

Guidance for Good Governance and Civilizational Transformation: Lessons from History, Religion and Science

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INTRODUCTION

Changes with the passage of time and civilizational transformations are facts of history. Since man (human being) is the only evident actor in all these phenomena, any explanation for changes in history must incorporate a fair understanding about the human nature. The idea of human nature has been heavily debated by ancient philosophers as well as modern humanists and social scientists. In our view it is necessary for us to develop a fair understanding of this phenomenon for a fair perception of civilizational transformation. Numerous rational philosophers and performing scientists in history have participated in discussions related to this broad subject. In their discourses some have raised questions about the role of religious beliefs; others have tried to underscore the human nature scientifically. Do we really know how the earliest human civilization in history was established? Unfortunately we simply do not know

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much about earliest growth of civilization. Due to lack of information about how the earliest human civilization evolved, both the faith and the scientific approaches have involved a degree of conjecture. Should conjectures or even assumptions be allowed to play any role in such a complex and vital subject? Wouldn't a certain degree of assumption and conjecture be necessary for the formulation of a hypothesis? Will the rational and scientific methodology acknowledged within the current social science discourse allow such an assumption? Could the assumptions be formulated on the basis of certain observations and experience? We shall discuss these questions below. In order to focus our discourse to a perceptive, rational and scientific view of civilization in history, we shall deliberate mainly on contributions of fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) and nineteenth-century psycho-analyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) in this essay.

In his discussion on “Civilizations in History and Today”, Samuel P. Huntington states that, “Human history is history of civilizations.”¹ Scholars have debated to find a suitable definition of the term civilization, but like many other terms in social sciences and humanities, the term civilization demands an elaborate treatment, mainly because this involves a wide variety of culture, language, people as well as space in history. Civilizations involve governing all affairs of societal developments such as beliefs, ideas and politics dealing with human relationship. Civilizations also involve extra-human conducts of life such as human relationship with the environment, the nature, and even the metaphysical world. One would also find multiplicity of characteristics of this phenomenon during the long lifespan of a civilization. During this long period of life civilizations go through diverse stages. We shall explain various meanings and their implications below.

Based on our understanding of history, we may suggest that civilizations must ensure a mechanism in which an individual would feel secure within a group. This individual/group relationship is the key to understanding the life of a civilization. Civilization must develop rules and regulations in order to accommodate needs of both—the individual and the group. An individual, however, may belong to more than one group. He/she may belong to a family, tribe, nation or a cultural or a linguistic group, or an ethnic or racial group, or to a geographical territory and/or to a professional, ideological or a religious body. Civilizations, therefore, need to accommodate many groups within a larger body. In fact, civilization is required to ensure sociable relationship between the individual

and different groups. This not only complicates the individual and group relationship; it also enriches the civilization. In order to ensure an orderly society, civilization requires sets of rules and regulations to govern and regulate human actions and behavior. Good governance, therefore, is a part and parcel of every civilization. How does a civilization warrant cordiality between individuals and groups? Can this be achieved through cooperation? or does civilization impose this by means of coercion? We shall address the phenomenon of civilization by raising more questions and by analyzing them below.

We begin our analyses by raising more questions. How did civilization originate in history? Everybody knows that no human being survives alone, but how did human beings relate to one another during the original formation of human society? How did it set in motion? The main dilemma in this regard is that we simply don't have adequate information about the rise of the most ancient civilizations. Historian Fernand Braudel in his book *A History of Civilizations* quotes Arnold Toynbee saying, "Arnold Toynbee offered a tempting theory [about the growth of civilization]. All human achievement, he thought involved challenge and response. Nature had to present itself as a difficulty to be overcome. If human beings took up the challenge, their response would lay the foundations of civilization."² Braudel himself attempted to understand the term civilization by studying the historical use of the term in European languages in the eighteenth century, and concluded that the study of civilization involved all social sciences. He explained the concept in terms of 'civilizations as geographical areas', 'civilizations as societies', and 'civilizations as ways of thought.'³ Although Braudel provides a good insight into the term, he provides little understanding about the process of its origin and growth. His treatment of the subject does not explain how human beings originally set the motion in societal progress to lay the foundation of the earliest civilization in history.

