

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD VIEW IN DEALING WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS AMONG MUSLIMS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DEPRESSION

By:

Umar A. M. Kasule

Abstrak

Pembangunan pesat manusia dalam bidang industri dan urbanisasi kini, yang disokong kuat oleh faktor berlakunya migrasi secara besar-besaran umat Islam ke negara-negara maju, telah menyebabkan wujudnya masalah tekanan perasaan di kalangan mereka yang semakin meningkat dari semasa ke semasa. Terdapat beberapa metode yang digunakan bagi merawat penyakit psikologi tersebut berdasarkan pendekatan Islam dan Barat. Pendekatan Barat jauh berbeza dengan pendekatan Islam. Ini kerana sarjana Barat tidak melihat manusia sebagai makhluk yang terdiri dari roh dan jasad. Lantaran ini, mereka menggunasuai pendekatan sekular yang tidak melihat dan memperhitungkan dimensi kerohanian dalam diri manusia bagi merawat penyakit tekanan perasaan. Artikel ini akan membincangkan beberapa kaedah atau cara merawat penyakit tekanan perasaan berdasarkan 'world view' Islam.

PREAMBLE

Psychology is probably one of the most problematic disciplines to deal with. This is a conviction that is held not only by the non-psychologists but also by psychologists themselves. Robert Thomson a distinguished historian of psychology alluded to this fact when he wrote:

It is generally thought that psychology is not a coherent and tidy discipline, but a vast and rambling collection of bits and pieces. If it is a family of different methods, techniques and problems, the family is one, which exhibits striking individual differences.¹

¹ Robert Thomson (1968), *The Pelican History of Psychology*, England: Penguin Books, p. 430, hereinafter cited as *History of Psychology*.

Professor Malik Badri, agreeing with the above dictum, likens psychology to a *Pasar Malam*, the popular Malaysian night markets,² due to the discipline's incoherent nature. This fact notwithstanding however, it is a real vital discipline, which can not be ignored both by way of studying it or appealing to it.

Because of its problematic nature its not clearly agreed when it originated as a distinctive discipline. An attempt to venture into its origin would depend on what point of view one looks at it from. That is to say one may ask: did it spring from philosophy, physics, physiology (medicine) or is it simply anthropology par excellence? The purpose of this paper is not to trace the origin and development of psychology so as to delve into the intricacies surrounding its history. Rather the paper intends to bring to light one of the most significant dimensions of psychology and that is, its relationship to a particular worldview, in this case the Islamic Worldview, to its operation or its *modus operandi*.

Psychology largely deals with the nature, function and phenomenon of human mind and conduct. Taking this to be its major scope, then, there is no way psychology can be divorced from a worldview, which Alparslan contends to be "the environment within which the mind operates and without which it can not function at all."³ He further argues that a worldview is formed by the individual as a matter of habit that is dominant in his daily life through his culture, religion, technology, scientific and speculative ideas that he acquires throughout his education. It is in fact a perspective from which the individual views everything. Therefore no one can evaluate any question or problem without first assuming a worldview of a sort."⁴

Considering the above to be the general features of psychology and the meaning of a worldview, I wish to make a hypothesis from which the arguments here flow, that is people's minds, which psychology seeks to understand and deal with are shaped by a worldview to which they succumb. People's perception of things like the meaning of life, the purpose of living, the values for which one should live and strive for, and above all what happens or is likely to happen to a person at the end of the road of life are all significantly influenced by the worldview they appeal to. In short, it can be safely asserted that the worldview is what shapes people's general mentality towards everything they do, ranging from the challenges of life and how to go about

² Malik B. Badri (1999), lecture notes on *Counseling and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Perspective*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, unpublished.

³ Alparslan Acikgenc (1996), *Islamic Science: Towards a Definition*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, p. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

them, to the ultimate end of life in this world. The place of this mentality is the soul and mind from which people's behavior spontaneously flow. This being the case therefore, any psychologist's attempt to deal with the Muslim mind, will *ipso facto* require him or her to have a proper understanding of the Muslims' general mentality, which is embodied in the Islamic worldview.

THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

The Islamic worldview is built upon seven fundamental philosophical concepts, which significantly differentiate it from other worldviews. These concepts together with what they entail cannot be divorced from the Muslim soul and mind, for it is within the environment they create that actually makes any soul or mind worthy being regarded as "Muslim". The concepts are: The Existence of God, Divine revelation or the *dīn* or Religion, The Concept of Man, The Concept of Knowledge, Ethics and The Universe. All these concepts are so closely inter-related that independent perception of any one or some of them in isolation of others renders such perception faulty. A brief explanation of these concepts will shed light on the nature of the Islamic worldview.

