Zukhruf*, verse 32, it is stated:

أَلَمْ يَقْسُوا رَبَّكَ أَنْ نَحْنُ قَسَمًا بِيَهُمْ مَعَبَّتُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْتُمِعُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Is it they who apportion their Lord's mercy? We have appointed among them their livelihood in the life of the world and raised some of them above others in rank, that some of them may take labour from others, and the mercy of thy Lord is better than [the wealth] that they amass. (43:32)

While discussing the conception of *tawhīd* (Divine Unity), in the part dealing with the world outlook of *tawhīd*, I have dealt with the meaning of this verse.¹ Here I will give just the substance of the verse. Human beings have not been created alike in respect of their talents and dispositions. Had they been created so, everyone would have possessed the same qualities and all would have lacked diversity of talents. Naturally, as a consequence, none would have required the services of others, thus making mutual co-operation and mutual obligations meaningless.

God has created man in diversity with different spiritual, physical, and intellectual aptitudes, dispositions, and inclinations. He has given some people special abilities, and has imparted superiority to some over others in certain talents. By means of this, He has made all human beings intrinsically needful of others and inclined to associate with others. Thus He has laid down the foundation of collective and social life. The above-mentioned verse also asserts that social existence is not merely a conventional, or selective or a compulsive affair, but a natural one.

Does Society have an Essential and Independent Existence?

Society is composed of individuals; without individuals a society does not exist. What is the manner of this synthesis? How is an individual related to society, and what kind of relationship is it? Let us take

into consideration the following views:

First View:

Society is constituted of individuals. This is merely a hypostatized synthesis; i.e. a synthesis does not exist in reality. An objective synthesis takes place when a series of elements influence one another, and when there is a reciprocal and mutual relation of action and reaction between the elements. These actions and reactions prepare ground for the emergence of a new phenomenon with its own specific characteristics, as observed in the case of a chemical synthesis. For example, due to the action and reaction of the two gases, oxygen and hydrogen, for example, a new compound, namely, water, is produced with a new form and a new set of properties. The essential condition for a real synthesis is that the constituent elements are merged into one another in the process of synthesis, giving up their individual nature and properties, to bring into existence a new substance: the compound.

In collective life, human beings never merge with one another in this way, and a society does not represent anything like a 'unified man'. Thus, society does not possess an essential and independent existence, but a secondary and an hypostatized one. It is the individual alone who has independent, real, and essential existence. So, although human life in society does have a collective form and colour, but members of society do not merge to form a real compound called 'society'.

Second View:

In reality, society cannot be compared to the natural compounds; it is an artificial compound. An artificial compound is a kind of compound although it is not a natural one. An artificial compound, like a machine, is a system of interrelated parts. In a chemical compound, the constituent elements lose their identity, and dissolves in the 'whole' and essentially lose their individuality. But in an artificial compound, the components do not lose their identity; they just surrender their independence. The components are interconnected and related in such a way that the effect of the resultant product is quite different from the sum-total of the individual effects of its ingredients. For example, an automobile carries persons or things with a great speed from one place to another. Its mobility and speed cannot be attributed to the sum of individual performance of its parts when considered as independent and disconnected from one another. There is a sort of co-ordination and coherence between its parts, which is artificial and imposed from without. However, merger of identities of the ingredients in the 'whole' does not take place. Yet, the whole does not exist with-

out its constituent parts. The whole is the sum-total of its parts in addition to the specific connections and relations among them.

Society, in the same manner, is comprised of several primary and secondary organizations and bodies. These organizations, and the individuals who are connected with them, all are inseparably related with one another. Any changes in any one of these institutions—cultural, religious, economic, legal or educational—bring about changes in other institutions also. Thus, social life is a phenomenon dependent on the social machinery. But in this process, neither the identity of individuals nor that of institutions is dissolved completely in the society as a whole.

Third View:

Society is a real compound like the natural compounds. But the synthesis here is of minds and thoughts and of wills and wishes; the synthesis is cultural and not physical. Like the material elements, which in the process of action and reaction, reduction and dissolution in one another, prepare the ground for the emergence of a new substance, and due to this re-organization a new compound comes into existence and the elements continue their existence with a new identity, individuals also, who enter into social life with their gifts acquired from nature and their inborn abilities, spiritually merge into one another to attain a new spiritual identity, which is termed the 'social spirit'. This synthesis itself is unique and special, with no parallel in the universe. Since the components do affect and influence one another and are transformed by mutual effect to acquire a new personality, this synthesis is a natural and real synthesis. However, in this case, the 'whole' or the 'compound' does not exist as a single physical entity. It is different from other compounds in the sense that in other natural compounds the synthesis is physical and the components influence and affect one another to the extent of acquiring a totally new identity, and the compound becomes a single indivisible entity, a real unit. The multiplicity of constituents is dissolved and transformed into the unity of the compound.

But in the synthesis of society and individual, though an actual synthesis takes place—because, the constituents, the individuals, as a result of their interaction, attain a new form and identity—the plurality of individuals is not converted into a unity. This synthesis does not produce anything like a 'unified man', a physical entity in which all individuals have physically merged. Society conceived as a single physical entity is only a hypostatized abstraction.

Fourth View:

Society is a real compound of a higher order than a natural

compound. In the case of natural compounds, the constituents have their own individuality and identity before the synthesis occurs. During the process of their action and reaction, conditions for emergence of a new substance are produced. However, the human individual did not possess any kind of individuality at the stage of pre-social existence. At that stage, he is like an empty container capable only of embracing the social spirit. Without social existence, human beings are absolutely like animals, with the only difference that they possess human aptitudes. The humanity of a human being—i.e. his feeling of being a human being, his consciousness of his human 'egohood', thought, human likes and dislikes, and other emotions and feelings associated with man—originates under the influence of the social spirit. It is the social spirit that fills this empty pot and confers personality upon a person. The social spirit has always been co-existing with man and shall co-exist with him forever through its manifestations such as morality, religion, education, philosophy, and art. The cultural and spiritual causes and effects, actions and reactions among the individuals take a specific shape due to the influence of the social spirit. Hence, they are not prior to it. In fact sociology is prior to human psychology. This view is contrary to the former view, which accepts the possibility of human psychology even before the stage of social existence, and regards sociology as belonging to a later development. According to this view, if man had not acquired social existence and sociology, he would not have reached the stage of acquiring human psyche and human psychology.

The first theory is a theory maintaining the priority of individual; because, according to it, neither society has a real existence, nor law, custom nor social destiny have an independent reality. Only individuals have an objective existence and are knowable objects in an epistemological sense. The life and destiny of every individual is independent of that of other individuals.

The second theory is also a theory of the priority of individual. It does not recognize the society as an independent 'whole', and also denies an objective synthesis of individuals as a necessary condition of social existence. But it considers the relationship among individuals as somewhat objective, although confined to physical association. According to this theory, whereas society does not have an existence independent of individuals, the individual alone has a real and objective existence. But according to this view, individuals, being the constituents of a society, share a common destiny—just as the components of a machine or an automobile are related and linked together in the form of a mechanical association of cause and effect, their movements being mechanically interlinked. Moreover, society—that is the group of inter-related and interconnected individuals—from the point of view of its

specific system of mechanical cause-and-effect relationships, has an identity independent of its individual parts.

The third theory, however, emphasizes the reality of individual as well as that of society. This theory recognizes the independent existence of individuals; because, according to it, the existence of components of society (individuals) is not merged into the existence of society. It, also, does not accept any unified existence for society like that of chemical compounds. At the same time, it recognizes the objective reality of society, because it considers the synthesis of individuals similar to a chemical synthesis with regard to their spiritual and intellectual makeup. As a result of this synthesis, individuals acquire a new identity, which is the dominant character of society—although society is not a physically unified entity. On the basis of this theory, due to the process of interaction between the parts, an entirely new entity has emerged: a new spirit, a new consciousness, and a new will, which is over and above the intelligence, consciousness and will of the individuals, and which dominates the intelligence and consciousness of all its individual members.

The fourth theory believes in the essentiality and absoluteness of social reality. According to this theory, whatever exists is the collective spirit, the collective consciousness, the collective sensibility, the collective will, and the collective 'self'. Individual consciousness is nothing but a manifestation of the collective consciousness.

The Quranic View:

The verses of the Holy Quran confirm the third view. As I have stated earlier, the Quran does not discuss human problems in our philosophical and scientific terminology. Its language and approach is different. Nevertheless, the Quran views the problems concerning society in such a way that it supports the third view. The Quran puts forward the idea of a common history, a common destiny, a common record of deeds, a common consciousness, understanding, sensibility and a common conduct for the *ummahs* (societies)². It is obvious that if the entity referred to as '*ummah*' did not have an objective existence, it would be meaningless to talk of fate, understanding, conscience, obedience, and disobedience with reference to it. It may be inferred that the Quran believes in a certain kind of life which is the collective and social existence. Collective life is not just a metaphor or an allegory, it is a reality; likewise collective death is also a reality.

In verse 34 of *Sūrat al-'A'rāf*, the Quran asserts:

وَلَكِنْ أَقْبَهُ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْجِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِرُونَ ۝

And every ummah (society) hath its term, and when its term cometh, they cannot put it off an hour nor yet advance [it]. (7:34)

This verse refers to life and existence that is given a limited period of time, the duration of which cannot be changed. The end can neither be advanced nor delayed; and this life is associated with the nation (*ummah*), not with the individuals; or else it is evident that individuals of a nation are deprived of their existence individually and separately and not collectively and simultaneously.

In *Sūrat al-Jāthiyah*, the verse 28 states:

.... كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَىٰ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِهَا....

Every ummah (society) shall be summoned to its record. (45:28)

Thereupon we come to know that not only individuals have a particular record of deeds of their own, but societies are also judged by their own records of deeds, because they, too, are like living beings who are conscious, responsible, and accountable for their acts, as they have freedom of will and act accordingly.

In *Sūrat al-'An'ām*, verse 108 states:

.... زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ....

...unto every nation have We made their deeds seem fair....(6:108)

This verse affirms that every nation evolves its own particular consciousness, its own particular standards and its own particular way of thinking. The consciousness, understanding, and perception of every nation has a specific and distinguishable character.

