

## The Philosophical Foundations of Education: Nature of Man “A Quranic Perspective”

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### Introduction

*Al-Qur'ān*, preserved in its original form in pure divine language is the last message of Allah (s.w.t) to mankind. Islam, 'being the last religion and final synthesis of divinely revealed truth, draws in itself all the essential aspects of truth about God and man that were expressed in earlier religions' (Austin, 1978, p. 70). By virtue of its being a revelation (*al-Wahy*), Islam aims to establish the leading Muslim *Ummah* in human life through providing a comprehensive system of thought and an action that provides moral guidance in all human life's fields.

Since *al-Qur'ān* lays the foundations of the Islamic way of life, Islam emerges as a comprehensive educational system that aims to build the perfect human personality in such a way to achieve the aims of human existence. So, 'any genuine discussion of Islamic education requires sound understanding of its principles' (Abdurrahman, 1982, p.7).

Any theory of education must stand on a set of philosophical foundations. For the philosophical foundations of education, as understood by the present day educators, have not been mentioned by *al-Qur'ān*, in an explicit manner. However, the analysis of *al-Qur'ān* and the authentic *Sunnah* would lead to realize that such philosophical foundations have been systematically treated. Such a treatment could be a basis for the formulation of a comprehensive system of education ever known by mankind. The reason for such an attitude is that Islam, 'as a final revelation (*al-Wahy*), is particularly detailed in this respect and erects a vast structure of interrelated norms of action and conduct that enable man to saturate his life in unceasing awareness of the divine reality' (Gawhar, 1978, p. 285).

### Does *al-Qur'ān* involve a theory of education?

For the purpose of this study, we find it worthwhile to ask the following questions: Does *al-Qur'ān* involve any theory of education *per se*? In other words, does *al-Qur'ān* treat the philosophical foundations upon which the theory of education stands? Hence, are we in need to prove that *al-Qur'ān* involves a certain theory or at least some assumptions about

the philosophical foundations that form the basis of the theory of education stands? Below is a summarized analysis of these queries.

It is axiomatic for the Muslims, at least, that *al-Qur'ān* is the *Word* of Allah (s.w.t) to mankind. This is mentioned in many parts of *al-Qur'ān* itself. For instance, Allah (s.w.t) says in *surah as-Shura*,

*And thus We, by Our command, sent inspiration (angel Gabriel) to thee: Thou knewest not before what was revelation (al-Wahy), and what was faith; but We have made the Qur'an a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men) to the straight Way, the Way of Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heaven and whatever is in earth. Behold (how) all affairs tend towards Allah (42: 52).*

and in *surah an-Nahl*

*...and We have sent down to thee the book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy and Glad tidings to Muslims (16: 89).*

*Al-Qur'ān* and the inspired Prophet who proclaimed it are identified in these verses as guides of mankind towards Allah's (s.w.t) straight way. So, by virtue of its being revealed by Allah (s.w.t) to the Prophet through His Angel Gabriel, *al-Qur'ān* must be absolute in term of source, contents and ends. So, what *al-Qur'ān* says about human being or human life as a whole, is absolute too. Hence, it cannot be questioned; rather, it must be sought to be correctly understood and adequately applied.

However, the case is different with the different man-made attempts that seek to understand the nature of human life. These are no more than a kind of attempts developed in the limits of human mind itself. Additionally, these attempts are subject to limitations, falsehood, and able to be questioned. Hence, *al-Qur'ān* is the last message to mankind,

*Mohammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets; and Allah has full knowledge of all things (33: 40).*

That is, 'when a document is sealed, it is complete and there can be no further addition. The holy Prophet Mohammad (saas) closed the long line of Messengers. Allah's (s.w.t) teachings are and always will be ongoing, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Mohammad

(s.a.a.s) and the later ages will only need thinkers and reformers that undertake the mission of remembrance to mankind but no Prophets<sup>1</sup>. For the above reasons, *al-Qur'ān* implied all what is needed to guide mankind to the straight path of Allah (s.w.t),

... *Nothing have We omitted from the book...* (6: 38),

that is, for his happiness in both, the present life in terms of righteousness, integrity and probity, and in the hereafter in terms of reaching the pleasure of the Lord, Allah (s.w.t) and the eternal happiness in the heaven.

Based on the analysis of the above-cited Quranic verses, one can ask: Does *al-Qur'ān* imply any theory of educating man to qualify him for such a destiny either in the present life or in the hereafter? One way to answer such a question is to explain why *al-Qur'ān* has been revealed to mankind. Undoubtedly, the reason is that *al-Qur'ān* has been revealed to mankind so as to be a prescribed law and a traced-out way (*shir'ātan wa minhājan*<sup>2</sup>) for mankind in the present life. Hence, it is obvious that to obey to any system, one should be first subjected to a certain process of educational adaptation that qualifies him to fulfill the requirements of such a system. Otherwise, he will not be *apt* to do so. From here, the necessity of a Quranic process of education emerges as an unavoidable pre-requirement to a successful application of the Quranic system of life.

Additionally, with reference to the Prophetic era, one can assert that this period had been the perfect application and actualization of the Quranic education that took the form of the Quranic model of both, man and society. However, a careful study of the Quranic model of education in the life of the Prophet and his companions would enable us to realize that such a model of education had been actualized in human life. So, one day, A'ishah (r.a a) while asked about the virtues of the Prophet, she replied that he was a complete interpretation of *al-Qur'ān*., that is, *al-Qur'ān* manifested itself through the behavior of the Prophet. Hence, he was the perfect model by *excellence* of the Quranic education by virtue of his being the example the Muslims must consider as their principal source of actualizing the meanings of *al-Qur'ān*, if a perfect eternal life is sought for.

*Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah*

<sup>1</sup>The Holy *Qur'ān*, English translation of the meanings and commentaries, King Fahd, Holy *Qur'ān* Printing Complex, P.O.Box 3561, *al-Madinah al-Munawwarah*, Saudi Arabia, 1410 AH, p. 1186.

<sup>2</sup>It is a part of the 48<sup>th</sup> verse from *surah al-Mā'idah*.

*and the Last Day, and remembered Allah  
much (33: 21).*

However, since the source of such education is revelation (al-Wahy), and its role model is performed by the Prophet (s.a.a.s), the system of education is unique in terms of conception, objectives, methods and means. Meanwhile, the different types of education on earth adopt ideal citizen as the final and utmost objective, Quranic education emphasizes the principle of Universality over citizenship (*al-Muātin as-Sālih* through *al-Insān as-Sālih* who goes beyond the limited earthly considerations such as race, tongue, color and geopolitical borders. So, *al-Qur'ān* emphasizes the principle of *al-Insān as-Sālih* as a human being with a historical mission prescribed by revelation (al-Wahy), the vicegerency of Allah (s.w.t) on earth. Such a mission should be performed in such a way as to be qualified for the eternal life in the hereafter.

Because of all these considerations, *al-Qur'ān* adopts a comprehensive approach so that all the dimensions of human personality, body, spirit and mind, are taken into account. It regards human being as he is in his real life with his innate nature, weaknesses and strengths and as a unified entity where we can not separate between mind, spirit and body since they function altogether to fulfill human needs.

### **Some methodological considerations**

Prior to the proposed analysis of the nature of man from the Quranic perspective, we see the necessity to point out to the some methodological requirements that are, in our view necessary to address the foundations of the Quranic model of education with the emphasis on the nature of man, and ensure an adequate understanding of such an approach. The following paragraphs are a brief analysis of these requirements.

### **A historical experience**

The historical experience of the Muslim world confirms that the Quranic theory of education had been actually adopted on the ground by Muslims either in the Prophetic era or the Prophet's companions. Austin (1978) supports this view and asserts that Islam draws together many strands of truth expressed in the Judaic and Christian traditions, creating from the synthesis the complete and final form of Allah's religion. So, the life of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.a.s) unites in one man the truth about man. In his life, the Prophet (s.a.a.s) combines the dual role of man as solitary and social being, as slave and vicegerent of Allah (s.w.t), as a servant and messenger, Prophet and king. He is the archetype or norm of humanity by excellence in which all aspects

of being unite at the center in perfect harmony and balance (Austin, 1978). Al-Maududi (1978) also asserts that 'this reality is not a dream or utopia. The Prophet of Islam and his companions developed and established a complete model of Islam on earth for mankind to follow' (al-Maududi, 1978, p. 14).

Furthermore, the ideas, which are discussed briefly in one location *al-Qur'ān*, may be discussed in more detail in another in order to be more appropriate to human understanding and real application because *al-Qur'ān* is an integral book and not merely a segment of unrelated verses. So, the indispensability to deal with *al-Qur'ān* from an integral point of view to ensure an accurate understanding of its meanings and their implications as well emerges as a methodological necessity.

### **A revealed model**

The most outstanding aspect of *al-Qur'ān* and *as-Sunnah*'s analysis of the philosophical foundations is their complete distinction from the attempts made by mankind. Al-Kurdi (1992) asserts that 'when discussing the issue of the nature of knowledge in *al-Qur'ān*, the matter is, from the beginning, totally different from any man-made philosophical attempts by virtue of its being a source of knowledge based uniquely on revelation' (al-Kurdi, p. 429). It is observed in this context that 'human theories about ultimate realities based on reason never achieved the level of certainty and their authors conscious of their limitations, do not present them as conclusive proved' (Gawhar, 1978, p. 5).

Based on the above, *al-Qur'ān* 'is not only a source of revealed knowledge, but also a standard for evaluating human knowledge itself' (al-Kurdi, 1992, p. 429). On this basis, it is necessary to consider this difference and this distinction between *al-Qur'ān* as a reveled source of knowledge and the man-made philosophical attempts in the field of education in the general sense of the term, and achieved either by the Muslim or non-Muslim scholars.

### **A principal reference, *al-Qur'ān***

From *al-Qur'ān*'s perspective, the philosophical foundations of education should be discussed as developed in *al-Qur'ān* and *as-Sunnah*. Books of *tafsir* represent the principal source of reference. The comments of Muslim or, non-Muslim scholars on the matter are mentioned merely as a supporting evidence since the basic reference is *Tafsir* (exegesis) of *al-Qur'ān* and *as-Sunnah*. This is because the Islamic theory of education

is fundamentally based upon the Quranic concepts<sup>3</sup>. Pointing out the difference between the Quranic philosophy of education and the attempts of the Muslim scholars to grasp the essential elements of this philosophy is a matter of a great necessity. The consideration of the Quranic educational concepts, i.e. man, society, knowledge, aims of education, as the philosophical foundations of education is based on the assumption that these concepts form the basic elements on which *al-Qur'ān* has developed its own theory of education. Together, these concepts are referred as the Quranic philosophy of education. Furthermore, when dealing with the above-mentioned concepts, focus has not been put on the analysis of the theoretical-linguistic analysis of the terms since this kind of analysis can be provided by other studies. However, the functional dimension of the terms as used in *al-Qur'ān* is emphasized.