God's existence is the chief fundamental block of the Islamic worldview. To all Muslims, God, Allah is known to be in real existence. He is not legendary nor mythological. His existence is an absolute reality (*al-Haqq*) (al-Qur'ān, 20: 114), meaning that it is not confined to time nor place so as to think that He came into being or will cease to be for He is the First and the Last (*al-Awwal wa al-Ākhir*) (al-Qur'ān, 57: 3) neither is He fixed at place so as to be said of Him as being far or near by way of a scribing location to Him for He is every where (al-Qur'ān, 2: 115). He is the Necessary Existent on Whom all other existents and existences necessarily depend. He cannot be perceived of as not being for He has always been and will always be. He is therefore the Ever-living Sustainer of all creation within the Universe and outside it (al-Qur'ān, 29: 60). Since he causes all existence and therefore sustains it, He then is the over all Controller of everything (al-Qur'ān, 6: 95). He is not at rest because His Existence is dynamic and active. He is needless of all that is characteristic of His creation because He is Self-sufficient (*al-Ghaniyy*) (al-Qur'ān, 6: 133). In Islamic metaphysics, Allah is known to be the only Real Existent and therefore the Ultimate Reality. Al-Attas describes God's Existence as postulated in the Islamic Worldview not as a mere concept but as the Reality of Existence. He writes thus;

Unlike its conceptual counterpart, the reality of Existent is active; it is a conscious, dynamic and creative entity, articulating from within itself infi-

nite possibilities of self expression in analogical gradations at different ontological levels in particular and individual modes that appear as separate things in the visible world as well as in the invisible world. The true meaning of the word 'existence' as an objective reality pertains to this second understanding of it and is applicable to God in this sense only.⁵

The Muslim's perception of God's existence as a conscious, dynamic and creative entity prevents Muslims from being indifferent about God. Neither are they complacent of His existence so as to behave in an agnostic manner. To the contrary, the Muslims are required to be always set to seek God's pleasure and avoid His displeasure, for He is known to be constantly intervening in the daily lives and activities of His creation. To Muslim, God has perfect knowledge of all that goes on with universals as well as with particulars (al-Qur'ān, 2: 284 and 3: 5). Constant prayer and invocation of His Mercy and Guidance subsequently reciprocate this acknowledgement. Islam teaches that God is approachable by any body in any circumstances without need for an intermediary. His servants' approach towards Him is His pleasure, while avoiding Him and seeking recourse to other than Him constitutes a heinous sin not forgivable by Him. Sincere Muslims so constantly seek His guidance in repentance and with patience and prayer, that none of them easily falls in utter despair and hopelessness. This gives an assurance to the Muslims that whatever trying circumstances one may find oneself in, cannot perpetually subsist because the Real Existing God does not turn away from His creation, which is in need of His assistance and so He said: "So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief: Verily, with every difficulty, there is relief" (al-Qur'ān, 94: 5-6). In short, it can be safely stated that the proper Muslim mind is that which is ever conscious of God as a matter of Reality and Certainty.

Revelation is the second key block that makes up the Islamic worldview. Muslims perceive Divine Revelation as an act of God through which He chose to disclose Himself to mankind (al-Qur'ān, 6: 91). It was a historical fact that happened from time to time as He deemed it necessary. Through it, mankind is guided on the way to approach the Existing God for both guidance and salvation. It is indeed a source of light, which was aimed at regulating man's conduct both between himself and other creation of God. The final and highest form of revelation was given to Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in the form of the Qur'ān which confirmed all previous revelations sent by God to His past messengers. Nothing in this revelation is

⁵ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (1995), *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, p. 268, hereinafter cited as *Prolegomena*.

doubtful (al-Qur'ān, 2: 2), for it is by its very nature, the truth (*al-Haqq*), which came to dispel all interpolation hitherto inserted in earlier revelations or otherwise attributed to God. Al-Attas gives the meaning of revelation as perceived in the Islamic worldview as follows.

We mean by it (the revelation) the speech of God concerning Himself, His creation, His relation between them and the way to salvation communicated to His chosen Prophet and Messenger, not by sound or letter yet comprising all that He has presented in words, then conveyed by the Prophet to mankind in a linguistic form *new in nature* yet comprehensible without confusion with the Prophet's own subjectivity and cognitive imagination. This revelation is final and it not only confirms the truth of preceding revelations in their original forms but includes their substance, separating the truth from cultural creations and ethnic invention.⁶

Thus revelation perceived as above is, to the Muslim mind, the only proper way to salvation. Anything contradicting it whether in substance or in spirit is absolutely rejected as false (*bāṭil*). Muslims therefore hold the Holy Qur'ān in very high esteem. In fact, when it is recited to them, it imparts a great psychological impact on them. It is indeed a declared cure (*al-shifā'*) of several psychological disturbances among the believers (al-Qur'ān, 17: 82).

