Chapter I

*Concept of Religion – An Analysis*
Chapter-I

Concept of Religion - An Analysis

Definition of Religion

The word *religion* is derived from the Latin *religio* which was used by Romans of the pre-Christian era.\(^1\) To Smith, *religio* is an 'attitude'.\(^2\) He points out the word continued to be used by Christians in reference to 'rites' and 'observances', though becoming more multi-faceted without gaining clarity. The general literal meaning of the 'religion' is 'recognition on the part of man of a controlling Superhuman power entitled to obedience, reverence and worship; the feeling or the spiritual attitude of these recognizing such as controlling power, with the manifestations of such feeling in conduct or life; the practice of sacred rites, or observances; a particular system of faith in and worship of a Supreme Being or a god or gods; the state of life of the members of a ruling order, practice of devotion or consciousness, as he made a religion out of making money'.\(^3\)

Religion, however, can hardly be defined precisely as it admits of the widest diversity of interpretations, because of the entirely personal nature of the experience which, it entails. It has to deal with what is most vital in the feeling, belief and performance of multiple actions of every human being. Religion seems to be a phenomenon, which controls the attitude of each

---

1 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning of End of Religion*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1978, p. 31. Smith (b.1916) a Canadian scholar is the author of the book entitled *The meaning of End of Religion*. Smith has mentioned in his work that in the case various religious traditions of the world, with the exception of Islam, the names such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, etc.) used for referring to them as distinct entities, were given by outsiders, and in most cases (such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism etc.) were terms coined by the Westerns during the nineteenth century. He has pointed out that only the Islamic tradition is a partial exception in that it has an inbuilt name (al-Islam) and a term (din) for all the various senses of its Western counterpart 'religion'. (Ref ibid. P 112).

2 Attitude towards something objective in which other people are involved.

3 *New Websters' Dictionary*, Delhi, 1985, p. 1267.
individual towards life, 'primitive' as well as modern. Even in one man's lifetime, his conception of what is religion may change from one to another definition.\(^4\) The term 'religion', clearly refers to certain characteristic types of data, a belief, practice, feelings, moods and attitudes etc.\(^5\) Religion in the words of E.B. Tylor can be described as 'the belief in spiritual beings' sometimes.\(^6\) Some interpreters are of the opinion that the real characteristic of religious phenomena is a bipartite division of the whole universe, known and unknowable, into two classes which embrace all that exists, but which radically exclude each other. Sacred things are those which the interdictions protect and isolate; profane things, those to which these interdictions are applied and which must remain at a distance from the first. Religious beliefs are the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things.\(^7\)

According to some "Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life. Therefore this concern is unconditionally serious and shows a willingness to sacrifice any finite concern which is in conflict with it".\(^8\) Markham has defined Religion as a way of life (which embraces a total world view, certain ethical demands, and social practices) and refuses to accept the view that sees human life as nothing more than complex bundles of atoms in an ultimately meaningless universe.\(^9\) St. Augustine understood by the term 'religion', worship. After Augustine the term was used as 'faith' by the medieval Church men. By the time, the notion

\(^6\) ibid., p. 663
\(^8\) Peter Burne and Peter Clarke have illustrated this point in their important book, Definition and Explanation in Religion.
\(^9\) IAN S. Markham, A World Religions Reader, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, USA; 1996, p.6.
of religion was becoming more complex and assuming the sense of the bond between man and God.

**Rationalist Theory of Religion**

Many of the early interpreters of religion theorized that religion is the result of a rational effort to understand basic questions of existence. The essential philosophical character of religion in their view could be demonstrated in the roots of religion among the primitive people. After the discovery of the essence of religiosity (e.g. their inclination towards something unseen-forces) among the primitive, these interpreters, influenced by evolutionary thinking, believed that they could trace its progressive development through various stages to modern 'civilized' times. In each of these stages religion remained rooted in man’s advancing intellectual effort to understand his world. One of the most important early interpreters of religion whose method is based on philosophy, evolution and the search for the origins, is Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917). Tylor attempted to show that religion originated as primitive people used their childlike reasoning to answer two problems. The first problem according to Tylor’s theory, was: “What is the difference between a living and a dead person?” A dead body appears little different from the body of a sleeping individual. Why then one will decay while the other will revive? The second complementary question that the primitives posed was: ‘What are those shapes that appear in dreams?’ How could a friend who has died appear in a dream or how could the dreamer leave his body and travel in dreams? These two questions and their subsidiaries led the primitive to logically posit a soul or spirit which left the body permanently at death, but continued to exist in a phantom shape. This spiritual aspect of man barely fled the body of a danger during his visions. This soul is the animating

---

principle of life - an essence without which the body decays. This belief in souls is named 'Animism' by Tylor.

Belief in the soul as the animating principle of human life led the primitive people to reason that animals, plants, and, even seemingly inanimate objects, like stones, must possess a spirit. This spread of animistic belief was the result of the primitive observations which showed that animals and plants live and die like men and appear in dreams. Also, it was deduced by early man that natural phenomena such as earthquakes in which the land shifted, and avalanches, in which great boulders moved, must be caused by a spirit within nature. These spirits - personified natural phenomenon in their view - explained the cause of disasters and led the primitive people to perform some rituals as a gesture of worship and supplication to these powers. Not only early rituals, but myths, for Tylor, are the results of primitive man’s rational search for answers to vital questions of existence. Taylor recognizes that primitive beliefs, myths, and rituals might appear ridiculous to modern man, but suggests that they were logical and adequate to the reasoning power of early humans. The mental power of the primitive can be likened, Tylor argues, to that of a child who talks to animals and toys believing these to be rational or alive, and who fabricates fantastic stories to explain various events. The early rational endeavours of the primitive or child, however, must be surpassed in a later state of evolution. Like Tylor, Frazer believes that religion developed out of the primitive’s search for answers to basic questions of existence. However, unlike Tylor, Frazer argues that before mankind developed religion there was an era in which early man attempted to control nature through magical means. The era of magic which dominated early activities and thought was one of great optimism. However, this age of optimism gradually gave way to an era of religion, which arose when man began to doubt whether he truly could make nature function according to his wishes. This doubt led to beliefs in great superhuman
magicians who became the first deities, to whom the primitive people humbly directed their worship. Supplication, not manipulation, characterizes the religious period of man's development. Thus, for Frazer, religion began as a slight and partial acknowledgment of powers, superior to men which grew 'into a confession of man's entire and absolute dependence on the divine. Tylor closely follows Auguste Comte in presenting a scheme of the evolution of religion.

August Comte (1798-1857) believed in three stages of human progress, each marked by the specific type of thought, religion and ethics. (i) Theological Stage (belief in nature, polytheism and then monotheism), (ii) Philosophical or Metaphysical stage; and finally (iii) Scientific or Positivistic stage. In the first stage man's childish thought is dominated by questions that are satisfied by religious and supernatural answers. As the human capacity to reason progress the religious answers lead from nature worship to polytheism. In the second state, the metaphysical, man, as in the first state attempts to answer basic questions of life, but instead of employing supernatural agents, he uses his reason to develop abstract system of belief. The third and last state sees the triumph of the scientific method which Comote believes, correctly bases answers on observations of natural laws. The scientific state has closed the chapter of religiosity. August declares:

"Science has dismissed the Father of nature and the universe from his post, consigning him to oblivion, and while thanking him for his temporary services, it has escorted him back to the frontiers of his greatness".

13 Quoted by Murtaza Mutahhari, n.12, p.483.
We shall evaluate this subject critically in the Chapter 'Ideological Foundations of Islam'.

**Origin of Religion - Monotheism or Polytheism**

Scholars agree that religious beliefs have always been intertwined with human life. However, their opinions differ concerning the fundamental roots of religion and the factors that have played a primary role in its establishment and development. Some scholars have supposed that at the dawn of human existence there was a belief in a single God and that only later there occurred a development in the belief in many gods as well as animism. Other scholars have supposed an evolutionary development of religion, which only reached monotheism - considered to be the highest form of religious belief after a long period of purification. The two approaches sponsor, respectively, two contrasting myths about primitive man. According to the one, there was once a golden age of innocence and harmony; according to the other, the life of the earliest man was hasty, brutish and short.

