

History of Islam

An encyclopedia of Islamic history

Theory of Evolution- Fact or Fiction?

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What makes us human? Is it the size of our skulls or the shape of our teeth? Is it the absence of a tail on our backs or the size of our thumb? Is it the size of our brain or the color of the skin? Did man evolve from the apes or was he divinely created?

Modern man searches for his self in the shape, size, form, fit and function of his body and of his internal organs. Not a day goes by when we read in newspapers about a discovery of bones in an ancient grave which is claimed to provide "the missing link" between man and the ape. Textbooks in schools assert unequivocally that man is a descendant of the apes based on a similarity of their body structures. To quote the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences:

"Man resembles all of the anthropoid apes, especially in the lack of an external tail, in the intricacy and pattern of cerebral convolutions, posture without prolapsus or sagging.... The human animal diverges in body bulk and size, in the specialization of body pelvis for support and transmission of the body weight to the lower limbs and in the better elongation of the fore limbs, the hands and the feet." (Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 10, 1968, p. 71)

A "mechanical" description of man in terms of his physical body takes away his essential attributes. If man were only his body, would he then feel, see, think, create or build institutions? Seeing, feeling, thinking and creating are not attributes of the body; they are attributes of the soul. There is more to man than his mere body. *Evolutionists define man in terms of his body and miss his essential attributes. They buck the issue before they even get started.*

The evolutionary theories and the spiritual approach take us in diametrically opposite directions in search of the anthropological roots of man. The Evolutionists search for skulls, bones, and body shapes. The spiritual approach looks for our essential attributes such as consciousness, love, reason, knowledge and free will.

The evolutionists maintain that there is no ethical purpose in nature and that the fittest survive in the struggle for life.

The anthropologists used this argument to explain the evolution of man. The sociologists used this same argument to formulate the "white man's burden". Political scientists used this argument to justify the domination of Asia and Africa by European powers.

This observation throws some light on the social origins of the Theory of Evolution. In the mid-nineteenth century Europe was the master of the world. The British had successfully subjugated India. The Dutch had their eyes on Indonesia. The French had a stake in North Africa and the Spanish were in Latin America. The Western coast of Africa had been robbed of its manpower and its resources were at the mercy of European greed. Industrialization had taken hold in Western Europe and was creating riches hitherto undreamed of. Into this *laissez faire* environment was projected the Theory of Evolution. It fit the worldview that the European mercantile class desired to cultivate. The position that it was the fittest who survived seemed to justify their own unfettered exploitation of Asia and Africa and of their own masses. It was tailor made to give a philosophical foundation to their mercantile domination.

The Theory of Evolution was thus a projection of the social conditions of mid-nineteenth century Europe onto the philosophical plane. It was a projection onto heaven of a social condition upon earth.

Many are the social theories of man that are advanced to justify an exploitative social environment. The ancient caste system in India provides an example. The process that generates such theories is this. A privileged segment of society seeks to justify and perpetuate its position by giving a cosmic underpinning to the existing social milieu. Philosophers emerge and offer seemingly acceptable justification for the privileges of the dominant sections of society. Their theories get accepted and become a part of the religious dogma of the establishment. In this manner religion, power and money cooperate to create a trinity of control over society and perpetuate the status quo.

The Theory of Evolution is one such attempt on the part of humankind to clothe a social condition on earth into a cosmic framework. Evolution has become the religion of modern man and is thrust upon people with the same vigor that a priestly class pushes a religious dogma. It is no less exploitative today than it was over a hundred years ago. And, it is no less a basis for domination, racism and downright intimidation as it was over a hundred years ago.

The historical experience of humankind shows that it is not the fittest who survive but the just who triumph. Moses triumphed over the Pharaoh. The Romans thought it was their natural right to conquer and enslave. Yet their very excesses did them in. Hitler sought to build a Third Reich ruled by a super-race that would last a thousand years. It lasted less than fifteen years. If the fittest were the ones to survive then Egypt would still be ruled by the Pharaohs, the Mediterranean would be a Roman lake and Hitler would be the Chancellor of Europe. But each of them fell because they exceeded their limits, became unjust and brought ruin upon themselves.

