Faith and Reason: A Synthesis in Pakistani Society

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Abstract

The basic objectives of this paper are to build a general level of understanding towards the need for synthesizing and harmonizing religious, scientific and philosophical thoughts as they are developed and practiced in Pakistan or in other words, bringing the Islamic and western incliners close to each other and also in outlining some practical methodological ways through which this process of integration can be put on track leading towards a forward looking and modern Pakistani society while retaining its core and basic fabric of faith and religion. The paper has three sections, the first section highlights the needs and reasons for synthesis in relation to various segments of our society and also point out the potential adverse consequences of not undertaking and building an integrative view. The second section suggests some ways, measures and methods of achieving the above mentioned thought of integration across the society and focuses on some of the collective and institutional level endeavors and commitments required to actualize this integration. The third section of this paper issues some warnings regarding the process of integration and its possible undesirable repercussions on the society, in light of some of the earlier such attempts. The research draws some practical steps which need to be undertaken in the Pakistani society for creating a synthesis between Faith and Reason.

Keywords: philosophical thoughts,

1. Introduction

The Reason-Faith Synthesis debate has surfaced many a times, in differing forms and intensities, across the history of cultures and civilizations of the humankind. At times it has presented itself as integration of all sciences and knowledge while at other times one can witness similar attempts at combining religion, mainly Christianity and Islam with sciences and philosophy.

This paper focuses on the issue of synthesis of reason and faith from a purely Pakistani paradigm and no attempt is made to suggest an overall grand synthesis between cultures and civilizations at this stage. Some clarification of the terms *faith* and *reason,* as they are used in this paper, needs to be made. The term faith, from the point of view of this paper, is defined as an overall "Islamic inclination" towards life, based on the practice of Islam in both orthodox and mystical manner in the contemporary Pakistani society, while *reason* is meant to highlight a "western inclination or attitude" based on the western methods and views of rationalism and empiricism in science and philosophy, and life in general.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this paper are to build a general level of understanding towards the need for synthesizing and harmonizing religious, scientific and philosophical thoughts as they are developed and practiced in Pakistan or in other words, bringing the Islamic and western incliners close to each other and also in outlining some practical methodological ways through which this process of integration can be put on track leading towards a forward looking and modern Pakistani society while retaining its core and basic fabric of faith and religion.

This task is undertaken under three sections in this paper, the *first section* highlights the needs and reasons for synthesis in relation to various segments of our society and also point out the potential adverse consequences of not undertaking and building an integrative view. The *second section* suggests some ways, measures and methods of achieving the above mentioned thought of integration across the society and focuses on some of the collective and institutional level endeavors and commitments required to actualize this integration. The *third section* of this paper issues some warnings regarding the process of integration and its possible undesirable repercussions on the society, in light of some of the earlier such attempts.

1.2 Approach

The approach of this paper to the issue of integration of faith and reason in Pakistani society is based on "seeing through history", and the historical perspective is brought forward to meet the present and in a generalized way

extrapolated into future (Crotty, 1998, p. 100). Though no attempt is made to interpret any of the religious scripture in a purely hermeneutic way of interpretivism, yet the heavy borrowings from history and their amalgamation with present and possibly future, grounds this paper in a somewhat hermeneutic mode of expression.

2. SECTION ONE: Why synthesis is required?

2.1 Structure of Pakistani society: The issue of internal polarization

Before looking into the anatomy of our current societal structure, it has to be kept in mind that we are living an era of technology and information revolution which has blurred the boundaries between cultures where hardly anyone is immune from being influenced, and in some cases swayed away, by these cultural invasions, making the need for a renewed approach and philosophy towards life cannot be ignored.

Pakistani society is a product of three parallel but largely unrelated systems of education; English and Urdu medium schools and religious madaris. English medium schools cater to the well-to-do class and are mostly located in the private sector whereas the other two types which in general are the sole source of education for the economically less privileged class, belong primarily to the public sector. A large majority of the society, especially those belonging to rural areas have simply little or no access or motivation or both for education. The outcome of this disjointed and thoughtless education system is the emergence of two distinct classes in the society, a well educated segment who can pursue higher education either locally or from abroad and is heavily influenced by the western thought and, a less educated segment having little exposure to western influences but wit strong Islamic inclinations. These two segments live in their own worlds, with their own beliefs, values, ambitions and expectations and are citizens of two different intellectual-spiritual worlds. This *internal polarization* is probably the biggest need why synthesis is required between reason and faith in our society. The inquiry which I want to raise in this paper is; where could this segmentation of society take us if nothing is done to break the status-quo? The creation and ideological differentiation between the two classes is not only promoting a situation of mistrust and isolation between them but also proving to be the hardest obstacle in nurturing a national culture based on shared values and expectations of the nation as a whole. The well educated group, in general, believes in the western rational-empirical model as a way forward for progress whereas the more conservatives have little knowledge and exposure to the potential benefits of this model. As a result none of the two segments is contributing what it can to the underlying core beliefs and values of the national ideology of Pakistan.