Wilhelm Schmidt (1864-1954), a German Catholic scholar is noted for his collection of a vast amount of material on Urmonotheism (original monotheism) among primitive peoples. Following Andrew Lang's (1844-1912) rationalistic interpretation of the creator being among the primitives, Schmidt believes this deity to be the result of early man's search for a cause of the world. For Schmidt, the early monotheism integrates the social, economic, rational, and emotional desires of mankind. This eternal creator was originally worshipped sedately, in love and trust through sacrifices carried on by the priests. However, the primitive people, whose very simplicity and closeness to nature allowed them to honour this Supreme Creator, lost their reverence as

---

they indulged themselves in emotional fancies about animistic beings. This
degeneration into animism, magic, and polytheism caused the Supreme Being
to be pushed to the periphery of consciousness and, symbolically to the edge of
the cosmos, the sky, where as a 'high god' he remains only dimly remembered
and called upon only in times of overwhelming crisis. Unlike Lang, Taylor and
Frazer, Schmidt rejects a strictly evolutionary approach to religion and stresses
the degeneration of this phenomenon from primitive monotheism. Schmidt's
method rests on the presupposition that cultures move as wholes, retaining their
structures and basic beliefs throughout their migration.

In contrast, the people who support the evolutionary theory of religion
opine that if the improvement of human society is considered from rude
beginnings of a state of greater perfection, polytheism or idolatry was, and
necessarily must have been, the first and most ancient religion of mankind.17
David Hume (b.1711), the British Philosopher states:

“IT appears to me, that, if we consider the improvement of
human society, from rude beginnings or a state of greater
perfection, polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily must
have been, the first and most ancient religion of mankind.”18

The supporters of this theory have endeavoured to confirm this opinion
on the basis of the arguments that in ancient times, people were ignorant and
barbarous, it is very difficult to believe that they might have discovered the
truth. They produce the present experience concerning the principles and
opinions of barbarous nations of the savage tribes of America, Africa and Asia
who are still idolaters. The advocates of this view exude confidence that
according to the natural progress of human thought, the ignorant multitude

17 David Hume: Natural History of Religion (1757), Edited with an Introduction by H.E.Root, Adam
must first entertain some familiar notion of superior powers, before they stretch their conception of that perfect Being, who bestowed order on the whole frame of nature. Abstracting from what is imperfect, the idea of perfection is formed. Thus mid reaches gradually, from inferior to superior notion of that Being. The people, who support this view, argue that the implements, the language, the science, the art, the social and political institutions of civilized man, have all been slowly evolved out of much simpler and more savage forms. They say:

"We treat religion as an institution, and apply to it the same comparative method as to legal and political institutions; or examine it as a belief, in the same way as we trace the slow growth of scientific conceptions of the universe; the presumption is that, here as everywhere else, the higher forms have been evolved out of lower forms, and that monotheism has been developed out of a previous polytheism. Religion is an organism which runs through its various stages, animism, totemism, polytheism, monotheism. The law of continuity links together the highest, lowest, and intermediate forms. The form of the religious idea is ever slowly changing, the content remains the same always."\(^{19}\)

But this theory has been rejected by the galaxy of, both religious and atheist scholars. Max Muller and others who are of the opinion that monotheism has been the first religion from the very beginning of creation, say that 'not seeing never meant not being'.\(^{20}\) At the end of the last century, several prominent historians of religion believe that in the religious history of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Indians they had found traces of a 'primary monotheism', which later had more or less disappeared.\(^{21}\)


Psychological Theory of Religion

Some thinkers insist on the conclusion that religion is the product of fear of natural calamities such as floods, storms, epidemics, earthquakes, lightening and thunder and regard these factors responsible why the primitive people developed in themselves the concept of religion. Russell regards the fear of such natural forces to have been the originator of religion. He says,

"In my opinion, religion is above all founded on fear: fear of the unknown, fear of death, fear of defeat, fear of the mysterious and the hidden. In addition, as already remarked a sentiment comes into being enabling everyone to imagine that he was a supporter in his problems and struggles".22

After extensive research in psychology, Freud discovered that, during childhood, certain happenings and ideas are repressed in our unconscious minds which can later result in the irrational behaviour of adults. The same applied to the religious concepts of the hereafter, heaven, hell, etc., which are but echoes of those very wishes which were born in the child’s mind but never fulfilled, circumstances being unfavorable, and consequently, repressed in the subconscious. Later the subconscious, for its own satisfaction, supposed the existence of a dream world in which its unfulfilled wishes would be realized, just as, deep in sleep, one dreams of wishes coming miraculously true. When childhood fancies, which had been thoroughly repressed, suddenly burst through to the surface, producing a state of frenzy or hysteria, or other abnormal behaviour, people mistakenly are tended to attribute this phenomenon to supernatural forces which had found expression in human language. Similarly, the generation gap and the “Father complex” in a family gives rise to

---

the concept of God and slave. In his most famous pronouncement on religion in The Future of an Illusion, Freud states that the belief is an all-powerful Father God originates in an infant’s helplessness. He opines:

“As we already know, the terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection - for protection through love - which was provided by the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one. Thus the benevolent rule of a divine providence allays our fear of the dangers of life; the establishment of a moral world-order ensures the fulfillment of the demands of justice, which have so often remained unfulfilled in human civilisation; and the prolongation of earthly existence in a future life provides the local and temporal framework in which these wish fulfillment shall take place.”

Thus to Freud this infantile powerlessness arouses the need to cling to the human father for protection and love. This father, who provides shelter and other basic physical necessities and who guides his child into society by providing rules of behaviour is viewed by the anxious child as powerful and all-knowing. However, when the child reaches maturity he realizes that the human father falls far short of his infantile image. He also realizes that the happiness he searches for in life is not a prolonged possibility in view of his body which is doomed to decay, and his often strained relationship with others. Freud believes that this situation leads mankind to project a magnified father to

---

23 Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis 1973), pp. 30-5. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is acclaimed as the father of psychoanalysis. Despite growing up observing Jewish custom, he was always a critic of religion, and his studies confirmed his atheism. God, argued Freud, was a projection. In the Future of an Illusion (1927), Freud points out the complete lack of evidence for the truth of religion and therefore the likely truth of his own psychological interpretation.

24 ibid., pp. 30-31.
the heaves. This father and the beliefs that surround him allay the anxiety about his existence by guaranteeing fulfillment in the heavens, assuring punishment of those who make us suffer and explaining the privations caused by the rules of society. Thus, man is reconciled to life by the illusion of the non-human father of religion which arises from his original feeling of helplessness as a child. Freud considers all religious doctrines as illusions. He writes:

"We can now repeat that all religious doctrines are illusions and insusceptible of proof. No one can be compelled to think them true, to believe in them. Some of them are so improbable, so incompatible with everything we have laboriously discovered about the reality of the world, that we may compare them - if we pay proper regard to the psychological differences - to delusions."\[^{25}\]

In Totem and Taboo Freud links religion to another childhood psychic experience, the Oedipus complex.\[^{26}\] This psychic crisis arises when the male infant sees the father as a rival for his mother’s affections. Consequently the child wishes to love the mother and kill the father. This wish is, however, repressed and its psychic energy is released in other activities. Freud thinks that this complex actually might reflect a historic event accounting for the rise of culture and its first religious form, Totemism. Totemism consists in the fact that a tribe is supposed to be related to an object - mainly animal or plant towards which they behave in a reverent manner by adopting its name and offering sacrifices or adoring it. A totem is generally an animal, rarely a plant which gives its name to a clan or may be otherwise associated with it. The relation of the clan and that particular animal is explained by bonds of descent the clan considering itself the descent from that species. The Iroquis clans

\[^{25}\] Ibid., p. 32.
\[^{26}\] Lowell W. Bloss, n.10, p.40.
were called Turtle, Bear, Wolf, Hawk etc. They carved out the representation of these animals over the doors of their houses. The people of the clan do not kill or eat that animal with whose name they are linked. They attach to it super-empirical meaning. In Ruanda, for example, the Buffalo people will not eat buffalo. Only when the clan worships the animal or offers sacrifices to it, totemism may be associated with religion, although it is now generally acknowledged that it is mostly a social phenomenon combined with magic or superstition. The Ojibwa (Algonquin tribe, North America) word ‘Totem’ provides the technical term ‘totemism’ for a belief system involving, e.g., Tabu and increase rites, and some idea of descent from a mythical totemic ancestor (e.g. among Australian tribes). Among the many theories of totemism, its symbolic function in social cohesion was stressed by Durkheim. In advancing the above theory Freud points out that two taboos or sacred rules adhere to the Totem. The members of the clan cannot kill the Totem animal and clan members cannot have sexual relationships among themselves. The strength of these rules leads Freud to believe that the desire to break these taboos is exceedingly strong. Furthermore, he states that the Totem, which is related to the clan in kinship, is actually the father, and that the second Taboo is directed most importantly to sexual relations with the mother. The rules thus reflect the repression of desire of an Oedipal nature. With this background Freud attempts to explain how these rules arose in the earlier culture. He notes first that Darwin had theorized the pre-human roamed in hordes each of which had a male leader who possessed exclusive rights over the females of the group. Any sons born into this group were thrown out when they reached the level of maturity to pose a threat to the leader's supremacy. These outcasts, Freud believes, also formed groups. This theory of pre-human existence is then linked by Freud to a report of William Robertson Smith about a Totemic feast.

