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Miskawaih's Thoughts on Human Personality

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Abstract: *This paper aims at highlighting the views of Miskawaih on human personality. According to Miskawaih, personality is not the product of free interaction between ones' heredity and physical and social environment; it is born of the conflict between the rational and irrational parts of the self leading to the emergence of a strong moral conscience, which serves as the intrinsic core of* khulq, *a term that Miskwaih uses for personality. Man possesses personality because he is capable of reason as well as being subject to desires.*

Born at Rayy in 940 A.C., Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Yaqub, surnamed Miskawaih,[1] was an eminent moralist, historian and theistic thinker of the Buwahid Persia. He started his career as secretary to Abu Muhammad Muhallabī (d. 964), the Vizier to the Buwahid prince Muʿizz al-Dawlah, who captured Baghdad in 945. Miskawaih also served the Buwahid ruler ʿAḍad al-Dawlah (d. 982) as his secretary and librarian. He died at Isfahan in 1030.

Miskawaih is the founder of philosophical ethics in the world of Islam and is known to the world chiefly through his celebrated manual of ethics, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Taṭhīr al-Aʿarāq*.[2] The manual, in keeping with its title, takes a moral view of human personality, as opposed to the amoral theories of personality current in modern times. The reason for this difference, radical as it may seem, lies in the vital difference of psychology, metaphysical in the one, and empirical in the other case, on which these views of personality are based. I shall therefore briefly discuss below the nature of metaphysical and

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empirical psychology before discussing Miskawaih's thoughts on human personality.[3]

Metaphysical Psychology

Aristotle (d. 322 B.C.) defined psychology as the science of the origin, nature, function and destiny of the soul in natural organised bodies, ranging from plants through animals to man. Analysing a natural body into a complex of matter and form, the former constituting its potentiality and the latter its actuality, he defined soul as "the first grade of actuality of a natural organised body."[4] At another place, he speaks of it as that which distinguishes a living from a non-living body.[5] In either of the two senses, the conception of the soul is essentially that of an immanent principle of an organism, implying its destruction with the destruction of the organism.

The aforesaid naturalistic view of soul as the form or life of body did not find approval of Miskawaih. He strongly criticises it in his *al-Fawz al-Aṣghar*[6] on more than one count. With the systematic elimination of the naturalistic view, he clears the way for his metaphysical view of soul as a simple, immaterial and imperishable substance directly created by God just before infusing it into the body, where it stays as long as He wills it to be there.[7] After the death of the body, it lives its own separate independent existence. This transcendent view of the soul leaves no room for the Aristotelian doctrine of the substantial unity of the soul and body (hylomorphism), which it replaces by their radical dichotomy. But if the soul and body are radically opposed to each other, the one being spiritual and the other material, how could they possibly act and react upon each other, as they do? Here Miskawaih invokes the absolute sovereignty of God and asserts categorically that, though the soul and body are two completely closed worlds, yet they act and react upon each other through the continuous intervention of God.[8] This view of soul-body relationship was later reformulated by Geulincx and Malebranche (d.1716) in modern times, under the name of Occasionalism.

As regards the functions of the soul, Miskawaih gives a full account of them in his theory of evolution.[10] He regards the entire development from the mineral to the human stage as one continuous process of ascent inspired by the spiritual urge of return to God which is shared by all existents in proportion to the degree of their ascent toward God. In minerals, it is without consciousness. In plants, it manifests itself in nutrition, growth and reproduction. In animals, it is characterised by

free movement, sense-knowledge and sense-appetite. In man, it attains self-consciousness, culminating in revelation from God in the case of prophets. Desire (appetite), ire (anger) and intellection are the three functions of the self-conscious human soul. Of these, the first two functions are performed through the body and the third through its own native essence.

The medieval metaphysical psychology, explained above, has lately received a fresh impetus under a new name of "philosophical psychology" in modern times. In its new form, it is a refreshing elaboration of the psychology of Aristotle as developed, amended and modified by the medieval Muslim, Jewish and Christian philosophers, especially St. Thomas Aquinas. It obtains its data from experience but interprets them in terms of the metaphysical concepts of existence and essence and the laws of continuity and proportionality or analogy, in order to explain the ascent of being towards God.

Empirical Psychology

In contrast to the medieval metaphysical psychology, modern psychology is empirical in the sense that it is based on the scientific method of observation and experimentation, the foundation of which was laid by W. Wundt (d.1920) in Germany and by W. James (d.1910) in the USA. They made it a "laboratory science" to eliminate subjectivity and achieve objectivity in this field. It no longer uses the terms "soul" and "mind" as the subject of its inquiry for they tend to give it a metaphysical orientation.