Every nation judges things according to its own standards (at least in the matters involving practical values and notions) Every nation has its own special way of perception and comprehension. There are many acts which are 'good' in the eyes of one nation and 'evil' in the eyes of another. It is the social atmosphere that moulds the taste and perception of the individuals of a nation according to its value-system.

In *Sūrat al-Mu'min*, verse 5 says:

.... وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ لِيَأْخُذُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَجَاءَ دَلِيلًا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُذِجُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ فَأَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ •

...And every nation purposed to seize their messenger and argued [falsely, [thinking] thereby to refute the Truth. Then I seized, and how [awful] was My punishment. (40:5)

This verse is about an unrighteous resolution and decision of a

nation. It refers to a collective decision of immoral opposition to truth, and asserts that collective disobedience deserves collective retribution and punishment.

In the Quran, there are frequent instances how the actions of an individual are attributed to the whole group, or sins of a generation are associated with later generations.³ In such cases, the people had the same (collective) thinking and the same (collective) will, or, in other words, they had the same social spirit. For example, in the story of the Thamūd, the act of hamstringing Šālih's camel, which was the deed of an individual alone, is attributed to the whole nation: فَعْتَرَوْهَا (they hamstrung the she-camel). The whole nation was considered to be responsible for the crime. Consequently all of them were considered to deserve the punishment for committing that crime: فَدَمَّرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رَبِّهِمْ (so Allah doomed them for that sin).

‘Ali (A), in one of the sermons of the *Nahj al-balāghah*, elucidates this subject in the following manner:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا يَجْمَعُ النَّاسَ الرِّضَا وَالتَّخَطُّ.

O people, actually that which brings together a community [and imparts unity and a common fate to it], is the common feeling of approval and disapproval.

Whenever any proper or improper action having collective approval has been performed, even though by a single individual, the whole society is held responsible for it.

إِنَّمَا عَمَّرَ نَاقَةَ ثَمُودَ رَجُلٌ وَاجِدٌ فَعَمَّتْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِالْعَذَابِ لَمَّا عَمَّوْهُ بِالرِّضَا فَقَاتَ فَعْتَرَوْهَا فَأَضْبَحُوا
نَادِمِينَ.

Indeed only one man had hamstrung the she-camel of Thamūd, but God included them all in His punishment, because they all condoned his act. So, God has said (in the Quran): "They hamstrung her and woke up repentant."

God sent down His punishment collectively on the people of Thamūd, because the whole nation maintained the same position and approved the act of one individual, and when his decision was enacted, it was actually the decision of the whole nation. God, in His Book, has attributed the act of hamstringing of the camel to the whole nation, although the act was performed by one person. It says: "That nation hamstrung the camel," and does not say that one person from among them committed the sin.

It is essential to remind here that mere approval of a sin, as long as it remains a verbal approval alone and practical involvement has not

occurred, is not to be considered as a sin. For example, a person commits a sin and another comes to know about it before or after its committal and approves it, even though the approval leads to the stage of resolution but is not translated into action, it is not a sin; as the resolution of an individual to commit a sin, which is not translated into action may not be considered a sin.

An approval is considered as participation in sin when it plays an active role in its planning and execution. The collective sins belong to this category. The social atmosphere and the social spirit favour the occurrence of the sin and support it. If one of the members of a society whose approval is a part of the collective will and whose decision is a part of the collective decision commits the sin, it is here that the sin of an individual becomes the collective sin. The above quoted passage of the *Nahj al-balāghah* which refers to the contents of the Quranic verse, explains the same fact. It is not merely the approval or disapproval which is regarded as participation in the intention or committal of a sin.

The Quran occasionally associates the acts of an earlier generation with the latter generations. For example, the action of an earlier nation, namely the people of Israel, has been associated with the Israelites of the Prophet's age, and the Quran says that these people deserve ignominy and wretchedness because they slew prophets unjustly. It is not so because in the view of the Quran they were the offsprings of the same race, but because they represented the same evil social spirit. It has been said that "human society has more dead than living."⁴ It means that those who are dead participate in the formation of every age more than the living. Therefore, it is also said that "the dead rule the living more than before."⁵

In the Quranic exegesis, *al-Mizān*, it is argued that if a society has a single soul and the same social thinking, it is as if a single individual. In this case, members of society are like the bodily organs and faculties of one organism, intrinsically and physically united, and are amalgamated in the form of a single human personality in thought and action. Their pleasures and pains are like the pleasures and pains of one person and their bliss and adversities are like the bliss and adversities of one person. This discussion is further continued on the following lines:

In its judgement on nations and societies having religious or national prejudices or having a unique social thinking, the Quran regards the latter generations punishable for the actions of the earlier generations. A present generation is regarded accountable and punishable for the actions of those who have passed away. In the cases in which people had the same social thinking and the same social spirit, the Divine Judgement could not be otherwise.⁶

Society and Sociological Laws

IF society has real existence, it should naturally possess laws peculiar to it. If we accept the first theory about the nature of society (which we have already discussed) and reject the existence of society as a real entity, naturally we have to admit that society lacks laws which may govern it. And if we accept the second theory and believe in artificial and mechanical composition of society, then we would have to admit that society is governed by laws but that its laws are confined to a series of mechanical and causal relationships between its various parts, without the distinguishing features and particular characteristics of life and living organisms. And if we accept the third point of view, we shall have to accept, firstly, that society itself has a comparatively more permanent existence independent of the existence of individuals—although this collective life has no separate existence, and is distributed and dispersed among its individual members, and incarnates itself in their existence. It has discoverable laws and traditions more permanent and stable than those of the individuals, who are its components. Secondly, we shall have to accept also that the components of society, which are human individuals, contrary to the mechanistic point of view, lose their independent identity—although in a relative fashion—to produce an organically composite structure. But at the same time the relative independence of the individual is preserved; because individual life, individual nature, and individual achievements are not dissolved totally in the collective existence. According to this point of view, man actually lives with two separate existences, two souls, and two “selves.” On the one hand, there are the life, soul, and self of the human being, which are the products of the processes of his essential nature; on the other, there are the collective life, soul, and self which are the products of social life, and pervade the individual self. On this basis, biological laws, psychological laws, and sociological laws, together, govern human beings. But according to the fourth theory, only a single type of laws govern man, and these are the social laws alone.

Among the Muslim scholars 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Khaldūn of Tunisia was the first and the foremost Islamic thinker to discuss clearly

and explicitly the laws governing the society in independence of the laws governing the individual. Consequently he asserted that the society itself had a special character, individuality, and reality. In his famous introduction to history, he has discussed this theory in detail. Among the modern scholars and thinkers Montesquieu (the French philosopher of the eighteenth century A.D.) is the first to discuss the laws which control and govern human groups and societies. Raymond Aron says about Montesquieu:

His purpose was to make history intelligible. He sought to understand historical truth. But historical truth appeared to him in the form of an almost limitless diversity of morals, customs, ideas, laws, and institutions. His inquiry's point of departure was precisely this seemingly incoherent diversity. The goal of the inquiry should have been the replacement of this incoherent diversity by a conceptual order. One might say that Montesquieu, exactly like Max Weber, wanted to proceed from the meaningless fact to an intelligible order. This attitude is precisely the one peculiar to the sociologist.⁷

It means that a sociologist has to reach beyond the apparently diverse social forms and phenomena, which seem to be alien to one another, to reveal the unity in diversity in order to prove that all the diverse manifestations refer to the one and the same reality.

In the same way, all the similar social events and phenomena have their origin in a similar sequence of analogous causes. Here is a passage from the observations on the causes of the rise and fall of the Romans:

It is not fortune that rules the world. We can ask the Romans, who had a constant series of success when they followed a certain plan, and an uninterrupted sequence of disasters when they followed another. There are general causes, whether moral or physical...which operate in every monarchy, to bring about its rise, its duration and its fall. All accidents are subject to these causes, and if the outcome of a single battle, i.e. a particular cause, was the ruin of a state, there was a general cause which decreed that that state was destined to perish through a single battle. In short, the main impulse carries all the particular accidents along with it.⁸

The Holy Quran explains that nations and societies *qua* nations and societies (not just individuals living in societies) have common laws and principles that govern their rise and fall in accordance with certain historical process. The concept of a common fate and collective destiny implies the existence of certain definite laws governing the society. About the tribe of Banī Israel, the Quran says:

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ عِلْمًا كَبِيرًا ۗ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا أَنَا أَوْلَىٰ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ فَخَاشُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا

تَفْعُولًا • ثُمَّ زِدْنَا لَكُمْ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَا لَكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَيْنَ وَتَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ آكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا • إِنْ
 أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْنَا لِاتَّقِيكُمْ وَأَنْ أَسَأْتُمْ قَلْبًا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعَدُ الْأَجْرَةُ لَكُمْ أَوْ جُوعًا وَيَذْخُلُوا
 الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَيُؤْتِرُوا مَا عَلَنُوا نَجِيرًا • عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ غَدًا غَدًا
 وَتَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا •

And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the scriptures: You verily will work corruption in the earth twice, and you will become great tyrants. So when the time for the first of the two came We roused against you slaves of Ours of great might who ravaged [your] country, and it was a threat performed. [After you had regretted your sins and became pious again] Then we gave once again your turn against them, and We aided you with wealth and children and made you more in soldiery. [saying] 'If ye do good, ye do good for your own souls, and if ye do evil, it is for them. (i.e. Our laws and customs are fixed and constant, it is by this covenant that people are bestowed with power, might, honour and constancy or subjected to humiliation and abjectness). So when the time for the second [of the judgements] came, because of your acts of tyranny and despotism, We aroused against you others [of Our slaves] to ravage you, and to enter the temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting. It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you [if ye mend your ways], but if you repeat [the crime] We shall repeat [the punishment], and We have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers. (17:4-8)

The last sentence, i.e. ... وَأَنْ غَدَّكُمْ غَدًا... ("But if you repeat [the crime] We shall repeat [the punishment]") shows that the Quran is addressing all the people of the tribe and not an individual.

It also implies that all the societies are governed by a universal law.