---

in which the men of a clan join in killing and eating of the Totem. The Darwinian theory and Simith's report - which later proved to be false - led Freud to content that at one time in history the outcast males joined together and killed their father in order to possess their mother. This act was accompanied with eating of the father and with a sense of guilt projected their longing to an animal. The brothers stated that this animal, actually the father, was not to be killed and that there would be no sexual relations with any kind of this animal, the mothers. These two rules based on a killing and the guilt that arose from this deed, are the basis of culture and the first religious cult. From this time gods, like the great monotheistic father, have reconciled man to his fate in society. Freud explains Christianity in view of this historical event, which it will be remembered takes place in the psychic development of every child. Christ is for Freud the brother offered to the father to redeem them of their guilt.28

In advancing his theories that base religious phenomenon on human psyche development, Freud tends to equate dreams to myths. Dreams for Freud express unfulfilled or repressed wishes. The dreams thus possess great emotional power as they speak of realities of our life. These real wishes are, however, covered up in the dream by images that can be partially interpreted. This interpretation is one of the roles of the psychologist. The psychologist after much sifting of information on mental illnesses hope to direct the patient to confront the truth behind the dream, and to direct the released energies in a socially acceptable manner. The myth of Freud, is the dream projected onto the environment by the primitive people who possess a weak ego or self-identity. Here like the dream it can reveal the reality of the psychic situation if deciphered, as Freud believes he has done with myths surrounding the totem. Carl Gustay Jung (1875-1961) believes that dreams and myths are both

28 Lowell W. Bloss, n.10, pp.41,42.
reflections of the process of the psyche. Jung gives a far greater scope to the term ‘religion’ than does Freud. Jung believes religion can be equated with the processes of the psyche and as such provided a total existential and balanced orientation for man. Jung developed this view of religion after he observed that the images in the dreams and fantasies of his patients were often times comparable to the symbols found in primitive and classical religious systems. Jung reduces religion to a psychic phenomenon, but in doing so he captures some of the meaning and depth of myths and symbols. Contrary to what Freud believes that symbol is not a certain specific sign of repressed desires, but contains many layers of meaning for it represents both the individual’s existential situation and the inherited image of the psyche. Thus, a symbol of the mother might be seen as representing the individual’s feelings towards his human mother, and the accumulated meanings of mankind depicting a woman who can create - with the power of fertility and love, but who can also destroy with these same traits. Using a comparative analysis of his patient’s symbols plus an analysis of the symbols of religious traditions, Jung points to some of these meanings and guides his patient to the healing experience. In this process dreams, a system of symbols in story form, are most important for in a series they reveal the direction that the psyche is travelling. The desired direction is for the patient to become more and more open to the message of the psyche. The result of the correct openness to a series of dreams is the healing of the psychic imbalance. This imbalance shows itself in an intense experience of wholeness. Jung equates this experience which is beyond expression with the religious experience the mystic. This allowed interpreters of religions to begin to perceive primitive systems, not as childish, but as meaningful ways of providing orientation to the important questions of life. His works thus proved greatly influential in stimulating the investigations of other interested scholars.

29 ibid., p.43
The eranos circle a group of scholars meeting around the leadership of Jung, contributed considerably to the history of religions. Associated with this circle of scholars have been Mircea Eliade, the eminent Romanian-French historian of religion, and the Hungarian-Swiss historian of religion Karoly Kerenyi (1897-1973). This movement has been one of the main factors in the modern revival of interest in the analysis of myth.\(^{30}\) To a certain extent, therefore, Jung argued like Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) for a sophisticated outlook on the part of the scholar which would allow the mystery of religion to remain.\(^{31}\)

**Religion - A Social Phenomenon**

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) proposed a structural theory of the origins of religion in the Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (1915), saying that social order is required for people to live and work together.\(^{32}\) In structural theory any part of society is interpreted in terms of its functions and not in terms of its utility and origin. In other words it refers to the study of phenomena from the point of view of the functions that particular institutions such as family, class, political institutions, religion, etc., serve in a society. Durkheim begins his argument that religion is a social phenomenon by analysing the religion of the Australian Aborigines. He chooses these people because he believes that they represent the most elementary form of social organisation, the clan, and the most basic religious belief, Totemism.\(^{33}\) Durkheim treated the totem as symbolic of the god, he inferred that the god is a personification of the clan. This conclusion, if generalized, suggest that all the objects of religious worship symbolize social relationships and, indeed, play an important role in the continuance of the


\(^{31}\) Lowell W. Bloss, n.10, pp.45,46.


\(^{33}\) Lowell W. Bloss, n.10, p.33.
social group. Among these people, as in all cultures, religion centres on a distinction between the sacred, which is viewed as powerful, full of life force and efficacious, and the profane which is ordinary and lifeless. The sacred force for the Australian Aborigines is the Totem, an animal that is intimately related to the clan by genealogical myths and who often cannot be killed or eaten.

Durkheim theorizes that totemism arises from the socio-economic conditions of the Aborigines, in which most of the year is spent in small family groups hunting and gathering. However, at times of crisis or plenty the families meet as a clan. Communing with his kin, the primitive people experience a sense of power, well-being, security, and joy that is beyond the scope of the ordinary. Unable to fathom this experience the primitive project their feelings unto an animal with whom they feel an affinity due to economic or natural considerations. This totem becomes the centre of many myths which explain kinship, moral standards and rites.

This totemic system, Durkheim argues, is eminently social. The primitive people, according to Durkheim, felt power and security due to their membership in the clan which allows them to transcend their personal and family boundaries. The myths and rites that surround the totem, who is the symbol for society, help to ensure the continuity of the community and make intelligible various social phenomena. They explain rules of morality and language that the primitives people must have followed. Moreover, rites sanctioned by the totem serve to bring the society through potentially disruptive crises. This is particularly true at the time of death which threatens the solidarity of the society and raises doubts about the efficacy and power of the belief system. Funerary rites, by sanctioning communal action, re-enthuse its

---

participants with the religious experience and allow them to accept their culture.\textsuperscript{35}

Durkheim also explains other religious developments that plagued his predecessors as eminently social. The belief in an immortal soul is in Durkheim’s system a subsidiary element of the Totemic system. The soul is actually the particle of the totem that every clan member possesses, while immortality is an explanation of the continuity of the community. Furthermore, the high-god or All-father about which Lang and Schmidt talked, is the result of the collective power of the clan totems in the tribe.\textsuperscript{36}

**Religion - Projection of Human Wants - Marxism**

For Karl Marx and other such people who regard belief in a reality beyond nature as the product of economic factors; make strenuous efforts to establish some connection between religion and economics.\textsuperscript{37} In his opinion:

“Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people.”\textsuperscript{38}

He further states:

“The abolition of religion, as the illusory happiness of the people, is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up

\textsuperscript{35} Lowell W. Bloss, n.10, p.34.
\textsuperscript{36} ibid., pp.34,35.
\textsuperscript{37} Karl Marx (1818-83) was an exceptional thinker. He created the ideological basis of communism. His attitude to religion emerged in reaction to the suffering of so many on London’s streets, where he lived from 1849 onwards. He noticed how useful so much theology is to the rich and powerful. The doctrine of an after life means that you don’t worry about the here and now. The doctrine of individual salvation means you don’t rebel when the employer is exploiting you. Religion is the drug which keeps the poor quiet. Religion, all too simply, works in the interests of the rich and powerful.
a condition that requires illusion. The criticism of religion is therefore the germ of the criticism of the valley of tears whose halo is religion".39