Stripping it of all metaphysical and moral strings, J.B. Watson defined psychology as the science of the behaviour of living beings. He not only refused to accept the existence of "mind," but also that of "consciousness," e.g., thinking, feeling and willing in the name of scientific objectivity. The same strain is present in W. Woodworth's definition of psychology as the science of the activities of the individual in relation to environment. He explains the activities of the individual in purely mechanistic terms of stimulus and repose, (the S-R formula). As an empirical psychologist, he considers man as a cog in a machine, not a creature of infinite worth and dignity.

In the secular humanistic tradition, personality has no moral overtones. It is an integrated whole of the unique characteristics of an individual which satisfactorily explains his peculiar behaviour and abiding life-style. The overriding emphasis here is on the free unfolding of the potentialities of an individual through interaction

between the manifold factors of his heredity and environment. The personality emerging from this interaction can be measured by quantitative tests devised by psychologists for the purpose.

Stripped both of soul and mind, modern empirical psychology regards man as an integral part of the vast machine of the universe to the utter disregard of higher values and ideals he lives by. Since this man has a body and a brain, but neither soul nor mind, empirical psychology uses the terms "behaviour" and "personality" for what we call "conduct" and "character," respectively in ethics, to underline that it has nothing to do with the question of value, the product of subjectivity. It is concerned with facts and facts alone which lend it objectivity and, therefore, scientific credibility and respectability. But psychology as the science of man cannot be based on mere facts without reference to values, for facts of human behaviour are not lifeless, but living realities. They take on meaning to the extent they can be placed in a cultural setting which provides a sound basis for their interpretation.

Moral, Metaphysical View of Human Personality

In the transcendent spiritualist tradition, personality has a metaphysical axis and a moral thrust. To be a person, man must operate within the framework of tension created by God in his nature, reason being the one and desire and ire being the other term of this tension. Personality is not the product of the free interaction between ones heredity and physical and social environment, as the humanists think. It is born of the conflict between the rational and the irrational parts of the soul leading ultimately to the triumph of the former over the latter and the emergence of a strong moral conscience which serves as the intrinsic core of *khulq* or personality, says Miskawaih.[11] The essence of conscience is not the fear of the police, as the empiricists hold, but the ever-present awareness and closeness to the unseen (*ghaib*) upon which is structured the warps and woof of a truly human personality.

Personality (*khulq*), with Miskawaih, is therefore, not a lifeless attribute that can be measured by quantitative tests. He takes a qualitative rather than a quantitative view of personality, regarding it as a value (as opposed to a fact), the highest value man can think of. Personality, in this sense, is an acquired capability through which action proceeds with ease and facility without the guidance of consciousness. It is a settled habit of action which we judge to be good or bad, or right or wrong, in some way. It is a whole system of

commendable virtues each connected with the use of the one or the power of the soul—reason, desire and ire. As the highest value, *khulq* is the quintessence of humanity. It deserves utmost respect and reverence, specially the *khulqin ʿaẓīm* (68:4), the peerless personality of Prophet Muhammad (SAS).

The aforesaid moral view of personality is diametrically opposed to its amoral humanistic view given currency by the modern psychology. One is based on the vertical axis of transcendence, the other on the horizontal axis of positivism. The referent of the one is the almighty God, that of the other is the self-subsisting man. One is structured upon values, the other upon facts. In one case, it consists of conforming to the established type of the individual self; in the other, it consists of the richest possible unfolding of man's potentialities) the *khulqin ʿaẓīm* of the Prophet. The humanist looks upon conformity to the pattern or paradigm as depersonalization of the individual. The transcendentalist looks upon the free unfolding of the potentialities of the individual, without reference to values, as his dehumanization, not to speak of his depersonalization. The conceptual ecology of each is such that it leaves no room for a discourse between them.