The significance of revelation cannot be separated from the personality, instruction and the conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). As the recipient of the final revelation, the speech of God, Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was its chief interpreter, instructor and demonstrator. Because of this, his conduct and teachings, his *Sunnah* is not only respected among Muslims, but is also much desired to be emulated by the faithful ones (al-Qur'ān, 33: 21). Just like in the case of the Qur'ān, the Muslim mind is always ready to reject anything that contradicts the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. He is indeed the best example to be emulated by the Muslims. Love for him is as good as love for Allah; for every aspect of his model example leads one nearer to Allah. Indeed following his *Sunnah* increases spiritual nourishment of the Muslim mind as well as leads to stability of any seemingly confused or destabilized mind.

Dīn, which in English terminology is referred to as religion, is another fundamental aspect of the Islamic worldview. It is the way or path along which the Muslim mind actualizes its strong belief in the existence of God and the guidance through revelation. As stated earlier that the Muslim mind perceives God as an Active Reality that constantly intervenes in the activities that flow from it, then *dīn* is

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

the way by which man is supposed to reciprocate his consciousness of God. Indeed it is the chosen way of life through which a Muslim's willing submission to the Almighty God has to be shown. It is through *dīn* that Muslims truly follow and obey God's commands and prohibitions and ordinances and law. Trekking the path of *dīn* is the sure way to attain success both in this world and in the hereafter. The final destiny of a Muslim will therefore be determined according to how he or she observes his or her *dīn*.

Indeed, it is through *dīn* that the truth and reality of things about life and death are brought to the attention of the Muslims. The reality of life after death and all that it entails with regard to reward and punishment are all impressed to the Muslim mind through *dīn*. It is therefore the way of properly regulating relationships between individuals and communities as well as between the two combined together on one hand; and God on the other. Proper *dīn* is the preparation for one to attain ultimate success, which is bound to be realized in the hereafter. Al-Attas gives the meaning of this *dīn* in a very comprehensive and beautiful way in which he conveys the meaning of religion or *dīn* (Islām) thus:

Islam is both belief and faith (*īmān*) as well as submission in service (*Islām*); it is both assent of the heart (*qalb*) and mind ('*aql*) confirmed by the tongue (*lisān*) as well as deed and work ('*amal*); it is the harmonious relationship established between both the soul and the body. It is obedience and loyalty (*tā'ah*) both to God as well as to the Holy Prophet; it is accepting whole heartedly the truth of the testimony (*kalimah shahādah*) that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah - Islam is the unity of all these, together with what they entail, in belief and in practice, in the person of the Muslim as well as in the community as a whole. There can be no separation nor division, nor dichotomy between the harmoniously integrated parts of the unity thus established so that there can be for Islam, no true believer nor faithful one (*Mu'min*) without such one being also submissive in service (*Muslim*); no real assent of heart and mind confirmed by the tongue without deed and work; no genuine obedience and loyalty to God without obedience and loyalty to His Messenger; nor can there also be true acceptance of the Testimony that there is no God but Allah without also accepting Muhammad as His Messenger, who in fact first made manifest the Formula of Unity (*Kalimah al-tawhīd*).⁷

The concept of man is yet another key block of the Islamic worldview. According to Muslim mind, man has a dual nature; he is both body and soul. He is once a

⁷ See *Prolegomena*, p. 61-62.

physical and spiritual being.⁸ These two elements are so closely linked to one another that their independent existence negates the very nature of man. That is to say without soul, the body or physical being ceases to be man just as without body, the spiritual being cannot be called man. In fact the real essence that qualifies the physical being to be man is the soul. Indeed it is the engine that makes the body function and subsequently carry out activities that are known to differentiate man from other beings. Being the essence and engine of man, the soul, the spiritual nature of man, is therefore according to the Islamic worldview, much more important than the body. Verily it will be the soul that will return⁹ to its Creator when the body will be destroyed. The body in this sense is, therefore, nothing but a *container* of the real essence of man, the soul. This conception of man has very significant implications. Firstly, it implies that man is essentially a spiritual being whose ultimate success lies in spiritual nourishment. Secondly, it implies that his physical being is but a temporary state of affairs which is supposed to enable his spiritual being to prepare for his final destiny that will be realized in another life, that is in the hereafter. Thirdly, it does not only affirm the reality of the soul, but and more importantly, it confirms the immortal nature of the soul. The Islamic worldview is therefore far from perceiving man in materialistic or mechanistic terms so as to denude him of values both spiritual in nature as well as material. It is on this basis of the concept of man that further affirms man's need for religion or the *dīn* as discussed above. Indeed the primary target of *dīn* is man's soul from which man's actions and general behavior proceed. A soul tranquilized by *dīn* will reside in a tranquil body, both of which will manifest themselves in a tranquil man.