2.2 Historical support for integration: It has happened before!

The internal optimism of this paper about synthesis stems from the historical evidence that syntheses, of faith and reason and other knowledge, have happened before. The Ionian Enchantment which Edward Wilson mentions in his book "Consilience" means a belief in the unity of sciences and the assumption that the world is orderly and can be explained by a few natural laws (Wilson, 1998, p. 3). He traces the roots of this integrative idea back to the time of Thales of Ionia in the sixth century B.C. Another historical evidence of synthesis comes from St. Augustine (354-430) who transferred Platonic and Neoplatonic themes to Christianity and who, according to Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), adopted anything consistent and rejected anything contrary to Christian faith from these themes (Moore & Bruder, 2001, p. 69).

The Islamic Golden Period of knowledge ushered in the 9th century through encouragement by Caliphs to translate Greek writings into Arabic and Al-Kindi (801-873) termed as "the philosopher of the Arabs", borrowed heavily from Neoplatonic Aristotlianism and directed Muslim philosophy towards an accord between philosophy, religion and reason (Sharif, 1983, p. 421,423). This trend was kept alive by other Muslim philosophers like Al-Razi (865-925), Al-Farabi (870-950), known to have expounded philosophy in a religious way and philosophized religion, Ibn Sina (980-1037) who anticipated Aquinas in his adoption of the distinction between essence and existence, and by many more Muslim thinkers who pursued such integrations. The great achievement of Aquinas is considered to be the production of a vast synthesis of the western thought with elements of Islamic and Jewish thought (Magee, 2001, p.59).

The most outstanding historical evidence of synthesis is probably seen in the 12th and 13th century when, under Islamic philosophers' influence the work of Aristotle reached Europe and had an altogether transforming effect on European intellectual development and was instrumental in pulling Europe out of the Dark Ages (Magee, 2001, p.55). Lenn Goodman's recent book on Islamic and Jewish philosophy highlights the cross-pollination of the two schools of thought, and commentators of the book have furthered this relationship by terming it as, "convergence and not mere cross-pollination" (Kellner, 2000).

The main focus of the Vienna Circle (a group of philosophers and scientists centered at the University of Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s who espoused logical positivism) was to introduce the methods of natural sciences to the practice of social sciences and also in introducing the exactitude of mathematics to the study of philosophy (Crotty, 1998, p. 24; Moore & Bruder, 2001, p. 180).

More recently the integrative endeavors of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (in education), Muhammad Iqbal (in philosophy) and M.A. Jinnah (in politics) have resulted in the partition of India and emergence of Pakistan on the world map.

2.3 Economic isolation

It is beyond the scope of this paper to go in details of the nature and extent of Pakistani societal problems but the rapidly increasing western indifference towards our problems in particular and, the widening North-South gap in general merit some urgent and solid remedial measures. The Arab Studies Quarterly assigns this increasing disparity between North and South as a major cause of surge in incidents of terrorism in recent times, "The gap between South and North was almost non-existent as late as 1800 before heyday of colonialism, when many Southern economies were crippled" and also laments the fact that "with a few exceptions, Islam is almost entirely within the boundaries of South." (Elnur, 2003).

2.4 Threat of political isolation

One cannot also ignore the challenges imposed on Pakistan due to changing political scenarios around it in the shape of renewed Sino-Indian axis and also developing economic links between India and Iran.

2.5 Growing culture of intolerance

The specific press in this paper is on the resolution of internal issues of disharmony, religious and sectarian intolerance, religious and sectarian extremism, dearth of scientific development and lack of any attempt to provide a guiding thought or philosophy through invoking the spirit of integration and synthesis in our mind set. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, these cultural trends, if allowed to grow unchecked, will damage the very fundamental core fabric of our society.