Justice is the fulcrum upon which the struggle of man hinges. History is a resolution of this struggle. Humankind strives to find a just and equitable balance upon earth. When they succeed, they prosper. When they fail, they perish.

It is the destiny of man to struggle on this earth, to exercise his free will, to strive to establish justice and to be judged by the consequences of his struggle. Every struggle is accorded a judgment and the global struggle of humankind finds its logical conclusion in Divine Judgment.

Man is a responsible creature. It is in this sense of responsibility that one has to search for the vision of man.

The Evolutionists take the position that man is a product of nature. Nature is the servant of man. It is man who changes nature by the strength of his free will.

“Have you not seen

how God has subjected to you

all that is on earth?"

Qur'an (22: 65)

The Theory of Evolution places nature in the driver's seat. It makes man a mere tool in the hands of the galactic changes taking place in the cosmos. Man becomes a helpless creature responding to nature's bidding, going through mutations and trying to survive in a cruel, antagonistic universe.

Observation contradicts this view. It is man, not nature that is the boss in the scheme of things. It is man that tames nature by the strength of his free will, not the other way around. It is the will of man that subjugates the strength of steel and makes it bend, shapes and forms as he wills it. It is the will of man that diverts rivers, builds dams and makes them yield hydroelectric power. It is the will of man that creates mighty cities such as Los Angeles out of the desert. It is the will of man that rides the air at speeds greater than the speed of sound. It is the will of man that uses the forces of nature to conquer those very forces. It is the will of man that defies gravity and soars to the moon. It is the will of man that forces inanimate oxides to "talk" and makes transistors and computers.

Conversely, it is man who inflicts injustice upon nature and destroys his own habitat. He destroys forests. As a result, hundreds of animal and plant species perish. It is man who depletes the ozone layer and commits suicide in the long term. It is man who ravages the land through over-cultivation and makes barren the very soil that yields him food. It is man who inflicts injustice upon his own self by transgressing all bounds, committing heinous deeds which result in disease and starvation and death.

How can the evolutionists maintain that man is a product of nature when it is nature that bends to the will of man? The regency of man extends over all the dominions of the earth. His free will dances in the cosmos like the rhythm of light dazzling the imagination even of the angels. It is nature that is the servant of man not the other way around.

Nature cannot and has not produced humankind. Humans are the masters and nature is the servant. How can the servant be the master?

The Evolutionists claim that things evolve from the simple to the complex. Not necessarily true. Events can as naturally go from the complex to the simple as they can from the simple to the complex. The direction of change is a moment of Divine Grace.

Evolutionists look for the origins of man in the ape, of the ape in the reptiles, of the reptiles in simple organisms and of living organisms in inanimate matter. In their view evolution is a one-way street from the simple to the complex.

Such a view is contrary to the laws of thermodynamics and of quantum mechanics. The world is an ensemble of a large number of events. These events occur many billions of times a second. The outcome of each event is uncertain and may or may not depend on the constraints of the previous ensemble. For example, if we shuffle a deck of cards upon which are written numbers one to one thousand, after a while we will get a perfectly disordered deck where the numbers between one and one thousand are arranged at random. Suppose we keep shuffling the cards. It is perfectly possible that at the next shuffle we may produce the original sequence of one to one thousand! Of course, the probability of this happening is small but this possibility cannot be ruled out.

It is the same with events in the universe. There is no *a-priori* reason why a simple organism would become complex with the passage of time. Indeed, observation in nature suggests that many organisms have survived because of their extreme specialization. Insects, turtles and bees are examples of such specialization. They have been around for millions of years, but they have not gone through transformations. Simplicity is the rule of nature, not complexity. Various species adapt to changing circumstance by simplifying and shedding that which they can do without but still remain in the same genre. The seed of a tall pine tree does not mutate and produce an elm tree if it is planted at higher altitudes.

Going back to the example of a deck of cards, the direction of change from one moment to another is totally unpredictable. The position that things will continue tomorrow the same way as they did yesterday is only an assumption. Such an assumption is perhaps necessary to simplify our worldview and to make some sense out of the large number of inputs we are bombarded with. But there is no *a priori* reason to believe that events of yesterday will repeat exactly the same way tomorrow.