Having affirmed the above dual nature of man and having underscored the significance of the soul, the Islamic worldview then advances its concept of knowledge. According to the Muslim mind, knowledge acquisition and interpretation are activities of the soul. Man is a rational animal simply because his soul is endowed with the ability to acquire knowledge¹⁰ at different levels including the highest level

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁹ Here we speak of return to the Creator because of the strong indisputable conviction that man was created by Allah and from Him therefore man came and will return to. Note the fundamental variance between the Islamic view of man as a direct creature of God, and that of the Western view which holds that man evolved from a lower species of animals and with time *developed* in to his current stage of being.

¹⁰ The phrase "acquire knowledge" carries the connotation of knowledge being essentially received from an external source, which in this case is God. Knowledge is not an absolute product of the mind nor of the brain. So it is not merely a compound of elements of association as advanced by behavioral psychologists. See Robert Thomson, *History of Psychology*, p. 24-27 and p. 70-71 on James Mill and John Stuart Mill.

which is revelation. This fact is derived from the Qur'anic teaching that when Allah created Adam, He taught him the names of things,¹¹ meaning that He gave him knowledge. Adam, representing mankind, was given knowledge of the physical world as well as some elements of the spiritual world. This means, therefore, that the Islamic concept of knowledge combines both the physical and the intuitive domains. Whereas the physical domain is up for grabs by every body, i.e. all people depending on their endowed mental capacity can attain it, the intuitive domain is exclusive. It is given to those whom Allah the All Knowing, chooses. Good deeds and righteousness usually predicate its attainment.

Intuitive knowledge is in other words cast on the God fearing soul as a reward and favour of Allah to His obedient and loving servant. This knowledge and its acquisition is uniquely a concept advanced by the Islamic worldview and it demarcates a great variance from other worldviews especially that of the contemporary West which holds that scientific knowledge (that of the physical world) is the sole authentic knowledge, which pertains only to phenomena and/or verified by observation. To Muslim mind, knowledge can be, and indeed is, an innate phenomenon. No wonder therefore that the Islamic worldview comfortably affirms both miraculous knowledge like that of prophets and *awliyā'* and the cognitively attained knowledge, scientific or otherwise. This kind of affirmation then carries along with it the truth of revelation and intuition as legitimate sources of knowledge.¹²

In Islam, therefore, revelation, which is the highest method of acquiring knowledge or source thereof, is an authoritative source as well. This means that whatever is stated from revelation is nothing but the truth no matter whether it may apparently appear to contradict what is naturally perceptible by our minds. In a similar manner, the Islamic concept of knowledge affirms the reality or certainty of knowledge and thereby negates all theories of truth relativism, scepticism and doubt. This concept can best be summarized in al-Attas's words thus:

In contrast to modern philosophy and science, with regard to the sources and methods of knowledge we maintain that knowledge comes from God and is acquired through the channels of the sound senses, true report based on authority, sound reason and intuition.¹³

¹¹ See al-Qur'ān, *Al-Baqarah* (2): 30-34.

¹² The close relationship of The Concept of Knowledge and Revelation earlier discussed, as building block of the Islamic Worldview. This relationship indeed shows the internal consistence, of this worldview.

¹³ Al-Attas, *The Prolegomena*, p. 118.

Ethics is yet another fundamental block of the Islamic worldview. It is one in which the values of the other blocks are manifested and put to test. It is one that addresses itself to virtue and morality. Thus ethics in the Islamic worldview is in no way alienated from the general concept of *dīn*. It is one of the means through which the *dīn* achieves its objectives. This being the case then, Islamic ethics is, derived from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. There is no dichotomy between religion and ethics both of which are intended to mould a good man, a *khalīfah* or vicegerent of Allah, who is to dwell in this world with the ultimate mission of establishing justice among the creation of Allah. This vicegerency of man should not, however, be misconstrued to take Islamic ethics on the same footing as the secular ethics for, indeed, the latter is concerned with human good in this life only while the former is concerned with the human good in this world as well as in the hereafter.¹⁴ The vicegerency is to carry out actions directed to God as well as towards ones fellow man in family and in society and the purification of the soul from vices and its beautification with virtues.¹⁵ Thus encouraging virtues and controlling vices are the underlying principles of Islamic ethics. Putting these principles in practice is a duty incumbent upon everybody at the individual level and upon those entrusted with authority at the community level. At the individual level, man is supposed to control vices within his soul, an act that does not necessarily call for external supervision.

Man is thus required to do justice to his own carnal soul, which is the seat of vices, and to subject it to his rational soul from which virtues flow. Thus man is supposed to police himself before he is policed. When an individual fails to control the vice within himself, then the community is compelled to tame him as a matter of necessity. No one in the Islamic community is absolutely free to act as one wishes not even with oneself. Freedom in this case, therefore, is not the right to act as one wishes, instead it is the right to act as one ought to within the confines of Islamic ethics. The ultimate goal of ethics in Islam lies in the hereafter whereby those individuals who succeed in their moral struggle will attain happiness, *sa'ādah* and those who fail will experience misery, *shaqāwah*.¹⁶

Lastly the Muslim mind's perception of the universe crowns the Islamic worldview. The universe is perceived as God's creation. It is not an eternal entity

¹⁴ This conception of ethics need be read together with the nature of man as discussed above. Ethical or moral behavior is also an act of the soul, which is expected to return to its Creator to Whom an account of its conduct will be presented in the hereafter.