3. Potential Consequences of the current Thought Polarization

3.1 Consequences of Reason alone attitude: Contemporary western concerns

There is no doubt that the rational-empirical model of Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677), Leibniz (1646-1716), Locke (1632-1704), Berkeley (1685-1753), Hume (1711-1776) and Burke (1729-1797) in philosophy and that of Copernicus (1473-1543), Newton (1642-1727), Machiavelli (1469-1527), Bacon (1561-1626) and Hobbes (1588-1679) in science after the Renaissance in Europe, reshaped the scientific attitude, politics and government as they are actually practiced today. But today's practices are not free of vices and have led to many of the global problems like nuclear weapons, clones, waste of billions of dollars on meaningless space exploration projects, war on civilian populations, genocide, AIDS, to name a few. The American pragmatism of 19th and 20th century, with its rejection of the idea of fixed, absolute truth and the insistence that truth is relative to a time and place and purpose and thus ever-changing in light of circumstances and new data (Moore & Bruder, 2001, p.174), has added to the confusions of mankind and has turned human beings into economic animals having nothing more than material motives and ambitions in their minds. The contemporary western philosophy of mind, with its rejection of the concept of dualism and the growth of physicalist views in the form of behaviorism, identity theory and functionalism which attempt to reduce and redefine the concept of mind or soul as mere physical and functional notions can perhaps be of some use in the short term, but is definitely wanting when it comes to addressing the longer terms issues of peace of mind, happiness, patience, sacrifice and other notions unrelated with apparent and immediate gains. The Justification Hypothesis goes to the extent of explaining human ego (which is itself intangible and empirically inaccessible) in terms of evolution following the process of natural selection (Vazire & Robins, 2004). The need for synthesis in our country is therefore more acute than ever otherwise, if not checked, the unilateral progression of these mechanistic western views would damage the very basic foundations of our society.

In an attempt to explain every phenomenon scientifically, west seems to have already assumed that science can explain all that exists and can answer all the possible queries, "implying that any pattern of reasoning that can be used to reach such an idiotic conclusion must obviously be defective" (Moore & Bruder, 2001, p.343). This situation draws a parallel with west's own favorite objection to the 11th century Christian philosopher, St. Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God by his contemporary Benedictine monk, Gaunilo. This obsession with seeking rational explanations of every happening is further weekend by scientist themselves, and the assertion of Heisenberg in the form of his "uncertainty principle" asserting that, "it is impossible to

determine both the position and momentum of a subatomic particle with any real accuracy" (Crotty, 1998, p. 29 – 30) turns the laws of physics into subjective expression rather than expression of objective truth. The western bias towards mechanistic approach to all walks of life is a continuous stimulus for further developments in natural sciences at the expense of social sciences, "contemporary ontologists are generally very careful to reach their theories compatible with natural sciences. They are however, less concerned with social sciences and moral and political philosophy" (Balazs, 2004). Another outcome of adopting an approach to life, based purely on reason, is the obvious proximity to secularism, in the sense of even divorcing the possibility of religious thoughts. Some of the current thinkers in west even blame the current western Christianity for hoping to find in secular moral philosophy a grounding for Christian mores (Engelhardt & Tristram, 2003; Herdt, 2000) and insist that discursive reflections alone cannot make moral insights available, undermining the notion of beautitude, (Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God", Matt 5:8).

The idea of unity of sciences put forward by Edward Wilson's "Consilience" (1998) does not present a realistic hope for synthesis because not only does it criticizes religion at every available opportunity, but in an uninformative manner tries to compare it with biology. Wilson's embracing of enlightenment (scientific humanism) seems to have irked the postmodern philosophical thinkers, "Postmodernism deconstructs the enlightenment as the soul of European modernity whose scientific, technological, economic and industrial complex has resulted in ecological irrationality and pushes all humanity and its habitat to the brink of total destruction……postmodern philosophy is thoroughly ontologically, epistemologically, ethically and politically antifoundationalist, that is, against human nature as a fixed set of traits which comes in different guises in physicalism and biogeneticism" (Hwa, 2002). The argument presented by Hwa against C-theory of Wilson is that the success of natural sciences since the time of Galileo, who could express some of the elements of the nature mathematically, should not lead us to assume that the same can be applied to science of human social behavior without committing a "methodolatry".