### A realistic perspective

By its harmony, integration and inclusiveness of the different dimensions of human personality, as well as the other foundations i.e. society, knowledge and aims of educations, *al-Qur'ān* presents a particular view about man (Qutb. M, 1987). This is because *al-Qur'ān* deals with human nature from a realistic perspective that takes human being as he is in the real life with respect to the whole dimensions of his personality, spiritual, material and intellectual capacities. Below is an account on the philosophical foundations on which the theory of education stands as treated by *al-Qur'ān* and *as-Sunnah*.

### Nature of man

#### The notion of *al-Khalq* (creation)

The primary concept used by *al-Qur'ān* to analyze the nature of man is the verb *Khalaqa* (to create). For instance, in *surah al-Mu'minūn* (The Believers), Allah (s.w.t) says about the origin of man:

*Man We did create from a quintessence, of  
clay (23:16)*

Ibnu Kathir says that in this verse, Allah (s.w.t) describes the creation of man from clay, and man here, is Adam who has been created by Allah (s.w.t) from sounding clay. Ibnu Kathir confirms that 'Allah (s.w.t) informs mankind on his origin i.e. Adam who is from clay' (ibnu Kathir, 1999, p. 264). This verse consists of two ideas relating to the nature

<sup>3</sup>Mentioning to *al-Qur'ān* must necessarily includes *as-Sunnah* since the latter is the explanation and the perfect application of *al-Qur'an*. So, it will not be needed to mention to *as-Sunnah* whenever *al-Qur'an* is mentioned.

of man. The first idea is that the creator is We, (Allah, s.w.t) Who created man and expressed by the Arabic term, “*khalaqnā*” that means We created. So, it becomes clear that the term “*khalaqnā l’Insān*” means We (Allah) have created man, and therefore, *Insān* (human being) is the creature of Allah. The second idea concerns the origin of man, which is also mentioned here to be “*tīn*” (dust). Alongside ibnu Kathir’s comment, the commentators on *al-Qur’ān* assert that when *al-Qur’ān* uses the term “*tīn*” (dust) the concerned creature here is Adam (s.a.a.s)) who has been created at the origin from dust as the first father of mankind. The following verse from *surah as-Sajdah* supports this comment:

*He Who created all things in the best way  
and He began the creation of man from clay  
and made his progeny from a quintessence  
of despised fluid (32: 7-8).*

Again, ibnu Kathir says that ‘*And He began the creation of man from clay*’ means that Allah (s.w.t) created the father of mankind, Adam, from clay’ (ibnu Kathir, 1999, p. 504).

On the basis of the above discussion, man is a creature of Allah (s.w.t). However, it appears that the Quranic verses that are concerned with the creation of Adam (s.a.a.s)), the origin and the evolution of human specie give preponderance to the divine kindness that granted man with those human particularities since the first moment of his creation. This is to refute the notion of evolution from unknown animal specie as argued by the Darwinism. So, evolution, in the history of human life, is no more than the progressive appearance of the innate and original human particularities by the means of growth and training while facing the different challenges of life over the time (Qutb. S, 1982).

Also, *Al-Qur’ān* notes that creating man from dust is only the first step in the whole of human being creation process. This process includes more than one stage. These stages are called in *al-Qur’ān* “*atwāra*” as mentioned in *surah al-Jinn* and stated in a clear order in many *surah*, namely *al-Mu’minun*, *al-Hajj* and *as-Sajdah* where Allah (s.w.t) says:

*He Who created all things in the best way.  
And began the creation of man from clay.  
And made his progeny from a quintessence  
of despised fluid. But he fashioned him in  
due proportion and breathed into him of  
His spirit. And He gave you the faculties of  
hearing and sight and understanding.  
Little thanks do ye give! (32: 7-9).*

The next stage after *al-Khalq* (creation) of man in these verses is “*wa nafakha fihi min rūhih*” (and breathed into him of His spirit). Then, He instilled into him the necessary faculties and tools of knowledge and learning, “*as-sam’a*” (hearing), “*al-bassar*” (sight) and “*al-af’idah*” (mind). While in this *surah* (*Sajdah*) those faculties have been forwarded by the necessity of *Shukr*, (thankfulness and gratitude to Allah, (s.w.t), in *surah an-Nahl*, they have been connected with “*Lā ta’lamūna shay’a*” (you knew nothing). That is, these Allah’s grants are to be the means which would drive man to face that state of inborn-ignorance in order to learn how to spend his life, achieve the aims of his existence and how to thank Allah (s.w.t) for those invaluable grants.

### Three fundamental dimensions

Based on the above, it can be inferred that human personality consists of three main components: *Jism* (body), *Ruh* (spirit) and *Aql* (mind).

a)- **The body** represents the physical and biological components of human being. It manifests itself by the biological necessities and desires. Those necessities and desires are concerned with the preservation of human life and ensuring its continuity in two ways, the preservation of the self by eating, drinking and the likes, and the preservation of human specie by sexual reproduction.

b)- **The mind** represents human part, which is concerned with the function of helping and enabling human to identify the best ways to fulfill his human needs in such a way to be different from the animal species. The function of human mind, however, is not limited at this stage, but it goes so far beyond because the divine will has instilled into human creature a motive with a continuous insistence to be satisfied, the need to discover the unknown and acquire its knowledge. So, the historical evolution of human life and its progress owes these motive great thanks

c)- **The spirit** has a different nature from the body and the mind. Therefore, ‘its mission in human life is different too. It is concerned with the assurance of a continuous spiritual relation with Allah (s.w.t), the Creator’ (Qutb. M, 1993, p. 69). This kind of relation is known in *al-Qur’ān* by the concept of *Ibādah* (worship). In *surah al-Baqarah*, *al-Qur’ān* mentions this concept connected with the concept of *Khalq* (creation). He (s.w.t) said:

*O ye people! Worship your Guardian Lord  
Who created you and those who came before  
you that ye may become righteous (2-21).*

Here, Allah (s.w.t) associates between the concepts of *Khalq* (creation) and *Ibādah* (worship). Such an association is meant to remind human beings with their origin as a creature of Allah (s.w.t) and their obligation to worship Him (s.w.t) as a sign of thankfulness and confession toward Him (s.w.t) the most merciful.