This is where the spiritual perspective offers insights. In this perspective, the Creator makes the decisions in an ensemble of events. It is His will that brings out the tree from the seed and it is His will that causes the tree to die and return to dust. The direction of change is a moment of Divine Grace. This is the meaning of the Qur'anic term "*Inshallah*" (God willing). It means that the outcome of the next moment is *contingent* upon the Will of the Creator. It is a term pregnant with philosophical content. Indeed, it is *the* religious statement of Physics!

The Evolutionists maintain that species acquire new characteristics and evolve into higher species. This position is contrary to observation. Changes within a single species are mere adaptations to a changing environment. These changes say nothing about transformation from one species to another.

The Theory of Evolution looks upon an organism as a passive recipient of a changing environment. As the environment changes, the organism develops certain characteristics to adapt itself to the changes. With time, the organism undergoes a mutation and fixes the new characteristics. This process continues until a new species is evolved.

Darwin was not the first one to advance a Theory of Evolution. His theory rests on an earlier one by Lamarck. It was Lamarck who advanced the idea that changed characteristics and mutations are fixed in an organism and are then transmitted to the next generation. Later speculations suggested a selection process to accommodate the changed behavior of a newly mutant organism. In other words, the more an organism changed in response to a changed environment the more that environment was favored. The two fed upon each other until a new equilibrium was established.

The core of the Theory of Evolution rests on two assumptions: (1) Chance mutations transform one species to another, and (2) Mutations are fixed and transmitted through heredity. Both assumptions need close scrutiny.

The biological makeup of living organisms consists of specific and distinct cellular structures. Each living organism has its own unique structure, specific to its genre, which it seems to guard as if it is a temple unto itself. Within each species certain attributes are brought forth by environment and certain other attributes are suppressed. For instance, an oak tree, which in the tropics grows to be about a hundred feet tall, becomes a dwarf oak on the footsteps of tall mountains. The variation in size of the oak says nothing about mutation. The characteristic of growth is already inherent in the oak. All that the

tropical climate does is to bring out those attributes. Goats that live in cold climates have a thicker wool coat than their cousins who inhabit the plains. But such changes are within a species. They do not cross boundary lines *between* species.

The Theory of Evolution cannot and does not explain the presence of male and female among the species. If an organism can mutate, select, fix and alter itself, then why does it need a male and a female for its reproduction? The inability to explain this issue has led the evolutionists into a plethora of speculations about the origin of the male and the female. Huxley, one of the well known British evolutionists, speculated that men and women originally belonged to two different species then somehow got together and melted into one!

Nature does not cause anything. It merely serves to bring out that which is intrinsic to each species. Each genre, and each species, jealously guards its own genetic structure. The boundaries of this structure are well delineated and marked out. It is only within these boundaries that we see shades of adaptation and change.

By contrast, the spiritual perspective asserts that change is an act of creation. It belongs to God. The cosmos as we know it is an ensemble of billions upon billions of events happening simultaneously. This cosmos breathes by the Will of God. Time is a measure of change. Events that happen at one time are associated with one moment of time. Events that happen the next moment are associated with the next measure of time. Many trillions of times a second and at all times in between, the Will of God intervenes and determines the outcome of all events. Not an atom moves nor a speck of dust is disturbed without His knowledge and concurrence. He and He alone is the First Cause of all change.

God has created each species, male and female, with its own disposition, its own characteristics and “its own mode of prayer”. A crab and a fish both live in water, each distinct and beautiful in its own way.

Man is created and endowed with consciousness and knowledge. His free will makes him unique in creation. He is enjoined to observe, study, reflect, think, extrapolate, act upon, experiment, conquer and rule the universe so that through it he may realize the Will of God. The pertinent question before a man of faith is not: What is the Law of Nature? It is: What is the Will of God?

To look for the origins of man in the structure of his body is to chase ghosts. It gives us no clue as to whether our ancestors were “more” human or “less” human.

The Evolutionists compare man to the apes based on the similarity of their body structures. To quote a modern encyclopedia:

“Man is similar to the apes in the structure of the trunk and arms (including the form and number of vertebrae, the disposition of the viscera, the form of joints and muscles and the proportion of the trunk and the limbs).” (Human Evolution, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, Vol. 5, 1968, p 218.)