Another outcome of this mechanistic approach is leading to unnecessary corporate losses inflicted by competitors who tend to focus more on damaging the profits of other companies rather than improving their profitability (Arnett & Hunt, 2002). This trend of *competitive irrationality* is suggested to be reversed by enhancing deontological orientation, cognitive moral development, idealism and by controlling relativism. The moral philosophers of management are now expressing the need for reverting to the humane values, taken out from corporate and managerial world under the influence of purely mechanistic approach, "Time, art and love must unite against taxes, supervisors, and usury: workers and owners of the world, you have nothing to lose but the chains of illusions with which the moralists of the business schools, both economists and organization theorists, would bind you, providing tools for managerial enchainment" (Clegg, 1996) is a clear reflection of how skeptical even the contemporary western managerial philosophy sounds of the mechanistic influences.

If this is how even the west is preparing to face the challenge of "unchecked rational thinking", its unchecked advance in our society (which is slowly getting hold in our minds) and its possible repercussions on our value systems are not very hard to anticipate.

3.2   Consequences of Faith alone attitude

Highlighting the potential and actual problems in following the path of reason alone is something quite palatable and digestible to Muslims but, identifying the issues emerging from following the faith alone and without acquiring and applying the worldly knowledge is seemingly a matter of little concern to them .The point of this paper is not to discourage having faith and following it but the intention is to highlight the consequences of not exploring and pursuing the other spheres of knowledge like natural and social sciences and political and moral philosophy as it is practiced today in the rest of the world, along with having a religious faith. In an address to Muslim students in Lahore, Sayyid Ahmad (1817-1898) highlighted this issue more than two centuries ago, "I want you to dive deep into European literature and sciences but at the same time I expect you to be true to your faith" (Sharif, 1983, p.1597). This is the thought what is termed as synthesis and this is precisely what is missing from our society even today. The Pakistani intellectual elitists have not strived for developing a culture where contemporary western knowledge is explored indigenously and where anything new is added in it through the process of research and inquiry. Embracing science and west only for the sake of living a comfortable life, with all the scientific gadgets and luxuries around, without the rigorous hard efforts put in to develop and build the same, is following the west blindly. Similarly blind, spiritless and prejudice-based following of faith is also not the cure of our societal ills of today.

If the lopsided material progress of the west is unethical and uninspiring, so is our rigid religiosity which has become hollow and a life and progress-thwarting force. As Iqbal mentions in his book, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, adherence to the fossilized religious dogmatism alone cannot generate an outlook that would lead to the self-realization of individuals and societies and also holds that in human life religion is

more central and vital than philosophy as religion is a system of general truths with the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended. But man being a rational creature cannot be satisfied with faith unless he finds reason also to be in agreement with it and in view of this, religion is in greater need of a rational foundation than even the dogmas of science. A recent similar line of thought, linking faith and reason, emerges from the exploration of Adam Smith's work on the grounds of moral philosophy, "Smith sees polytheism as an explanation, a story, found in less mature stage of society. The story (religion) matures with society. A medium of that maturation is philosophy……..even as society evolves and the philosophical researchers confirm the role of those duties embodied in religion, philosophy provides no enforcement mechanism. Here again, religion fills an instrumental void" (Evensky, 1998). While responding to Richard Posner's attack on moral philosophy's impotence in directing human choice of ends, Harvard Law Review, from a purely philosophically perspective, reports that, "Good character is a necessary condition for moral soundness, but that does not mean moral philosophy cannot add anything to the character we acquire as children. Even the best character is likely to prove deficient in certain ways, and when it does, reason provides needed supplementation, and support, adding a depth to moral life, that no set of virtuous habits can supply" (Kronman, 1998).

Following the faith blindly and with no regard to the context of present and future has resulted in extremely myopic view of life, breeding intolerance and denial of others; of their (others') achievements and of the possibility of their goodness. This intolerance of others is a self-created vacuum which can only enforce isolation (intellectual, economic and political) on its practioners, resulting in the shape of poverty, hollowness, confusion, frustration and extremism for the masses and bringing the society on the brink of entering a dark tunnel with no light at the end.

4. SECTION TWO: How can synthesis be handled in Pakistani society? A suggested methodology

Keeping in mind the magnitude and sensitivity of the issue, the suggested methodology for undertaking synthesis of faith and reason in Pakistan is presented in this section. Considering the space constraint, no attempt is, therefore, made to go in the specific details of implementation issues. A generic outline, from where the process can be started, is therefore presented.

4.1 Role of Education

The synthesis process should ideally begin at the individual level, and the broad strategies suggested here are developed keeping this individual focus in sight. The most vital institution which can bring about synthesis in a fruitful manner in Pakistan is none other than education. As noted earlier, our educational system is encouraging the production of diverging classes in the society and hence can be a relevant starting point for bringing about the required changes in our mind sets to initiate the process of integration and synthesis.