¹⁵ See Muhammad Abul Quasem (1978), *The Ethics of Al-Ghazzālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, New York: Caravan Books, p. 22.

¹⁶ See Al-Attas, *The Prolegomena*, p. 98.

and, therefore, it is temporary, meaning that, at an appointed time it will come to an end. The appointed time is the *yawm al-ākhirah* when the entire universe with its various elements will crumble at the order of Allah. For the human beings and the jinn, this will be the end of a phase in the order of their existence and the beginning of another life, which will be spiritual. The temporariness of the universe is commensurate with the temporariness of all the creation in it. It was given to us as an arena wherein the concepts discussed above could be put to practice. Man is meant to be the principle beneficiary of the universe as it was subjected to him by God (al-Qur'ān, 22: 65) and because of this, he will be required to give an account to the Benefactor, of how he made use of or abused Allah's favours in the universe. Didn't Allah after all delegate him as His vicegerent? It is only but natural that he should give an account to Who delegated him. It is in line with this conception of the universe as a temporary existence that Muslims are strongly conscious of the implications of their conduct, thought and intentions. What ever we do or believe is not a matter of this world alone for our final destiny ultimately lies in the hereafter. Indeed it lies in a more sublime and permanent world.

DEPRESSION AS A TYPICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER

The above synopsis of the Islamic worldview brings to light the basic concepts that constitute the environment in which Muslim mind operates. How then is understanding of this environment relevant to a psychologist who wishes to deal with psychological disorders among Muslims? I have chosen depression as a representative state of destabilized mind or psychological disorder, though my discussion may spill over to other mental states.

Depression is a common illness. It usually starts as a normal reaction to certain circumstances such as loss of dear ones, or financial catastrophe or failure in an endeavor in which one had invested a lot of hopes. At first glance it appears almost a normal thing for people to be depressed. But taken a step further, this mental state can become an illness when it is out of proportion to the situations that caused it or when prolonged for an unusually long period of time. For instance, while it is normal for one to feel grieved at the loss of a spouse, it is abnormal to feel so sad as to think of, or even to attempt suicide, or fail to sleep or loose appetite for long periods.

There are three or four types of depression whose differences basically lie in the degree of intensity or seriousness. First there is reactive depression which is usually caused by external factors within ones environment, say loss of a job, bereavement, financial loss or bankruptcy, emotional difficulties in courting couples or generally failure to achieve much desired goals. The common causal factor in this kind of de-

pression is either loss or failure. This type of depression is always combined with anxiety or anxiety neurosis.¹⁷ It is sometimes called Exogenous Depression. The second type of depression is the endogenous. In this kind of depression, the illness can be precipitated by external factors like any of those in the exogenous type above but most often it occurs for no obvious reasons whatsoever.¹⁸ A very minor incident, past or present, can terribly upset a person whose state eventually deteriorates into endogenous depression. This type is more prone to go to a very serious degree of intensity. It is usually steadily increasing for the victim rarely snaps out of the depressive state.¹⁹

The endogenous depression may take another form, which is specifically related to advanced age. This form is called the involuntional depression. It usually comes up as a result of perceiving oneself as aging and therefore no longer able to do things the usual way or as having no more time to achieve better results in ones dearest preoccupations and ambitions. It appears in people above 40 years of age and usually appears for the first time in patients in their 60s or 70s or more. It is more common among widows and is usually accelerated by death of other relatives and friends.²⁰ The victims of this depression very often develop hypochondria and anxiety.²¹

The third type of depression is the manic-depressive psychosis. It is in fact an illness that manifests itself in the opposite form of the other types of depression. It is characterized by excessive unwarranted joyfulness as opposed to nimbleness or dullness in the other types.

With the exception of the third, the most common symptoms of depression include: loss of appetite, interference with normal sleep, physical weakness, failure to cope with daily routine like going to work, difficulty in making decisions, pessimistic attitude towards life, hopelessness about the continuity of life, loss of sexual desire which may result in impotence in men and frigidity in women, retardation, self accusatory delusions and delusions of unworthiness that lead to desire to die and hence leading to attempted or even real suicide.²²

¹⁷ See Edgar A. Monton (1974), *Depression: Its Causes, Symptoms and Treatment*, England: Roseneath Scientific Publications, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 10-17.