### The concept of *Fitrah*

The concept of *Fitrah* or as al-Faruqi (1978) calls it 'man's innate perfection' (al-Faruqi, 1978, p. 94) – *Tawhid*, is another dimension in human personality. Its interpretation has been a controversial issue between Muslim scholars (Dureyni, 1988, p. 482). However, a deep reflection in the Quranic verses and Prophetic tradition might enable us to find out that when *al-Qur'ān* says:

*So set thou thy face truly to the true religion  
being upright the nature in which Allah has  
made mankind (30: 30),*

it means that man is born as a Muslim, who believes in one God, Allah (s.w.t), the creator and the Lord of the universe. This interpretation is supported by a narration from abu Huraira<sup>4</sup>. Al-Faruqi (1978) comments on this verse by asserting that 'man, either Muslim or non-Muslim, possesses what Islam calls *Dinul Fitrah* or natural religion. This consists of the unerring discoveries of the *Sensus Numinis* by which man recognizes Allah (s.w.t) as transcendent and holy, and hence worthy of adoration. Based on this, what Allah (s.w.t) has implanted in human nature, the recognition of His transcendence, unity, holiness and ultimate goodness is prior to any tradition, and *Dinul Fitrah* is properly speaking, *Ur-Religion* or original. So, its possession by every man defines his humanity and casts upon him a very special dignity' (al-Faruqi, 1978, p. 95). However, the meaning, which is reported by abu-Hurairah is supported by another verse in *surah al-A'rāf*:

*When thy Lord drew forth from the children  
of Adam from their loins their descendents  
and made them testify concerning themselves  
(saying): Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes  
and sustains you)? They said: "Yea! We do  
testify!" (7: 172-173).*

Ibnu Kathir's comment on this Quranic statement is that Allah (s.w.t) drew forth the children of Adam from their loins their descendents naturally testifying that Allah (s.w.t) is their Lord. Dureyni (1988) supports

<sup>4</sup>This hadith is narrated by abu Hurarayrah, Book of *Qadar. Sahih Muslim bi Sharh an-Nawawi, al-Matba'ah al-Misriyah bil-Azhar*, Egypt, 1930, Vol. 16.

this interpretation and asserts that 'when *al-Qur'ān* compares between *ad-Din* (Islam) and *Fitrah* as its other side, it means to show that the real nature of *Fitrah* is originally created in a full state of goodness in such a way to make the harmony between Islam and *Fitrah* a possible matter' (Dureyni, 1988, p. 492).

Being the innate nature of human being, *Fitrah* would be one of the main aims of education in *al-Qur'ān*, to be preserved from any kind of corruption and to prevent it from devil. One way to achieve this aim is the process of *Tazkiah* (purification) to enable man to keep himself close related to the true path of Islam, that is, to preserve his *Fitrah* in its original shape.

#### **A religious creature**

One of the important conclusions, which can be made when discussing the concept of *Fitrah*, is that man is a religious creature. So, 'to worship Allah (s.w.t) is an innate need for man, and because of this universal reality one does not find that any stage of human history is void of any kind of worship, or religion' (Gawhar, 1978, p. 314). As a matter of fact, religion is a natural component in human personality. However, the problem, man is continuously encountered with, is the extent to which he can success in determining the true path towards his True Lord, Allah (s.w.t). The success is subject to two crucial factors, man's pure and continuous effort and then, Allah's help for the success, which as a result of the sincere human effort, as Allah (s.w.t) says in *surah al-Ankabut*:

*And those who strive in our cause, We will  
certainly guide them to our paths (29-69).*

Malik Bennabi, for instance, emphasizes such a universal human condition. He asserts that once born, human nature is in an inborn natural disposition to religiosity. That is, in a state of *fitrah*, which, according to *al-Qur'an* marks man's ability to look beyond his earthly horizon. In other words, human being manifests a continuous inclination to religiosity in a kind of an ideal of moral perfection which human civilization has never ceased to seek for as its ultimate end' (Bennabi, 1983, p. 79). This innate religiosity underscores 'an aspect of the universal psychological background common to all individuals of the human specie, according to which every individual builds up his personality' (Bennabi, 1986, 69 / 1998, p. 80). As a matter of fact, any society's historical movement, either in form of social change, civilizational project or an educational system must essentially be inspired and based on the principle of the inherent religiosity of human being. So, it would be inconceivable to think about educating man and preparing him for his historical mission outside

the consideration of the religious nature of his personality. Hence, it has to be noted here that the interpretation of either human nature or the process of educational qualification of human being for his mission in history is based on the principle of the innate religiosity of man. The reason is that 'religion is an independent force underlying the existence of human life and determining human culture and civilization' (Bennabi, 1983, p. 77).