This paper does not suggest to merge the different streams of educational thought i.e. English & Urdu medium and religious madaaris, overnight (a practical impossibility), in contrast they can exist in their current forms, at least in the beginning, but with some meaningful modifications and thoughtful additions. For the traditional deeni madaris imparting religious education and the state run schools, colleges, universities and, all other educational institutions falling in or towards the category of conservative (referred to as recipients of faith) and, for those who can afford education from English medium schools, westernized local universities, and those who have exposure to foreign education (referred to as recipients of reason), the following broad measures for synthesis are suggested.

Objective: *to add a flavor of "faith" and "reason" in the thought process of knowledge recipients.*

4.1.1 Science, Philosophy Reason and Early Islamic Thinkers

Firstly, as mentioned already, these recipients (both of reason and faith) need to be informed of the Islamic thinkers and scientists and their achievements and their role in initiating and maintaining the golden period of Islam for well over six centuries. The following table, very briefly, outlines the curriculum around which courses in Islamic Philosophy can be developed for different levels of the recipients.

Philosopher	Salient Achievements (Works) and Message
Al Kindi	philosophy, logic, arithmetic, music, astronomy, geometry, medicine, psychology, politics
	(*Harmony between Greek philosophy and religion*)
Al Razi	medicine, physics, logic, epitomes, philosophy & hypothetical sciences, metaphysics, theology, alchemy
	(*Rationalism*)

Al Farabi	logic, philosophy, ethics, politics, physics, mathematics, metaphysics
	(*Integration of previous philosophies with current culture*)
Miskawaih	history, literature, ethics, politics, pharmacology, culinary art
	(*Ethical and moral philosophy*)
Ibn Sina	medicine, ontology, psychology, epistemology, doctrine of prophecy,
	(*Emanatory processes*)
Ibn Bajjah	language, grammar, literature, ancient philosophy, astronomy, music, medicine
	(*Rationalism*)
Ibn Tufail	medicine, philosophy, mathematics, poetry
	(*Science of divinity*)
Ibn Rushd	Islamic studies, science of Fiqh, language, literature, logic, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy
	(*Commentator on the works of Aristotle*)
Tusi	medicine, philosophy, mathematics, astrology, logic, dogmatics, metaphysics
	(*Moral and political philosophy*)
Al Ghazali	theology, religious empiricism, logical positivism
	(*Refutation of philosophy*)
Rumi	mystical poetry, philosophy
	(*Hikmut*) or wisdom
Ibn Khaldun	history, society
	(*Historiography*)
Shirazi (Mulla Sadra)	religious sciences, theodicy
	(*Harmonious ensemble of gnosis, philosophy and revealed religion*)
Shah Wali Allah	religion, politics, agriculture, economics, Islamic law
	(*Reconciliation among different schools of Muslim jurisprudence*)
Sayyid Ahmad Khan	history, politics, society, education, philosophy
	(*Academic integration*)
Muhammad Iqbal	philosophy, politics, poetry
	(*Universal integration*)

A course of this breadth and depth can have profound effects on the value system and beliefs of the recipients and can reshape their mutual mistrust in each others' schools of thoughts towards a feeling of trust. Trust can serve as the first seed towards synthesis and integration between these two segments. To the conservative recipients, the value of reason, rationality and empiricism, adopted by the early Islamic thinkers will be demonstrated, whereas the in the eyes of recipients of reason, the true and unbiased status of the Islamic philosophers, thinkers and scientists will be elevated, and this modified value system of both groups of recipients will help decrease the current polarization between them.

Another similar course, highlighting the virtues and benefits of western thought, is recommended to be designed for all the recipients of knowledge (bearing the same objective of integration in mind). The following list of such "good points", though not exhaustive by any means, can be used as a starting point towards the ultimate objective of integrating these points or thoughts with our mainstream thought of synthesis.

4.1.2 Virtues of Western Philosophy (Post-Aristotle)

Francis Bacon: scientific method of causal connections, inferences, deductions, hypothesis testing

Rene Descartes: analytical and coordinate geometry, graphics, epistemology

Spinoza: ethics, social philosophy

Leibniz: principle of sufficient reason

Locke: primary and secondary questions

Burke: political philosophy

Voltaire: populizing philosophic thoughts through literature

Rousseau: political philosophy of "general will"

Schopenhauer: ethics of compassion, integrative approach

Fichte: moral philosophy

Schelling: philosophy of nature

Hegel: historical perspective

Marx: economics (subsistence)

Frege: logic

Russell: analytical philosophy

Wittgenstein: linguistic philosophy

The job of achieving some degree of integration between the two segments would be half done without presenting some of done without presenting some of the "vices" of western philosophy to our westernly inclined recipient of knowledge.