DETERMINISM OR FREEDOM:

One of the fundamental problems discussed by philosophers, particularly in the last century, is the problem of determinism and freedom of individual as against society, or, in other words, determinism and freedom of the individual spirit vis-a-vis the social spirit. If we accept the first theory regarding the nature of society, and consider social structure to be merely a hypostatized notion, and believe in the absolute independence of the individual, then there will be no place for the idea of social determinism. Because, there will be no power or force except that of the individuals, and no social force that may rule over the individual. Hence, in this theory, there is no room for the idea of social determinism. If there is any compulsion or determinism it is of the individual and operates through the individuals. The society has no role in this matter. Hence, there can be no social determinism as emphasized by the advocates of social determinism. In the same way, if we accept the fourth theory, and consider the individual and indivi-

dual's personality as a raw material or an empty pot, then the entire human personality of the individual, his intellect, and his free will would be reduced to nothing but an expression of the collective intelligence and the collective will, which manifest themselves, as an illusion, in the form of an individual to realize their own social ends. Accordingly, if we accept the idea of the absolute essentiality and primariness of the society, there will be no place left for the idea of the freedom and choice of the individual.

Emile Durkheim, the famous French sociologist, emphasizes the importance of society to the extent of saying that social matters (in fact all the human matters, as against the biological and animal urges and needs, like eating and sleeping) are the products of society, not the products of individual thought and will, and have three characteristics: they are external, compulsive, and general. They are considered to be external, because they are alien to individual existence and are imposed from without upon the individual by society. They existed before the individual came into existence and the individual accepted them under the influence of society. Acceptance of the moral, social, and religious traditions, customs, and values by the individual comes under this category. They are compulsive, because they impose themselves upon the individual and mould the individual's conscience, feelings, thoughts, and preferences according to their own standards. Because of being compulsive, they are necessarily general and universal. However, if we accept the third theory and consider both the individual and the society as fundamental entities—although admitting the power of the society as dominating that of the individual—it does not necessitate any compulsion or determinism for the individual either in human or social affairs. Durkheimian determinism arises due to the failure to recognize the essential nature of the human being. Man's nature gives him a kind of freedom and liberty that empower him to revolt against social compulsions. On this basis, we may say that there is an intermediary relationship between the individual and the society that lies between the extremes of absolute freedom and absolute compulsion (*'amr bayn al-ʿamrayn*).

Although the Holy Quran attributes character, personality, reality, power, life, death, consciousness, obedience, and disobedience to society, it also explicitly recognizes the possibility of violation of social law by an individual. The Quran in this matter relies on what is termed as *فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ* i.e. the Divine nature. In *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, the verse 97 refers to a group of people who called themselves "*mustad'afūn*" (the oppressed and the weak) in the society of Mecca, and took shelter in their 'weakness and being oppressed' as an excuse for shirking their natural responsibilities. In fact, they considered themselves helpless as against the social compulsion and pressures. The Quran says that their

excuse cannot be condoned on any ground, because at least they were free to migrate from the Meccan society to another one better suited for the fulfilment of their aspirations. Elsewhere it states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا تَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ...

O believers! You have charge of your own souls. He who goes astray cannot injure you if you are rightly guided... (5:105)

The famous verse (7:172) regarding human nature states that man is bound by the Divine covenant to believe in monotheism (*tawhīd*), and it has been made inherent in human nature. The Quran says further that it is ordained in this way so that people should not say on the Day of Judgement that "our fathers were idolaters and we did not have any other alternative except helplessly adhering to the faith of our forefathers." (7:173)⁹ With such a nature gifted to man by God, there is no compulsion to accept any faith contrary to the Divine will and to human nature itself.

The teachings of the Quran are entirely based upon the notion of human responsibility—man is responsible for himself and for society. The dictum: *al-amr bil ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (commanding others to do what is commanded by God and forbidding them from that which is prohibited by Him), is a command to the individual to revolt against social corruption and destructiveness. This is the Quranic code of conduct prescribed for the individual to save society from chaos, disorder, and destruction. Tales and stories embodied in the text of the Quran deal mostly with the theme of the individual's revolt against a corrupt social order. The stories of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Prophet Muhammad, the Companions of the Cave (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*), the believer of the tribe of the Pharaoh, etc. deal with the same theme.

The notion of social determinism is rooted in the misconception that society in its real composition needs complete merger of its constituent parts into one another and dissolution of their plurality into the unity of the 'whole'. This process is considered to be responsible for the emergence of a new reality. Either one has to accept that the personality, freedom, and independence of the individual are real, and so negate the reality of society and social structure (as in the case of the first and the second theories regarding the nature of society and the individual), or the reality of society is to be affirmed at the cost of the individual and his freedom and independence (as in the case of Durkheim's theory). A reconciliation between these two opposite viewpoints is impossible. As all the conjectures and arguments of sociology support the supremacy of society, the opposite view is necessarily

rejected.

In fact, from a philosophical point of view, all forms of syntheses cannot be regarded similar. On the lower levels of nature, i.e. minerals and inorganic substances, which in philosophical terms are governed by a 'simple force,' and as interpreted by the philosophers, act according to one and the same law, are synthesized in a way that they completely merge into one another and lose their individuality in the whole. For example, in the composition of water, two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen are merged together, and both lose their individual properties. But at the higher level of synthesis, the parts usually retain a relative independence with respect to the whole. A kind of plurality in unity and unity in plurality manifests itself at higher levels of existence. As we see in man, despite his unity; a unique plurality is manifested. Not only his lower faculties and powers preserve their plurality to some extent, but, at the same time, there is also a kind of continuous inherent opposition and conflict between his internal powers. Society is the strangest natural phenomenon in which all its constituent parts retain their individual independence to a maximum possible degree.

Hence, from this point of view, we have to accept that human beings, who are the constituent parts of a society in intellectual and volitional activity, retain their individual freedom, and, therefore, their individual existence precedes their social existence. In addition to this fact, in the synthesis at the higher levels of nature, the generic character of the parts is preserved. The individual human being or the individual spirit is not determined by the social spirit; it rather preserves its right to think and act freely.

Social Divisions and Polarization

ALTHOUGH society has a kind of unity, it is divided from within into different groups, strata and classes, which are occasionally opposite to one another. If not all, some of societies are divided into different and occasionally conflicting poles despite their apparent unity. Thus, in the words of Muslim philosophers, a specific type of 'unity in plurality and plurality in unity' governs societies. In earlier chapters, while discussing the nature of the unity of society, we have elaborated what type of unity it is. Now we shall discuss the nature of its inherent plurality.

There are two well-known theories with regard to this problem. The first is the philosophy of historical materialism and dialectical contradictions. This theory, which would be discussed in detail later, is based upon the origin of private property. The societies in which the conception of private property does not exist are basically unipolar, such as the primitive communist societies or those communist societies which are likely to be formed in the future. A society in which the right to private property exists is, of necessity, bipolar. Hence, society is either unipolar or bipolar. There is no third alternative possible. In bipolar societies, human beings are divided into two groups, viz. the exploiters and the exploited. Except these two opposite camps, i.e. the group of the rulers and the group of the ruled, any third group does not exist. All the social modes, such as philosophy, morality, religion, and art, may also be divided according to the class character of the two groups. There are, therefore, two types of philosophy, morality, religion, etc., each of which bears the specific economic class character of each group. Hypothetically, if there were only one philosophy, one religion, and one morality prevalent in a society, it too represents the character of any one of these two classes and is imposed on the other. But it is impossible to imagine the existence of a philosophy, art, religion or morality without having a character independent of the economic structure of society.

According to the other theory, the unipolar or multipolar characteristic of society has nothing to do with the principle of private

ownership. The social, ideological, cultural, and racial factors, too, are responsible for giving rise to multipolar societies. The cultural and ideological factors, in particular, play the basic role; they are not only capable of producing bipolar or multipolar societies—with occasionally contradictory poles—but can also create a unipolar society without necessarily abolishing the institution of private ownership.

Now we have to discuss the view of the Quran regarding the plurality of society. Does the Quran affirm or negate social plurality? And if it affirms, what is its point of view about the polarization of society? Does the Quran affirm the bipolarization of society on the basis of ownership and exploitation, or does it forward some other view? The best or at least a good method for determining the Quranic point of view seems to be that we should first of all extract the social terminology used in the Quran. In the light of the nature and meaning of the Quranic idiom we can infer the position of the Quran concerning this matter.

The social terminology used in the Quran is of two types: some of the words are related with a particular social phenomenon such as, *millah* (community), *shari'ah* (Divine Law), *shar'ah* (path), *minhāj* (method), *sunnah* (tradition), and the like. These terms are not relevant to the present discussion. But a number of terms which refer to all or some human groups may be taken into account for discovering the Quranic viewpoint.

These words can reveal the point of view of the Quran. Such terms as: *qawm* (folk), *ummah* (community), *nās* (mankind), *shu'ub* (peoples), *qabā'il* (tribes), *rasūl* (messenger, apostle), *nabī* (prophet), *imām* (leader), *walī* (guardian), *mu'min* (believer), *kāfir* (unbeliever), *munāfiq* (dissenter or hypocrite), *mushrik* (polytheist), *mudhabdhab* (hesitant), *muhājir* (emigrant), *mujāhid* (warrior), *ṣādiq* (truthful), *shahīd* (witness), *muttaqī* (pious), *ṣāliḥ* (righteous), *muṣliḥ* (reformer), *mufsid* (corrupter), *āmīr bil ma'rūf* (one who orders to obey God's command), *nāhi 'an al-munkar* (one who forbids indecent or illegitimate deeds), *nāhi 'an al-munkar* (one who forbids indecent or illegitimate deeds), *'ālim* (learned), *nāsiḥ* (admonisher), *ẓālim* (cruel, oppressive, unjust), *khalīfah* (deputy), *rabbānī* (Divine), *rabbī* (rabbi), *kāhin* (priest), *ruḥbān* (monks), *aḥbār* (Jewish scribes), *jabbār* (tyrant), *'ālī* (sublime), *musta'li* (superior), *mustakbir* (tyrant, proud), *musta'af* (tyrannized, oppressed), *musrif* (lavish, prodigal), *mutraf* (affluent), *tāghūt* (idols), *mala'* (chieftains), *mulūk* (kings), *ghani* (rich), *faqīr* (poor, needy), *mamlūk* (the ruled), *mālik* (owner, master), *ḥurr* (free, liberated), *'abd* (slave, servant), *rabb* (master, lord), etc. Furthermore, there are other words which are apparently similar to these words, such as: *muṣallī* (one who prays), *mukhlis* (sincere, devoted), *ṣādiq* (loyal, true), *munfiq* (charitable), *mustaqfir* (one who asks for God's forgiveness), *tā'ib*

(penitent), *ʿābid* (adorer), *ḥamid* (one who praises), etc.