In his view of religion, Marx is influenced by Ludwing Feurbach (1809-1872), who believed that religion is a projection of human wants and traits on the imagined figure of God.40 For Marx, the origins of religion are political and economic. Religion is an integral part of the capitalist ideological superstructure, an illusory value system created to keep the poor in their place by teaching them to be submissive, obedient, and resigned to their lot in life. Marx voiced his opinions repeatedly and at length in works such as the German Ideology (18-4546).41 They claim that religion has always been in the service of imperialism and exploitation and that it was the invention of the ruling, exploiting class as a means for breaking the resistance of the exploited masses. Religion has been used, they claim, to stupefy the deprived toilers and to encourage them to accept their deprivation. Marx sees religion as a man-made phenomenon. It functions as an illusory realization of human ideals, which provide man with compensation for surrender. Marx opines:

"Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self awareness of man who either has not yet attained to himself or has already lost himself again."42

In his view it is, as such, used by the state and the status quo in order to continue the oppressive economic and social system by fostering humility and cowardice. The oppressed are directed to await the promise of religion and not

40 Lowell W.Bloss, n.10, p.35.
41 IAN S. Markham, n.9, p.12
42 Karl Marx, n.38, p. 63.
to attempt to change reality. However, there is hope if man can realize that religion is man's own self-consciousness and not that of an aloof God. If man could perceive this situation he would be able to acknowledge the oppressive nature of his world and work to change it. Marx states:

"The criticism of religion disillusions man so that he may think, act and fashion his own reality as a disillusioned man come to his senses; so that he may revolve around himself as his real sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself." 43

Religion will, for Marx, die away as man realizes his true humanness and works to accentuate true human relationships based on the non-exploitative attitude of love and respect for fellow human beings and a proper regard for nature. These revolutionary attitudes that were once projected to heaven are actualized on earth. He opines:

"It is therefore the task of history, now the truth is no longer in the beyond, to establish the truth of the here and now. The first task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, once the holy form of human self-alienation has been discovered, is to discover self-alienation in the unholy forms. The criticism of heaven is thus transformed into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics. 44

Even Frederick Engels is not satisfied with bourgeois political economy, which according to him has given a certain insight into the casual connection of the alien domination (i.e. religion). In his view, it makes no essential

43 ibid., p. 64.
44 ibid., p. 64.
difference. According to him what is necessary for total change is the social act. He states:

"What is above all necessary for this, is social act. And when this act has been accomplished, when society, by taking possession of all means of production and using them on a planned basis, has freed itself and all its members from the bondage in which they are now held by these means of production which they themselves have produced but which confront them as an irresistible alien force; when therefore man no longer merely proposes disposes - only then will the last alien force which is still reflected in religion vanish; and with it will also vanish the religious, reflection itself, for the simple reason that then there will be nothing left to reflect." 45

A.N.Wilson and others like him have spoken more than what Marx described about religion. Marx described it as the opium of the people; but in their view it is much deadlier than opium. Wilson says:

"It is said in the Bible that the love of money is the root of all evil. It might be truer to say that the love of God is the root of all evil. Religion is the tragedy of mankind. It appeals to all that is noblest, purest, loftiest in the human spirit, and yet there scarcely exists a religion which has not been responsible for wars, tyrannies and the suppression of the truth. Marx described it as the opium of the people; but it is much deadlier than opium. It does not send people to sleep, it excites them to persecute one another, to exalt their own feelings and opinions above those of others, to claim for themselves a possession of the truth." 46

Such group of people thinks that religion is not kind; it is cruel. It does not rejoice in the truth. In fact, all the major religions go out of their way to suppress the truth and to label those who attempt to tell the truth as heretics.

Thus Communist philosophy holds religion to be a historical hoax. Since Communism studies history exclusively in the light of economics, to it, all historical factors were offshoots of the economic situation. It holds that it was the feudal and capitalistic systems prevailing in the past that had led to the birth of religion. Now that these outdated systems are dying a natural death, religions should also be treated as dead along with it. As Engels puts it, moral concepts, in the last analysis, are the product of contemporary economic conditions. Human history is the history of class wars, in which the ruling classes have been exploiting the backward classes, and religion and morals were invented to provide an ideological basis of safeguarding the interests of the ruling class. According to the Communist Manifesto, laws, morals, religion - all are the fraudulent innovations of the Bourgeoisie under the cloak of which most of its vested interests are hidden. Addressing the third All-Russia Congress (October, 1920) Lenin said:

"Of course, they did not believe in God. They knew very well that the Church authorities, landlords and bourgeois who spoke with reference to God, were simply interested in safeguarding their own interests as exploiters. They denied all such moral laws, as had been borrowed from a Super-human power, or were not based on the concept of the minds of farmers and labourers in order to serve the interests of landlords and capitalists. They asserted that their moral code was subject to the class struggle of the Proletariat alone, the source of their moral principle being the interest of the Class-struggle of the Proletariat".  

Scientific Empiricism, or Logical Positivism

Scientific empiricism, or logical positivism, became a regular movement in the second quarter of the 20th century, but as a trend of thought, it had already - long before - taken hold of people's minds. From Hume and Mill up to the time of Bertrand Russell, many philosophers have been its proponents, and it has now become the most important contemporary trend of thought, buttressed as it is by numerous centres of research and propagation all over the world. Secular humanists have declared that religion reflects an age when the mysteries of nature required an explanation. When scientific explanations for these natural mysteries are available. The God hypothesis is no longer required. Richard Dawkins, the brilliant biologist and author at the University of Oxford, draws a very succinct contrast between science and religion. Science is useful, while religion is useless even destructive. He is of the opinion that "If all the achievements of scientists were wiped out tomorrow there would be no doctors but witch-doctors, no transport faster than a horse, no computers, no printed books, no agriculture beyond substance peasant farming. If all the achievements of theologians were wiped out tomorrow, would anyone notice the smallest difference?" He goes on to state "Even the bad achievements of scientists, the bombs and sonar-guided whaling vessels, work! The achievements of theologians don't do any thing, don't affect anything, don't achieve anything, don't even mean anything. What makes you think that 'theology' is a subject at all?"

Modern, advanced knowledge states that reality is only that which can stand up to the tests of observation and experience, whereas religion is based on a concept of reality which cannot in this way be subjected to analysis and scientifically proved: it follows then that it has no basis in actuality. In other

---

48 IAN S. Markham, n.9, p.17
49 ibid., p.22.
words, religion gives an unrealistic account of real events. Since man's knowledge was limited in ancient times, the correct explanation of natural phenomena were bound to elude him. This being so, the suppositions he had which hinged on religion were distinctly far-fetched and, at best, tangential. But, thanks to the universal law of evolution, man has at last emerged from the darkness in which he was engulfed, and now, in the light of modern knowledge, it is possible for him to discard odd, conjectural beliefs and arrive at the true nature of things by purely empirical methods. Tr. Miles Writes: It might be said that metaphysicians of the past have done something comparable to writing a cheque without adequate funds in the bank. They have used words without proper 'cash' to back them; they have been unable to give their words 'cash-value' in terms of states of affairs. 'The Absolute in incapable of evolution and progress' is a grammatically correct sentence; but the words are like a dud cheque, and cannot be 'cashed'.

---

50 Religion and the Scientific Outlook, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p.20, quoted by Wahiduddin Khan, Islam and Modern Challenges, (Tr) Dr. Farida Khanam New Delhi, 1997 page.11.
Shariati's Views on the Phenomenon of Religion

Shariati has analyzed and evaluated the religion from philosophical, sociological and anthropological viewpoint in the manner of those who have challenged religion itself. In his view, tracing out the religion of primitives would help, to some extent, to explore the essence / origin of religion. Durkheim, Lierol, E.B.Tylor (1832-1917), Max Muler, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and others have adopted similar approach to study religion in 18th, 19th and in early 20th century. Although these social thinkers have arrived at anti-religious conclusions, yet they agree that religious beliefs have always been intertwined with human life, like Fetishism, Animism, Totemism etc. The origin of religion is to be found in 'primitive' societies which manifested simple, fragmented attitudes towards the unseen powers that governed their lives, based on perceptions of the operative powers of such entities as the ghosts of ancestors. Such ideas were held to be evident from observations of isolated groups, such as Australian aborigines, who had not developed in the manner of more 'sophisticated' societies. Later developments, it was claimed, saw the evolutionary emergence of spiritual beings, Gods, many gods, hence a structure of Polytheism, which in turn evolved into Monotheism, the belief in a single all-powerful God. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), an early sociologist, saw religion as a mythological representation of social structures, affirming thereby the values and rules of society in a quasi-objective form. He believes that Totemism has been the religion of primitive people. He surveyed of many nomad tribes in Africa, Northern America and Australia, who still were worshipping animals. Therefore, Durkheim describes religion nothing but sacredness of totem. He emphasizes the importance of society to the extent that social matters (in fact all human matters, as against the biological and

51 Ali Shariati, *Jamia Shinasi Adyan*, Iran, nd, p. 55
52 John R. Hinnells, n.27, p.164.
animal urges and needs, like eating and sleeping) including religion are the products of society. These products, says Durkheim have three characteristics: external, compulsive, and general. External characteristics are alien to individual existence and are imposed from without upon the individual by society existing prior to the individual and he accepted them under the influence of society. Acceptance of the normal, social, and religious traditions, customs, and values by the individual comes under this category, says Durkheim. They are compulsive, as they impose themselves upon the individual and mould his conscience, feelings, thoughts and preferences according to their own theories and of being compulsive, they are necessarily general and universal.