The following vices, in particular, are suggested to be de-emphasized:

Hobbes: corporeal philosophy

Hume: theory of causality and man as a bundle of sensations

C.S. Peirce, William James & John Dewey: pragmatism, spectator theory of knowledge The consequences of these "vices" need to be inculcated in the minds of our knowledge recipients and they also need to be kept updated on similar contemporary western thoughts, like, "We desire something not because it is good. Rather, something is good because we desire it" (Polka, 2002). And this stream of thought is coming from the extreme empirical and pragmatic approaches like ethical skepticism (moral knowledge is not possible as moral standards are not knowable), too much reliance on relativism, specially individual relativism which promotes the beliefs like "'what is right or wrong is what each individual believes is right or wrong", and hedonism (a pursuit of pleasure). These doctrines serve as the sources of a narrow view to life where only material and immediate self desires are given importance, directly or indirectly, at the expense of overall moral good from our point of view. To create credibility for moral relativism, west has taken the hollow approach of comparing morality with natural sciences. This approach needs to de-emphasized. While defending relativism and subjectivism, Alain Locke's argument that, "…..science at any given time acknowledges a final truth only in the sense of the most recently accepted consensus of competent experience, and contrary to traditional logic, knows no absolute or irreplaceable truth" (Presby, Struhl & Olsen, 2000, p.474) is simply misplaced and is rendered weak by assuming that science is the ultimate authority in separating truth from non truth. At the level of matter and material it might be so, but extending this ability of science or its methods in contemplating moral and ethical values is not justified. This stream of thought, however, is not the reflective thought of west and the dominant consensus since Kant seems towards reintroducing the form of ethics where some affirmation of the good or goods to which human purposes should be attached is identified (Gamwell & Barden, 1996).

4.1.3 Highlighting the Recent Development in Islamic Philosophical Thought

The inherent integrative nature of Islamic philosophy is well captured in a recent book on its history by Syed Hasan Nasr. The book views Islamic philosophy as a combination of theological and mystical tradition, Greek philosophy, law and literature, and differentiates it from Greek and Medieval Latin philosophy by the notion of, "Religious Sensibility", the source on which the whole structure of Muslim moral and ethical thought is based. The book provides an informative view of Islamic philosophy but mentions little about the scientific interests and achievements of Islamic philosophers. But this is what precisely is required to achieve integration; promoting the scientific thought of Islamic philosophers to knowledge recipient (conservative and western, both) of our present day society, not just to "market" the scientific interests of Islamic philosophers but to capture a fact, since, "all philosophers in Islam wrote on scientific subjects" (Ragep, 2004; McGinnis, 2002).

4.1.4 Highlighting the New Found Western Interest in Islamic Philosophy

The knowledge recipients should also be informed of the recent surge in translations of great Islamic philosophers like Rushd, Ghazali, Farabi and Shirazi, in English and the interest these translations are generating in the west. Even the works of Baba Afdal (Afdal al Din Kashani), a great 13th century philosopher who was until recently not very well known outside Iran, are also now available in English language (Dagli, 2004). The trend no doubt can serve to enlighten the west and the pro-western thinkers in a country like ours, but the scholars of Arabic and Persian need to ensure that the ideas of these thinkers of the past reach the audience in their true essence and are not over or under emphasized due to linguistic issues involved in translations.