FORMATION OF CIVILIZATIONS IN HISTORY: THE FREUDIAN PERSPECTIVE

We begin our discourse with an observation by psycho-analyst Sigmund Freud. We undertake study of this subject from the psycho-analytical perspective first mainly because we have no historical information about early formation of human society. That is why we take shelter in

an understanding of the human nature, which in our opinion, although might have progressed with the passage of time, reserved certain perpetual fundamental characteristics. Freud believed that coercion was the main power behind civilization. Did individuals volunteer or were they forced to form groups to set up civilizations? According to Freud, the decisive step of civilization occurs with the replacement of the power of the majority of individuals formed as community, which is set up as 'right', against the power of the individual, which is condemned as 'brutal force.'⁴

Although Freud subscribed to history as a source of knowledge, he made the above observation from his understanding of the human nature, which he claimed to have grasped scientifically. One should note here that almost no historical information is available about the origin of human civilization. Freud lays the foundations of his knowledge on civilization through perceived first acts such as the use of tools, such as gaining control over fire and construction of dwellings, opening up paths followed by man ever since. He hypothesize "the first acts of civilization" which "were the use of tools" (and) "the gaining of control over fire and the construction of dwellings." Then he argues that, "Among these, the control over the fire stands out as a quite extra-ordinary and unexampled achievement, while the others opened up paths which man has followed ever since, and the stimulus to which is easily guessed."⁵

Interestingly, Freud, in a footnote, takes recourse to conjecture while attributing the origin of man's control over fire, an "extra-ordinary and unexampled achievement," to the satisfaction of an infantile desire of putting out fire with a stream of his urine.⁶ In his interpretation of human behavior Freud claims to have taken the "inner psychic reality" into consideration, but he seems to be over obsessed with the role of sex organs in human life. "Civilization depends on relationships between a considerable number of individuals," he explained.

When a love-relationship is at its height there is no room left for any interest in the environment; a pair of lovers are sufficient to themselves, and do not even need the child they have in common to make them happy ... we can quite well imagine a cultural community consisting of double individuals like this, who, libidinally satisfied in themselves, are connected with one another through the bonds of common work and common interests.⁷

Freud's overall thesis is that human beings derive their highest pleasure from sexual fulfillment but unrestrained sexuality drains off psychic

energy needed for creative acts for civilizational progress. Therefore, he believes, civilization requires the repudiation of instinctual gratification and the mastery over animal instincts. It is amazing to note that in Freud's conjectural psycho—analyses the need for sexual gratification appears before want for food, shelter and other challenges posed by the nature. Moreover, there is no role for moral discipline in his thought: how did the early couples determine sex partners? This is a question of moral discipline. For many, this discipline differentiates humans from animals. No primitive or modern human society is known to have practiced or even approved sex between parents and children—an act common among animals. Does this phenomenon make any sense in a reasonable understanding of the human nature? Traditionally, civilizations took lessons on this issue from religions, and religions, in general, have held the view that human beings were a special creation. Freud, however, has a different perception about religion.

Freud rejects the Christian idea of “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” which is generally considered the golden rule of religions, as “strange to mankind.”⁸ He identifies men as being largely instinctively aggressive, and “not gentle creatures who want to be loved.” In this light, a neighbor is not simply a potential helper or sexual object, but also a stimulant for meting out aggression to cause pain, torture or even kill.⁹ In other words, Freud seems to have been persuaded by Social Darwinism—an idea that was viewed by many in Europe as scientific and made deep impact on many intellectuals during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, although new research in behavioral sciences has challenged such views of the human nature,¹⁰ today's Wall Street culture is still run by this same culture. Our aim here, however, is not to evaluate the impact of social Darwinism on Freud; we would rather examine the impact of Freud's psycho—analyses upon the concept of the beginning of human history and civilization.

