

Sacred Name as a holy vessel which carries him from the limited world of his self to the shores of the World of the Spirit where alone Man is his Real Self.

The contemplative disciplines of all traditions of both East & West insist on the primacy of the awareness of the self & its nature. As the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dogen has said, “To study Buddhism means nothing other than inquiring into the true nature of the ego or the self.” The famous dictum of Christ that the Kingdom of God is within us is likewise a confirmation of the primacy of the inward journey towards the Ultimate Self as the final goal of religion.

The traditional science of the soul sees only one Self, which shines, no matter how dimly, at the center of oneself and every self. It is based on the love of one-Self which however does not imply selfishness but, on the contrary, necessitates the love of others, who in the profoundest sense are also one-self. For as the philosopher, Meister Eckhart has said, “Loving your Self, you love all men as your Self.”

The sheer presence in human society of those who have attained the Ultimate Self has an invisible effect on all of us. Such men and women are not only a channel of grace for the whole of society but the living embodiment of the truth that self-awareness can lead to the Ultimate Self.

Man lives in the world of change & becoming wherein he experiences time, which marks his earthly life & which finally conquers him since it leads him to his death. Yet he is able to conquer time because he has issued forth from the Eternal Order & has an innate awareness of Eternity, an idea that is deeply imprinted on his mind. It echoes in the depths of his soul where something remains of the lost paradise which he inhabited before being born into his terrestrial life.

The traditional universe is dominated by the two basic realities of Origin & Center, both of which belong to the realm of the Eternal. Man lives a life removed from the Origin on a circumference distanced from the Center. And it is precisely this removal & distancing which constitute for him the experience of time since he is a being suspended between time and Eternity, **neither a purely temporal creature nor a being of the Eternal Realm**. That is why all religions focus their teachings upon the question of the relation between time & Eternity, as do traditional philosophies. To understand the nature of Man is to become aware of his existential situation as a being that belongs to the Eternal Order but who lives in earthly time, which itself cannot but be related to Eternity since all orders of reality are interrelated.

The notion of Eternity evokes at once the idea of changelessness, immutability & perfection. It is related to the Divine Order, to the Divine Principle itself as well as to the world of the Spirit which resides in the Divine Proximity: hence the usage of the term ‘eternal life.’ Man is able to know & experience Eternity directly as a being who belongs ultimately to the Eternal Order. As for time, he has an immediate awareness of it and lives in this world as if he knew perfectly what time is.

Paradoxically, while time seems to be so much easier to grasp and experience than Eternity, it is not possible to know or measure it as it is usually understood without the world of becoming, or the world of constant change which surrounds Man. But the relation of Man to time always involves this world, for there is no time without becoming, without change or movement.

Time which characterizes the state of becoming must be related to and have its root in the Eternal Order; hence the famous Platonic saying that time is the moving image of Eternity. This philosophical assertion summarizes the relation of time to Eternity. It asserts first of all that Eternity has an “image,” that is, that the Eternal Principle manifests Itself. Secondly, since this manifestation is in the mode of becoming and in fact constitutes the world of becoming, it is a moving image. And time is none other than this moving image. If there were to be no moving image there would be no time, and if there were no Eternity or the Eternal Reality which is at once the Absolute, the Infinite and the Perfect Good, there would be no moving image.

There is the principle of time and the principle of space. One denotes change, transformation, death and rebirth, and the other, preservation and permanence. In the Islamic tradition, a distinction is made between sarmad (Eternity or the purely changeless), dahr (the relation of the changeless to that which changes) and zamān (time which concerns the relation between the changing and the changing). It is said that dahr is the principle or spirit of zamān while sarmad is the principle or spirit of dahr.

The more a person rises in the hierarchy of existence and levels of consciousness from the world of outward experience towards the Divine which is the Eternal, the more he experiences higher modes of what one could still call “time”.

The fallen nature of humanity at this present phase in the cosmic cycle is such that the mind is too dispersed & the imagination too entangled in worldly forms to enable the vast majority of people to simply live in the eternal present by their own will. People need revelation & sacred forms which, issuing from the

Eternal, will enable them to live in the Eternal Now. They need help from the Eternal Itself to make this attachment to the Eternal possible.

At the heart of these sacred and revealed forms and teachings which constitute religion stands **prayer**. This links people who live in time to God and the Eternal Order. Through prayer a person transcends the accidentality of time & space & regains their direct contact with the Eternal. The temporal & the Eternal are miraculously united in **prayer** as in the realization of the Truth through knowledge. The subject who prays to the Eternal has already journeyed beyond the realm of temporal or fleeting time to reside in the Eternal Order. They have ceased to become & having passed through the divine gate can only be said to be. For him time has ceased to manifest itself as the moving image of Eternity. **It has become a constellation of eternal moments or rather a single moment of the Eternal Now.**

Through sacred rites, objects and forms in time are brought back to the bosom of Eternity. **Time itself is sacralized through the celebration of rites**. A distinction is thereby made between secular time, which is the time associated with what has come to be known as ordinary life, and sacred time, which redeems life by inundating the soul in the eternal spring of the Spirit.