### An innate goodness

When discussing the concept of *Fitrah*, another issue emerges, the goodness of man. This issue may be considered as the other face of *Fitrah*. Human beings are good by nature. The most suitable interpretation of this goodness is that man is born free of any kind of corruption. However, this concept is not in conflict with the effects of the hereditary factors, because when one admits the goodness of man he does not adopt man as *Tabula Rasa* as claimed by John Lock (1632 - 1704), since the influence of the hereditary factors should not be totally neglected (Qutb.M, 1993). Some *hadiths* (Prophetic traditions) support the notion of the innate goodness of man. For instance, al-Bukhari (810 – 870 ac) reports in his *Sahih* a narration from Abu Hurayra that the Prophet (s.a.a.s) explained when mentioning the issue of *Fitrah*, how human beings are born, he (s.a.a.s) said:

*There is no newborn child who is not born in a state of Fitrah. His parents then make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian, Just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth)?*<sup>5</sup>

One of the Muslim scholars who commented on this *hadith* is al-Imam al-Qurtubi. He says that human child is born free of al-*Kufr* (disbelief) according to the *Mithāq* (covenant), as mentioned in *surah al-'Arāf*. From this perspective, human beings, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, are hence members of one family, and their religious differences are domestic. In other words, they are referable to, and corrigible in terms of a common parental origin, which is *Dinul-Fitrah*.

This issue has also been discussed by some Western educators. The most prominent of them is Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1878) who claimed the natural goodness of man, and that any kind of corruption that may befall human nature is therefore, the result of socio-educational

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://muttaqun.com/pregnancy.html>: Hadith - Sahih Bukhari 8.597 (See also 2.467), Narrated Abu Huraira.

factors<sup>6</sup>. However, he overstated the how to preserve that goodness especially when he emphasized the absolute free-will that should be given to child before the age of twelve, the period where the child should be put in a direct contact with *nature* without any kind of social interference<sup>7</sup>. Actually, Rousseau was right, at a certain extent, by claiming goodness of human being. But his call to absolute free-will of child behavior while fulfilling his vital needs through performing a *natural life* out of the *corrupted* social dictations may be questioned. The reason is that the corrupted French society of the pre-revolution phase, which may be the source that inspired Rousseau's thoughts, cannot justify its generalization over human childhood due to the peculiarity of the socio- cultural and historical context of every society.

### A dual potentiality

Human personality is set upon the principle of duality, a kind of a spiritual potentiality to either preserve or corrupt the *Fitrah*. That is, a human's ability to either remain in the state of goodness, or tend toward the state of evildoing and corruption. This twofold condition is essentially based on free will on the one hand and accountability toward Allah (s.w.t) in the Day of Judgment on the other. So, belief in the Day of Judgment is of crucial importance in determining man's choice and destiny. Due to its importance in Islamic education, *Al-Qur'ān* emphasizes this issue, which is particularly mentioned in *surah ash-Shams* by the following statement:

*By the soul, and the proportion and order  
given to it. and its inspiration as to its wrong  
and its right. Truly he succeeds that purify  
it. And he fails that corrupts it. (91: 7-10).*

Ibnu Kathir says that Allah (s.w.t) created man free of any kind of corruption and inspired him with the disposition to follow either *Taqwā* (piety and devoutness) or *Fujur* (corruption and evildoing) (ibnu Kathir, 1992, p. 547). In this Quranic statement, we are facing a twofold human condition, the innate disposition to either remain in the state of goodness or the conversion to the state of evildoing and corruption. However, Allah (s.w.t) is He Who made up mankind upon this dual condition, which is stated in *al-Qur'ān* by the verb "*sawwāhā*" (equalizing between both, goodness and evildoing). For the verse "*and its inspiration as to its wrong and right*", mankind is not subject to any

<sup>6</sup> For more details, see: Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*.

<sup>7</sup> This idea is illustrated in Jean Jacques Rousseau's "*Emile*".

kind of accountability toward Allah (s.w.t) because it is a matter of divine will out of man's choice. While for the verse,

*"Truly he succeeds that purify it. And he fails that corrupts it",*

is, as we shall see latter, the educational dimension where human being is subject to accountability because it is set upon his consciousness, free will, rather, under the limits of his capabilities to chose freely and consciously the way he prefers, but with the spirit of accountability. Ibnu Kathir reports two different interpretations about these two verses:

*Truly he succeeds that purify it. And he fails that corrupts it. (91: 9-10).*

The first interpretation is that Allah (s.w.t) is He Who decides whether man has to follows the first or the second way so as man's will has nothing to do with this matter, as reported from ibnu Abbas. The second interpretation is that man's will is crucial in that decision; as it has been narrated by Qatādah and others. However, the right interpretation of these verses is the combination between the two reported interpretations in such a manner to affirm that choice is a fully-human matter regarding the different kinds of innate abilities man has been granted with from Allah (s.w.t). Allah (s.w.t) knows any intended decision from man concerning this condition. However, being the Almighty, Allah (s.w.t) can change man's decision at any time, but for a determined wisdom. So, He lets man enjoy his free-choice and free- will but to try him whether he will follow the right or the wrong path as *al-Qur'ān* states:"

*That so He may see how ye act" (7: 129).*

From these verses, it can be understood that when Allah (s.w.t) sees that man is trying to follow the true path, He, because of His kindness, Will help him to achieve his aspirations. On the other hand, if man decides to follow the path of evil, He, Allah (s.w.t), will let him alone do what he likes because Allah (s.w.t) does not help anyone who follows the path of evil. In addition to be an outstanding human particularity unlike the other creatures, based on the principle of free will, human choice is a sign of Allah's *Takrîm* (conferment) of human race:

*We have honored the sons of Adam...and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation. (17: 70).*

This statement leads to point out the concept of human potentiality regarding the right and the wrong. Man has the power to purify himself and then to enhance his nearness from Allah (s.w.t) to the extent to be spiritually higher than the angels. Meanwhile, he also has the ability

to fall down to the extent to be worse than the animal (ibnul Qayyim, 1992). These two conditions are mentioned in many parts of *al-Qur'ān* namely *surah al-'Arāf* (7: 179), *al-Furqān* (25: 44) and *Mohammad* (47: 12).