However even the modern psychologists now admit that the claim of the sciences of man and society to objectivity and value-neutrality is vitiated "by the presence and pressure of cultural compulsives"[12] in interpreting their data. "Interpretation necessitates a mind-set, a purpose, an end. Such mind-sets, such purposes, such ends are controlled by cultural compulsives. Any man living in any society imbibes his very consciousness from that society, his way of thought, his prejudice of vision," says Calverton.[13]

Since complete objectivity and value-neutrality is not possible to achieve in social and behavioural sciences, the specialists in these fields are today increasingly in favour of adopting an "interdisciplinary approach" to these sciences as a strategy for minimizing the bias and prejudice of each individual discipline in collecting and, specially in interpreting its data. What is required is to study the facts of these sciences from all possible perspectives in order to understand them in their entirety. This will broaden the outlook of these sciences and pave the way for the much-needed dialogue between them. Since truth is one, knowledge of it cannot be many. Unity of knowledge is a necessary corollary of the unity of truth.

Psychological Basis of Moral Personality (*Khulq*)

The metaphysical psychology on which Miskawaih structures his concept of personality takes bearings from an *a priori* belief in God who created the world *ex-nihilo* with a definite purpose in view. It was in consonance with this purpose that He endowed creatures with certain powers, determining their place and function in life. The striking feature of His Creation is that He made everything in the world subservient to man (23:12-14), but made man exclusive for His *ʿibādah* (worship), both in a private and public sense (95:4).

According to Miskawaih, angels have been created without desire and ire. Devoid of irrational nature, evil is unknown to them. They are pre-determined to do only what is good. Since they are good by nature, they are above morality which renders them incapable of possessing personality. To animals God gave desire and ire, without reason. They cannot distinguish between good and evil. Being devoid of reason, they are below morality which renders them as incapable of possessing personality. To man, God gave reason as well as desire and ire. Man is a rational animal. Reason is his guide and mainstay. It comprehends the contents of revelation and helps man in applying it to concrete situations in life. It makes him distinguish between the good and the bad, the true and the false and the beautiful and the ugly. It is the deputy of revelation. As regards desire and ire, he shares these with the rest of animals. Desire meets the legitimate needs of his body in a desirable way, while anger is the guardian of his sense of self-respect on the one hand, and a powerful ally of reason in subjecting the demands of appetite (desire) to moderation on the other.

It is clear from what has been said above that *akhlāq* (morality) is the prerogative of man and so also the possession of *khulq* or personality, denied to angels as well as to brutes. The conduct of man is not predetermined like that of the angels and the brutes. Man is free to choose either of the two ways of good and evil. He may rise above angels in rank, if he subjugates desire and ire to reason. He has to resist evil, despite temptation to it, a temptation that angels do not have. Likewise, he may sink himself below the level of the brutes if he is swayed by desire and ire; brutes are excusable in the matter, being devoid of reason, but man does not have this excuse. Man occupies a middle position between angels and animals and displays the ability that makes him morally responsible for his actions and, therefore, worthy of possessing a personality. The possession of personality is

such a great honour that entitles him to the Divine *amānah* (trust) (33:72) and *khilāfah* (vicegerency) (2:30-31). Thus according to Miskawaih, neither mere reason, nor mere desire and ire taken in isolation with reason, but all the three powers of the soul taken together provide the infrastructure on which man has to erect the grand edifice of his personality or *khulq*.

Development of Truly Human Personality

Man is a complex of body and soul. He is a field of the operation of desire, ire and reason, which the Qur'ān calls *nafs* or individual (self). The *nafs* passes through three stages in its struggle for becoming a person: *al-nafs al-ammārah bi al-sū'* (impulsive self) (12:53), *al-nafs al-lawwāmmah* (reproaching self) (75:2) and *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* (contented self) (89:27). I shall briefly discuss these three stages below.

The impulsive self is called impulsive because it is desire, unbridled desire, that provides an impulse to action at this stage. It is the stage of the over-all rule of sense-appetite. It is marked by the craze for bodily pleasures. It idolizes transitory external goods and believes that it will bring it happiness and contentment. It is a natural stage in the development of the individual but which he has to surpass through the concerted effort of his will. If he does not, he loses sight of what is good and succumbs to evil. It is about this state of the self that the Qur'ān says: "Verily! the self commands to do what is evil" (12:53).

With the onward march of the self from the impulsive to the reproaching stage, ire also comes into operation side by side with sense-appetite. It is at this stage that conscience makes its appearance and pronounces upon the moral quality of one's actions. It censures the self over its unbecoming conduct and a tug of war ensues between the two halves of the self, the one siding with the body and inciting it to evil, the other with the spirit and restraining it from evil. This inner conflict is of the essence of morality and a necessary condition of one's becoming a person.