When studying Freud's psycho—analysis one can't ignore his obsession on taking stand against those of established religions—a reflection of which one finds in his observation of the “golden rule.” On religion he endorsed the Marxist expression and predicted its future.¹¹ An unbeliever, as his translator and biographer calls him¹²; Freud tried to comprehend the origin of religion from his knowledge of history and what he called the science of psychology. He believes that religion originated in history out of man's perplexity and helplessness in the face of nature's dreaded forces. He says, “I have tried to show that religious ideas have

arisen from the same need as have all the other achievements of civilization: from the necessity of defending oneself against the crushing superior force of nature.”¹³ He continues suggesting that, “this body of religious ideas is usually put forward as a divine revelation. But this presentation of it is itself a part of the religious system, and it entirely ignores the known historical development of these ideas and their differences in different epochs and civilizations.”¹⁴

Referring to one of his earlier works on the origin of child’s fear of father, in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud employs tools of psychoanalysis to explain the formation of religion in a similar light, a creation he believes arose out of man’s need for protection against the consequences of his human helplessness.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Freud finds the origin of religion, which he believes is full of illusion and mystery, in perplexity and helplessness of man. Why didn’t the helpless and perplexed man try to get assistance from other men around him? Was there no man around the helpless and perplexed man that he had to look for the unseen? This is clearly a major dilemma in Freud’s psychoanalytical science.

Assumptions and conjectures seem to have been the main problem in Freud’s thought. After critically evaluating the literature on ideas about decline in Europe in recent history one author has suggested that, “our real problem is not that our popular culture is filled with obscenities or trivialities, but that no one seems able to present the necessary intellectual grounds for an alternative.”¹⁶ The author blames the nineteenth-century social sciences for hosting “deterministic assumptions” for understanding history.¹⁷ In our opinion, this seems to be the fundamental problem in understanding the role of religion in history. The problem of nineteenth-century social science methodology will be clearer if we take our question to a more specific area of historical studies. The deterministic assumption seemed to have become formal in social science disciplines with the introduction of Darwinian assumption about the origin of man in history.

THE PROBLEM OF DARWINIAN VIEW OF MAN

Although the idea of evolutionary growth of life on earth was speculated by Greek philosophers, and was followed by Muslim thinkers, the Darwinian view of evolution dramatically changed the perception of man and his place in history. Charles Darwin (1809–1882) wrote, “The early forebears of man were ... probably furnished with great canine teeth,

but as they gradually acquired the habit of using stones, clubs, or other weapons for fighting with their enemies or their rivals, they would use their jaws and teeth less and less. In this case, the jaws together with the teeth would become reduced in size.” Quoting this statement from Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* (1871) one anthropologist explains that Darwin argued that intense social interaction between these primitive creatures demanded more intellect, which gradually increased over time to more intelligence, which in turn gave rise to technological and intellectual sophistication. This hypothesis of linked evolution by Darwin eventually became a cornerstone to the development of the science of anthropology.¹⁸

Darwin’s views have not only influenced the science of anthropology; they have also influenced the science of history. As historian E. H. Carr claims that, “Darwin made another scientific revolution; and social scientists, taking their cue from biology, began to think of society as an organism ... Evolution in science confirmed and complemented progress in history.”¹⁹ But this science failed to comfort social scientists on the question of the origin of man. Darwin’s view that the human being is continuous to the animal kingdom had a severe implication for his society of late nineteenth-century Europe. As one observer notes, “Darwin deprived people of the privilege of being God’s special creation, thereby contributing to the feeling of anxiety that characterizes the twentieth century.”²⁰

This observation has been made in the context of Judeo-Christian tradition of Europe which advocated the idea that human beings are a special creation of God and God had a specific purpose behind this creation. This view also introduced the idea of human accountability which had a direct link to social and political systems in all civilizations in history. In this context, one must admit that the Darwinian belief shook the foundations of European society in the nineteenth century. The question, therefore, the student of history must ask: Were the pre-Darwinian European views of creation and purpose of life totally unscientific? How scientific is the Darwinian view of creation? Will it be scientifically sensible for a historian or a social scientist to subscribe to such ideas as pre-Darwinian Europeans had believed? Or there is any effect at all of pre-Darwinian or post-Darwinian beliefs on the historian or the social scientist? Let us examine both beliefs in the present context.