But these words have been used only for the purpose of describing kinds of behaviour and not to refer to certain social groups, poles, or classes.

It is essential to study the connotation and meaning of the verses in which the terms referred to earlier are used, in particular the words related to social orientations. It is also to be seen whether the above mentioned terms can be divided into two distinct groups. And supposing that these terms refer to two distinct groups, it should be determined who are their referents; for example, can all of them be classified in two groups of believers and unbelievers, according to a classification based on religious belief, or into two groups of the rich and the poor according to their economic position? In other words, it is to be analysed whether these divisions are ultimately based on any one primary classification, and whether or not all the other sub-divisions are essentially secondary and relative. If there is only one principle of division, it has to be determined.

Some people claim that the Quranic view suggests a bipolar society. They say: according to the Quran, society is divided into two classes: one is the ruling, dominating, and exploiting class, and the other consists of the ruled, exploited, and subjugated people. The ruling class consists of those whom the Quran calls '*mustakbirūn*', i.e. the arrogant oppressors and exploiters. The subjugated class is of those who are called by the Quran '*mustad'afūn*' (the weakened). All other divisions, such as *mu'min* (believer) and *kāfir* (unbeliever), *muwaḥḥid* (monotheist) and *mushrik* (polytheist), *sāliḥ* (righteous) and *fāsid* (corrupt) are secondary in nature. It means that it is tyranny and exploitation that leads to infidelity, idolatry, hypocrisy and other such evils, whereas, on the other hand, subjugation to oppression and exploitation leads towards *īmān* (faith), *hijrah* (migration), *jihād* (struggle), *ṣalāḥ* (righteousness), *iṣlāḥ* (reform) and other such qualities. In other words, all such things which are regarded by the Quran as deviation and aberration in religion, morality, and deeds are rooted in the practice of exploitation and the economic privileges of a class. Similarly, the source and root of the attitudes and acts morally, religiously, and practically approved and emphasized by the Quran, lie in the condition of being exploited. Human consciousness is naturally determined by the material conditions of life. Without changing the material life of a people, it is not possible to bring about any change in their spiritual, moral and psychic life. According to this viewpoint, the Quran perceives social conflicts as basically class-conflicts. It means that the Quran gives essential priority to social and economic struggle over moral struggle. According to this interpretation, in the Quran, infidels, hypocrites, idolaters, the morally corrupt and the tyrants arise from among the

groups whom the Quran names as *mutraf* (the affluent), *musrif* (extravagant and wasteful), *mala'* (ruling clique), *mulûk* (kings), *mustakbir* (arrogant) and so on. It is not possible for these groups to arise from among the opposite class.

In the same way, they say, the prophets (*anbiyâ'*), messengers (*mursalûn*), leaders (*a'immah*), upholders of truth (*şiddiqûn*), martyrs (*shuhadâ'*), warriors (*mujâhidûn*), emigrants (*muhâjirûn*) and believers (*mu'minûn*) emerge from among the class of the oppressed and the weak. It is not possible that they may arise from the opposite class. So it is mainly *istikbâr* (tyranny and arrogance) or *isti'dâf* (weakness, or condition of being oppressed) that mould and direct the social consciousness of the people. All the other social modes are products and manifestations of the struggle between the exploiters and the exploited, and the oppressors and the oppressed.

According to this viewpoint, the Quran not only considers the two above-mentioned groups of people as manifestation and expression of the division of society into two classes of the *mustakbirûn* and the *musta'd'afûn*, but it also divides human attributes and dispositions into two sets. Truthfulness, forgiveness, sincerity, service, insight, vision, compassion, mercy, pity, generosity, humility, sympathy, nobility, sacrifice, God-fearing, etc. constitute one set of positive values; on the other hand, falsehood, treachery, debauchery, hypocrisy, sensuality, cruelty, callousness, stupidity, avarice, pride etc. constitute another set of values, which are negative. The first set of attributes are ascribed to the oppressed class and the second set is considered to characterize the oppressors.

Hence, they say, oppression and subjugation not only give rise to opposite groups, but they are also the fountainheads of conflicting moral qualities and habits. The position of a class either as oppressor or oppressed is the basis and foundation not only of all human attitudes, loyalties, and preferences, but also of all cultural and social phenomena and manifestations. The morality, philosophy, art, literature, and religion originating in the class of oppressors always manifest and represent its character and social attitude. All of them support and justify the status quo, and cause stagnation and decadence by arresting social progress. On the other hand, the philosophy, art, literature, and religion originating from the class of the oppressed are dynamic and revolutionary, and generate new awareness. The class of the oppressors, i.e. the *mustakbirûn*, because of its hegemony over social privileges, is obscurantist, traditionalist, and seeks shelter under the shadow of conservatism; whereas the class of the oppressed is endowed with vision, and is antitraditionalist, progressive, zealous, active, and is always in the vanguard of revolution.

In brief, according to the advocates of this theory, the Quran

affirms the view that it is actually the economic structure of a society which makes a man, determines his group-identity and his attitudes, and lays down the foundation of his thinking, morality, religion, and ideology. They quote a number of verses from the Quran to show that what they teach is, on the whole, based upon the Quran.

According to this view, commitment to a particular class is the measure and test of all things. All the beliefs are to be evaluated by this standard. The claims and assertions of a believer, a reformer, and even a prophet or a spiritual leader, can be confirmed or rejected only through this test.

This theory is in fact a materialistic interpretation of both man and society. No doubt the Quran gives a special importance to the social allegiances of individuals, but does it mean that the Quran interprets all distinctions and classifications on the basis of social classes? In my view such an interpretation of society, man, and the world is not consistent with the Islamic world-view. It is a conclusion drawn from a superficial study of the problems discussed in the Quran. However, since we shall discuss this matter fully in a later chapter dealing with history under the title "Is History Materialistic in Nature?" I shall abstain from further elaboration at this point.

The Nature of Society: Homogeneity or Heterogeneity?

AN answer to this problem, too, as indicated earlier, is essential for every school of thought; because only a discussion of this problem can throw light on an important issue: whether all human societies can follow one and the same ideology, or if there must be a multiplicity of ideologies based upon various types of societies; i.e. should each nation, community, civilization, and culture necessarily possess a particular ideology? Ideology means the sum total of the general schemes and means which can lead a society towards the attainment of perfection and its summum bonum (the highest good). We also know that every species calls for specific qualities, conditions, and capacities; that which represents the 'highest good' in the case of a horse is not identical with that of a sheep or a man.

Hence, if all societies—assuming their objective existence—should share the same essence and nature, they could also, possibly, share a single ideology. Their mutual differences being like those among members of the same species, any living ideology can be applied to them, allowing within its framework adjustments for individual difference according to the varying aptitudes of its members. But if societies have different natures and essences, they naturally call for different programmes, plans, ideals, and varying summum bonums particular to each. In this case, one single ideology cannot be applied to all of them.

A similar problem applies to the changes and mutations of societies over long periods of time. Do societies change their nature and essence in the course of changes and mutations, in the same way as species are transformed in the process of evolution? Does such a process of transformation occur on the level of societies? Or if the social changes are like changes in the circumstance of an individual of a certain species, whose nature and generic characteristics are preserved in the midst of all changes and transitions?

The first issue is related to sociology, whereas the second one is connected with history. We shall discuss the first problem at present and postpone the discussion of the second until we take into account the nature of history.

Can sociological studies reveal whether or not there are some common characteristics among various societies? Are the differences among them only secondary and superficial, resulting from factors extraneous to the essence and nature of society, which itself remains unchanged? Or is it true that human societies are basically different in essence and nature, and even if supposedly similar from the point of view of external conditions, they function in intrinsically different ways? These alternative views are suggested by philosophy in its effort to disentangle obscurities surrounding the formal unity or plurality of things.

There is a shorter route also, and that is man himself. It is an established fact about man that *homo sapiens* is the only species that has not shown any biological mutation from the very beginning of its emergence. Some thinkers say that as the process of evolution of living organisms culminated in the emergence of human being, nature altered its course and diverted the movement of evolution from the biological to the social course, and from the process of physiological evolution to that of spiritual and intellectual development.

In an earlier chapter, while discussing the question "Is man gregarious?" we came to the conclusion that man—who is a single species—is ordained by nature itself to be gregarious and sociable. That is man's intrinsic and inherent gregariousness that manifests itself in the form of society and the collective spirit, is derived from the essential nature of the human species. Man has social inclinations because through them he can attain the kind of perfection of which he is capable. His gregarious propensity secures for him the ground for the collective spirit, which is itself a means to attain the end: self-perfection. Accordingly, it is human nature itself that determines the course taken by the collective spirit. In other words, the collective spirit serves human nature. As long as man exists, human nature would carry on its activity, supporting and encouraging his social spirit. The collective spirit is derived, therefore, from the individual spirit, which in turn is effused from human nature. Man is a single species, so human societies, also, have the same nature, substance, and essence.

However, as in case of individual, who can deviate from the course of nature and is occasionally even dehumanized, a society may also be diverted from its natural course and be dehumanized. The variety in societies is quite similar to diversity in individual morals, which are, in any case, not outside the sphere of human nature. Thus, societies, civilizations, cultures, and, finally, social spirits that govern societies, in spite of the differences in characters and forms, have ultimately a human character and not a non-human nature.

If we agree with the fourth theory about the synthesis of society, and consider individual as only passive, receptive matter, an empty

container without any content, it would be tantamount to a negation of the human nature. We may propound a hypothesis concerning diversity of nature and essence among societies, but this point of view in the form of Durkheimian theory is not at all acceptable; because it leaves the very fundamental question unanswered. If the origin of the collective or social spirit does not lie inside individuals, and if it does not spring from the natural and biological aspect of human beings, then where does it come from? Does the social spirit come from absolute nothingness? Is it sufficient for the explanation of the social spirit to say that society has existed as long as man has existed? In addition to this, Durkheim believes that social phenomena such as religion, morality, crafts, art etc. are the products of its social spirit, which have been, are and would remain the expressions of the social spirit, and thus have 'temporal durability' and 'spatial extensibility.' This itself is a proof that Durkheim implicitly believes that all societies have a singular essence and nature, which manifests itself in the social spirit.

