

## AN ELEMENTARY STUDY OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN ISLAM<sup>1</sup>

S. A. HOSSEINI<sup>2</sup>, M. D.

Islam treats man as a combination of chemical agents and a non-chemical factor defined as "Psyche" which is responsible for the co-ordination of chemical agents and gives life to his total organism.

Islam emphasizes both physical and non-physical aspects of the psychological processes. According to Islamic psychology there are two different and opposite psychic processes in operation : namely conscience and passion, which are inherent and not acquired. The first one has evolutionary and developmental nature and the second has instinctual motives. His reasoning ability as realised in his free will; however, helps man to activate the former and control the latter accordingly or vice-versa. Conscience like any other psychological terminology has its slightly different definition in Islam. Here are some characteristics attributed to conscience according to our understanding from Islam (Ayatollah Tabatabaee, 1965, 1967 and Morteza Motahary, 1972, 1975):

1. Potent to differentiate between man's benefits and his harms.
2. Inherent, constitutional and not acquired.
3. Steady in the life of everybody (but it may be weakened or strengthened).
4. Existent in all human beings.
5. Acting as a judge, whose judgements are respected by others.
6. Universally it takes some subjects and judgements quite obvious, such as telling lies is bad, committing murder is illegal etc.
7. Potent to accept truth and the existence of God.

8. It blames the self, when it commits wrong-doing.

9. It is quite conscious.

10. It acts like a compass.

The process of conscience has been presented as a firm and unchangeable principle-common in all mankind-which is a part of his soul and which enables him to fulfill his needs.

We should not only make ourselves familiar with the characteristics of conscience mentioned above, but also try to use them in the methods of education, psychotherapy and mental health. Some beliefs and judgements, naturally accepted by the conscience, can be used for inter individual relationship and any other related humanistic aspect. Acceptance of truth for instance in general and the existence of God in particular are only two of the potentialities of conscience.

The Islamic laws taught by God are in accordance with man's conscience, and they should be considered as the directors for the developmental movements of man and to prevent lapse in conduct. By accepting these laws, and acting accordingly, there should be an opportunity for the development of richness of man's conscience, and the individual will have an extended psychic capacity. Otherwise, his psychic capacity will be much restricted and his life would be meaningless and intolerable.

For the improvement of cases with restricted psychic capacity, usually manifested by reactive psychiatric symptoms, psychotherapist should try to help the referral by reconciliation with his conscience and strengthen it by greater ac-

1. Presented at VII World Congress of Psychiatry held at Vienna at 11—16 July, 1983.

2. Director of Mental Health and Psychiatric Centre of Mashad University, P.O. Box 1155, Mashad, Islamic Republic of Iran.

ceptance of the divine laws and to act accordingly. Man's reasoning ability as realised in his free will, helps him to activate the conscience and control the passions or vice-versa. In the first case instinctual powers are under the supervision of conscience and facilitates his developmental movement. In the second case (weakened conscience), instinctual powers supervise the whole personality, and the individual will have a lapse in conduct.

According to Islam, conscience and the divine laws fortify each other, and man has to accept and use these laws, if he is interested in developing his personality. The following criteria of psychic development have been pointed out :

1. Belief in God and other truths.
2. To act according to one's faith and belief.
3. To try to generalize the truth as far as possible.
4. To tolerate difficulties in the way of generalization of the truth and to counsel one another to do the same.

The negative aspects of the above education are criteria for the psychic loss.

Straight movement through the straight path of development and maturity can be seen only by a few developed and maturity can be seen only by a few developed and mature persons (the prophet and the divine selected leaders). Fluctuating movement throughout the developmental direction and loss is the most common case which may have a benign outcome i.e. maturity and development after having some difficult crises; or a malignant outcome i.e. lapse in conduct and loss. Complete reversed changes from developmental direction to loss or vice-versa are predictable. On these bases mankind can be helped to develop himself and to prevent loss. According to Islamic education, the way

towards development is exactly monopolistic to divine laws and when one is walking through a wrong pathway, further movement will make him go further from his goal.

Islamic principles can be used in the areas of psychotherapy, mental health and other related subjects. Some of the most important principles are :

First principle—The unity of God : According to this principle, programming in individual, social, scientific, economical and political affairs should be in accordance to the divine laws. We can divide routine works and relationships of every person to the following five basic circles :

- 1) Family circle, 2) Social circle, 3) Occupational circle, 4) Scientific circle, 5) Political circle.

Any basic circle should be surrounded by a bigger one which is the circle of the relationship between man and his creator (religious circle) .

Second principle—The necessity of judgement on the basis of awareness, knowledge, and invalidity of judgement according to surmise. Hence judgement and programming for healthy community should be according to knowledge, awareness and reasoning.

Third principle means fulness of life and emphasizes maturity and the evolution of man's conscience so as to win God's favour. People in their prayers expect God to guide them in the straight pathway to have a continuous movement in the direction of maturity and development. Every creature has been guided to reach its highest degree of accomplishment—this general rule is quite valid in man too. In order to gain highest degree of development one should continue to follow divine laws. In this case his behaviour would be coloured by divine colours and every action in his daily life will take him nearer to God.

Fourth principle : The belief in the

supervision of God on humanity, His intervention in their every day activities and denial of casuality.

According to what is already presented, not only man is able to schedule his every day life, but he can also use them in individual and group psychotherapy and to open a new door to a better mental health. These principles are also of use in the cases, which Victor Francel calls "Noogenic Neurosis" (lack of meaning of life). That is, if one has a dynamic movement through the straight way, in the direction of maturity and deve-

lopment, he is healthy because his life is meaningful.

#### REFERENCES

- ALPORT-GORDON, W. (1970). The individual and his religion. The Macmillan Company.
- HOSSEINI, S. A. (1982). Fundamentals of mental health. Vol. 2, Mash-had University Publication.
- MOTAHARY, M. (1972). Majmooe Maghalat. Jahan Publication.
- MOTAHARY, M. (1975). Esalat Rooh. Sadra Publication.
- TABATABEE, A. (1965). Tafsir Almizan Translated by Moosavi, Vol. I.
- TABATABEE, A. (1967). Tafsir Almizan Translated by Moosavi, Vol. 25, Mohammadi Publication.