

The Nature of an Ideological Encounter

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Opinion

The following brief discourse is an attempt at understanding the nature of Islamic Psychology and some dominant philosophies of our age. Within the intellectual framework of Islam, there is, no doubt, a conscious effort on the part of some eminent scholars to explicate the encompassing nature of its Islamic framework and to render it meaningful and practicable for the contemporary society. This has led them as a consequence into an intellectual struggle with some of the existing modes of thought which are already predominant. But the picture of Islamic concepts has become too blurred to allow a clear perspective of the situation. This probably is due to some confusion about the actual position of some fundamental issues in the two systems, namely, Islam and the contemporary thought.

These issues, as we understand; occupy an axial position in the two systems and constitute the entire core of the conflict. It may be pointed out that they appear like foci on their respective axes from where a multitude of conflicting concepts radiate out in different directions of knowledge.

Of the two major system the first we would call super-sensory, i.e. the one which by virtue of a common theme includes some religious and philosophical doctrines, the latter (i.e. philosophical) being derived from the former. The other is called sensory the theme of which enroots together a hot of philosophies and their off shoots called empirical and materialistic. For the sake of convenience, we may hence forth call these systems X and Y respectively. Each of these gigantic framework contains facts and postulates and a set of inferences within three independent foci which, I have said, occupy an axial position.

The first of these foci includes facts, postulates, and meanings and definition of existence and reality, occurring through a set of interrelated concepts within each, but with two distinctly different points of reference. In X system the point of reference is the notion of the supra mundane whereas in Y system it is the notion of the secular or the mundane. They subsequently posit two divergent ontological frames of reference. This posit is not an adjunct but a logical and psychological requirement. And this can hardly be questioned.

The second of these foci which interacts heavily with the first is the epistemological focus. In X system it has the following four major premises denoting the sources of knowledge.

1. **Revelation:** This is restricted to private and personal experience of an individual P but its content, when rendered in form of statements, is shared by an individual.
2. Intuition
3. Reason and
4. Sense perception

These four sources mutually reinforce and tend to confirm each other in their mode of operation in human understanding. In the Y

system there is big difference at this point. Only three major sources of knowledge exist here, namely, (i) sense perception, (ii) reason and (iii) intuition. But recent history has demonstrably shown that last two are being gradually replaced by the first behind which there is an almost invincible theoretical force. Moreover, the rather strict condition of mutual confirmation found in the X system is considerably modified in the later.

The third focus of X system contains two major axiological premises. The first posits a notion leading to a understanding of the supra-temporal, supra-spatial characteristics of values with an emphasis upon universalism and relative absolutism, and the second states the spatial-temporal characteristics with an emphasis upon the local and ephemeral nature of values. Both these notions occur with the frame of reference which we have called supramundane. The relationship of the first with the second is that of the determinant and the determined respectively. As we are able to understand, these axiological premises have heuristically wide influence to overtake issues such as the factual and normative aspects of vales as regards the question of their identity, concurrence etc. Furthermore, these premises lead to a peculiar approach in the philosophy of history and social sciences.

The third focus of Y system contains only one of the two premises namely the latter but in an entirely different manner. What is apparently common with the above is the heavy emphasis on the local and ephemeral characteristics of values. Unlike the former, it is, however, a self-determining premise. It is certainly true that these two systems give rise to two psychologically different and even conflicting attitudes towards existence, knowledge and values. The common psychological factor in the two is, however the mode of acquiring beliefs about the inferred notions and the modes of developing an attitude towards them.

On this very basis, it is our understanding that mutual cross questions between the two systems would continue to remain meaning-less, void and pseudo-questions so long as their extra logical significance is not thoroughly understood. And consequently all answers to such question would remain ultra vires. The recent syntactical and semantical analyses have probably circumvented the issue of this serious psychological limitation inherent in very modus operandi of human understanding. A searching analysis of any fundamental question might reveal the underlying tacit assumptions which set up a complex and powerful factor of expectancy in the mind of the enquirer based upon a set of beliefs and attitudes, that tends to funnel the questions at very outset. This psychological virus embedded in the very tissues of the questions cannot be overlooked. It is probably for this reason that the answer, no matter how plausible, cannot be pressed upon the mind of the enquirer without a direct interaction of the fiducial limits set up by the epistemological premises. All such efforts are therefore doomed to be infructuous. It is therefore obvious that the meaningfulness, and hence the validity, of either system

cannot be questioned without undertaking these issues into serious consideration. This, no doubt amounts to a re-examination of the entire issue.

From the hitherto discussion it appears that the two systems are mutually closed and non-interacting. It might apparently be true but the present writer has some serious doubts about it. The manner in which these foci might interact is an issue of considerably wide dimensions and is outside the scope of the present discourse. We would not therefore hastily conclude that the nature of the two systems would forcibly bring us to a choice point where one of the terms would inevitably lead into a blind alley.

Coming back to the X system namely Islam, it appears through a historical perspective that it is continuously shrinking on its own axis and has ceased to be a directing intellectual force – the Zietgeist. In fact

little has been done to reexamine the language of its ontology and other foci to incorporate the concepts that have emerged from the expanding horizon of knowledge. More striking is the lack of any serious attempt to consider the possibilities of admitting auxiliary concepts for incorporating the expanding knowledge. For certain reasons the condition of mutual conformity in its epistemological premises has probably crossed the breaking point but very little attention has been paid to it. And finally there is a frightening gap in the understanding of the nature of determining operation within its axiological premises. It is therefore obvious that the present encounter is an encounter between a now-closed and a comparatively open system, the latter being also the dominant force and the Ziegeist. If the former tends towards openness without breaking away from its original framework the picture of this encounter might, however, change very radically.