Consider the proposition that the size of the brain determines the human species. The human brain is an extremely complex organ and two of its important characteristics are memory and throughput. These are also two of the requirements that we impose on computer design.

Memory is the amount of information that can be stored in a computer. Throughput is the speed with which we can process a given amount of data to make some sense out of it. The mechanical size of a computer gives no indication of its memory or its throughput. A large IBM computer of the 1960s had but a fraction of the memory and throughput of a portable PC of today. The size of a computer depends

on the design characteristics of microchips, packaging density, material, manufacturing technology and performance requirements. If we cannot determine the memory or throughput of a computer from its mechanical size, how can the size of the human brain determine its capability?

As another example, consider the strength of an ordinary steel wire. Most people would think that the larger the size of a wire, the stronger it gets. One uses a small size wire to hang a flowerpot from the ceiling and a large chain to anchor a ship. But it may come as a surprise to many that beyond a certain size the strength of a wire actually *decreases*. This happens because metals have inherent micro-cracks at the atomic level. The strength of a wire depends on the density of micro-cracks. The smaller the diameter of a wire the easier it is to fabricate one without micro-cracks. Beyond a certain size these micro-cracks have a tendency to coalesce under stress to form larger cracks and fracture. It is for this reason that a rope woven from several strands of wire is much stronger than one made from a single strand of a single wire.

These are ordinary day-to-day experiences. Yet positions are taken that the size of our brain determines the fact that we are human. Doesn't it fly in the face of observation? Suppose we had a brain that was ten times as large and weighed a hundred times as much. Would that make us more human? On the contrary, such a weight on our shoulders would make our heads quite unmanageable. It would make it that much more difficult to turn our head. Every time such a heavy head flopped to one side or the other it would require a significantly greater effort to lift it up. Our back muscles would have to be stronger or larger or both. In order to accommodate the size of such muscles our necks would in all probability disappear and our heads would become continuous with our torso. In other words, we would look like large tin cans!

It should be obvious that the size of our brain is not what makes us human. Our own understanding of computers should make it clear to us that the Creator could have made our brains somewhat smaller or larger and still endowed us with the same memory, intelligence and throughput. Our humanness does not reside in the size of our brains. It lies somewhere else.

This argument applies with equal force to the shape and size of our skulls and our heads. The human skull serves to protect the brain and head and besides acting as the container of the brain locates four of our sensors, namely the eyes, ears, nose and tongue. Anthropologists spend an enormous amount of time searching for similarities in the structure of the human skull and of ancient bones. The shapes and sizes of ancient bones are carefully measured and catalogued, as are the variations in shape and size of facial bones of modern man. Based on such measurements speculations are made about the humanness of the owners of those bones.

Consider a robot. Suppose we build one that looks like a modern male human being. Suppose we shape its skull, eyes, nose, ears, and tongue to look "real". With a little ingenuity we can locate sight sensors in its eyes, hearing sensors in its ears, air intake sensors in its nose, and food intake sensors in its mouth. We can so design these sensors that the spectral response of the sight sensors is identical to that of human eyes, the auditory response of the hearing sensors is identical to that of an average male, the air intake and the food intake similar to that of a human. We can make this robot walk erect, make sure that it has no tail, ensure that the toes stick out just the right amount, configure its backbone the same as that of a human. Would it make this robot human? Even a child can tell that all our mechanical ingenuity, the shape and size of the robot's skull, the location and characteristics of its eyes and ears, its posture and food intake, does not make this robot human. Our humanity lies elsewhere.

The observations that are made with respect to the size and shape of the skull can be repeated with equal validity for other parts of the body. Consider the absence of a tail in the human genre. Much is made of this observation in the evolution theories. If we attach a tail to our robot, does it become more human or less human? A six inch tail can be as neatly folded and packaged as a bundle of wire coming out of any ordinary instrument which we design these days.

Consider the size and shape of our toes. Again, anthropologists are fond of pointing to our toes and our thumbs while speculating on the evolution of the human species. It is said that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of man is that he has toes sticking out of his feet just the right amount. It is also asserted that nature has given him thumbs; that in the absence of thumbs, man would not be able to build the tools that give him an advantage over other animals. Such observations and speculations are once again a reflection of the mechanical mentality of the nineteenth century. It overlooks the intrinsic attributes of mankind.