The teachings of Islam emphasize absolute unity of religion, and consider difference in religious codes and traditions as secondary, and not essential and primary. We also know that religion is nothing except a programme for perfection of the individual and society. It also reveals that foundation of these teachings have been laid upon an assumption of the unity of societies. If there were various 'species' of societies, then the ends of perfection and their respective means would have been also diverse, necessitating a diversity and plurality of religions.

The Quran repeatedly stresses that there is not more than one single faith throughout the world. There has been one religion in all regions, in all societies and at all times. According to the Quran, religions—in the plural form—have had no existence; only "Religion" (in its singular form) has existed. All prophets preached and taught the same faith, the same path, and the same purpose:

سَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ....

He has ordained for you the religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee, and that We charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus, [saying], 'Establish the religion and be not divided therein...' (42:13)

The verses of the Quran which prove that the faith remains the same at all times, in all regions, and in the scriptures of all true prophets of God, are numerous. The difference lies only in certain rules and ordinances, according to the relative stages of development or backwardness of societies. The logic that there is essentially no more than one religion, is based on the outlook about man and society that

mankind is one and a single species and that men are not different in their human essence. In the same way, human society, as an objective entity, represents a single species, not a plurality of kinds.

Societies of the Future

IF the present societies, civilizations, and cultures are not to be considered as belonging to diverse species, it cannot be denied that they have different forms and colours. What about their future? Will these cultures, civilizations, societies, and nations continue to exist in their present form, or is humanity moving towards a certain unified culture, civilization, and society? Will they abandon their own specific individuality in the future, in order to assume one common character—a character that is closer to their real human nature?

This problem is also associated with the problem of nature and essence of society, and the type of relationship between the collective and the individual spirits. Evidently, on the basis of the theory of man's primordial nature—according to which his social existence, his social life and, as a result, the social spirit are the means chosen by human nature to attain its own ultimate perfection—it may be said that societies, cultures, and civilizations are moving towards homogeneity and unification, and ultimately would merge into one another. The future of human societies lies in a highly developed, single and universal society, in which all positive human values shall be realized. Man shall attain true perfection and shall finally realize his own authentic humanity.

According to the Quran, it is evident that the ultimate rule shall be the rule of righteousness, which would lead to complete annihilation of falsehood and evil. Eternity belongs to the pious and the God-fearing (*muttaqūn*).

In his Quranic exegesis, *Al-Mizān*¹⁰, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī holds that:

Any profound examination of the conditions of the universe shows that man, as a part of the universe, shall realize his ultimate perfection in the future. The statement of the Quran that establishment of Islam in the world is a necessary and an inevitable matter, is just another way of saying that man shall ultimately attain to complete perfection. The Quran says:

.... مَنْ يَزِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ....

Whosoever of you turns from his religion, [know that in his stead] God will assuredly bring a people He loves and who love Him [for the purpose of communicating and for establishing God's religion]. (5:54)

Here the Quran aims to describe the purpose of creation of man and his ultimate future, which, in another verse, is explained in the following words:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَسَخُلِفَتِهِمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفْنَا الَّذِينَ
مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا
يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا....

God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the earth, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them which He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after fear [by destroying their enemies]. They shall serve Me, not ascribing with me anything [as partners]..(24:55)

Similarly in another place it states:

.... أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ ۝

....My righteous servants will inherit the earth. (21:105)

In the same book, under the title "The Frontiers of the Islamic World are Faith, not Conventional or Geographical Borders", it is said:

Islam has annulled the role of tribal and national distinctions, and denied them any effective role in the evolution of [the structure] of human society. There are two main factors responsible for these divisions. One is the primitive tribal life, which is based on genealogical associations, and the other is geographical and regional diversity. These two main factors are responsible for division of humanity into various nations and tribes, giving rise to racial, linguistic, and colour differences. Also, these two factors are responsible for a nation's loyalty to a particular region; every nation calls its territory its homeland and is prepared to defend it in the name of "ne motherland". Though it is a natural human urge to be identified with one's group, but it is, at the same time, opposed to the demand of man's nature that mankind should live as a 'whole' or as a single unit. The laws of nature are based on bringing together scattered elements by creating harmony and establishing unity in place of diversity. By means of this, nature achieves its ends. This fact is evident from the natural course of evolution, which shows how primordial matter is transformed into different elements....and then how elements are combined together to evolve plants, and then animals, and finally culminate in the emergence of man. Although the regional and tribal diversity unifies members of a particular region or tribe and imparts them unity, it also brings one unit into confrontation against other such units. As a result, although the members of a nation have the feeling of fraternity among

themselves, they tend to regard other peoples—who are treated as 'things' and not as human beings—with hostility; to them the outsiders are mere means whose value lies only in their practical utility. This is the reason why Islam abrogated tribal and national diversity of men (which divides humanity into sections), and laid the foundation of human society on conviction and belief (in which the opportunity to discover the truth is equal for every individual), and not on race, nationality, or native soil. Even in affairs of matrimony and inheritance, Islam made common belief and conviction the criterion for human relations.¹¹

In the same book, under the title "The Religion of Truth is Ultimately Victorious", 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'i says:

Mankind, which has been endowed by nature with an urge to attain self-perfection and true felicity, strives collectively to achieve the highest stages of material and spiritual evolution, which it would, positively, achieve some day. Islam, the religion of *tauhid* (monotheism), is in fact a programme of attainment of such an end or summum bonum (*sa'adah*). The deviations that hinder man from traversing his long path, should not lead us to a negation of his nature and of his humanity. It is the sole natural law that actually governs human nature. The deviations and faults should be considered as a kind of error in application of the natural law. The objective of attaining perfection for which man aspires, is directed by his restless, perfection-loving nature itself—an end which he is likely to attain sooner or later one day. Some verses in *Sūrat al-Rūm* (30-41), which start with the verse:

فَأْتِمُّوْهُنَّ وَهَكَذَا لِلَّذِيْنَ حَنِيفًا فِطَّرَتِ اللّٰهُ اَلْبِيْنَ فَطَّرَ النَّاسَ عَلَیْهَا....

and end with *تَلْمِيْحًا تَرْجِعُوْنَ* ...lead us to the same conclusion that the demand of the law shall ultimately be fulfilled, and man, after wandering in different directions and experimenting with different ways, shall finally discover his own path and adhere to it. One should not pay any attention to the opinions of those who say that Islam, like other cultural movements, has fulfilled its function as a phase in the development of human culture and is now an out-dated part of history. Islam, as we know it and as we have already discussed it, aims at the ultimate perfection of man, which in accordance with the laws of nature, has to be achieved one day.¹²

Contrarily, some people claim that Islam has never favoured the unity and unification of human culture and human societies. Islam has always, they say, favoured diversity and variety in cultures and societies, and this diversity and plurality is not only recognized, but it is also reinforced by Islam. They say: the personality, the nature, and the 'self' of a nation are synonymous with its culture, which is the manifestation of its social spirit. And this social spirit is moulded by the specific history of that nation, which distinguishes it from other nations, who do not share it. Nature has moulded man's specific essence; history shapes his culture, and, in reality, moulds his personality, character, and his 'selfhood.' Every nation possesses a particular culture compatible with its particular nature, taste, perfume, and essence. This culture not

only affirms the personality of that nation, but also safeguards its distinct identity. As in the case of individuals, whose individuality and personality is an inseparable part of his self, the loss of which means distortion of personality and alienation from one's own self, so also imposition of any other culture except the one evolved by a nation through the course of history and which affirms its selfhood, causes self-alienation. The fact that every nation has a particular sensibility, vision, orientation, preferences, tastes, literature, music, customs, etiquette and rituals, and prefers certain ways, contrary to those accepted by other nations, is an outcome of its history, during which, due to various causes arising from its successes, failures, achievements, frustrations, climate, migrations, contacts, connections, and its eminent personalities and geniuses, develops a specific culture of its own. This particular culture moulds the national and social spirit in a particular form and in special proportions. Philosophy, science, literature, art, religion, and ethics are the sum total of various features, which through centuries of common history, have become common characteristics of a particular group, and are synthesized in a special form, which distinguishes it from other human groups and renders it a particular identity. Due to this synthesis 'the social spirit' is born, which integrates the individuals of a certain group with the whole, in the same way as different parts of the body are organically interrelated and are responsible for its life. The same 'spirit' not only gives a nation its independent, specific, and individual existence, but also gives it a 'life' that distinguishes it in the course of history from other cultural and spiritual forms of expression. It is because of this spirit that a particular culture and its social orientation, thought, customs, and behaviour are distinguished from those of other cultures. It is reflected in its approach to nature, life, historical events, feelings, preferences, ideals, beliefs, and even in its scientific, artistic, and technical products and achievements. The impact and imprint of its spirit is manifested in all the material and spiritual manifestations of a nation's life.

It is said that religion is a type of ideology. It is a faith which affirms certain feelings and approaches. But nationality means 'personality,' which brings into existence specific distinguishing characteristics that are common in the spirit of the individuals who share the same social destiny. According to this view, the relationship between nationality and religion is the relationship between personality and belief.

It is said that Islam's opposition to racial discrimination and national prejudice should not be taken to mean that Islam does not accept diversity of nations in human society. The proclamation of equality by Islam does not amount to a negation of plurality of nations. On the contrary, it implies that Islam accepts the existence of various

nations as undeniable natural realities. The following verse of the Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ....

O, mankind, indeed We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the most God-fearing among you...(49:13)

contrary to the argument of those who use it for a denial and negation, actually approves and affirms the diversity of nations. Because; they say, the above-mentioned verse, firstly, accepts the division of mankind according to sex (male and female), which is of course the natural division; then it immediately goes on to refer to national and tribal divisions. It shows that grouping of individuals in nations and tribes is also a natural, God-willed phenomenon, like their grouping as men and women. This proves that in the same way as Islam favours a specific relationship between man and woman, and does not intend to eliminate sexuality and its manifestations, so also it favours relations between various nations on an equal level and does not intend to negate nationalities, which are regarded as a natural phenomenon inherent in the process of creation. Further, the fact that the Quran considers *ta'aruf* (to know one another) as the purpose and philosophy of the existence of differences among nations, suggests that a community identifies itself and discovers itself in comparison and contrast with other nations, and it realizes its individuality and vitality vis-a-vis other nations.