Although Darwin believed that, “there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe,” he claimed that there was “no evidence that man was

aboriginally endowed with the ennobling belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God,” saying that there was ample evidence of the existence of numerous races which did not have any idea of one or more gods, and even lacked words in their languages to express such an idea.²¹ Darwin further argued that the tendency in savages to imagine natural objects and agencies as being animated by spiritual or living essences was similar to that of the unconscious and unsophisticated reasoning by animals, which he illustrated with the possible reason behind his dog growling fiercely every time an open parasol was moved by a slight breeze; perhaps the dog barked because no one was standing beside it, and that movement without any apparent cause perhaps indicated the presence of some unwelcome stranger living agent. Darwin posits this belief in spiritual agencies as being an easy precursor to belief in existence of one or more gods, and a natural consequence of savages attributing to spirits the same passions, love of vengeance, justice, and the same affections felt by themselves.²²

Who are these savages that Darwin refers to? Animals like Darwin’s “full-grown and very sensible” dog? Man in the jungle? Or a ‘native’ in one of the colonies? Whatever one may think in response to such questions, Darwin’s views shook the foundations of religious beliefs in Europe. As Darwinian views were adapted by most scholars and scientists in the nineteenth century and it was “argued that man is not only continuous with the animal kingdom and subject to the laws of nature; they also asserted that his mental, moral, and spiritual qualities evolved by precisely the same process that gave the eagle its claws and the tapeworm its hooks.”²³ It is precisely because of such assertion on mental, moral, and spiritual qualities of human beings that Darwinism emerged as a rival to established religions.

Freud clearly subscribed to the Darwinian method in his understanding of early human society. On the validity of religious ideas, however, Freud raises interesting observation. He says that the claim to believe in religious ideas is founded on a threefold answer approach—these were the beliefs of one’s primal ancestors, these primal ancestors handed down proofs for their belief, and it was completely forbidden to question their authentication. Dismissing these answers, he laments former and present attitudes towards those questioning such ideas.²⁴ Freud made these observations as a believer in the Enlightenment philosophy, but unlike Enlightenment philosophers he did not believe in any role of God in the process of creation. Yet he tried to conceptualize a believer’s conviction in God, and he attempted to do so by subscribing totally to the Enlightenment methodology—experiment and observation—as

the foundation of his own belief. Yet, citing problems of relying on information from history he accuses that religions have imposed restrictions on raising inquiry about the validity of doctrines. He accused religions of containing contradictions, falsifications and bearing marks of untrustworthiness. This, he says, contributed to the neglect of authentication of elements of cultural assets which deal with solving the riddles of the universe and reconciliation with the sufferings of life.²⁵ He then declares religion as an illusion which, according to him, is “derived from human wishes” and is a kind of “psychiatric delusion.”²⁶ Some of Freud’s observations might be legitimate and might involve working out a methodology to differentiate between genuine religiosity and pseudo-religiosity in what has come to us as religion. Such elaborate treatment of the subject, though, does not fall into the scope of this chapter. We shall, however, undertake the question about rationality of religious views about beginning of human history.