Animals are tool-dumb. Man is tool-wise. Observations have shown that even a child can master tools and toys with considerably more ease than a full-grown ape. Furthermore, it is not just the mastery of existing tools that distinguishes man. It is also his *inventiveness*, and inventiveness does not reside in the body, it is an attribute of the soul. Man not only masters tools but overcomes his handicaps with his inventiveness. Man is at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the beast with respect to strength and ferocity. So he invents hunting tools to overcome this handicap. Man cannot tolerate extremes of temperature. So, he invents sensing tools that sense temperatures as cold as liquid helium and as hot as molten steel. Mechanical tools are an extension of man's body. Similarly, electronic tools such as the computer are an extension of his mind.

In comparison with man the cheetah is more nimble, the lion stronger, the cat more sensitive, the bat more perceptive and the gazelle more alert. Left to the contraption of his body humankind would have perished a long time ago.

Not only is the human body feeble, the information that it gives us is often deceptive and misleading. For instance, if we observe the full moon as it traverses the sky it appears much larger when it is close to the horizon than it does when it is at its zenith. Yet photographs taken of the moon at various positions show that the moon does not change its size as it moves across the sky. In judging two-dimensional objects we invariably tend to exaggerate heights and minimize horizontal distances. Our sense of touch does not distinguish between extreme cold and extreme heat. Extreme cold "stings" the same way that a hot object does. Our eyes are insensitive to a rapid succession of pictures so that we think we are watching a movie whereas in fact we are watching a series of discrete pictures one after the other.

Besides being feeble and deceptive, the body does not teach us anything about the true nature of things. Consider a blue canvas (or a red or green one for that matter). Try to construct a "scientific" description of the blue color. It would run along the following lines. Electro-magnetic waves from the sun bounce off the canvas. All of the radiant energy in the visible spectrum is absorbed except that in the vicinity of 0.48 micrometers. This radiation is bounced back into the atmosphere. Some of it reaches the eye where it travels through the eyeball, hits the optic nerve and sends a signal to the brain which registers it. Let us examine this description and ask where the blue color is. The electromagnetic radiation is there, the reflection of light is there, the optic nerve and electro-optical signal is there but nowhere is there the slightest indication of the sensation of "blue". The color is neither in the canvas nor in the eyeball. It is somewhere else. *The body is only a receptacle and a reference. Knowledge transcends the physical body. Our humanness does not reside in the shape of our bones nor in our organs which act as our sensors.*

The question is asked: “If we are not determined by our body, then what determines our humanness?”
What makes us human is not our body but our soul and its divine attributes.

Where are the attributes of color, beauty, harmony, compassion, love and justice located? Is the sense of color located in our eyes? Is the sense of touch located in our skin? These are all attributes of the soul. Indeed, the soul is the seat of all human attributes. It is the soul that feels the pangs of love. It is the soul that is the seat of cognition and learning. It is the soul that feels joy and pain. It is the soul that hears and sees and feels. The body is merely the means for passing on data to the soul.

This observation is not new. It has been recognized by perceptive minds in different civilizations. Karl Jung, in his *Eranos Jarbuch*, wrote: “All science is a function of the soul, in which all knowledge is rooted.”

What makes us human is our soul, not our body. Man and beast do not share the same attributes. To deny the soul is to deny our common humanity. It is to deny the attributes that distinguish the human from the beast. To argue our humanness on the basis of the structure of our body or the shape and size of our bones is to miss the boat completely.

We have discussed in earlier chapters the attributes of the soul. They are summarized here for the sake of clarity.

1. The soul is endowed with consciousness. It is given the ability to “name” things

“And He taught Adam the names (attributes, characteristics and nature of all creation).”

Qur’an (2: 31)

“I am conscious, therefore I am”, sums up this argument. Man was created by Divine Love and was endowed with consciousness. The sublime act of creation was the moment when the consciousness of man asked: “Who am I? Who is my Creator and Sustainer?”