Hence, they say, contrary to the unduly propagated general belief, Islam affirms nationalism in the sense of cultural heritage, and it is not opposed to cultural pluralism. What Islam negates is nationalism in the sense of racialism.

The theory (which aims at an Islamic justification of nationalism) is inconsistent for several reasons. It is primarily based upon a particular outlook of man and a specific view with regard to the essence and constituents of human culture, that is philosophy, science, art, morals, etc. Both of these views lack soundness.

It is presumed with regard to man that his essence is potentially blank. It is supposed to be devoid of any prior intellectual and emotional content or perceptual disposition to view his world, himself, and his role in it, even on the level of potentiality. It is assumed that human essence is equally neutral towards all modes of thought and emotion, purposes and goals. Man is assumed to be an empty container devoid of form and colour, totally subservient to that which fills it. He acquires

his 'egohood,' his personality, his path, and his goal from the content that is poured into the empty vessel of his essence. He assumes any form or personality and adopts any path and goal that is bestowed upon him by the content. His content—in fact the first thing that is poured into this vacuum—moulds man in any form, colour, and character; his 'real' personality and essence being actually identical with the characteristics bestowed upon him by this content. That is so because his 'ego' or 'self' is shaped and affirmed by his acquired content. Whatever is offered to him after this, which would suggest a change in his personality, colour, or shape, is only borrowed and alien stuff, because it contradicts with his first personality formed by historical accident. In other words, this theory is inspired by the fourth theory regarding the nature of individual and society. It maintains the idea of absolute primariness of society, and has been critically examined earlier.

From both philosophical and Islamic points of view, such a judgement regarding human nature cannot be justifiable. Man, according to his own special nature—although only potentially—has a definite personality, path and goal that is determined by his God-given nature. It is his very nature that determines his real self. Distortion and dehumanization of human existence are measurable only on the basis of man's essential nature, and not according to criteria based on historical factors. Every system of education and culture which is in harmony with the human nature and is helpful for its development, is man's *real* culture, though it may not be the first culture imposed upon him by historical conditions. Any culture that does not suit human nature is alien to him, and, in a way, distorts and deforms his real nature and converts his 'self' into 'non-self,' even though it may be the product of national history. For instance, the ideas of dualism and the sanctity of fire were distortions imposed on the human nature of ancient Persians, although these notions are considered products of Iranian history. But belief in the unity of God (*tawhid*) and rejection of all forms of worship of non-Gods signifies man's return to his real nature, even though this faith is not the product of Iranian soil and history.

Also, it has been wrongly presumed regarding human cultural material that it is a colourless and formless stuff to be moulded and shaped by history. It means that, according to this view, philosophy, science, religion, morality, and art, whatever form and colour they may assume, are genuine. But as to what colour, mode, type, or form these should have is relative, and dependent upon history. It is the history and the culture of every nation which necessitate its own special philosophy, its own system of education, religion, morality and art.

In other words, as man himself is considered as being without any specific essence and form, and who draws his identity subsequently from culture, in the same way, the principles and basic materials of

human culture are also devoid of any form, colour, and expression. It is history which gives them an identity, a form, and an expression, and stamps them with its particular seal. Some have gone further to the extent of claiming that even "mathematical thinking is influenced by the particular approach of a culture."¹³

This conception is based upon the theory of relativism of human culture. We, in the *Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism*¹² have dealt with absolutism and relativism in regard to the principles of thought. There, we have proved that whatever is relative is concerned with subjective and practical perceptions of reality. It is these perceptions of reality which are different in different cultures, according to the changing conditions of space and time. These perceptions do not provide us with any test of truth or falsehood, and right or wrong, regarding the reality lying beyond them, to which they refer. But the theoretical sciences, scientific thought, and theoretical principles, which provide secure ground for philosophical and theoretical knowledge of man—like the principles of religious world outlook and the primary principles of ethics—are absolute, permanent, and non-relative. Here, I am sorry to say, we shall abstain from further prolongation of this discussion.

Secondly, the claim that religion is belief and nationality is personal identity, that the relation between the two is determined by the relation of faith and personality, and that Islam affirms national identities as they are, and officially recognizes them, amounts to a total negation of the most important mission of religion. The most important mission of religion, and above all that of Islam, lies in offering a world outlook on the basis of a universal system—whose central idea is the belief in the unity of God (*tawhīd*)—and in moulding the spiritual and moral personality of man on the basis of this world outlook. It seeks to cultivate and develop a new relation between the individuals and society. Such a project necessitates the foundation of a radically new culture—a culture which is human and not national. The culture which Islam offered to the world, and which is known as the Islamic culture today, was not aimed to be a culture similar to those cultivated by other religions by assimilating more or less the elements of the previous culture of the people. Such religions were influenced by the pre-existing culture, and in their turn influenced the society. The culture that Islam developed was peculiar in the sense that culturalization was inherent in the basic message of this religion. The message of Islam is dissociation of man from cultures unworthy of him and association with a culture worthy of him. It affirms only that which is essentially positive in an existing culture. A religion which has nothing to do with various types of cultures, and which adjusts with varied cultures, is a religion which feeds itself upon the cultural leftover, and is satisfied with

casual, once-in-a-week visit to the church.

Thirdly, the meaning of the verse (49:13) that says:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ...

is not that 'We have created you as two sexes,' so as to substantiate the claim that mankind is classified in various groups on the basis of sex, and is 'similarly divided into different nations and nationalities, and, in this way, to justify the conclusion that the verse means to say that, as the difference of the sexes is natural, an ideology should be based on affirmation of such differences and not their negation, and the differences of nationality are of the same kind as those of sex!

In fact what the verse wants to say is that 'We have created you from a male and a female.' This either means that all human beings are genealogically related to and originate from one man and woman (Adam and Eve), or it means that all people are equal since they are the progeny of the same father and mother, and there should not be any discrimination.

Fourthly, the phrase *لِتَعَارَفُوا*, which has been used in the verse to refer to the purpose of creation, does mean that nations are diversified so that 'they may be distinguished from one another,' so as to justify the conclusion that all the nations should retain their specific character permanently in order to be identifiable as compared to other nations. If the Quranic verse aimed at emphasizing this point, it should have used the word *لِيَتَعَارَفُوا* (that they may know their identity) instead of the word *لِتَعَارَفُوا* (that you may know one another). As those who are addressed are the individuals, the Quran tells them that 'the divisions that have taken place in such a manner are inherent in the process of creation, so that you individuals may know each other by means of the national and tribal associations.' We know that the purpose of this verse is not to preach that different nations and communities should necessarily retain their individualities, remaining independent of one another forever.

Fifthly, whatever we have described in the last chapter concerning the Islamic point of view regarding homogeneity and heterogeneity of societies is sufficient to prove that, according to Islam, the natural and creative process itself leads different societies towards the establishment of a unified society and culture, and the main programme of Islam is to establish such a culture and such a society. It is also sufficient to reject the above-mentioned view.

The concept of Mahdism (the belief in the coming of the promised Mahdi) in Islam is based upon such a view of the future of Islam, mankind, and the world. Here, we conclude our discussion on society to initiate the discussion about history.

Notes to Part One

1. *Jahān binī-ye tawhīdī* ("The World-view of Tawhīd") is another of Martyr Murtaḍā Mutahhari's books which also, like the present work, is a part of *Muqad-dameh ʿī bar jahān binī-ye Islāmī* ("Introduction to the World Outlook of Islam"). (Tr.)

2. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān*, vol. II, p. 102.

3. Following Quranic verses are referred to:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا
قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ •

Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: 'This is from God,' so that they may take for it a small price. Therefore, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn. (2:79)

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ أَيُّنَ مَا تُنْفِقُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَبِأُ
يَغْضَبُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ
اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ •

Abasement shall be pitched on them, wherever they are come upon, except they be in a bond of God, and a bond of the people; they will be laden with the burden of God's anger, and poverty shall be pitched on them; that, because they disbelieved in God's signs, and slew the Prophets without right, that, for that they acted rebelliously and were transgressors.(3:112)

4. Auguste Comte, as quoted in Raymond Aron's *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. I, p. 91.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Al-Mizān*, vol. IV, 112.

7. Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. I, p. 14.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Following verses are referred to:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى
أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ
هَذَا غَافِلِينَ • أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ •

And when thy Lord look from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify touching themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yes, we testify'—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'As for us, we were unaware of this,' or lest you say, 'Our fathers were idolaters aforetime, and we were seed after them. What, will Thou then destroy us for the deeds of the vain-doers?' (7:172-173)

10. *Al-Mizān*, vol. IV, p. 106.

11. *Ibid*, pp. 132, 133.

12. *Ibid*, p. 14.

13. Spengler, the well-known sociologist, as quoted by Raymond Aron's *Main Currents in sociological Thought*, vol. I, p. 107.

Part Two: History

What is History?

HISTORY may be defined in three ways. In fact, there are three closely connected disciplines related to history.

1. Knowledge of the incidents, events, circumstances, and conditions of people living in the past in relation to the present conditions and circumstances. All situations, conditions, events, and episodes which take place belong to the present, that is, the time during which they take shape, are judged, reported, and recorded as matters of the day by daily newspapers. However, as soon as their time elapses, they are merged with the past and become a part of history. Hence, history, in this sense, is the knowledge of the bygone incidents, events, conditions and circumstances of the people in the past. Biographies, records of battles and conquests, and all such chronicles compiled in the past, or at the present, by all nations, come under this category.

History in this sense is, firstly, the knowledge of the particular; that is, it is the knowledge of a sequence of personal and individual episodes, not the knowledge of a series of general laws and relationships. Secondly, it is a study of narratives and traditions, not a rational discipline. Thirdly, it is the knowledge of 'being,' not that of 'becoming.' Fourthly, it is related to the past, not to the present. This type of history we shall term as 'traditional history' (*tārikh naqli*).

2. History is the knowledge of laws that appear to govern the life of the past, obtained through investigation and analysis of the past events.