The above is briefly the nature of a typical mental disorder that psychology may strive to restore to, normally. A close scrutiny of its causes and symptoms leads one to make some generalizations which, though may not be so accurate, do significantly link the illness to a worldview. Firstly the psychological disorders like depression result from people's (the patients) illogical thinking about themselves, the world they live in, and the future. The patients selectively perceive the world as useless, over generalized issues concerning themselves, magnify the significance of undesirable events and exaggerate other people's actions as proof for their worthlessness. Secondly the yardstick of values, which the depressed person seems to 'illogically disregard', and which therefore the psychologist wants to reassure the patient about, is greatly the worldview of the patient prior to becoming ill. That is to say, if the patient is an avowed atheist or materialist prior to being depressed, it would be very hard for him to appreciate religion as a new hope to get him out of the depressed state. Conversely and more importantly, a believer in religious values will appreciate or appeal to religious-based hope than to anything else especially when caught up in distressful or hard conditions that can spark off depression. If the case involves a Muslim's values, then what should be invoked by the psychologist during therapy, should be drawn from the Islamic worldview.²³

Similarly, before diagnosing a patient as psychologically disoriented, the psychologist should be conversant with the environment and background culture or worldview for that matter, in order to be able to choose the proper procedure of the therapy. This is because what is normal behavior in one culture may be abnormal in another. For instance, whereas in the West, as well as in other westernized countries today, it is normal for women to go about in very short and tight dressing in public places, in the Muslim world and Africa it is taboo for women to go about 'naked'. Thirdly and most important, much of the abnormal behavior of a depressed person, is not the product of the physical mind alone. It is a product of the soul as well. We can take an example of a person who is depressed as a result of deep-seated guilt over which one even wishes to commit suicide. In reality, this is not only a result of the external factor alone, but it is also an act of the rational soul which otherwise wishes to seek repentance from the most Affectionate Forgiver. If the soul does not know where to turn to then its power of anger dictates recklessness that attempts one to commit suicide. Similarly in other causes of depression like death of loved ones or financial loss or failure to achieve desired goals, it is the weakness of the soul that

²³ Here it is assumed that the therapist or psychiatrist is using a cognitive behavior therapy or any related to it but not psychoanalysis. Much of the discussion that follows will be along this assumption.

brings in the patient a sense of hopelessness and despair. Indeed a tranquil soul is not likely to allow depression in the first place!

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

As already noted above, the Muslim mind is one that is God conscious. It therefore follows that mention of God to a depressed or otherwise psychologically disoriented Muslim is bound to be appealing. Reference to God's attributes such as the Most Forgiving, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Subduer, the Creator, the Source of Peace, the Giver of life, the Giver of Death, the Protecting Friend, etc, is likely to bring about reassurance and security to the depressed person depending on the immediate cause of his illness. For example, a patient who is depressed over death of a loved one can be soothed by being reminded that after all Allah is the owner of our lives. He gave us the life and He is the one who takes away the life of those He chooses at any time. He or she may be reminded that death is not the end of the road, for there is life after death; a life in which one can attain eternal bliss. Such a patient may be reminded of his/her duty to the deceased and that is constant prayer to Allah, the Oft-Forgiving and Merciful, to rest the loved one in peace. In a similar way a depressed person over bankruptcy or financial loss may be reminded that Allah is after all the Giver of sustenance. He gives to one He chooses and takes away from the one He wishes. Indeed, the most crucial success does not lie in accumulating wealth but it is in attaining the pleasure of Allah.

Relating any of the causes of depression to Allah's constant intervention in our daily lives, which is a key element of the Islamic worldview, the depressed may be reminded that all calamities is from Allah. This is not to mean though that Allah takes pleasure in our suffering, but He sends calamity to us as a way of testing us in our faith, trust and dependence on Him. In this respect, Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah advises a depressed person or the therapist thus:

One must know that He Who commands and controls the mutation of all transitory and permanent conditions is the Wise and Just Lord, and He is the Most Merciful and Compassionate one, and that He does not decree such development in ones life in this world to destroy him, or to annihilate him. Instead, through His all-encompassing Mercy, He has visited him with such trials to either further his growth or to allow him to understand his real and naked condition. Such trials will help the servant to recognize his true state of faith, contentment, gratitude, forbearance, and patience with his Lord. During such trials Allah the Magnificent would also want to hear His servant calling upon Him, beseeching Him, running back to Him abiding

by the threshold of His door, seeking His blessings and acceptance, asking for His forgiveness for his sins, his failing to give proper attention to his covenant, his losing focus or for being distracted from His real permanent benefits by the glitters of this world.²⁴

This kind of advice should of course be delivered to the patient with wisdom and professional skills depending on the condition of the patient. Lest it may turn out to be counter productive as for instance a severely depressed person may exaggerate it into a kind of accusation by a poor therapist. For a depressed person who is still in control of himself/herself it is indeed a reassuring way of looking at his/her condition from another angle.