### An educational matter

On the basis of the above discussion, it would be clear that the process of preserving the innate human nature is an educational matter and not a pre-determined fate despite the support of Allah (s.w.t) given to His servants as a reward for their good and right intention toward Him and His teachings.

*Truly he succeeds that purify it. And he fails that corrupts it. (91: 9-10).*

Therefore, this point is highly considered in the Quranic education. As a matter of fact, the preservation of *Fitrah* is considered as one of the important aims the Quranic education is seeking for. Based on this consideration, any attempt to develop a curriculum to educate human being should observe such a crucial necessity. The reason of such an emphasis is that from the Quranic perspective, human nature is the first *Amānah* (trust) Allah (s.w.t) has granted man with. So, the insurance of the eternal life happiness is subject to the extent to which human being is able to preserve such a *Fitrah* in its original shape and nature. A careful reading of the above-mentioned verses of *surah as-Shams* elucidates this matter.

### A privileged position in the universe

*Al-Qur'ān* privileges human being with a particular position in the universe. It starts by pointing out that man is the most glorious and venerated Allah's creature.

*We have honored the sons of Adam, provided them with transport on land and sea, given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation. (17: 70).*

This exalted position of man in the universe is due to the nature of his personality itself that is totally different from the other creatures. *Al-Qur'ān* justifies this human's privilege by some considerations; the most important of them is being breathed by Allah's spirit, which is not the case for all the other creatures:

*When I have fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down in obeisance unto him. (15: 29).*

By this statement, *al-Qur'ān* not only places mankind in the highest hierarchical level of Allah's creatures, but also makes him the vicegerent

of Allah (s.w.t) so as the whole universe is subjected to him. Another distinction is that man is the sole creature being trusted with the mission of *Khilāfah* (vicegerency). So, he has been created, his personality has been formulated and the universe has been subjected to him in such a manner to enable him to fulfill the requirements of that *Amānah* (trust), the vicegerency of Allah (s.w.t) on earth. Dureyni (1988) justifies these privileges by the fact that 'the trust is something given to a person over whom he has a power of disposition; he is expected to use it as directed and expected, but he also has the power to use it otherwise. In fact, there is no trust if the trustee has no power of choice and free will as well as the different abilities that enable him to perform successfully his mission' (Dureyni, 1988, p. 106-109) through the achievement of *Maqāsid ash-Shari'ah* (objectives of the divine message) in human life (ash-Shatibi, 1982). That is to mean, man has been appointed as a *Khalifah* (vicegerent) under certain conditions under Allah's supervision and according to His teachings.

Finally, by a deep reflection in *al-Qur'ān's* treatise of human personality one can find out that its concern was not a simple theoretical treatise, but actually a formulation of a pattern that would be the perfect practical example to be followed by man whenever he wants to achieve the aims of his existence. Furthermore, Allah (s.w.t) has sent the Prophet (s.a.a.s) as the perfect application of that pattern ever experienced by man. So, howsoever that may be, human being can no longer seeks guidance and orientation out of this pattern that is crucial to ensure his righteousness and salvation in the present life and success in the hereafter.

### **A noble and purposeful mission**

With regard to the special position man occupies in the universe amongst all Allah's (s.w.t) creatures; it becomes obvious that the principle of creation has never been a purposeless one. *Al-Qur'ān* elucidates this reality by stressing that creating man is a sign of the Divine Wisdom. And, Allah's (s.w.t) Will can not be understood otherwise. In the following verse of *surah al-Mu'minūn*, *al-Qur'ān* emphasizes such a reality:

*Did ye then think that We had created you  
in jest, and that ye would not be brought  
back to Us (for account). Therefore, exalted  
be Allah, the King, the Reality: There is no  
god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honor  
(23-115,116).*

While commenting on this verse, al-Qurtubi said that '*in jest*' is a state where human being is discarded, abandoned and left over without

any equipment to face the challenges ahead of his life. So, in this verse, Allah (s.w.t) Wants to remind mankind that they have not been created in this universe and then left over in a purposeless manner without any accountability because Allah (s.w.t) as the Lord of the universe is Exalted” (al-Qurtubi, 1994, p. 156).

Meanwhile, ash-Shanqiti (1994), in his “*Adhwā’ul Bayān*” supports this view by asserting that ‘it should not be understood that you, mankind, have been created without any purpose or wisdom in this life so as you will not be subjected to any kind of accountability in the Day of Judgment. However, the reality is otherwise’ (ash-Shanqiti, 1994, p. 831). Based on this Quranic statement it would become unconceivable to admit that human being has been created without a determined mission to be performed in this life in a purposeful manner meant by the divine Will. *Al-Qur’ān* itself confirms such an assumption and makes it a *sine qua non* in human life. However, *al-Qur’ān* does not content with the indication of mere mission but it confirm its specificity, which is one of the most outstanding features of Allah’s (s.w.t) conferment of mankind over other Allah’s creation. For instance, in *surah al-Ahzāb* such a mission is called *al-Amānah* (the Trust):

*We did indeed offer the trust to the Heavens  
and earth and the Mountains; but they refused  
to undertake it, being afraid thereof: But  
man undertook it: He was indeed unjust  
and foolish (33-72).*

Al-Qurtubi says that ‘*al-Amānah* implies all kinds of religious obligations that are recommended by the Divine Will’ (al-Qurtubi, 1994, p. 162-163). Meanwhile, in *surah al-Baqarah* the mission is more elucidated when Allah (s.w.t.) Calls it *Khilāfah*. He says:

*Behold thy Lord said to the angels: “I will  
create a vicegerent on earth” (2: 30).*

The first attribute ever given to man since the beginning is to be the vicegerent of Allah (s.w.t) on earth with the aim to execute the divine ordinance. This is supported by the Prophetic tradition when the Prophet (s.a.a.s) said in one *hadith*:

*Whoever enjoys the right and forbids the  
wrong Is the vicegerent of Allah on earth.*

So, from a Quranic perspective, the purification of human personality cannot be achieved unless the revealed system of life is observed. To do so, mankind must set one’s life under the guidance of such a system and deal with the universe in such a way to exalt and glorify the Lord, and seek for His love, His pleasure and then ensure

the eternal happiness in the hereafter. These meanings are stated in *surah Hud*: Allah (s.w.t) said:

*It is He Who hath produced you from earth  
And settled you therein. Then ask forgiveness  
Of Him and turn to Him in repentance. (11: 61).*

This verse encompasses three major issue related to the existence of mankind on earth. The first is the source of creation of man,

*“it is He Who hath produced you from earth”.*

The second is his historical mission,

*“and settled you therein”,*

(so, He asks you to explore the universe according to His teachings).

The third is the aim that must achieved through the performance of that mission in the light of Allah’s teachings,

*“then ask forgiveness of Him and turn to Him  
in repentance”*

(to worship Him and seek His pleasure on you to ensure prosperity and eternal happiness in the hereafter).

Through this guidance, Allah (s.w.t) instills in mankind the spirit of confidence, optimism and hopefulness. So, He (s.w.t) reminds man that whenever one repents to Him with a pure intention to please His Lord and devote himself to His Will, Allah (s.w.t) is

*“qarîbun mujîb”*

Allah is close to His servants, ready to respond the prayer of every suppliant, and provide help, blessings and success of his efforts. ‘Such providence is to make mankind feels that he is not alone and not unleashed on earth as an irresponsible savage as claimed by Aristotle’ (Qutb. S, 1982, p. 146). Actually, Allah (s.w.t) upon creating man Has sent down to mankind His books and His messengers as leaders to ensure for mankind salvation and happiness. Allah (s.w.t) also promised to man that He will fulfill the needs and help whenever man follows His messengers and observes His commends. From this perspective, Islamic education takes into account all the dimensions of human personality in such a way to qualify mankind to successfully perform his mission.

In this context, a deep reading in the meanings of the different terms used in *al-Qur’ân* to elucidate the mission of man in history leads to understand that such a mission can be summarized in two meanings, which imply one vision, the actualization of the Divine Will in human life and according to Allah’s (s.w.t) teachings. These two meanings are *at-Ta’abbud* (worship) and *at-Ta’bîd* (enabling others to worship). The former implies the duty of man to keep himself close related to the true path of Islam. That is to preserve his *Fitrah* in its original

shape through a certain process of education called *Tazkiah* (purification) or *Tādīb* as al-Attas prefers to term it in his “*The concept of education in Islam*”. Meanwhile, the latter, implies the duty of mankind to lead others to the true path of worshipping Allah (s.w.t) by means of what is called in Islamic literature *ad-Da’wah* (preaching for Islam) in the general meaning of the term. This second duty is one of the meanings that justify the existence of man in this life and impart to it a historical significance; as well as that ensure his salvation in the Day of Judgment. *Al-Qur’ān* elucidates this meaning in the following verse from *surah al-Jinn*:

Say: “No one can deliver me from Allah (if I were to disobey him) nor should I find refuge except of Him unless I deliver what I receive from Allah and his Message. For any that disobey Allah and His Messenger for them is Hell: they shall dwell therein for ever (72-22, 23)

This conclusion is actually confirmed by another Quranic statement, which explain in an explicit manner that in order to ensure righteousness in the present life and success in the hereafter, human life must be undertaken according to the teachings of the Divine Will.

Say: “Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds: No partner hath He: this am I commended, and I am the first of those who submit to His Will (6-162,163)

That is, the whole life of mankind must be devoted to this sacred aim, or the actualization of the true meaning of *al-Ibādah* in one’s life. This is in contrary to some interpretations of the meaning of *Ibādah* that restrict it in the limits of determined prayers in space and time. This is the case of some laic interpretations of Worship or religious life as a whole<sup>8</sup>.

Through the above analysis, it may become obvious that mankind has actually been created purposefully to perform a determined mission in the present life. This is with regard to his privileged position in the universe amongst all Allah’s (s.w.t) creatures by virtue of his being equipped by a set of spiritual and intellectual faculties that qualify him for such a mission. However, such a position is also marked by its dual

<sup>8</sup> For more elucidation see for example: *al-Ibādah fil Islām*, Yousef al-Quaradhawi.

specificity, privilege and accountability. That is, if mankind is privileged in the present life, he, on the other hand, will be called for account in the Day of Judgment. The meaning of accountability is elucidated in the next paragraphs.