The stuff with which the traditional history is concerned, i.e. the events and incidents of the past, provides the rudimentary and basic material for this study. For the study of history in this sense, such events and incidents are similar to the material gathered by a natural scientist for his laboratory analysis and investigation to discover certain general laws, through induction, regarding the nature and properties of his material and the causal relations governing its changes. The historian, in this analytical endeavour, wishes to uncover the true nature of historical events and their causal relationship, and to discover the general and universal laws applicable to all similar events of the past and the

present. We shall call history in this sense 'scientific history'.

Although the object of research and the subject matter of scientific history are the events and episodes of the past, the laws which it deduces are not specifically confined to the past. They have the ability of being generalized in order to be applied to the present and the future also. This aspect of history makes it very useful, making it one of the sources of man's knowledge regarding himself, and enables him to exercise control over his own future.

The difference between the task of a researcher in the field of scientific history and a researcher in the natural sciences is notable. The material of research for the natural scientist is a chain of real and verifiable occurrences that are present. Hence, necessarily, all his investigations, analyses, and results are empirical and verifiable. But the material on which a historian works belongs to the past and does not exist in the present. What is accessible to a historian now is only a bundle of chronicles about the past. A historian is like a judge in a court of law who decides on the basis of circumstantial evidence and indications on record in his files, not on the basis of the testimony of any eye-witness. In this way, the analysis of a historian is logical, rational, and mental, not one based upon verifiable external evidence. A historian makes his analysis in the laboratory of his mind and intellect, with the instruments of logic and inference, not in the external physical laboratory with instruments of observation and measurement. Hence, the job of a historian is more akin to that of a philosopher than of a scientist. Scientific history, like traditional history, is concerned with the past, not with the present. It is the knowledge of 'being' not of 'becoming.' But unlike traditional history it is general, not particular; it is rational, not based upon tradition.

Scientific history is actually a branch of sociology; i.e. it is a sociological study of the societies of the past. The subject of sociology includes the study of the past and the present societies. However, if we restrict sociology to the study of contemporary societies, then scientific history and sociology should be considered as two disciplines, separate but closely related, complementary, and dependent upon each other.

3. Philosophy of history is based upon the knowledge of gradual changes and transformations which lead societies from one stage to another. It deals with the laws governing these transformations and changes. In other words, it is the science of 'becoming' of societies, not of their 'being' only.

Perhaps this question might have arisen in the mind of the honoured reader, whether it is possible for societies to have simultaneously 'being' as well as 'becoming,' and that being should be the subject of one discipline, viz. scientific history, and 'becoming' of societies the subject of another discipline, viz. philosophy of history.

Isn't any synthesis between the two impossible, as 'being' implies rest and 'becoming' movement? Only one of the two should be chosen. Our picture of the societies of the past should be either a picture of 'being' or a picture of 'becoming'.

Probably the honourable reader may pose this problem in more general and comprehensive terms: Our picture of the universe as a whole—and of society as a part of it—is either a static or a dynamic one. If the universe or society is static then it has 'being,' not becoming; and if it is changing and dynamic, it has 'becoming' and not 'being.' From this point of view, the most significant division of the schools of philosophy is made. It has been said that philosophical systems are divided into two main groups: the philosophies of 'being' and the philosophies of 'becoming.' The philosophies of 'being' are those which hold that being and non-being are incompatible with each other, and they regard contradictions as impossible. It is supposed that if there is 'being' there cannot be 'non-being' and if there is 'non-being' there is no 'being.' Hence one has to choose one of these two alternatives. As being is necessary and there is nothing except being in the world and society, the world is governed by rest and stillness. But the philosophies of becoming, on the other hand, hold that being and non-being co-exist in each and every single moment, and this is what we call motion. Motion is nothing except that a thing 'is' and at the same time it 'is not.'

Hence, the philosophy of being and the philosophy of becoming are two opposite views regarding existence, and one has to choose any one of the two. If we associate ourselves with the first view, we should hold that societies have 'being' not 'becoming,' and, contrarily, if we associate ourselves with the second view, it should be assumed that societies have 'becoming' and not 'being.' Either we can have scientific history, in the light of the above discussion, without having any philosophy of history, or we can have philosophy of history without a scientific history. The answer to these questions lies in the fact that such thinking about being and nothingness, about motion and rest, and about incompatibility of opposites, is a characteristic feature of the Western thought and originates in the West's ignorance of the philosophical problems of being (problems concerning existence) and specially the profound problem of principality of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) and a number of other problems related to it.

Firstly, take the statements that 'being' is synonymous with rest, or, in other words, rest is being, and that motion is a synthesis between being and non-being and means unity of two opposites. These notions are some of the gross errors made by some schools of Western philosophy.

Secondly, what is maintained here has nothing to do with the

above-mentioned philosophical problem. The positions taken here are based upon the hypothesis that society, like all other living beings, follows two different sets of laws: one set of laws which is confined to a particular species, and the other set of laws which deals with changes of species and their transformation into one another. We shall term the first kind of laws, 'the laws of being', and the other, 'the laws of becoming.'

Incidentally, this point has been realized by some sociologists. Auguste Comte is one of them. Raymond Aron says about him:

Statics and dynamics are two basic categories of Auguste Comte's sociology... Statics consists essentially in examining, in analyzing what Comte calls the social consensus (social unanimity). A society is comparable to a living organism. It is impossible to study the functioning of an organ without placing it in the context of living creature. By the same token it is impossible to study politics of the state without placing them in the context of the society at a given moment....As for dynamics at the outset it consists merely of the description of the successive stages through which human societies pass.¹

If we take into consideration any species from among the species of living beings, like mammals, reptiles, birds etc., we shall see that they have a group of particular laws specific to their kind, which govern them as long as they are related to that particular species. (For example, the laws related to an animal's embryonic stages, its health and survival, its conditions of sickness and disease, its food habits and nourishment, reproduction and growth, or the laws related to the patterns of its habitation or migration, and its mating habits.)

But according to the theory of evolution and development of species, in addition to certain specific laws that operate within the species, there is another set of laws which are concerned with the process of evolution and transformation of the lower species into the higher ones. These laws are formulated philosophically, and sometimes termed as the 'philosophy of evolution' as distinct from the science of biology.

As society is considered to be a living organism, it is also governed by two types of laws: biological laws and evolutionary laws. The laws which are concerned with the causes of birth and decline of civilizations, and the conditions which determine social existence, are laws which are universally applicable to all the varying forms and changes taking place in various societies. We shall call them the 'laws of being' of societies. And those laws which are concerned with the causes of evolution of societies from one epoch to another and from one system to another system, would be termed as the 'laws of becoming' of societies. The difference between them will become clearer when we discuss each of the two types of problems. Hence history, according

to its third meaning, is the study of evolution of societies from one stage to another. It is not merely the knowledge of the existence of the society at a particular stage or at all stages. For the sake of avoiding any possibility of confusion, these problems should not be mixed with the problems of scientific history. We shall call the study of these problems the 'philosophy of history.' Very often the problems related with scientific history, which deals with the non-evolutionary movement of society, are not clearly differentiated from the problems of philosophy of history, which deals with the evolutionary movement of society. This is what gives rise to misunderstandings and errors.

Philosophy of history, like scientific history deals with the general not with the particular. It is rational (*'aqli*), not traditional (*naqli*). It is the knowledge of *becoming* of societies, not of their *being*. And also, contrary to the case of scientific history, the use of the word 'history' in the term 'philosophy of history' should not lead us to think that philosophy of history is related to the past; rather it means that philosophy of history is the study of a continuous stream which originated in the past and continues to flow towards the future. Time, for the sake of study of these types of problems, cannot be assumed to be merely a container [occupied by historical reality], but it is to be regarded as one of the dimensions of this reality.

The study of history is useful in all of its three senses. Even the descriptive traditional history, which deals with the lives and characters of individuals, may be useful, moving, directive, educative and constructive. But it depends upon who the individuals whose life histories are discussed are, and what conclusions we infer from their lives. Men are made, according to the law of imitation, under the influence of the behaviour, treatment, resolutions, moral habits, and companionship of their fellowmen. As the lives of contemporaries serve as a lesson and example for man, and he learns manners and customs from his fellow beings—or, according to Luqmān, learns good manners even from the ill-mannered, so that he does not commit their mistakes—the same principle is applicable to the biographies of the men belonging to the past. History, like a film, transforms the past into the present. The Quran itself refers to the beneficial aspects of the lives of such worthy people whom it considers as fit and imitable models. About the Prophet (S), the Quran says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَاليَوْمَ الآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ
كثيراً •

Verily, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example for whosoever hopes for God and the Last Day, and remembers God much. (33:21)

About Abraham (A), the Quran says:

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ....

You have a good example in Abraham, and those with him....(60:4)

Whenever the Quran refers to the characters of persons as examples for others, it does not give importance to their worldly positions, but always emphasizes the moral and humanistic aspects of their personalities. It is from this viewpoint that the Quran remembers Luqmān, a negro slave, as a wise man, although he was neither a king, nor a wealthy man, nor a famous philosopher. He is introduced to the world as a paragon of wisdom. The examples cited in the Quran of the true believers—one belonging to the Pharaoh's tribe and another mentioned in *Sūrat Yāsīn*—also belong to the same category.

In this book, where we intend to discuss sociology and history from the Islamic point of view, we will confine our attention solely to scientific history and philosophy of history because of their relevance to the world outlook of Islam. Accordingly, we will discuss these two topics somewhat elaborately, starting with the nature of scientific history.

SCIENTIFIC HISTORY

To begin with, I would like to remind that scientific history is to be studied in the light of the view discussed earlier that the society has a reality and personality independent of the individual. If society does not have a reality independent of its members, there may not be any laws except those governing individuals, and, consequently, scientific history, which is the science of the laws and principles that govern societies, would be pointless. That history is governed by laws is a necessary corollary of the proposition that history has its own nature, which again follows from the proposition that society has its own nature and reality. In the context of scientific history, the following problems should be studied.

1. As has been pointed out earlier, scientific history is based on traditional history. Traditional history provides the material for the laboratory of scientific history. Hence, firstly, it should be thoroughly investigated whether the contents of traditional history are authentic and reliable. If the material is not reliable, all research and scientific inference regarding the laws governing the societies of the past would be futile and pointless.