Given the strong faith in Allah that most Muslims display especially in times of hardship, it would be even wise, indeed desirable that the therapist begins each session of therapy with prayer for the good health of the client. How reliable and reassuring such a psychiatrist, counselor or therapist would be to a Muslim patient! Indeed there are several types of prayers that are recommended by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) to be said in circumstances of distress and dispiritedness. One such prayer on the part of the patient is reported in the Hadīth by Anas thus:

Whenever the Messenger of Allah met with any trying circumstance, he used to pray, "Oh Living Lord and Controller of the universe, I call upon your all-encompassing Mercy to grant me an outlet from this imposing hardship." Related by Bukhārī and Muslim.²⁵

All this spiritual therapy is bound to make a lot of sense and positive effect on a mind that operates in an Islamic worldview. The example of the Prophet can also be cited in the due course of therapy sessions depending on the nature of the depression and its cause. If it is sparked off by death of say, a child or a spouse, incidents in the Prophet's life may be brought to the patient's attention. The lives of other messengers of Allah, pious and prominent believers could be also cited.

The concept of man as portrayed in the Islamic worldview is equally significant to both the client and therapist. To the therapist, the realization that man is both a physical and spiritual being, will guide him to make a quicker diagnosis of a deeply depressed person, for when an attempt of drugs fails, it will quickly occur to him that the problem may be spiritual. This may save months or even years of therapeutic

²⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1993), 'The Natural Healing With the Medicine of the Prophet' in *The Book of Provisions of the Hereafter*, translated by Muhammad al-Akili, Philadelphia: Pearl Publishing House, p. 154.

²⁵ For more such prayers authenticated by Hadīth, see *ibid.*, p. 156-160.

sessions trying to find out the cause of the illness. Secondly, this realization will discard the materialistic or mechanistic perception of the patient by the therapist, and thereby instead of treating him as a machine which can be after all written off as scrap beyond repair, he will look at him as a tender being whose recovery is his duty entrusted to him by Allah by virtue of his skills. He will subsequently treat his patient as an *'amānah*, trust, over which the patient has a right over him before Allah. Besides it is this concept of the dual nature of man that brings to light man's spiritual yearning not simply as an obsessional neurosis of Sigmund Freud but as a reality of life which springs from the soul. Professor Malik Badri tells of the case of a female Moroccan patient referred to him in 1965, to illustrate this point. The patient had a number of complaints such as generalized anxiety, feelings of inadequacy and depression as well as some phobic reactions. Both traditional and group therapy and even tranquilizing drugs were of no help to her. But a passage from the Holy Qur'ān on forgiveness of sinful behaviour is what paved the way for a very successful therapy that was a mixture of spiritual and cognitive behavioral techniques.²⁶

The concept of knowledge as basically a gift from Allah the All-Knowing is equally relevant to the psychologist dealing with disorders of his profession among the Muslims. This concept is a reminder to the professional that his skills are an endowment to him from Allah for the purpose of easing the hard conditions of those who are in distress. It is an *'amānah* entrusted to him by Allah to Whom accountability is due. Bearing this in mind, the would-be arrogant professional-cum scientist will approach his duties with humbleness and trust in Allah.

The emphasis on ethics in the Islamic worldview too is relevant to the psychologist dealing with Muslim patients. This ensures the moral uprightness of the therapist while carrying out his duties. He is bound to be conscious of what is *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* in his conduct towards his clients. The therapist who at the back of his mind is conscious of his duty as a vicegerent of Allah, is indeed bound to shun what is evil and only stick to what is lawful both in his/her speech and conduct towards his/her patient. A very stunning problem of many therapists whose background worldview is devoid of religious ethics (the non-Islamic worldviews), is that of sexual misconduct with their patients. This very startling behaviour is so much wide spread especially in the Western secular worldview where secular ethics is merely given tip-service. Robert C. Carson and James N. Bucher in their work entitled *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, in which they dedicated a chapter on 'Psychologically Based

²⁶ See Malik Badri (1979), *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*, London: MWH London Pub., p. 79.

Therapies', which they presumably reviewed with care, remarked in their summary thus:

Other unresolved issues include the often-perplexing occurrence of the negative or deteriorating outcome in psychotherapy. One likely source of such outcome, by no means the only or most common, is sexual misconduct on the part of the therapist.²⁷

It is intriguing to note that according to the authors this very unethical behaviour is still an unresolved issue and yet common; meaning that there is still some kind of debate among these so-called specialists, scientific professionals, on whether it is proper for a therapist to conduct him/herself in such a manner towards patients! No wonder a big portion of the philosophy of psychology in this worldview has deep roots in sexuality²⁸ and the accompanying notion that man can behave in the same way as any other animal, hence justifying this animal behaviour. Indeed Calvin S. Hall in his *Primer of Freud's Psychology*, alludes to the same point I have adduced above when praising Freud's great contribution to psychology and probably to the Western worldview:

It was considered fashionable to be psychoanalyzed and to use such words as sub-conscious, repressed urges, inhibitions, complexes, and fixation in ones conversation. *Much of the popular interest in psychoanalysis was due to its association with sex.*²⁹

In the Islamic worldview such moral misconduct has no place at all. A therapist brought up trained and working under this worldview knows well beforehand that sexual abuse of anyone including patients, is absolutely outlawed and there is no debate about its being improper. In the Islamic worldview, the issue was resolved by the revelation more than 14 centuries ago. If the therapist is not expected to make sexual advances towards the patients, it *ipso facto* follows that he should not even advice or counsel them to indulge in immoral behavior. Professor Malik Badri advances the same argument, though sarcastically, when he raps Muslim therapists who are fixed in the Freudian abyss:

²⁷ See Robert C. Carson and James N. Bucher (1992), *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 9th Edition, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, p. 671.