### An accountable fate

Based on the above discussion of the Quranic statements, it may become obvious that one of the fundamental creeds of Islam is the belief in *al-Ākhirah* (life in the hereafter). It is one of the required articles of faith in Islam. A denial of this creed is a denial of Islam as a whole even though one may have belief in Allah (s.w.t), in the Prophet (s.a.a.s) and in *al-Qur'ān*. In this context, *Al-Qur'ān* defines the concept of life in such a manner to be different from the *man-made* attempts in its nature, effects and consequences on man's destiny. Furthermore, Islamic education aims to prepare man for both, the present life and the hereafter. This is unlike the different types of *man-made* educational attempts, which consider the present life as the utmost aim of any educational process (Abdurrahman, 1988). So, from *al-Qur'ān*'s perspective, the concept of life is not limited to the period spent by mankind in the present world, i.e. from birth to death. This period is no more than a first phase which precedes the eternal life called in *al-Qur'ān*, *al Hayawān*, (the true life) where man would never experience the fact of death, as mentioned in *surah al-'Ankabūt*:

*What is the life of this world but  
amusement and play but verily the home of  
the hereafter, that is al-Hayawān –life  
indeed. (29: 64).*

Due to the importance of this concept in respect of man's destiny, *al-Qur'ān* makes it obvious that the eternal happiness of man depends on the extent to which man perceives the present life, its nature, aims and destiny and how would one spend it? Therefore, man's life in the hereafter is actually no more than the appropriate *Djazā'* (fitting recompense) in accordance with one's present life's behavior, rather, in accordance with the extent to which one has preserved the trust. Accordingly, the belief in *al-Ākhirah* (the hereafter) has a strong influence and a direct effect on man's behavior in the present life especially when man remains continuously aware with the fact that his sayings, actions and behavior will be subjected to accountability in the Day of Judgment. Al-Maududi (1978) clarifies this effect by asserting that 'due to that belief, man finds a permanent guard stationed within himself, who cautions him, admonishes him whenever he deviates from the right

path. The guard within him is ever on the alert, ready to seize him whenever he transgresses. The consciousness of this inner presence makes him fear God even when he is alone. He discharges his duties honestly, and a refrain from doing anything that is prohibited. It is the belief in the hereafter that helps man, under all circumstances to conform to God's scheme of permanent values. It is for this reason that Islam attaches great importance to belief in the hereafter' (al-Maududi, 1978, p. 285). Without it, even belief in God and the Prophet is not sufficient for man's guidance. Based on the importance of the association between *ad-Dunia* (the present life) and *al-Ākhirah* (the hereafter) in the Quranic worldview, belief in the hereafter is considered as one of the fundamental creed of Islamic faith. When *al-Qur'ān* discusses the concept of *ad-Dunia*, (the present life), it emphasizes two dimensions. The first is the worthlessness of the present life when compared with the hereafter in terms of value and duration. So, it is no more than "*lāibun wa lahw*" (amusement and play). The second is that *ad-Dunia* is a fateful period for man to ensure a successful destiny in the hereafter. So, the belief in the hereafter represents the most influential creed in human life at all. Its crucial importance manifests itself by the fact that believing or not in the hereafter is the crossroads between two kinds of mankind, rather, between two destinies. 'Human life will never be straightened on the true path, the way of Allah (s.w.t); unless mankind accepts that the true reward or punishment depends on the consideration or not of that creed' (Qutb. S, 1982, p. 24-25). Therefore, it would be conceivable to consider *ad-Dunia* as a *preparatory* phase for the next life after the Day of Judgment.

In achieving this utmost aim, to ensure the happiness of man in the hereafter, *al-Qur'ān* reminds man that one has not been unleashed on earth as an irresponsible savage. Rather, one is accountable to Allah (s.w.t) for one's actions. Today's life is only a test and an examination, and at the end one will be called upon to render a complete account of his acts of commission and omission to Allah (s.w.t). It is Allah (s.w.t) Who fixes the time of accountability and man will stand by himself *helpless* and *alone* to render his account and await the pronouncement of judgment that shall be in the power of Allah (s.w.t) alone. Judgment will rest on question: Did man conduct himself in submission to Allah (s.w.t), in strict conformity with the truth revealed to the Prophets, and with the conviction that he would be held responsible for his conduct in life on the Day of Judgment? If the answer is affirmative, the reward will be Paradise, and if it is negative, punishment will be Hell.

Through this systematic and emotional method based on yearning and awe, reward and punishment, *al-Qur'ān* takes human being and puts him on the *path* to be qualified for his real position in the universe as a preparatory phase to the hereafter.

### Concluding remarks

The Quranic treatment of the philosophical foundations of education provides a comprehensive guidance to fulfill the innate needs of the human nature as well as to achieve the aims of the human existence. The outstanding aspect of such a treatment is that it is inspired by revelation that makes it distinguished from any other man made attempts. The historical experience in the Muslim world has proved the availability of such a model as well as the possibility of a new re-consideration in the light of the current Muslim world's situation. *Al-Qur'ān* is the principal source of reference, while *as-Sunnah* is the interpretation par excellence and the application of the Quranic meanings. The four philosophical foundations that have been treated are the nature of man, society, knowledge and aims of education. However, the focus of this paper was the Quranic treatment of the nature of man. Allah (s.w.t) is the creator of man. The process of creation involves many stages. The concept of *fitrah* is an essential dimension in the human personality. Imam Muslim in his *Sahih* summarizes its meaning in term of being born Muslim. As a matter of fact, man is a religious creature. Harmony between *fitrah* and Islam is a possible matter. Free choice based on accountability is a human particularity. Human being, therefore, is set upon a dual potentiality. So, he is able to either remain in the state of goodness or tend toward the state of evildoing. The belief in the Day of Judgment is of crucial importance in determining the choice of mankind. The process of preserving the innate human nature or, *fitrah* is an educational matter and not a pre-determined fate. Due to the nature of his personality, man is privileged with a particular position in the universe.

It can be concluded that the Quranic approach aims to one and final end, qualifying man to be fit enough for the true and eternal life, there, in the heaven. That is why 'Islamic *Shari'ah* has been sent down with the aims to preserve its objectives in the human life, failing to do so, the human life would be harmful, never be saved from corruption in the present life and the evident loss in the hereafter' (as-Shātibi, 1995, p. 4).

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