2. If we proceed with the supposition that traditional history

is reliable, and that society has an essence and personality independent of individuals, then deduction of general laws from historical events and episodes would depend upon the hypothesis that the law of causation, or causal determinism, governs the sphere of human activities—that is the sphere of problems associated with human freedom and will, which are expressed in historical events. Without accepting it, the laws of history can neither be generalized or universalized, nor can there be any orderly system of such laws. The question is whether the law of causation governs the course of history, and if it does, what are we to think of human freedom and responsibility?

3. Is history materialistic in nature and governed by materialistic forces? Is the principal force dominating human history a material force? Are intellectual and spiritual forces secondary, subordinate, and dependent upon the material forces that shape history? Contrarily, is it true that history is essentially spiritual, and the dominating force of history a spiritual force, the material forces being secondary, subsidiary, and subservient to it? In other words, is history in itself 'idealistic'? Or do we have a third alternative, i.e. history possesses essentially a composite character, governed by two or more forces? Is it true that a number of material and spiritual forces—more or less harmonious and occasionally conflicting, depending on a system—govern history?

1. Authenticity and Inauthenticity of Traditional History:

There are some who severely criticize traditional history, considering it as a series of fabrications of the narrators based on the historian's personal interests and objectives, his social affiliations, or on national, communal or religious prejudices—all of which have more or less led to fabrications or distortions. The historians have compiled history according to their own wishes, and even those who, from a moral point of view, refrained from deliberate fabrication and distortion of facts, were selective in their choice while recording incidents. That is, they have invariably related only those incidents which did not go against their objectives and beliefs. They avoided giving accounts of such events which happened to be against their beliefs and feelings. In this way, though they might not have added anything of their own, or recorded any fabricated material, yet through their choice they gave history their desired form. A significant event or an important personality can be studied and analysed only when *all* the relevant material is accessible to the researcher.

If only a fraction of the required material essential for the study is available and the rest is not, the true face of reality is hidden and replaced by a radically different face.

The pessimism of these critics of traditional history is similar to the attitude of some sceptics among Islamic jurists (*fuqahā'* or *mujtahidūn*) about Islamic tradition (*ḥadīth*) and narrations (*riwāyāt*)—an attitude which has been termed "*insidād bāb al-'ilm*" ("closure of the door of knowledge"). Some have made such ironic statements about history as, "History means, a series of events that never occurred, recorded by a person who was not at all present at the time." A journalist is quoted to have said that "realities are sacred, but one has freedom of faith [to believe or disbelieve them]." Some are not so pessimistic, but they, too, prefer to be sceptical regarding history.

In the book *What is History?*, the following statement has been quoted from Sir George Clark:

...Knowledge of the past that has come down through one or more human minds, and has been processed by them, and therefore cannot consist of elemental and impersonal atoms which nothing can alter....The exploration seems to be endless, and some impatient scholars take refuge in scepticism, or at least in the doctrine that, since all historical judgements involve persons and points of view, one is as good as another and there is no 'objective' historical truth.²

The fact is that though we may not entirely trust even the records of the most reliable historians, but there are, firstly, a series of definite indubitables in history, similar to the self-evident postulates accepted in other disciplines. These can form the subject of the historian's study, analysis, and research. Secondly, the researcher can exercise his discretion in reaching a conclusion regarding the truth or falsehood of some narrations by subjecting them to critical scrutiny. Today we see that researchers have conclusively proved the unreliability of certain matters which were exaggerated out of proportion and were held in reverence for several centuries. The story of burning of the library at Alexandria, which began to be circulated since the seventh century of Hijrah, gradually found its way into several books of history. But the findings of the last century researchers have proved it absolutely baseless, only a fabrication of some prejudiced Christians. In the same fashion, sometimes certain truths are obscured and hidden, but after sometime they are somehow uncovered. Therefore, it is not justifiable to be totally sceptical of the historical records.

2. Causation in History:

Does absolute causation govern history? If the law of causality dominates history, it would be essential to accept that occurrence of every incident in itself should be certain and inevitable, and that some type of determinism prevails over history. If determinism governs

history, then, where is the place for the individual's freedom and choice? If in reality occurrence of events is deterministic, then no one has any responsibility, and no one may deserve any praise or reproach for his deeds. If the law of causation does not govern history, there can be no universality, and if there is no possibility of generalization or universalization, history cannot have any law because law is dependent upon universality, and universality is a corollary of the principle of causality.

This is the main difficulty with regard to scientific history and philosophy of history. There are some who, on the basis of the principle of causation and the principle of universality, negate freedom and choice. They maintain that whatever is accepted in the name of freedom is not actually freedom. Contrarily, there are others who approve the principle of freedom and negate the view that history follows certain laws. Many sociologists accept the incompatibility of causality and freedom, and, therefore, they accept causality and negate freedom.

Hegel, and Marx following him, accept historical determinism. According to Hegel and Marx, freedom is nothing but consciousness of historical necessity. In the book *Marx and Marxism*, the following passage of Engels is quoted from his work *Anti-Dühring*:

Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him freedom is the appreciation of necessity. Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood. Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. This holds good in relation both to the laws of external nature and those which govern the bodily and mental existence of men themselves.³

And also in the same book, after a brief discussion of the view that man can and should act according to his particular historical conditions and in the direction determined by those conditions, Engels says:

Identifying and understanding these given conditions, render human action more effective. Every act in the opposite direction amounts to resisting and obstructing the historic course. To act in the direction determined by the historic course means moving within the course of history and participating in the process. But the question, as to what is meant by freedom, still remains to be answered. The Marxist school answers that freedom of the individual lies in his appreciation of the historical necessity, and the social movement towards which the whole course of history is directed.⁴

It is evident that these remarks do not solve the difficulty. The real problem regarding man's relationship with historical conditions is as follows: Does man control historical conditions? Can he give history

his preferred direction? Is he able to change the course of history?

If man is unable to direct the course of history, or change it, he is forced to follow the course of history. This is the only way through which he can not only survive but also continue to evolve. If he goes in a direction opposite to that of the historic course, he will definitely perish. Now the question arises whether man is free or determined to participate in the course of history. If we accept the principle of priority of society over the individual and that the consciousness and awareness of the individual and his feelings are moulded by historical and social conditions—especially economic conditions—does there remain any room for individual freedom? Moreover, what is meant by the statement that 'freedom is the consciousness of necessity'? Does it mean that an individual whose life is threatened by a storm and who has the full consciousness of the fact that after some time the tide would take him down into the depths of the sea, or an individual falling from a high cliff who is conscious that according to the law of gravity his bones would be crushed into pieces within a short time, is 'free' to drown into the sea or fall into the valley? According to the materialistic theory of historical determinism, social conditions act as restraining factors for man, which determine his direction and mould his personality, his consciousness, his determination and choice. Man is nothing but an empty pot, merely a raw material in the hands of social conditions. Man is the product of the conditions, which are not created by him. Preceding conditions determine the future course for man. It is not man who determines the future course of historical conditions. On the basis of these notions, freedom has no sense and meaning.

In reality, human freedom cannot be conceived apart from the theory of (specific human) nature. According to this theory, in the general course of the essential movement of the universe, man enters into the world with a certain dimension that is over and above the physical universe, and this extra dimension is the essence and core of human existence. Afterwards, under the influence of the environmental factors, man's personality develops and matures. It is this existential dimension that gives man a unique human personality, so that he may rule over the tide of history and determine its course. I have already discussed this problem under the heading "Determinism or Freedom," and I shall discuss this issue further under the title, "The Role of Personality in History," when discussing the historical role of heroic figures of history.

Human freedom, in the sense pointed out, is neither inconsistent with the law of causation, nor is it incompatible with the universality of the laws of history. That man, in spite of his freedom of choice, his will and his thought, should have to adopt a predetermined, specific, and an inviolable course in social life—a freedom loaded with necessity—does

not imply anything but the rule of blind necessity over man and his will.

The problem regarding history being subject to laws and their universality poses another difficulty. It is revealed through the study of historical events and incidents that sometimes a sequence of trivial accidents change the course of history. Of course, the accidents—contrary to the belief of some people—do not occur without any cause; such events are called ‘accidents’ because they cannot be explained by a general and universal system of causal laws. If accidents do not follow any universal law and have played an effective role in the movement of history, then history would be regarded as devoid of any kind of specific laws. Among the accidents which have been effective in determining the course of history, the nose of Cleopatra, the well-known queen of Egypt, has become proverbial. Many times there have been in history where, according to the well-known saying, “A waft has ruffled the pages of history.”

In his book *What is History?* Edward Hallett Carr writes:

The other source of the attack is the famous crux of Cleopatra's nose. This is the theory that history is, by and large, a chapter of accidents, a series of events determined by chance coincidences, and attributable only to the most casual causes. The result of the Battle of Actum was due not to the sort of causes commonly postulated by historians, but to Antony's infatuation with Cleopatra. When Bajazet was deterred by an attack of gout from marching into central Europe, Gibbon observed that "an acrimonious honour falling on a single fibre of a man may prevent or suspend the misery of nations." When King Alexander of Greece died in the autumn of 1920 from the bite of a pet monkey, this accident touched off a train of events which led Sir Winston Churchill to remark that "a quarter of a million persons died of this monkey's bite." Or take again Trotsky's comment on the fever contracted while shooting ducks which put him out of action at a critical point of his quarrel with Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin in the autumn of 1923: "One can foresee a revolution or a war, but it is impossible to foresee the consequences of an autumn shooting —trip for wild ducks."⁵

In the Islamic world the instance of the defeat of Marwān ibn Muḥammad, the last Umayyad caliph, is an evidence of the role of accident deciding the fate of history. During his last battle with the ‘Abbāsids, Marwān, feeling the necessity to answer the call of nature, went aside to ease himself.

Accidentally, a person from the enemy's camp happened to pass by, he saw and killed him immediately. The news of his death spread among the soldiers of his army. As such an accident was never anticipated, his soldiers became panicky and fled from the battlefield. The Umayyad dynasty was thus overthrown. It was on this occasion that it was said: **دُفِنَتِ الدَّوْلَةُ بِرُؤْيَةٍ** ("a dynasty was swept away by urine.").

Carr, after explaining that every accident, far from being without