In a world which has lost its moorings and can no longer envisage time as the moving image of Eternity, there is nothing more timely than the ‘timeless’ whether it be in science, art or thought. The truly timeless is none other than the Eternal. The reflection of the Eternal in the temporal order through the forms of sacred art is directly related to the beauty from which such forms of art emanate. Beauty is a Divine Quality as stated in the Islamic context in the famous saying of the Prophet (p): **“God is Beautiful & He loves beauty.”** Beauty belongs to the Divine & hence the Eternal Order.

To be human is to experience a mode of existence in which every moment of time is related vertically to Eternity and in which the mode of one’s being & action determines one’s final end beyond the temporal order. As is so often emphasized in Hinduism the chain of one’s karma affects one’s posthumous state & as Islam insists, **“this world is the sowing field for the Beyond.”**

God’s ceaseless creativity, His cosmic self-revelation, is awesome & worthy of reverence – His Divine Attraction to a scientific direction. Muslims need to create a continent of sacred science literature untouched by the polluted tides of modernity. Your mind is excited by such a project, yes? Or is it repelled as you are comfortable with your non-thinking, ritualistic brand of Islam. So on the Internet today, **did you sow the wind or the whirlwind?**



It is only in the present, relatively materialistic age, that we separate science & the sacred as foreign to one another. In the process creating a dangerously wounded world. The Prophets & those who followed them knew a deeper harmony. But there are people who call themselves skeptics who are really cynics waving the banner of science & ready to attack anything that doesn't fit into their narrow materialistic paradigm. All those who profess to "think" must move from Blind Faith to Conviction Through Science. Don't be imbalanced – valuing the cold reliability of technology over the warmth & caring of spirituality. Thankfully, stagnant dogmatic ways of thinking are truly passé in this sweeping Age of Religion & Science Collaborating. This collaboration is an immensely appealing solution that both caters to reason & denies the vacuous existence that has emerged from materialism. To look at science through sacred lens would be to smooth the progress of how things can unfold here on our exquisite God-made planet. The Earth is a sanctuary in which mankind was made to dwell in comfort. The vast oceans, forests & mountains that make up this bountiful planet have been subdued by God for our enjoyment & productive use. Let's honour our Creator by our use of Sacred Science – those who study it in the proper way will find that it opens unsuspected horizons that are truly unlimited. It will provide an antidotal remedy to the "intellectual & spiritual myopia" of the times. Not that vain & profane science which is all that is known to most people. To make this a reality, the present-day mentality must be reformed.

Modern humans have lost their centeredness with God. Fascinated with the technological advances in the sciences that allow for development in space travel, medicine, communications & just about every area of life, they have come to believe that God and spirituality have no place or a secondary or even tertiary place in their life. This has led to many of the ills of the modern world such as the global environmental crisis, and the decadence and loss of spirituality that have come to define much of Western culture. Their movies, music & sport all celebrate Satan. Their business ethics is inhumane. The rapid & terrifying acceleration of global warming is disfiguring the ecosystem at a swifter pace than even the gloomiest scientific studies predicted a few years ago. The Earth has already begun to react violently to our hubris. Collective self-annihilation is on the radar.

Humankind will only be able to solve these & other current problems if they rediscover, reclaim and reposition God at the center of themselves & their civilization. Understand God. Understand self. Understand time. Then we can truly make science sacred & beneficial. **No more frightening bombs & no more using the Internet for mind-numbing porn.**

In his book, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, Syed Nasr notes that the term ‘sacred science’ may appear contradictory since ‘science’ is generally seen as the kind knowledge that has nothing to do with the sacred. *Scientia sacra* are, however, the **traditional sciences that have been cultivated in traditional & mainly non-Western civilizations.**

They lie at the very center of our being as well as at the heart of all orthodox & authentic religions. They are attainable through intellectual thought. They are the sciences that do justice to the study of religion by drawing from the wisdom which lies at the heart of all religious traditions. They deal with various domains of the natural world as well as with the psyche of the human, their art & thought, and with all of human society.

One of the consequences of the loss of a sacred body of science in the modern world is the idea that human progress is made only through material evolution, and having lost the sacred center of that science, humankind finds itself groping in the dark

and **accepting many false substitutes for religious belief.** The sensualist & empirical ideas which have dominated Western thinking in the modern era, have succeeded in **reducing reality** to a world that is experienced by the external senses. This **limits** the meaning of reality and removes the concept of ‘reality’ as a category that pertains to God.

The consequence of this change to the very meaning of reality has been nothing less than catastrophic since it reduces God, and all spiritual realms of being, to the category of the abstract and, finally, to the unreal.

This is unfortunate since it is possible for humans to gain knowledge of God and to come to know Him as Reality because of the very nature of human intelligence, which was created to know the Absolute. To gain this knowledge, it is necessary that humans grasp both the idea of revelation and of intellectual thought. It is to reach the inner man or the heart, which is the seat of the intellect with the aid of the grace issuing from revelation; and to reach the heart of revelation by means of the penetrating rays of his sanctified intellect and, thus, enabling humankind to gain a knowledge of God as the Ultimate Reality. Our awareness of God is not only that God is the Ultimate Reality but that **He is also the source of all that is.**

God as Reality is also infinite, the Infinite. Ultimate Reality contains the source of all cosmic possibilities and in fact all possibilities. God is infinite not only in the sense that no limit can be set upon Him, but also that He contains all possibilities. He is the All-Possibility.