4.2 Role of Fine Arts and Media

The literary contributors of Pakistan have a big role to play in the process of synthesis between faith and reason. With rich Arabic, Persian, Turkish and then Urdu literature traditions to follow, the contemporary Pakistani writers, poets, and others related with fine arts have to carry forward their works with a missionary zeal to convey the message of integration to common man. Everyone does not have access to education or educational institutions in our country but the access to media, electronic and print both, is quite well spread. Media shows or portrays what the writers think and feel and their thinking and feelings are manifested in their writing. The messages of media are more relevant and well understood from a common man's perspective than the institutional messages due to their vast and popular reach. Literature has the power to communicate complex religious, philosophical, scientific and political thoughts in simpler version to masses. Voltaire, the brilliant French writer of 18th century did more than any writer to propagate the revolutionary implications of the new found science and liberalism in Continental Europe (Magee, 2001, p.122). Rumi (13th century) extended the boundaries of religion from blind faith in the unknown to an ever present reality which could be both perceived and lived. The main theme of his mystical poetry is that love creates to fulfill itself, reason being secondary to it, step in later to look at it retrospectively, discovering laws and uniformities to seek the threads of unity in the diversities of manifested life. Long before Kant, who was compelled to point towards ultra logical realities like God and free will as necessary sources of understanding above reason, Rumi repudiated the claims of logical intellect and spatio-temporal categories to be the sole determinants of reality. Much later, Iqbal based on Rumi's conclusion, advocated his conviction that intuition is more basic than intellect, and that intuition about life is much better expressed through arts than through other means. Among the arts, Schopenhauer considered music to be a more adequate medium to touch the essence of reality (Sharif, 1983, p.1618). So the popular media and fiction writers have a major role to play in creating a momentum for the movement of integration of reason and faith.

Unfortunately, no institution on its own can synthesize the essences of faith and reason, east and west, and old and new better than the populizers or "thought builders" who belong to the domain of arts, literature and fiction. Our literature needs to rise above the current faddish commercial trends and move towards bringing the lost spirit back in the otherwise spiritless, purposeless and aimless creative endeavors which are perceived and appreciated as literature and fiction in current times.

Another area which needs special attention from Pakistani perspective is to lessen the tendency to dismiss Islamic scientific achievements as old and ancient and hence somehow less important and less contributing than the contemporary scientific works or those surfacing after the Dark Ages in the west. This misplaced tendency is beautifully captured, though not necessarily in the same context, by Thomas Kuhn, "…… those once current views of nature were, as a whole, neither less scientific nor more the product of human idiosyncrasy, than those current today." (Kuhn,1996, p. 2). A combined and sustained effort from our educational and media policy

makers can be helpful in creating an identity of, and affinity with early Islamic thinkers and scientists, and in projecting them as role models to our younger generation.

We Need Scientists and Not Academic "Masters" Alone

On the surface we seem to be doing fine in imparting science education. With scores of medical colleges, engineering universities and other government and private institutions providing science education at post-graduate level, we are producing thousands of doctors, engineers and Masters' in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Biology. But are we producing any scientists? Our system of education encourages the production of academic scientists, well suited for teaching the subject or for undertaking highly paid and stable jobs rather than developing the field of *normal science* which provides basis for its further practice. This serious flaw in our system of education or way of thinking does not stop us from enjoying and buying the comforts originating from modern science, but does not prepare us for the hardships and commitments of scientific research. That probably also explains our total dependence on west in all matters pertaining to science and technology. We need to look upon west to learn from it the amount of time and effort invested in developing natural sciences to their current shape. A cursory glance on the history of scientific paradigms (Kuhn, 1996, p. 10 - 22) development discloses that the current scientific achievements are a result of persistent pursuit of knowledge spread well over five centuries!

4.3 *Role of Religious Thought Builders*

The process of integration, in our country, can never be achieved without involving religious scholars in it. Our aim should be to create a "University of Integration", where the fields of religion, philosophy, science, management, economics, political science, etc. are all taught by a top notch faculty and which is managed with a spirit of creating integration across different knowledge domains. This objective cannot be materialized without creating a harmony (not compliance) of ideologies among different schools of thought, particularly, across our religious thought builders. A common base or forum needs to be identified where religious scholars can interact with each other and with other field specialists, without an underlying political agenda.

5. SECTION THREE: Synthesis: some challenges

No doubt that synthesis seems like the long term prescription to our societal and national ailments, but the extent of its accompanying challenges and difficulties cannot be underestimated. As mentioned earlier, attempts at integration have been made in various forms throughout the history of mankind. One can, therefore, fall back on the advantage of hindsight to learn some important lessons.

In his Refutation of Philosophy, Ghazali's main thesis has been to reject and condemn Islamic philosophers as practitioners of heresy (kufr). This rejection and its basis would be equally valid today. The interjection of religion with philosophy resulted in proliferation of the subjective (allegorical) interpretation of some of the verses of the Holy Quran based upon their apparent (zahir) and an inner (batin) meaning. Earlier scholars, before the influence of philosophy on Islam, had avoided interpreting verses in such a way, mainly because of the fear to confound the minds of common people. When Islamic thinkers declared their esoteric interpretation of the Holy Quran to masses, it did create confusion and anarchy in the sense of establishing and promoting various Islamic sects, accusing each other of heresy. This was, and would be a dangerous course to follow because how sects and sectarianism is still hurting the cause of Islam and Muslims, is no secret.