Man is a knower. He can be taught and in turn he can teach. This is a uniquely human ability. No animal has this ability. It is this ability that enables humankind to understand the nature of the cosmos through observation, interaction, extrapolation and intuition. The ability to name things is not a learned ability. It is taught by the Creator. It is intrinsic to the nature of humans.

This attribute helps us understand how humans learn. The names, nature and attributes of all things have been taught to humankind. But humans forget and must rediscover this knowledge through struggle. Knowledge is one and is universal. The various modes of obtaining knowledge, namely observation, extension, intuition and infusion are only different routes to reaching the universal reservoir of knowledge.

2. The soul is endowed with speech and intelligence

“God most Gracious,

(bestowed) knowledge (of) the Qur’an,

Created humankind,

Endowed it with the faculty of bayan (speech and intelligence).”

Qur'an (55: 1-4)

The faculty of *bayan* is speech and intelligence. It is not merely our ability to speak a particular language such as English, French, German, Swahili, Farsi, Urdu or Zulu. It is that innate ability to attach ideas to sounds, to transform and rearrange these ideas, to differentiate and integrate them, to fix and vibrate them, to connect and disconnect them, to extrapolate and expand them and to build that marvelous tree, the tree of knowledge. This ability is a universal human ability bestowed upon all men and women independent of their origin, race, creed, time and place. It is what distinguishes the world of man from the kingdom of the beast.

3. The soul is endowed with a free will

"We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains,

but they declined, being afraid thereof.

Humankind undertook it

It was indeed unjust and foolish."

Qur'an (33: 72)

The trust that is referred to in this passage is the trust of free will. It is the free will of man that bends steel, conquers space, climbs the highest peaks and rides the waves of the ocean. It is the free will of man that subjugates nature. It is what makes us human. "I will, therefore I am", sums up this position.

And what is free will? It is not merely our ability to conquer, control, shape and fashion what is in nature. It is also our ability to conquer, control, shape and fashion what is within ourselves.

The Will of God is realized in nature by necessity. It is realized in humans through free choice. Humans and humans alone can either follow the commands of their Creator or choose to disobey them. Man, and man alone, has a choice either to surrender his will to the Will of God, or become a rebel.

The free will of man is molded in the crucible of his own soul. To choose between right and wrong, to fight for freedom or suffer tyranny, to struggle for justice or bear injustice, to follow the command of a higher voice or succumb to the lusts of one's ego, these are choices that are made in the innermost recesses of our souls. But unlike the unfettered free will of Nietzsche, the free will of man in the Qur'an is a gift from the Creator to be used in justice and balance.

Free will is a unique attribute possessed only by humans. Animals do not go on a voluntary fast. Apes and monkeys do not give charity. Man, and man alone, conquers his self through an exercise of his free will.

Free will is a universal attribute bestowed upon all men and women independent of their origin, race, creed or the period of history they live in. It is an attribute possessed by men and women of Africa as well as men and women of America, by the scholar from Al-Azhar as well as the laborer from New York, by the peasant in Indonesia as well as the accountant in Los Angeles.

It is the destiny of man to struggle on this earth, to exercise his free will, to strive to establish justice and to be judged by the consequences of his struggle. Every struggle is accorded a judgment and the global struggle of humankind finds its logical conclusion in Divine Judgment.

Man is a responsible creature. It is in this sense of responsibility that one has to search for his humanness.

4. The soul is endowed with a sense of balance, proportion, harmony, beauty and justice

*“And the firmament We have created
and established therein balance, proportion and justice,
so that you may (similarly)
establish balance, proportion and justice
in your own lives.”*

Qur'an (55: 7-8)

Humankind has an innate, universal longing for justice and a natural disinclination towards injustice. There is a symbiosis between the sense of justice in humans and the justice that exists in the world at large. Man can intuitively relate to a beautiful building because he is endowed with an innate sense of proportion, balance and beauty. It does not take a Ph.D. to fall in love with the Taj Mahal. Every peasant falls in love with it too. Man can intuitively relate to harmony in music because he is endowed with an innate sense of harmony. Even a baby can be put to sleep with the melody of a lullaby. Man can intuitively relate to mathematical forms because he is endowed with a universal sense of balance, harmony and proportion manifest in nature. A flower is beautiful in part because it is a manifestation of mathematical forms. Men and women fight for justice and oppose injustice because they have an inalienable, universal sense of justice. One does not have to attend Harvard University to learn about justice. Even human is born with it.