When the Bible states that with God all things are possible or the Quran asserts that God has power over all things, these statements must not be understood only in the usual theological sense of alluding to God’s infinite power. They also refer to God’s nature as the All-Possibility & confirm in other language the Quranic verse, **“In His hands is to be found the dominion (malakūt) of all things”** (36.83). The essential reality of all things is to be found in the Divine Nature.

To say that God is the All-Powerful and the All-Potent, is also to say that He is the All-Possibility. The understanding of the Divine Infinity is so essential to an adequate doctrine of the nature of God, that its neglect has been the main cause for the philosophical objections to the religious idea of God as goodness & perfection, the source of all that is good and, at the same time, **the creator of an imperfect world.** No problem has been as troublesome to

Western man’s understanding of God as presented in the mainstream of Christian theology and philosophy as the famous problem of theodicy, that is, the question of the creation of a world, in which there is evil, by a Creator who is good.

However, **the doctrine of the Divine Infinity makes it possible to understand why there is a world which is limited and imperfect.**

The Divine alone contains all possibilities, including the possibility of its own negation, and without which it would not be infinite. That is: with God alone, all things are possible including His own negation. This possibility implies a projection toward nothingness, or infinity, which, however, is never reached, and within this projection stands the world, or rather the many **worlds** that stand **below** their Divine Origin. As the Opening Chapter of the Quran declares emphatically: *All praise, appreciation, gratefulness & thankfulness are to Allah alone, Lord of the worlds.* **Since only God is good, this projection creates a separation from the source of goodness and allows for the appearance of evil.**

That God is absolute and infinite is expressed in explicit fashion in the Quranic chapter called Unity or Sincerity, al-Taw īd, or al-Ikhlā (113), which according to Muslims summarizes the Islamic doctrine of God: In the Name of God – Most Merciful, Most Compassionate: Say: He is God, the One (al-Ahad)! God, the eternal cause of all beings (al-samad)! He begets not nor was He begotten. And there is none comparable to Him.

He is al-Rahmah, mercy in Himself, and being mercy & goodness cannot but manifest Himself. The expansive or creative power of the Divinity, which “breathing upon the Divine Possibilities” manifests the world, issues from this fundamental aspect of the Divine Nature as goodness or mercy. Enlightened souls consider the very substance of the universe to be nothing other than the “Breath of the Compassionate”.

Those who deny the Eternal Order are also those who fail to distinguish between the Absolute & the chance occurrence. They bestow upon the world the quality of absoluteness which belongs to the Divine Principle alone.

To accept the two mutually exclusive categories of Creator and created, as is done theologically, can only be achieved through an act of faith, in the absence of which there is usually skepticism concerning the very tenets of revealed religion. To begin with the world as the

only reality, as is done by most modern philosophy, is even more dangerous. This leads to nihilism & skepticism since it reduces God to an abstraction, to the ‘unreal,’ and **philosophy itself to the discussion that provides clever answers to ill-posed problems.**

To avoid such dangers, it is essential to rediscover the traditional teaching about the gradations of reality, or of being itself. To understand God as Reality, it is necessary to understand that there are levels of reality. The world is real to the extent that it reveals God who alone is Real. To understand God as Reality is also to grasp that the world is unreal in relation to that Reality which, ultimately, is the only thing that is Real.

Centuries of rationalistic thought in the West has reduced both the objective & the subjective poles of knowledge to a single level. But **there is not just one form of perception or awareness.** There are modes and degrees of awareness that lead from the so-called “normal” perceptions of Man that issue from his own ego and the external world to his awareness of Ultimate Selfhood. Self-awareness, from the point of view of tradition, is not simply a biological fact of life common to all human beings but includes a spiritual self.

Within traditional beliefs, there is more than one level of meaning to ‘self’ & more than one degree of awareness. Man is aware of his self or ego, but he also speaks of self-control, and therefore implies even in daily life the presence of another self which controls the lower self. Tradition speaks clearly of this distinction. Islamic thought emphasizes the fact that there is within every man both an outer & an inner man, a lower self & a higher one. Tradition also speaks of the self as being totally distinct from the Ultimate Self. The saying of the Prophet (p): “He who knows himself knows his Lord,” attests on the highest level to this basic truth.

In order to reach the Ultimate Self through the expansion of our awareness at the center of our consciousness, Man has to reverse the process which allows him to separate & objectify his existence. This reversal must begin with the negation of the lower self. Only the sacred can enable the awareness of the self to expand in the direction of the Self. The Divine reveals to Man His

Quran: 40:57

Greener indeed than the **creation of man** is the **creation of the heavens & the earth**

Prepared by: Zamals Software Co.
6 Dowding St. Kitty; 225-9031; zsc@networksgy.com
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