The phrase synthesis is an enticing one to fall prey to the potentially misleading Anglo-Islamic perspectives, for example, the religious philosophy of Sayyid Amad Khan, who without any doubt is a greater contributor in enlightening the Muslims of his era to the western knowledge, but even an achievement of that magnitude, does not qualify his rejection of certain basic and pivotal doctrines in Islamic faith. Without going in their detail, it is sufficient to warn the thought leaders of integration, not to tinker with the basic pillars of the faith, lest masses can be thrown in state of further confusion and restlessness.

Another unnecessary outcome of too much mysticism and subjective interpretations is the befooling of masses by the materially oriented and cunning spiritual leaders or *peers* who play with the innocence and ignorance of common man and fulfill their own ulterior motives. The movement towards integration can be greatly supported by such minds who can foresee their own material gains through it. This problem needs to be addressed in a way that clearly separates genuine mysticism from pseudo mysticism with a stress that genuine mysticism encourages an active way of life which assures progress and prosperity in this world and salvation in the hereafter, without bending the basic form of Islamic principles and without seeking too much of miracles and *karamats* (mini miracles of non-prophets) from the individuals serving as faith and spiritual leaders.

One should also keep a strong backlash from the current thought leaders from within both the conservative and liberal segments of the society. The very spirit of integration will threaten their power base and feudalist,

religious fundamentalists and the pseudo intellectuals will all resist it to their maximum. People will be misguided by proliferation of fatwa from the orthodox side whereas the westerners will blame the movement as pulling the development of science and technology in reverse, and putting the national progress at stakes.

While talking and thinking of the process of synthesis we should also expect some suspicion and possible backlash from the west. It is quite fashionable in west to blindly label any mention of Islam as a straightforward case of potential terrorism or at least some dangerous form of fundamentalism. It would not be wise to expect an encouraging reaction from west on the premise that since synthesis would also render credibility to some western concepts therefore west would assist or favor the movement. Scholars in east are quite skeptical of the indifferent western attitude towards genuine problems of the Third World like poverty, illiteracy, high infant and maternal mortality rates, population growth and economic misery. "The social and political function of present day analytical and linguistic philosophy is diabolically conservative and reactionary in the main……these philosophies (of west) exhibit total complacency towards any idea of changing and revolutionizing the established order" (Ahmed, 2004) speaks volumes of the expected western reaction towards integration from our point of view.

6. CONCLUSION

The road to synthesis is less traveled and its tortuous nature makes it even more difficult to travel. The process of synthesis is not the job of one department or institution, a national effort in the form of a revolution in the way we think is required to undertake it. We need to thoroughly dissect our systems, especially education system, to nurture a culture based on shared values of a nation which has common roots and heritage and common future aspirations. Thought rebuilding and thought reconstruction, through both formal and informal means, is the first step on this difficult road.

This thought rebuilding and reconstruction cannot happen unless our education system is completely revamped. We need to present a balanced and more factual picture of history of the world to our younger generation by letting them get exposed to different historical and contemporary worldviews, so that they can formulate their own individual worldviews and mental maps. Their self-respect and self-esteem, as an individual, needs to be built through exposing them to the historical achievements and works of Muslims in different spheres of knowledge and life. This motivation and spirit building of our younger generation becomes especially relevant in the present context of terrorism where terror groups are hunting for young, de motivated, unemployed and educated Muslim youth.

Our writers, poets, journalists, TV hosts, teachers and other stakeholders entrusted with influencing people's opinion, need to take up this responsibility of rebuilding the nation by going back to our roots; our religious roots where there was no sectarianism, our political roots of two-nation theory which identifies us as a separate nation on the basis of our religious and cultural values, cleansing of the Indian cultural influence through their media by banning their channels in our country (as they have done with our media), inculcating the spirit in our nation to face the foreign challenges squarely and not with an apologetic and unilateral concessionary attitude which has become our hallmark over the last decade or so.

We need to produce people who are well conversed and exposed to both Islamic and the Western worldview, we need to teach our youngsters that Western worldview, no matter how dominant it looks, is still one of the worldviews and that the major outcomes of the Western project of modernity, namely; liberal democracy, capitalism, Darwinism, Freudian psychoanalysis, positivistic philosophy and complete deconstruction of metaphysics from knowledge, are all flaws of the Western thought and that our own Islamic heritage is probably the best option available to us to bridge the gaps produced by Western discourse.

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