Shariati thinks that ‘Durkheimian determinism’ arises due to the failure to recognize the essential nature of the human beings. Shariati holds that this theory of Durkheim boomerangs itself against him. Each tribe according to Durkheim has its own totem, which has its own background, identity, rites and spirit, in this case how is it possible that other societies may adopt totem of alien society despite that this society has its own totem. If it is so, then totem is a relation of individual to society and feelings of religion is other type of instinct, which must be common. Shariati puts forth example of emblem of a nation. If somebody is praising is national emblem, he is actually praising the eternity of the soul of his nation and by means of one’s national emblem, one is differentiating his own nation from others, but meanwhile one is following some other religion. Thus it is evident that the individual belongs to a A-society; is taking religion of B-Society. Shariati gives an example that being himself an Iranian, it is not possible for him to take for himself the flag of France, but can adopt the French technology, writings and philosophy. Because all these things are not the collective soul of French Society, but is the matter

pertaining to human thought in general. Although one belongs to other nation or Country one can adopt or imitate this all, likewise French people can make literal exchange with an Eastern nation, because literature and art is not a collective soul of a particular society. Secondly Durkheim says that the individual of one society in worshipping their own totem, are worshipping the collective soul of their society and the individuals have thus the common soul, but in Barbaric societies, it has been seen in this single society, where they should have one religion, the minority has changed its religion i.e. although following the totem of majority, have adopted religion of other tribe.\(^5\)\(^4\) This indicates that religious feelings are somewhat different from feelings of collective soul. Shariati puts forth the example of Judaism, which we find in Arabian societies, while as this should had been confined to Banu-Isra’ilities etc. Separation of these two in the history are totally identified. Contrary to what Durkheim has said, worshipping of religious God is not worshipping of social symbol. Relation of man with religious God is not what is relation of individual with collective soul of his society. It is possible that relation of individual, with his ancestor must be fraught with much praise and adoration, but it is far behind from one’s religious feelings and instincts - with relation to God or gods or the unseen sacredness or sanctity. For this, it is not possible that individual in a society may change his religion, but only when religion with collective soul of society are not one and the same thing. Thus, Shariati challenges that the theory that Totemism can be considered as a religion of the primitives. Shariati thinks that Durkhemian determinism arises due to the failure to recognise the essential nature and essence of human beings. Shariati says,

“I believe all religions were based on monotheism and when, in the course of history, the social system was changed to

---
\(^{54}\) ibid., pp. 72,73.
multitheism, when the original classless societies were changed into ones with class distinctions and multi-groups, monotheism changed into multitheism".55

Shariati on Marxist Approach of Religion

Marxism considers religion as a tool in the hands of rulers and a projection of exploiters; and these have been the rulers who have plotted it. If it is taken true, then all the injections and teachings of the religion should have been merely a solace for the poor and downtrodden urging them to be contented in whatever state they are and whatever they have or have not. It should have restrained them not to rebel or make any rebellion against exploitation and exploiters and tyrants. The believers must have been contented and dependent on fate and divine will or their predestination. Believers must have been directed to neglect their portion in their lives and they should only wait for the rewards of the world hereafter. But things are quite opposite. Shariati is of the opinion that religion has always supported the downtrodden (mustadafun), ruled and exploited ones.56 Religion urges believers for revolution and rebel against any kind of tyranny and injustice and calls its crusaders mujahidin and those who slain in the way of God as martyrs (shuhda). If the religion would have been a device and a prevarication on the part of rulers or exploiters, then its preaching and teachings would have been hopeless and aimless for the downtrodden or the ruled class. Marxists never claim that religion has been a fabrication on the part of ignorant downtrodden and ruled people, from whose ignorance ruled class has had been benefited. Instead they say it has been the ruled class which has devised religion for consolidating their own position and just plundering the believing class, instead.

Prophet Mosses though genealogically belonging to a downtrodden race, but from the viewpoint of his social status is close to the rank of exploiters or ruling class. But he rebels against Pharaoh and supports Banu-Israel, the downtrodden class of society and this is anti-thesis of what Marxists claim. Here we quote some verses of Qura’n, which run against what Marxists say:

- “We have decided to grant a favour to the suppressed ones by appointing them leaders and heirs of the land, give them power in the land”
  (28:5)
- “God has promised the righteously striving believers to appoint them as His deputies on earth, as He had appointed those who lived before. He will make the religion that He has chosen for them to stand supreme.”
  (24:55)
- “The earth belongs to Him (God) and he has made it the heritage of whichever of His servants He chooses. The final victory is for the pious ones”.
  (7:128)
- “We have written in the psalms which we had revealed after the Torah that the earth will be given to our righteous servants as their inheritance”.
  (21:105)

Shariati is of the opinion that Marx seeks the easiest way for fighting against religion. Instead of referring to the faithful principles and the basic test of a school, Marx prefers to infer on the basis of those superstitious deviations in which common and misled people invest their belief. Because in this way,

---

57 Prophet Mosses was adopted by Asyia, wife of Pharaoh, as her son, thus he was nourished in a splendid manner like prince in the palace.
there is no need for research and it would be easy to ridicule, repudiate and negate that special school.⁵⁸ Shariati says:

“This shortcut changes his tone, as a ‘learned philosopher’, into a ‘propagatory orator’ or a ‘sophist politician’. This is not important, because to him, beating the power of religious faith paves the way for the victory of Marxism. In any case, from Marxian point of view, ‘end justifies means’, although the way of achieving aim, as Lenin states, would be through fighting against religion!’ Therefore, it is not strange while Marx, ‘a scientific philosopher and dialectician’ in scientific combat against religion, substitutes the “historical and social role of religion for “the intellectual and scientific truth of religion” and tends to prove the falsification of it, which is not an easy task, through condemning it.”⁵⁹

Marx tends to reason out that ‘religion’ had been the justifying factor for social injustice. Here, he neither presents the philosophical arguments and scientific reasonings as the materialists of 18th century and ancient naturalists had done, nor talks about religion or its true and real movements.

Marx declares rather: “The social principles of Christianity rationalized ancient slavery, endorsed medieval serfdom, and understand how, when the necessity arises, to support the suppression of the proletariat, however regretfully. It preaches the necessity for the existence of a ruling class and ruled class... The social principles of Christianity relegate compensation for all atrocities to the next world, while explaining their persistence in this world as punishment for original sin, or as a burden God has imposed as a test of His servants. The social principles of Christianity preach dishonour, contemptibility,

⁵⁹ ibid., p.53.
abjectness, servility, humility - in short, all base qualities. The proletariat, refusing to accept this debasement, has much greater need of courage, self-respect, pride and desire for independence, than of bread. The social principles of Christianity are hypocritical, but the proletariat's is revolutionary". On the one hand Marx declares the religion and ethics the product of sub-structure and economic production and does not acknowledge the distinction between 'ideology' and 'system' and on the other hand considers proletariat the torchbearer of ethics - spiritual attributes, which almost have been supported by the religion!