This attribute of harmony, balance, proportion and justice is a uniquely human attribute. It is a universal attribute possessed by all men and women whether they are black or white, yellow or brown, Chinese, Javanese or German, whether they lived in the eighth century or the twentieth century. Animals do not possess this attribute. Monkeys and apes cannot build the pyramids even if they are given a thousand years. They cannot design a geometrical floral pattern even if all the monkeys are gathered together. Elephants do not articulate what is just and what is not. Humans, and humans alone, are endowed with this attribute.

5. The soul is endowed with a sense of ethics

It is a distinguishing characteristic of humankind that it works together for its ethical well-being. In its most elemental form this ability manifests itself as a mutual desire for safety and protection. In its most advanced state it becomes a reflection of man's ethical fulfillment.

Early man was at a physical disadvantage with respect to the beast. He sought to protect himself through mutual help and elementary organization. When he went out hunting he did so in groups. When he faced danger he confronted it in groups. Such groups were at first composed of members of the immediate family and tribe. With the advent of agriculture, social organization made its appearance, transcending immediate associations with one's own kin. People began to settle in towns and villages, breaking down barriers of blood and requiring more complex forms of social and political organization. In modern times, the corporation has emerged as one of the most efficient organizations evolved for human economic benefit.

On the ethical plane, man has always had a thirst for truth and a penchant for knowledge. He had a natural inclination to understand his own self and his relationship to the world around him. He was well equipped by the Creator to undertake this mission. He was the only creature with a free will, gifted with the faculty of speech and knowledge of the “names” of all things. He was distinguished by his abilities to learn and to teach. These abilities set him apart from all other creation. What an individual learned he taught others. The tree of knowledge grew from a trunk to its branches and from there to further branches, until it embraced the reservoir of all human knowledge.

The ethical issues of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, of righteousness and inequity were part of this reservoir of knowledge. Man was a hunter not just of animals; he was a hunter of knowledge as well. He gathered what knowledge he could find and passed it on to others. He used his reason and judgment and inferred what was beyond the realm of his immediate experience. From time to time he was rewarded with illumination from the Creator about the nature of his own self and his relationship to the Creator. This illumination provided the criterion for ethics.

The ability to cooperate for its social and moral good sets mankind apart from the beast. While some form of social organization exists among insects and animals, organizations in the animal kingdom are one-dimensional and lack the flexibility and dynamics of human enterprise. Ants and bees, for instance, have a very high degree of social purpose and demonstrate an astonishing degree of cohesiveness. However, if an ant from one ant colony were to wander off into another ant colony it would be promptly and summarily killed. Bees exhibit the same kind of one-dimensional behavior. In this respect, ants and bees, despite their highly efficient social organizations, are prisoners of their own instincts. It is man and man alone who evolves his organizational framework and molds it to suit his goals. *Man is the master of his organizations whereas insects and animals are prisoners of their own organization.* Apes do not cooperate with each other to send rockets to the moon. Monkeys do not work together to build a telescope to search the galaxies. Ants and bees do not build hospitals to take care of their sick and wounded. Reptiles do not train their offspring to be senators and congressmen. Birds do not create symphonies. Termites do not build shipyards. Baboons do not build economic institutions and create international trade.

The ethical aspect of human social endeavor distinguishes it from that of other creatures. It is only man who can deliberately organize for construction or destruction, for peace or war, to fight for justice or inflict injustice. It is man alone who can choose the ethics of his own organizations. Man is alone not only in the excellence of his social organizational skills but also in the ethical values attached to them.

In summary, in the spiritual perspective, anthropology is a search for the divine attributes of man, not a search for bones and fossils. It is a search for those God-given, innate, universal, inalienable gifts that differentiate our genre from all other genres. It is in this search that we have to look for the origin of man.

Man is born free, blessed with a soul, illuminated with knowledge and judgment, with a mandate to rule all that is between heaven and earth. Nature obeys his command, not the other way around. Man is to live with Divine Presence and bow down before God and God alone. This is the noble vision offered by the Qur’an. A noble vision leads to a noble self. *Man becomes what he believes in.*

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