The third and final stage in the development of the self is that of the contented self. It is the stage of the absolute sovereignty of spirit and reason. The self now ceases to be the seat of conflicts, tensions and turmoil. Peace reigns supreme in it. The body becomes an ally of the spirit and the government of reason is established over the dominion of desire. This is a state of perfect peace and contentment wherein man is

happy with God and God is happy with man (89:27). It is at this stage that he comes to possess what we call a fully integrated personality.

Role of Education in Personality Building

We have seen in the preceding pages that personality, according to Miskawaih, has a metaphysical axis and a moral thrust. It emerges when reason and desire are required to function within the limit set by God. The impulsive self, the reproaching self and the finally contented self are the three stages in its evolution toward complete allegiance to God. The urge to cultivate personality in this sense is created, activated and intensified by education, says Miskawaih, to which I shall turn now.

"The child is born in its original nature. It is parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian," said the Prophet.[14] Miskawaih infers from this tradition that the child is neither good nor bad by nature. He is innocent. His mind is a clean slate at birth, open to any outside influence which we have to adapt to the degree of understanding he has at a particular age level[15]. Later, John Locke (d. 1704), the father of British empiricism, restated the view that the mind, in its first state, is a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate. Since the child is innocent by nature, education can play its role effectively in building his personality.

Miskawaih makes special mention, in this respect, of the natural affection of *ḥayā*[16] (modesty) which the child displays by growing red and hanging his head low over his uncommendable acts. He advises the teacher to make the most of this endowment of nature in shaping the personality of children through education. The very first display of shame by the child indicates the appearance of reason and determines the time when proper religious education should begin. It reflects the inherent nobility and the native sense of self-respect of the child which plays a pivotal role in the development of his personality. Furthermore, it expresses his feelings of disgrace and humiliation over his doing what he should not have done, besides a quiet but firm resolve not to repeat the act in future. Above all, it demonstrates his amenability to discipline and instruction.[17] It is only in so far as the child is capable of shame that there is a hope of his being improved by education. As soon as he succumbs to impudence, losing respect in his own eyes, and caring not who knows it, he goes far beyond the powers of human aid.

The first and foremost duty of a teacher, according to Miskawaih, is to develop the affection of shame into a strong moral conscience. He

should scrupulously protect it against all such influences that may damage or destroy it. To this end, he strongly condemns all authoritarian methods of making the child learn through physical punishment, force and threat, pain and fear. Children may be generously praised, but sparingly reproved. If they tend to conceal their little crimes, for which they have an astonishing power, they may not be exposed to the disgrace of being detected. And even when the censure seems to be necessary, it must be benevolent and indirect, attributing the lapse on their part to oversight or ignorance, with a warning against its future occurrence. Open and violent censure and physical punishment, should, as far as possible, be avoided, for it only helps in destroying the candour of the child, inducing him to duplicity and hypocrisy and turning him into an impudent rebel.[18] It extinguishes the flame of shame, kills the child's sense of self-respect and saps the very foundation upon which his personality is to be structured.

Traits of Personality

We have seen above that personality is an integrated whole of commendable virtues, each connected with the use of the one or the other power of the soul. Each virtue reflects a trait of personality in its own way which consists in the functioning of each of the three powers of the soul: reason, ire and desire, within the limit set by moderation. So great an emphasis Islam lays on-moderation as the regulative principle of personality that it calls Muslim *ummatan wasṭan*—a community of middle-path, or balanced community (2:143). Restricted to the middle course between excess and deficiency, these powers yield, as with Plato, the virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance; justice being the result not of moderation of any particular power, but of the harmonious working of all the three powers of the soul within their respective spheres.

Plato contented himself with four generic traits of personality: wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. He did not carry the classification further. Miskawaih subdivided each of these four traits of personality into their numerous subcategories. Going beyond Plato, he discerned seven subcategories of wisdom, nine species of courage, twelve subcategories of temperance and nineteen subcategories of justice.[30] The limitations of time and space do not permit me to reproduce them here.

Besides, Miskawaih lists four other traits of personality: benevolence (*tafaḍḍul*),[19] affection (*Maḥabbah*),[20] friendship

(*ṣadāqah*)[21] and love (*ʿishq*),[22] without linking them with the moderation of the one or the other power of the soul. Benevolence is an increase in justice, but it does not undermine justice, says Miskawaih. Far from it, it safeguards the interests of justice, for it is such an increase over the just award as will rule out the possibility of deficiency in it. Moreover, the prejudicial effects of benevolence remain confined to the benevolent person himself, for its occasion arises when a person dispenses justice between himself and another person, and not between two other persons.