²⁸ Here I am referring to Sigmond Freud's theories which reduced the noble nature of man to sheer sexual instincts signifying in our own worldview the carnal soul.

²⁹ Calvin Hall (1954), *A Primer to Freudian Psychology*, New York: World Publishing Company, p. 17. The last sentence in italic is emphasized by the author.

Some of these therapists enhance the feelings of guilt in their practicing Muslim patients instead of treating them. They increase their suffering by raising in them doubts about Islam in solving the problems of mankind. If Islam says do not fornicate, and the doctor who knows the unbeatable science of Europe says it is psychologically harmful not to, then one of them must be wrong.³⁰

Thus spiritual ethics in the Islamic worldview is very relevant to be grasped by a therapist working among Muslims for it guards against this immoral conduct especially on the part of the psychologist.

Perceiving the universe and all life in it as temporary and therefore transitional is also a matter that is so crucial to the psychologist and his patient. It inculcates in both of them the feeling of not-only-this-life-here matters. To the therapist the ethical consciousness will keep ringing in his mind while carrying out his duty. A combination of this concept with the others completes his view of his own life and that of the patient, a view that it is the other world, which is permanent that should be his target. Hence sincerity, compassion and justice to the patient will be ensured. To the patient this view of the universe will be more consoling; at best it will make him/her to prepare to meet his/her Creator. There is always room for repentance. It prepares the patient to be firm in these hard circumstances knowing that whether it be life or death, there is not much to lose since all creation is treading the same road. This kind of firm attitude towards the possible event of death makes the patient an easier client to deal with on the part of the therapist.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion has been just a humble attempt to underscore the significance of the Islamic worldview to the Muslim psychologist, therapist, psychiatrist or counselor dealing with Muslim patients; an attempt that was prompted by what professor Malik Badri, alluding to a prophetic Hadiths, referred to as 'Muslim psychologists in a lizard's hole'.³¹ The issues raised by the professor in this seemingly simple dictum are indeed so serious that unless constantly addressed, Muslim patients, students of psychology and practicing psychologists are bound to face a big conflict between their faith and the subject of psychology. Yet psychology as a discipline is one that cannot be swept aside from among Muslims because of its significant role.

³⁰ See Malik Badri, *The Dilemma*, p. 57.

³¹ See *The Dilemma*, p. 1-2, 14-15, 28-35, etc.

We thought that linking the Islamic worldview to what we termed as ‘operations of psychology’ or its *modus operandi* would go a long way in widening the outlet of the lizard’s hole so that Muslim psychologists entrapped therein can come out in crowds (*af’wājan*), to the genuine service of their community. Many of them could be trapped therein unaware! We make no claim to have exhausted this area of study, but we are convinced that all attempts to address the significance of the Islamic worldview is not in vain. Is it not true that proper psychology of a people should be that which conforms to their culture and norms? If that is the case, then Muslims need be exposed to a psychology that appeals to them or to psychologists who know what their culture and norms or their worldview for that matter is all about. There is no doubt that Western psychology applied among Muslim peoples with impunity is potentially dangerous. For sure this psychology does not only come as a trade nor as a purely academic discipline, but it comes as a package along with the worldview in which it was formulated and developed, as a very significant ingredient. I believe this is what the editors of the *Clinical Psychology Handbook* meant when they wrote thus:

When we were graduate students in the 1960s our level of sophistication simply was not as high as we expect from our graduate students. And that is how it should be. Not only must a diligent clinical psychologist today stay up to date with the developments within the profession, *but it is also imperative to maintain the attitude of the “Renaissance Man” (or Woman”)*³²

When these expert psychologists insist on maintaining the attitude of the “Renaissance Man” (or “Woman”), written with capital letters, then a careful reader cannot fail to decipher that this renaissance Man is not an ordinary man conveyed in any ordinary expression. Indeed he is a special man who may be a representative of a particular worldview or ideology such a man is secular and his worldview is secularism as a philosophical program. Hence he is part of the package.

³² Hersen Michel et.al (ed.) (1991), *The Clinical Psychology Handbook*, 2nd ed. New York: Pergamon Press Inc., p. 797. The last sentence in italic is emphasized by the author.