KANT’S PERCEPTION ON THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

It is interesting to note that the most celebrated rationalist philosopher of the Enlightenment tradition, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), ventured into a sketch of the beginning of human history on the basis of teachings of the Old Testament. Like Freud, he also called this venture “conjectural beginning of human history.” Kant’s rational mind justified this conjecture by saying, “what may not legitimately be ventured with regard to the progression of the human actions may be attempted with regard to their first beginning.”²⁷ Conjectures, he points out, are no match for history in terms of the standards and the value of actually recorded occurrence, and are at best only permissible exercise of the imagination guided by reason, in the absence of the latter. Due to this difference, and the absence of recorded historical documents in the beginning of man, he prefers to venture on a pleasure trip based on the route sketched out in the Old Testament.²⁸ After making his “pleasure trip” based on the map sketched in the Old Testament, Kant goes on to point out certain aspects of the human nature in order to understand progression in human history. Emphasizing on the usefulness of following this map of the Old Testament, Kant focuses on the lessons that can be learned from the biblical version of the beginning of man, especially the fact that man is taught that he must not blame his misfortune on Providence or attribute his offence to the original sin. Instead, more

importantly, man learns that under similar circumstances, and despite nature's advice to the contrary, he would have exactly acted like his first parents, i.e. abuse reason in the very first use of reason. Once the realization sets in of the need to take responsibility for the evils which spring from the abuse of reason, and the blame for moral evils is correctly laid where it belongs, it will help mankind on the course of gradual development from the worse to the better. Kant believes that this "is the lesson taught by a philosophical attempt to write the most ancient part of human history: contentment with Providence, and with the course of human affairs, considered as a whole."²⁹

Our aim here is not to scrutinize whether there was an evolutionary growth of earliest human beings or it happened due to direct intervention by Providence, our goal is to understand the human nature as described in the Old Testament. Interestingly according to the Old Testament the first human couple ran to cover their physical bodies when they discovered that they had lost God's special favor on them, and they were in the state of nudity (Genesis 3: 7). This behavior seems to be more consistent with normal human behavior that we witness today. The first couple appears to have been motivated by self-esteem and a sense of dignity. Such conclusion raises many questions however.

The first question that arises is whether or not human beings are created by a creator God or they are just like any other species, as quoted earlier and held by some nineteenth-century scientists, where it was said that, "man is not only continuous with the animal kingdom and subject to the laws of nature; they also asserted that his mental, moral, and spiritual qualities evolved by precisely the same process that gave the eagle its claws and the tapeworm its hooks." Although an examination of the scientific theory of evolution does not fall into our scope here, we can't avoid analyzing some implication of this theory in our understanding of the human nature and its impact on good governance and organization of human society. In this context one must recognize Freud's reference to religion. We shall, however, limit our discussion on the impact of the human nature in rises and falls of civilizations only. We shall avoid any discussion on the validity either of religions or of the theory of evolution.

We have already suggested that a rational and scientific mind would subscribe to the idea that organizations and institutions, which would be essential for the growth of civilizations, could not have been achieved through coercion; it had to be attained through cooperation. And in order to accomplish this requirement, civilizations must have

cultivated certain values in the individual. One must have a sense of dignity and security of one's identity to be a part of any institution or organization. This may begin from the family and with the passage of time may extend to surroundings providing other identities to an individual. On its part the idea of dignity demands equality and justice. We have also indicated earlier that recent findings in cognitive neuroscience, behavioral genetics, evolutionary psychology and evolutionary biology have demonstrated evolutionary growth in the understanding of certain aspects of the human behavior through certain observable facts that are "hardwired" in the human brain. But before we undertake a comparative study of the human nature depicted in the traditional religious beliefs and in contemporary evolutionary beliefs we would like to highlight medieval Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun's perception of the human nature and its role in his explanation of the growth and decline of civilization.