Man is a social being. Affection refers to this aspect of his nature. He displays tender feeling towards his fellow-humans. Affection is a natural tie. It is nearer to unity and ranks higher than justice. Justice is an artificial tie. It is brought about through fear and force. Affection is a spontaneous feeling which, if allowed to reign supreme, will render justice superfluous.

Friendship and love are the two species of affection. Friendship is based, as with Aristotle, on the considerations of pleasure, gain or good. Its scope is narrower than that of affection. The latter is a tendency to associate with fellow-humans in general; the former restricts this association to a few individuals. Far more narrow in scope than friendship is love which may be restricted to two individuals only. Love is an excessive desire for pleasure or good and may be carnal or spiritual in origin, the former being reprehensible, the latter commendable. Utilitarian considerations do not enter love.

Of the spiritual love, Miskawaih's account is interesting. Placing the love of God at the top and that of the parents at the bottom, he assigns a middle position to the love of teachers. Not the love of parents, but that of the teachers in his opinion comes next to the love of God. The parents rear the body, the teacher cultures the soul. Since the soul is superior in substance to body, the one who cultures the soul should be held higher in esteem than the one who rears the body. The teacher is "the spiritual father" of the taught. He is for him "like God in mortal shape."[23]

The metaphysical-cum-moral view of human personality is quite different from the amoral positivistic view of it and so are the traits characteristics of them. Wisdom, courage, temperance, justice (along with their numerous subcategories), benevolence, affection, friendship and love all are traits of the personality, structured upon the awareness of the unseen and the perception of the need of moral restraint and

rectitude. The modern secular man is stranger to all these characteristics. He is spiritually homeless. Loneliness is eating him up from within. The sooner he reasserts his spiritual dimension, the better it is for his mental and spiritual health. It is a happy augury that the secular humanists themselves are in a fix. They are realizing the need to rehabilitate man's spiritually in order to save humanity from destruction. The greatest problem of the twentieth century, says Andre Malraux, is to fill the vacuum created by the nineteenth century loss of faith.[24] The answer to scienticism is religious humanism. "The greatest need of this age is a great prophet who can accept the facts of science and at the same time give inspiration to fill the great spiritual void," says Dr. H. Urey.[25] Things have come to such a pass that necessitates a dialogue between transcendence and positivism without further loss of time.

Integration of Personality

In the religious tradition, personality takes its bearings from the perspective of eternity, from the awareness of, and closeness to, the unseen which gradually grows into a strong moral conscience through education. It is the awareness of the unseen that lies at the root of the growth of personality from the impulsive through the reproaching to the contented self. The more intense the awareness, the more integrated is the personality. Its intensity reached its highest in the person of the Prophet Muhammad who attained *khulqin azīm*, the most integrated personality for all times to come.

Since awareness of the unseen is the hallmark of human personality, it reflects itself in all of one's thoughts, feelings and actions and disciplines the natural endowment of reason, ire and desire by keeping them within the limit set by moderation. But notwithstanding this, reason plays no less a vital role than faith in the development of human personality. It is reason which determines the golden mean between the excess and deficiency of a thing, strikes a balance between the opposing extremes, and decides the course of action to be adopted. The function of reason ends here and that of faith begins, for the motive power which translates the decision into action is provided by faith. Thus neither reason nor faith can be taken separately. The two taken together, play a vital role in the integration of one's personality, says Miskawaih.

Needless to say, he who possesses an integrated personality, lives in perfect peace and harmony, undisturbed by the fear of and grief over

anything, says the Qur'ān (2:38; 2:62; 2:112). The twin principles of faith and reason, upon which such a personality is structured, make his conduct a paradigm of unity of thought and action in general and that of moderation in all affairs of life in particular.

Disintegration of Personality

It is the awareness of the unseen coupled with right reason which provides a sound base to the development of an integrated personality. A disintegrated personality lacks both these elements. Such a person becomes a stranger to himself, losing sense of measure and proportion because of the rupture between his mind and spirit. The rupture alienates him from himself and adversely affects his mental and spiritual health by opening the door of all sorts of fears and griefs which cripple his personality altogether.