Shariati thinks it unfortunate that Karl Marx identifies Jesus with the Pope and this kind of argument and inference belongs to the vulgar, although unscrupulous propagandist may make use of it for political or quasi-religious ends. Shariati thinks it vulgar to criticize the weakens and corruption of the religious classes and to infer from it that religious studies are futile. To Shariati this method of discussion and deduction, is related to common people, although propagandists misuse it in politics or religion for instigation of common people. Because these are the common people who attack the corruption and weakness of scientists and conclude that 'science' is in vain. Religion has been used for the positive as well as for the negative purpose and this is not fault with the religion itself instead for what purpose religion is used for matters more here. The only straightforward and a little philosophical analysis that Marx offers concerning the origins of religion in his favour in form of an assertion is as follows:

"Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-awareness of man who either has not yet attained to himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no

abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produces religion's inverted attitude to the world, because they are in an inverted world themselves.... Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up a condition that requires illusion. The criticism of religion is therefore the germ of the criticism of the valley of tears whose halo is religion.61

For the philosophical basis of Marxism's anti-religious outlook, the works of the intellectuals that Marxists regard as belonging to the new bourgeoisie, need to be studied.62 The well-known charge laid against religion that pertains to the alienating effect of religion, 'proclaimed as great Marxist discovery, is essentially Feuerbach's. In his book The Essence of Christianity, he executed the famous inversion wrought upon the school of Hegel in connection with the relation between the Son (Christ) and the Father (God). He says:

"In this instance, it is the Father who is born of the Son. God does not manifest Christ; Christ manifests God, and the Christ who becomes spirit of mankind urgently seeking deliverance. The Holy Spirit is none other than that human spirit which, failing to recognize godhood within

---

61 Karl Marx, n.38, pp 63-4.
62 Marx and, following him, Lenin advise that communists republish all the works of the encyclopedists and Feuerbach. The latter is the connecting link between Hegel's idealism and Marx's dialectical materialism. He is responsible for that 'overturning of the Hegelian pyramid' that Marx and Engels claim to have orginated, and many of his discussions are to be found unaccredited among the pages of their works. He offered an interpretation of religion to which Marx and his followers have added nothing but detail and commentary, or mere repetition.
itself, personifies it in a metaphysical being, and situates what is within itself in an imagined heaven”.63

This is what Marx means by the alienating effect of religion; if one can avoid this alienation, one will arrive at oneself, experiencing the self-awareness of Homo homini deo ‘man who is his own god’.

Marx, wrote in the introduction of his treatise, that: “Philosophy is allied with the faith of Prometheus64, in short, I hate Gods, all reasons denoting God’s existence, prove his non-existence, the real evidence should be stated as follows: Since nature does not have any appropriate organization, so there is God, and because there is illegal world, so there is God, in other words, irrationality denotes the basis of God’s existence”.65

Marx, who had taken up the Promethean faith and the idea of a Promethean society from the humanistic sociologists, and who was to be influenced by Saint-Simon and later by Prooudhon, has in this instance inherited the religious outlook of Greek mythology, just as they did. He has generalized from the God-man relationship in Greek religion to that in all religions, unaware that the outlook of the great Eastern religions is completely contrary to it. They envision a God very sympathetic towards humanity, not one, as in the Greek religion, who regards man as a rival and faces him with jealousy and malevolence, only to be met with fear. Therefore, choosing the word ‘hated’ in the introduction of a philosophical thesis while talking about gods, is not natural. ‘Hatred’ is passionate expression not a philosophical or

---


64 Prometheus, in Greek mythology, is one of the gods, who, in order to render a service to man, betrayed the other gods. One night as all the gods slept, he stole the divine fire and handed it over to man. When the other gods came to know of this, they bound him in chains. They were alarmed that humanity should possess the celestial fire, for they wanted people to remain forever in darkness and base weakness, never to ascend to a station near that of the angels.

scientific one. The root of this spiritual hatred should be found in his private life and his unsuccessful love caused by Christian priests.66

To perceive the workings of the universe as ‘unintelligible’, ‘suprarational’, or even unscientific is to lose sight of this reflection and this continuity. It is this that confounds humanity in what Marx calls a ‘heartless world’ and a ‘dispirited’ existence; such is life for the man who, in a world of unfeeling matter, has become the plaything of a blind and unending dialectical conflict and is drowning in a ‘sea of tears’, with his disheartening black halo of atheism. Perceiving of the universe unintelligible, where there is no criterion to distinguish right from wrong, knowledge from ignorance, good from evil, reality from imagination, inevitably puts man in the category of not more than a commodity of a ‘thing’. In the words of Guenon, ‘when the world is without meaning and purpose, man is likewise meaningless, purposeless’. Marx grants that such humanity lacks a ‘real’ destiny. Islam, on the other hand, goes beyond granting humanity an honoured place in nature. It does more than deny that God has made man a helpless creature who, having lost himself, searches for his own values and powers in God’s being and demands them from Him with ‘sighs’ and ‘tears’.

In the last part of his speech when Marx says, “all reasons denoting God’s existence, prove his non-existence. Since nature does not have any appropriate organization, so there is God, and because there is illegal world, so there is God, in other words, irrationality denotes the basis of God’s existence”, it exhibits a kind of confused logic in that it has taken the view of popular religion as the criterion of religious reasoning, whereas the popular religious approach always seeks God outside natural, rational laws, in unintelligible

66 It appears that Marx’s knowledge of religion was confined to what his father (of Jewish descent, Protestant by conversion) had comprehended of it. He had not even heard of one of the most basic doctrines of Judaism, Protestant Christianity, and Islam alike: God’s assignation of free will to man, that he might struggle in his earthly life and search for his own liberation.
courses of events; it sees proofs of His existence in extraordinary occurrences and in unscientific and unnatural sources. By contrast, the scriptures, and particularly the Qura’n, have made a rational case of Tawhid on the basis of nature, custom, the constant laws of life, and the ordered and intelligible quality of events in the universe. They look upon these things as objective attestations to the existence of an Intelligence, Who rules over nature. In the above said statement, Marx has repeated and paraphrased Feurebach except that he attempts to gain credit for the point by substituting ‘religion’ for ‘God’ and thereby renders it meaningless, or at least obscure as there is no one who says ‘religion is the maker of man’. Where in all this is a thought that does not carry more of literary technique than philosophical depth.

Meanwhile, for one, who has learned religion on the basis of main texts and recognized it in the performances of its knowledgeable leaders, the world to come is nothing but logical, scientific and practical, continuation of the human life in this world. Heaven and hell, high and low ranks in hereafter, are the consequences of man’s service or treason of a responsible man in society and final results of material and worldly life of an individual or collective one who has chosen the way terminating to man’s perfection and provided both himself and his, melieu with moral values or reversibly has destroyed his nature and polluted his environment. We see that lack of such reaction in this world and leaving this continuity are irrational, amazing and even, against the scientific status of affairs. So the negation of this reaction ties up man, as stating by Marx, in a cruel world and inanimate existence, and such a man, who became like a plaything of the contradiction of a blind and aimless dialects in a world making out of impersonate material, steeped into a sea of these tears which atheism is its disappointed black halo! The basic difference between religion and materialism lies here i.e. ‘Man does not have a real fate’.

The Marxian theory regards man simply as a product of economic conditions. Like the soap-cakes manufactured in a factory, man is moulded in the factory of environment. He does not act with an independent mind, but simply conforms to whatever conditioning he has been subjected to. If this were in incontrovertible fact, how could it have been possible for Marx, himself the product of a 'capitalistic society', to revolt against the economic conditions prevailing in his times? If the contemporary economic system gave birth to religion, why not believe then, according to the same logic, that Marxism too is the product of the same conditions? If the stand taken by Marxism on religion is correct, why should this not be applicable to Marxism itself? It follows that this theory is absurd. There is no scientific and rational proof to support it.

**Religion - Man's Desire**

Shariati is of the opinion that various definitions of sociological, anthropological, philosophical etc. have neither proved nor disapproved the religion.\(^{68}\) He believed that instead of examining a belief from philosophical, scientific, logical and theological point of view, or through theories of physics and chemistry, one should find a standard more reasoning as far as determining the truth is concerned. Shariati opines that arriving at the ‘whole’ and then to elements i.e. to know the, ‘whole’ \((kul)\) first and then the ‘parts’ \((juzyat)\) is the old Aristotelian method. Contrary to this old method, new method is to explore the ‘parts’ first and then to arrive at the ‘whole’ of the case. In the light of new method, while segregating all tribes from red skinned Americans to black-skinned Africans, from Arabian religions of Seami to Aryanic of cultured Indian and Iranian and Barbaric Australian tribes, we find one of the common elements, i.e. of all religions is belief in supernatural \((ghyab)\). Though this

\(^{68}\) Ali Shariati, n.51, p. 91.
being one of the common characteristics of all religions, Shariati holds, it is an external characteristics of religion and we can not confine religion and define it on this very base. Shariati agrees with Jung (who explained Freud), who believes in three consciences of man i.e. conscience, unconscience or inner conscience and a third conscience which he has named as 'intermediate conscience' or 'social conscience'. Social conscience is a force which gets an individual involved towards society. Running from individuality towards society / class is called social spirit. Jung points out that 'social conscience" is in the very nature of man but he cannot explain that why this particular conscience after all springs out in man and what is its philosophical explanation, because this is not the task of Jung, says Shariati. Shariati describes that this is the very spring (source) where from the river of religion shoots-forth and this effulgence is manifested even to all anti-religionists and theo-religionists, although its name wouldn't be given as 'religion' or any other thing. It is this aspect of man which has bent him towards different kinds of worship. Shariati, therefore, opines that roots of a belief be found in the inner core of man's essence. He quotes Mantisque that religion is a spiritual urge, a deep well in the heart of man, to be filled with truth, otherwise superstitions shall take place in it. Shariati says:

"From the early history we see man in search of finding a way towards spiritual direction, raising his hands towards heaven or fixing his eyes in the eyes of sun, or sitting impatiently near fire and bewildering in aspirations of 'salvation' and making supplication, filled with sincerity and enthusiasm, whispering and murmuring with himself something, in such a situation he sees all sides full of mysteries; from that city he has perceived a

---

69 ibid., pp. 93,94,95.
70 ibid., p. 97.
71 ibid., p. 98.
72 ibid., p. 108.
gesture of 'light' that with the instinct of this earthly abode finds somewhat alien, he feels this world a shadow of thought that has come from any other heaven.'''