IBN KHALDUN'S PERCEPTION ON GROWTH AND DECLINE OF CIVILIZATION

It is interesting to note that four centuries before Kant, historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) adopted a rational but believer's approach in understanding civilization and societal change. He has provided a simple but profound perception of the term civilization. However, Ibn Khaldun's explanation of the term requires some understanding about the Arabic language, and Islamic civilization. It also involves re-interpretation of some of Ibn Khaldun's original ideas.³⁰ Ibn Khaldun used the term *'Umran* which is derived from the three letter verb *'a-ma-ra* meaning (according to dictionary) to live long, to thrive, prosper, flourish, flower, peopled, populated, civilized, cultivated. The word *'Umran* has been translated as inhabitedness, activity, bustling life, thriving, flourishing, prosperity, civilization, building, edifice, and structure. *'Umran* is a continuous progressive process that mankind naturally achieves through cooperation and striving.³¹ Ibn Khaldun held the view that the "human society is a must. Philosophers express this by saying that man is political by nature; meaning, he cannot do without social life which is civic in nature." He explains the formation of human society as being due to the needs which cannot be adequately fulfilled by any one single individual, such as the preparation of food by bakers and cooks, craftsmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters and potters, or the help of fellow humans

for defense purposes. This society of men is the basis on which *‘Umran* is achieved and spread.³²

Thus man establishes *‘Umran* in order to satisfy his basic needs. Men then gradually develop activate their rational mind for better living, says Ibn Khaldun. He then explains:

Crafts, especially arithmetic and writing, bestow a certain mind on those who practice them. ... Rational soul exists in man only potentially. Its emergence from potentiality to actuality is depicted by the rise of new sciences and perceptions derived first from the world of senses, then what is acquired afterwards by the speculative power, until it becomes active perception and pure intellect.³³

However, the society needs to provide an individual with peaceful and cordial circumstances for him to utilize his rational mind. The society could ensure such circumstances only through close cooperation within the human community. Ibn Khaldun develops another key concept to explain such co-operation. Ibn Khaldun explains, “The defensive and protective action (of mankind) is not effective unless they have a common *‘asabiyyah* or fellow feelings of having common descent, with this they become strong and powerful... It leads to their solidarity and mutual support, and increases the fear of their enemy ... , (and when it comes to fighting) it won’t do without *‘asabiyyah*.”³⁴

Ibn Khaldun strongly believed that in history, kingdoms and dynasties were attained through *‘asabiyyah*. Even the “religious causes can’t succeed without *‘asabiyyah*.”³⁵ Therefore *‘asabiyyah*, which originates with the family and tribe, grows in strength and scope with the passage of time. It is a state of mind that has a natural defensive mechanism of survival and accommodates emotional aspect. It also could transform into a tool of conquest and expansion.

In history, whenever the forces of *asabiyyah* succeeded in establishing a kingdom, the population was provided with peace and security. On their part, the people were happy and were engaged in productive and progressive activities. In other words, with increased security and protection the *‘umranic* (civilizational) attention was diverted to co-operation among people for growth and production. It is *‘asabiyyah* that provided the people with the capacity for protection, defense, and other collective action. Even those people, who do not belong to the ruler’s blood group, develop working relationship with the ruling group. The society

then moves from production of necessities to production of luxuries. According to Ibn Khaldun, this improvement in the circumstances of the working class is accompanied with the accumulation of wealth and comfort, leading to a life of ease, tranquility and prosperity, with increasingly better food and clothing, and bigger houses, and elaborate towns and cities.³⁶

Ibn Khaldun makes a distinction between two types of *‘Umran*: rural *‘Umran* is generally the result of production of necessities while urban *‘Umran* is the result of production of luxuries. With increased security and freedom people get involved in competition and activities of economic production and growth, and as a result, *‘Umran* further increases and flourishes: Old cities are re-built, and new cities are constructed. Ibn Khaldun also points out that the government increases its finance by tax revenue. For this the government needs to ensure justice for its population.³⁷ The government can collect tax only if it can ensure peace and security for its population. However, in urban areas, life became relatively easy. On this, Ibn Khaldun warns the urban population that they may become so immersed in habits of luxury and pleasure seeking that their souls could become stained with vices and corruption. If such happens, economic activities and growth suffer. He says that usually the government constituted the biggest market. From this market would flow the substance of *‘Umran*. If the ruler lacked or withheld the funds, the total spending would decline and mercantile profits would dwindle and overall income (of the government) would also decline. According to Ibn Khaldun, this is because the government’s revenues are generated from income generating activities such as industrial activities, business transactions, and people’s search for benefits and profits, the lack of which will ultimately affect the smaller markets and circulation of money in the market.³⁸