The most disastrous consequence of the rupture between the mind and the spirit is the loss of the sense of moderation which the Qur'ān particularly wants the believers to have always in view: "And those who, when they spend, are neither spend-thrift nor stingy; and there is a firm (middle) position between the two" (25:67). When one forsakes the middle course, the path of virtue and integration of personality, he deviates either on the side of excess (*ifrāt*), or on that of deficiency (*tafrīt*), both of which are paths of vice and disintegration of personality. This means that a personality may disintegrate in eight ways corresponding to the four standard ways of its integration, as stated above: the way of astuteness and stupidity, being the states of excess and deficiency in wisdom; the way of rashness and cowardice, being the states of excess and deficiency in courage; the way of indulgence and abstinence, being the states of excess and deficiency in temperance, and the way of tyranny and sufferance, being the states of excess and deficiency in justice. All these vices stem from the loss of awareness of the unseen and that of the sense of moderation following it which result in the disintegration of personality in one way or the other.

Since virtue, as we have seen above, is a mean between two vices, the acquisition of one virtue saves one from falling prey to either of the two vices. If one succeeds in acquiring all the four virtues, he becomes immune from falling prey to all the eight vices mentioned above and also to fear and grief of all sorts attendant there on. Such a person alone can claim to possess a fully integrated personality.

Restoration of the Awareness of the Unseen

When a person is all the time aware of the unseen, he sees its signs both in the *anfus* (self) and the *āfāq* (world) (41:53; 51:21), leading him to the straight path of virtue and righteousness. Such a person possesses a normal and healthy heart which the Qur'ān calls *qalbin salīm* (26:89; 37:84), a heart open to the transcendent, receptive of the influence of the unseen. When a person lacks awareness of the unseen, he loses his sense of direction and purpose and succumbs to vices of all sorts. Such a person has but a diseased heart (2:10; 9:10) which deprives him of the ability to transcend his physical environment and respond to the unseen. The only course open to us in such cases is to restore awareness of the unseen by calling reason to our help and exposing him to knowledge and wisdom in general and common sense in particular, says Miskawaih.

Of the disorders of the heart, Miskawaih names four in the *Tahdhīb*. These are anger, cowardice, grief and fear. Of these, anger is caused by the excess and cowardice by the deficiency of ire. Grief and fear are caused neither by the excess nor by the deficiency of any of the three powers of the soul. Nor does he apply this quantitative view of vice to these disorders of the heart. Earlier, al-Kindī (d. 873) wrote a whole treatise on the cure of grief, *Dāfiʿ al-Aḥzān*, not extant today, and Zakariyyah al-Rāzī (d. 925) dealt comprehensively with repelling grief[26] and fear of death[27] in his *al-Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī*, but without specifying the causes of these disorders. It was Ṭūsī (d. 1274) who perceived for the first time that deviation of any power of the soul from equipoise may occur not only in the quantitative but also in the qualitative sense and that the cause of fear lies in the perversion of the state of ire and that of grief in the depravity of the state of desire.[28] I shall now turn to the cure of the disorders of grief and fear one by one.

Cure of Grief

Grief is caused by the depravity of the state of desire (*shahwah*). It ensues on failing to attain a desired object or losing something beloved. Its cause is either greed of worldly pleasures or the presumption that the things of the world are enduring and permanent or the supposition that it is possible to attain all things desired.

Its cure lies in remaining content with what a person has in his possession and on setting his heart on nothing, as suggested by

Socrates, the loss of which may cause him pain and grief. Besides, he should also realize that everything desired is not attainable and that the things of the world know no permanence and constancy.

Again, grief, as stressed by al-Kindī, in his *Dāfiʿ al-Aḥzān*, is not a natural phenomenon. It is not a consequence of the lack of something desired, but a state which men attract to themselves by their own bad choice. This is demonstrated by the fact that a thing, the loss of which a person repents, is such that there are people in the world who are quite happy without it; and that there is no misfortune in the world, however great, the grief over which is not forgotten with the passage of time.[29]

Cure of Fear

Fear is caused by the perversity of the state of ire (*ghaḍab*). It arises from the apprehension of something unpleasant or the expectation of something dreaded which a man is incapable of repelling. Now both apprehension and expectation relate to an event which will occur in future and the occurrence of which is either necessary or contingent; the cause of the contingent being either the action of the one who fears or that of another. For none of these reasons, it behooves a man of knowledge and wisdom to give way to fear.

As regards the event which is to happen necessarily, it lies beyond human power to repel it and as such it is better to reconcile with its inevitability than to be apprehensive of it, since apprehension will only hasten calamity and deprive the soul of the opportunity of regulating its affairs, leading to its *saʿādah* (felicity) both in this world and the world to come.