Shariati opines that faith of man in Fitches, Taboo, Totem, Manna, idol worship, stars, sun, fire, animism and his belief in various religions is the indication of man's inner natural urge and tendency of worship. He quotes Jalal al-din Rumi, "If you see that there is a forged coin current in the market, know that there has been a golden (original) one which was a means of exchange. No one makes a simple forged coin but always a forged golden coin." Shariati states:

"Man, wandering this strange earthly abode, found, himself under confined sky in amazement losing his way to his first heavenly abode, knowing that it exists - it happened so because he was certain he shall find a way. He gave up the first way and adopted other with the hope that he shall get rid of this prison by one way or the other, scratching his hands on the walls of this world, so that he may open a window".

The longing of man in his heart of hearts for an unknown destination, his aspirations, the restlessness of one's soul, his supplications are nothing but an manifestation of his inner search for the religion. In the words of Shariati, 'screaming of saints under the sky, full of toil searching of Buddha for 'salvation' from \textit{Karma} and succeeding to \textit{Nirvana}, heartfelt crying of Ali in the heart of nights in calm and cosy oasis of surroundings of Madina and also scornful and sorrowful statements of Sartre for being senseless cosmos of this world, all effulgence of frustrated human soul finds himself alien and alone,

\footnotesize{
\begin{itemize}
\item 73 ibid., p. 113.
\item 74 ibid.
\item 75 Ali Shariati, \textit{Art Awaiting its Saviour}, (Tr) Homa Fardjodi, The Shariati Foundation Tehran, 1979, p.11
\item 76 Ali Shariati, n.51, p. 113.
\end{itemize}
}
under the roof of this prison, all this indicates that this world is not his eternal abode’. Since the beginning of human history, religion and art has gone side by side. The primitive man has drawn his imaginary aspirations on the walls of his cave. He has tried to portray and materialize his imagination in the shape of art, poetry, paintings, music etc. Shariati holds that this inclination of man towards art, poetry since stone-age is an open indication of his craving of many for any other world. Art, according to Shariati, is not a plaything in man’s hands as a means for gaining pleasure, for diversion, for stupefaction, for expenditure of accumulated energy. It is not a servant to sexuality, politics or capital. Instead art is the special trust given to man by God. It is the creative pen of the Maker, given by Him to his vicegerent so that he might make a second earth and a second paradise, new forms of life, beauty, thought, spirit, message, a new heaven, a new time. He says:

“One of the things that art does is to help decrease the feeling of alienation of the conscious human being who has fled and alienated himself. How? It allows him to decorate the walls of his prison in the image of the house he wishes he was in and isn’t. These objects, this sky these stars and mountains do not understand him. He is left alone, stone-like and blind among all these objects. Art gives feelings to all these objects.”

Art according to Shariati is the expression of the human being’s creativity and through the continuation of this being, it becomes an expression of the creativity of God, in order to create what he wants and does not find. He says:

---

77 ibid., p.114
80 Ali Shariati, n.75, p.21.
“Art brings consciousness to the unconscious soul of the human being because art, awakening the sense of the abstract, allows man to come to know God”.

Even mythological tales is itself a history, which must have been existed but is not, so myths have been fabricated. All this indicates that man is instinctly attracted towards the super-natural phenomenon and he finds a gate open to enter this realm and that is ‘Religion’.

Naturalism

Man can not confine himself to nature, as nature does not explain, she is herself in need of an explanation. Naturalists believe that man is the outcome of nature, so he cannot excel nature, master it or transcend it. They believe that nature is an ultimate reality, alive but unconscious. Shariati raises objection that how an unconscious thing can become a cause of such a creature, who is three dimensional creature, possessing freedom of choice, self-awareness and creativeness, which nature does not posses itself. Philosophically, it is impossible for the less possible, less complete or less perfect to be the cause of that perfect to be the cause of which is higher than itself. For example temperature, knowledge and light are of varying degrees of intensity and perfection. It is impossible for a higher degree of temperature to emanate from one lower than itself. It is likewise impossible for a person to obtain a good knowledge of the English language from one who himself has little or no knowledge of it. Nor is it possible for a feeble source of light to be the cause

---

81 ibid., p.23.
82 Ali Shariati, n.78, p. 33.
83 Comment of Cecil Boyee Hamann, quoted by Wahiduddin Khan, n.50, p.22.
85 ibid., p. 77.
of a source greater than itself. This is because every higher degree constitutes a qualitative and quantitative increase over the one below it. This quantitative increase cannot be bestowed by one not in possession of it. When you wish to finance a project from your own capital, you cannot put into this project an amount greater than that you already have. Shariati holds:

“Although the naturalist maintained that man was the most developed species in nature, he subordinated man to nature and to natural forces. As an ideology, naturalism was another attempt to reduce man's freedom of choice, self-awareness, and creativeness. It was another man victimizing school of thought". 87

Religion and Science

Science in its original sense meant “knowledge”. Now in its broadest sense it is generally restricted to what were previously called physical sciences i.e., the study and systematization of the various aspects of man’s environment. In this sense, science is concerned with description, not with explanation; it attempts to say how things happen, not why they so happen. In the final analysis it is based on measurement and classification and therefore does not claim to deal with matters which are not susceptible to that treatment. Now what modern science tells us is only an elaboration upon, rather than an explanation of reality. The entire body of modern scientific enquiry is concerned only with the question: ‘What is it that exists?’ The question: why does it exist, is far beyond its purview. Since 16th and 17th century when Bourgeois system suppressed Feudalism, instead of searching the existence and essence of man, science has become a tool of capitalism. 88 In the words of Shariati, science and capitalism have entered into a matrimonial relationship,
and capitalism acted as male and science as female and the spouses gave birth to the illegal child of ‘modern technology’. Shariati states that in the Middle Ages, feudalism, supported and justified by religion, was the infrastructure of the society, religion being its superstructure. But the modern ages witnessed the decline of feudalism and the rise of the new bourgeoisie as the ruling class of the society. The new bourgeoisie launched extensive attacks against the vestiges of feudalism, its religious and cultural heritage. Eventually the new bourgeois class took over the leadership of Europe and established itself as its most dominant power. As the new ruling class, the new bourgeoisie, being secular in outlook, founded the principles and tenets of its cultural and moral norms upon individualism, materialism, economic, social and political interests and objectives. So it attempted the bourgeoisification of science and philosophy, religion and ethics, the arts and the humanities, so that they may serve its interests more directly and permanently. Dependent upon pragmatic values, it went so far to replace quality and quantity, intuition by reason, search for truths by search for power, life for the cause of an ideal by life for the sake of life, excellence by mediocrity, wisdom by diversion, love by lust, adoration by satisfaction, the heaven by earthly paradises, the hereafter by the present life, the search for the meaning of human life by the search for the exploration of natural resources, and so on. Beauty, truth and charity - the three most cherished lasting values in human culture - were dismissed and in their place were installed the three popular principles of the new bourgeoisie: realism, power, and consumption, which continued to exert tremendous influence upon the existential life, spirit, science and philosophy of its culture and society.