As regards the event, the happening of which is possible and is dependant upon the act of another, it should be borne in mind that the nature of the possible is such that both its coming and not coming to be are equally probable, and hence to suppose it to happen with certainty would only hasten suffering, whereas fair presumption and hope would give the zest to attain *saʿādah* in the here and the hereafter.

If the possibility of the dreaded event is dependent upon one's own act, the person who dreads it should better refrain from doing acts involving dreadful consequences, rather than doing such acts knowingly and then weep over his foolishness.[30]

Cure of the Fear of Death

Fear, as stated above, is caused by the perversity of the state of ire,

and the fear of death is the commonest instance of it. It arises either because the person who fears death knows not what death is; or because he knows not about the abode of his soul after death; or because he supposes that the dissolution of the body implies the dissolution of the soul as well, so that the world will remain as it is but he will not be there to enjoy its pleasures; or because he presumes that death is an extremely painful experience; or because he fears punishment after death; or because he feels sorely grieved over his separation from his children and property. All these presumptions are based on our ignorance of the nature and implications of death and the cure of ignorance is knowledge.

What we call death, is the severance of the connection of the soul with the body, so that the former can no more use the latter as its instrument, for it is destroyed after its separation from the former. The soul is an enduring substance and does not suffer corruption with the corruption of the body. Death in no way involves the destruction of the essential being of man and so the fear of one's ceasing to exist after death turns out to be entirely false and baseless.

If a man fears death, because he knows not the final abode of his soul, his fear is of his own ignorance, not that of death. He should voluntarily die before his physical death to attain knowledge of the true felicity or abode of the soul. Ignorance begets fear, knowledge dispels it. Again, whoever is afraid of death; is afraid of the completion of his own essence. Death makes man complete, noble and enduring, by setting the soul free from the fetters of the body and giving it immediate knowledge of its own essence and that of God, in which lies its true felicity.

If a person fears death because he presumes it to be a painful experience, he must know that pain is a sensation caused by the soul's connection with the body. Death tears this connection asunder, rendering the body incapable of suffering pain, for that which suffers pain has left the body. If a person is afraid of death, because he is apprehensive of punishment in the hereafter, he must know that his fear is of his own sins, not that of death. He should avoid doing sinful acts and meet death as a friend. If a person is afraid of death, because it would separate him from his wife, children and property, he should know that grief over it would hasten pain and augment suffering, and that if he reconciles himself with the situation, inevitable as it is, it would help him in leading a normal happy life.

Death is the natural end of life. He who is born must die one day. Mortality is as much a property of man as is life. He who is afraid of death must know that death is inevitable and so he must reconcile with it. Man is a finite being and death is his inevitable fate. Moreover, the longing for an everlasting life is an absurdity in itself. If our ancestors had not died, our own turn to enjoy the world would never have come. If life without death were possible, it would also have been possible for our ancestors, and if all persons, who were ever born were to survive, they would not find place on earth to live.

The desire for a longer span of life is no less absurd than the desire for an everlasting life. He who longs for a long life, longs for old age and in old age there sets in a general decline in the powers of the body and mind, followed by ailments which make life so miserable that one would prefer death to such a wretched life.[31]

Earlier, Rāzī also dealt with the cure of grief and fear of death in his *al-Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī*, but Miskawaih makes no mention of him in his *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, perhaps because he was dubbed as a heretic by the orthodoxy for his extremely rationalistic approach to religion. We learn from al-Tawḥīd[32] that he was "carried away" in early life by the works of al-Rāzi's on alchemy, and from Paul Kraus[32] that his *al-Risālah fī al-Lazzāt wa al-Ālām* is a restatement of al-Rāzī's epicurean view of pleasure which give us reason to believe that he may have been acquainted with al-Rāzī's *al-Tibb al-Ruḥānī* as well.

To recapitulate: Miskawaih builds his theory of personality on the Qur'ānic concept of a normal and healthy heart, a heart which is open to the transcendent (*qalbin salīm*) and responsive to the unseen (*qalbin munīb*), (50:33) as opposed to the abnormal and diseased heart (*fī qulūbihim maraḍun*) which lacks awareness of the unseen. A truly human personality, according to him, has a metaphysical axis as well as a moral thrust which the modern theories of personality have nothing to do with, for neither metaphysics nor morality has any place in the positivistic structure of modernity.

Notes

1. Abdul Aziz Izzat has conclusively shown that Miskawaih is the correct name and not Ibn Miskawaih. See his *"Ibn" Miskawaih wa Falsafatuhū al-Akhlīqiyyah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabii, 1946).

2. Miskawaih was first discovered as a moralist by T.J. de Boer, a Dutch Orientalist. "Among other things," he wrote in *The History of Philosophy in Islam* (London: Luzac, 1903), "Miskawaih has left us a philosophical system of ethics which up to this day is valued in the East." Later, in his article contributed to Hasting's *Encyclopedia*, he represented Miskawaih as "the most notable representative of neo-Platonic eclecticism in Muslim Ethics." (See *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol 5, s.v. "Ethics (Muslim)." Miskawaih believes that the human good cannot be determined apart from the place and position of man in the scale of evolution of the spirit (*rūḥ*). This concept of human good, writes Izzat, makes him the forerunner of Guyau, Lasbox and Dewey who are known to the world for their genetic approach to ethics. Abdul Haq Ansari (*The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawaih*, Aligarh: Aligarh University Press 1964) considers him to be "the greatest representative of philosophical ethics in Islam," with whom *saʿādah*, is not mere earthly felicity, as with Aristotle, but is the basic problem of ethics. To D. M. Donaldson (*Studies in Muslim Ethics*, London: Luzac, 1953) the whole history of Muslim ethics, "in the narrower sense," is but the story of the *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* of Miskawaih. For other studies on Miskawaih's ethics see, A.S. Nadwi, *Ḥukamā-i-Islam* (Urdu), vol. 1 (Aʿzamgarh: Nadwatul Muṣannafīn, 1953) 248-270; Ashkār Hussain, "Ibn Miskawaih ka Nizām-i Akhlāq" (Urdu), Paper presented in the *Third Session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress*, Peshawar, 1956; A.R. Badawī, "Miskawaih" in M. M. Sharif (ed.) *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Kempten: Allgäuer Heimatverlag, 1963) 469-479; B.H. Siddiqui, "Miskawaih's Theory of Spiritual Therapy," *Journal of the Regional Cultural Institute* (Tehran), vol. 1 (1968), 3: 22-36; B.H. Siddiqui, "The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawaih," *Journal of Regional Cultural Institute* (Tehran) 2 (1969), 1:32-52.

3. The Qur'ān uses the term *khuluqin ʿaẓīm* (68:4) for the most integrated personality of the Prophet Muhammad. The secular culture of the West makes a sharp distinction between character and personality by restricting the use of the former to ethics and that of the latter to psychology. This distinction is unknown to Islamic tradition. We may, therefore, translate *khulq* both as character and personality in English. In the ethical literature of the West also the terms character and personality are often used interchangeably. Modern psychology takes exception to it.

4. R. Mckeon (ed.) *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: The Modern Library, 1941), 412a.

5. Ibid., 413a.

6. Miskawaih, *Al-Fawz al-Aṣghar*, tr. J.W Sweetman in his *Islam and Christian Theology*, vol. 1 (London: Butterworth Press, 1945).

7. Miskawaih, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Taṭhīr al-Aʿrāq* (Cairo: Al-Maktabat al-Husainiyyah, 1329 A.H), 146.

8. Ibid.

9. F. Thilly & L. Wood, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 316-17.
10. Miskawaih, *al-Fawz al-Asghar*, 78-83.
11. Ibid., 32.
12. V.F. Calverton (ed.) *The Making of Man* (New York: The Modern Library, 1930), 28.
13. Ibid., 29.
14. *Mishkāt*, vol. I. (Lahore: Al-Faisal Publishing, n.d.), 44.
15. Miskawaih, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq.*
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 15-24.
20. Ibid., 108-110.
21. Ibid., 114.
22. Ibid., 116.
23. Ibid., 125.
24. *Proceedings of the Eighth Session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress* (Karachi: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1961), 171.
25. Ibid., 172.
26. *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, trans. A.J. Arberry (London: John Murray, 1950), 68-74.
27. Ibid., 103-107.
28. Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i-Nāṣrī*, trans. G.M. Wickens under the title, *The Nasirean Ethics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 123.
29. Miskawaih, *Tahdhīb al- Akhlāq*, 181-82.
30. Ibid., 172-74.
31. Ibid., 175-80.
32. Abu Ḥaiyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa al-Muʾānasah*, vol. 1 (Egypt: 1939), 35.
33. Cited by Izzat, *"Ibn" Miskawaih*, 127.