Shariati says:

89 ibid, p.26.
"The new bourgeoisie turned its eyes earthward, having done away with the metaphysical. The new bourgeois individual preferred the lust of the belly and his sexual pleasure to higher sentiments of the soul. He based his life on comfort and consumption, devoted himself to making and supplying the tools and means of his life, and thus dispensed with concerning himself with those higher values, mysteries, quests, and longings which impart direction and meaning to man's life in the universe. Although the bourgeoisie helped man to escape the rigid frame of his fate, experience and recognize all his potentiality and earthy dimensions, transcend the limits of heredity and what heredity meant him to be; although it taught him that he was larger than heredity and that he needed realism, a scientific approach which would help him to perceive and utilize the facts and phenomena of this physical world upon which he was dependent materially and existentially - despite all these, the bourgeoisie culture could not inspire man's restless longings, his quest for the ideal, his reverence for the mystical and the mysterious, his higher dreams and promises toward which he liked to aspire".91

The dominating spirit of today's culture and civilization, according to Shariati, is the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is the crass spirit of the low swindle-market, of the stock exchange, of mediocrity, of the culture of power, of the manufacture of tools, of the culture of commercialism, of the cult of consumerism, of the new decadent morality of finding fulfillment of lower passions. The arts and letters of the bourgeoisie glitter with absurdity, diversion, propaganda, and sentimentalism. In discarding the ancient culture by supplanting it by a handful of mixed ethics and values, the new bourgeoisie

91 ibid., p.50,51.
committed in the words of Shariati, a "progressive crime" - for what was discarded was indeed the Medieval culture of Europe. Nevertheless the new bourgeoisie is being highly praised and thanked for its thrilling new slogans and schools such as liberalism, democracy, scientism, evolutionism, and its pronounced aversion to superstitionism, theocratic absolutism, and cultic beliefs and practices. Renaissance, and the revolution in the view of Shariati caused man to lose some of the most essential gifts of his essence: his quest for the ideal, for love, for perfection, for the meaning of life and for the secrets of the soul transformed man into the strongest animal in nature.

Who is Responsible Science or Capitalism?

Shariati holds Bourgeoisie responsible for lowering the status of man in the modern ages. He says that it is not science to be held responsible for all this; it is indeed the mediocre and petty soul and rationale of the bourgeoisie which has always spoken in the language of science and presented its own crass perception of life through the medium of philosophy. It is economic materialism that has lowered the status of man in the modern ages, having forced its philosophy of materialism upon his world-view. Shariati states that in the modern ages, the ruling bourgeoisie, in complicity with its dependent intellectuals, has also attempted to justify its dominion over humanity by imposing its materialistic culture. Depending upon a power-production system where production is meant for power and power for production, where man is transformed into nothing more than a worshiper of the cult of consumerism, the bourgeoisie has tried to reduce man's status from his being a world-responsible being to a tool being used by the machinery of the social system, to a single link to the chain of labour attending the steel system of machinism, serving the bourgeois bureaucracy, its technological dictatorship, and the tyranny of mass

92 ibid., pp.51,52.
93 ibid., 52,53
94 ibid, p. 55.
production and consumption. Under the tyranny of this system, man has been divested of his freedom and his greatest gift of creation; he has been degraded into a groveling slave, toiling, paining, sweating and fawning at the feet of the slave-system, so that he may be bought as a saleable article. 95 Shariati says:

"it is the bourgeoisie which through its garish industrial buildings, its materialistic culture, its glittering civilization, cheap arts, and its power-structured political establishments has managed to disintegrate man's religious ideals and quests for truths. In order to accomplish this, it has put science, philosophy, and the arts to the slavish labour of serving its own materialistic interest. The bourgeoisie has thus festered the spirit of humanity with sickness, absurdity, and nausea, having put an end to the world-view of unity. In addition to all this misery and spiritual sterility and moral decadence it has inflicted upon mankind, it has stepped further to justify itself and the perpetuation of its rule through the complicity and collaboration of its installed intelligentsia and the official religious institutions". 96

The Relation Between Science and Faith

Shariati describes, enlightenment (hikmah) is nothing but faith. 97 It is faith which bestows direction to the science. Explaining the functions of science and faith or scientists or enlightened soul, Shariati states:

95 ibid, pp. 56,57
96 ibid, p.57.
97 Ali Shariati, n.51, p.220. According to Shariati the word ‘hikmah’ (wisdom) which is used in the Qur’an and within the Islamic cultural milieu, conveys the same meaning as he has attributed to enlightenment. The kind of knowledge (ilm) which is emphasized in Islam is an awareness unique to man, a divine light and a source of consciousness of the social conscience. Shariati quotes a famous tradition “Knowledge is a light which God makes to shine in the heart of whomever He desires”. It is this awakening, illuminating, guiding and responsibility-generating knowledge which Shariati has called ‘divine light’, which begets faith and responsibility. (Ref. Ali Shariati, n.51, pp. 219-220. Also Ref Ali Shariati, What is to be Done, (Ed) Farhang Rajaee, USA, 1986, pp.6-7).
“A scientist justifies, explains, and creates the conditions for producing as affluent, comfortable, strong, and leisurely life as possible. At most, he discovers the ‘facts’, whereas an enlightened person identifies the ‘truth’. A scientist produces light, which may be utilized either for right or wrong objectives, an enlightened person, analogous to a ‘tribal guide’ (ra’id) and as a vanguard of the caravan of humanity, shows us the right path, invites us to initiate a journey, and leads us to our final destination. Since science is power and enlightenment light, from time to time, the scientist serves the interests of oppression and ignorance; but the enlightened person, of necessity and by definition, opposes tyranny and darkness”.

In order to erase the doubts about contradiction or confirmation of science and faith, scholars have defined the contribution of both faith and science in the following words:

“Science gives man power and enlightenment, and faith gives love, hope and warmth. Science creates technology and faith creates purpose. Science provides with momentum and faith with direction. Science is ability and faith is good-will. Science shows what there is while faith inspires as what to do. Science is the external revolution and faith is the internal one. Science makes the world humane and faith elevates the human spirit. Science expands man horizontally, and faith promotes him vertically. Science re-shapes nature, and faith moulds man. Both science and faith give power to mankind. What science gives to human beings is detached strength, but what faith gives to them is an attached strength. Both science and faith are beauty, science being the beauty of wisdom and faith being the beauty of spirit. Science, as well as faith gives man security.

---


Dr. Iqbal is of the same view, he suggested faith a preliminary requirement for a society before equipping it with the scientific developments. He says:

"Humanity needs three things today a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and a set of principles universally upheld which would explain the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe, has no doubt, built idealistic system on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why thought alone has influenced man so little while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement. The Muslim, on the other hand, is in possession of these ultimate ideas resulting from a revelation, which coming from the inmost depths of life internalizes its own apparent extremity. With him or her, the spiritual basis of life is a matter of conviction for which even the least enlightened person among us can easily lay down his life.\footnote{Mohammad Iqbal, \textit{Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam}, Delhi, 1980, pp. 178-179.}"
History has proved that the separation of science and faith has caused irreparable damage.\(^{101}\) Faith must be recognized through science. Faith remains safe from superstitions through the enlightenment of science. Faith without science results in fanaticism and stagnation, getting us nowhere. Einstein says, “Without faith – science is blind, and without science faith is lame”. Where there is no science and knowledge, faith in naive followers becomes an instrument in the hands of clever charlatans. Science without faith is like a sword in the hand of a drunkard. It is like a light in the hand of a midnight thief enabling him to steal the best merchandise.\(^{102}\) There is not only any contradiction between science and faith, but that they are complementary to one another. It is clear that science cannot be substituted for faith in giving us enlightenment and ability, love and hope, to promote the level of our desires, to change our goals and ideas which are naturally and instinctively based on individuality and selfishness; instead giving us goals and ideals which are based on love and spiritual interests. In addition to being a tool in our hands, these goals and ideals change our essence and our nature. Belief cannot be a substitute for science to make nature known to us, to discover the natural rules for us and to help us to know ourselves.

Since almost all the theories of approaching religion in modern times are, in one way or the other, intertwined with a overt or covert scientific paradigm, therefore, Shariati, like Iqbal and Mutahhari, has dealt with the subject in a way erudite manner, bringing out the relation of religion vis-à-vis science in a more sociologically acceptable parlance. He analyses the claims and counter-claims of the proponents of various sociological, psychological, Marxian and scientific theories of religion in a manner reminiscent to the all invigorating theorizing of a spiritually oriented ideologue of Islam.

\(^{101}\) Murtza Mutahhari, n.99, p. 22.

\(^{102}\) This is why today’s unbelieving learned man is not the slightest bit different from yesterday’s unbelieving, ignorant man, in his nature and behaviour.