Ibn Khaldun warns the government against acts of force on the part of the ruler. He says that one man’s possession cannot be acquired by another except through proper exchange. Violation of people’s property kills their hopes of earning; and with their hopes shattered, they refrain from all striving to that end. In this connection Ibn Khaldun defines the Islamic concept of *zulm* or injustice as not just the seizure of property from the rightful owners without cause or compensation, but as something much wider in scope, “Whoever seizes someone else’s property, or forces work on him, makes unjust claims or imposes an obligation not required by law, he has actually oppressed him. Those who collect unjust

taxes are oppressors. Those who plunder property are oppressors.”³⁹ As a result of this, people’s hopes get lost, leading to ruin of *‘Umran* and ultimately a negative setback for the government.

Thus Ibn Khaldun discusses not only the method of the growth of *‘Umran* but also provides an insight into ways of its ruin. Following this definition of *‘Umran* or civilization, then one may argue, that the earliest villages such as Jerico in Palestine, and Catal Huyuk in Turkey which existed around 7500 BC or before were civilized societies. Archaeological findings in Catal Huyuk suggest that it was a locality of about 32 acres covered by solid wall where about 10,000 people lived for several hundred years in sun-dried brick houses. Earliest known textile fragments containers of wood and clay has been found in Catal Huyuk.⁴⁰ Establishment of such an organized and inhabited area could not have been possible without some form of formal government and a set of law. In this sense it would be a mistake to identify the river valley civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, and Yellow River valley China, all of which originated between the years 3500 BC and 2500 BC, as earliest civilizations).

However, Ibn Khaldun seems to have ignored the role of ideas in the formation of civilization. Braudel calls this aspect of the growth of civilization as the ‘awareness’ or ‘mentality’ of the people which act as catalyst in ensuring co-operation among themselves. Without any role of ideas *‘asabiyyah* becomes too deterministic. Also this concept alone does not explain why some tribes succeeded in utilizing their *‘asabiyyah* to create their state and government, and others failed. Braudel says, “In every period, certain view of the world, a collective mentality, dominates the whole mass of the society. Dictating a society’s attitudes, guiding its choices, confirming its prejudices and directing its actions, this is very much a fact of civilization.”⁴¹ The reason for Ibn Khaldun to ignore the role of ideas in the formation of civilization is, perhaps, the domination of Islamic civilization in world affairs for many centuries before the birth of Ibn Khaldun. He witnessed changes in politics and world affairs only through dynastic changes.

Could we apply Ibn Khaldun’s ideas of growth early civilizations in the context of the rise of nationalism in the last couple of centuries? Braudel seems to agree with the general thrust of Ibn Khaldun’s idea when he suggested that the growth of ‘liberty groups’ during the late medieval period paved the way to rise of Europe. According to him, “Liberties, in fact, were the franchises or privileges protecting this or that

group of people or interests, which used such protection to exploit others, often without shame.”⁴² Following the growth of city-states, under the ‘enlightened despots,’ nation-states emerged in Europe. *‘Asabiyyah* of race, linguistic and cultural divisions, and other material interests motivated the people in the formation of nationalities. By the end of the nineteenth-century Europe was already divided on the basis of nationalities.⁴³ This was followed in most other parts of the world following the two world wars in the twentieth century. The world of nations slowly provided the principal structure and laid down the foundation of today’s world system.

Our interest here, however, is to understand the earliest growth of human civilization and the impact of the human nature that might have played a role in this process. The specific question that we would like to raise here is whether or not Ibn Khaldun’s idea of the existence of the rational soul in every human being is a valid concept or not, and whether we could relate this concept which will assist us in understanding the human action that might have played any significant role in the formation of the earliest human civilization. In our opinion, with new findings about the function of the human brain, and how it is programmed to react positively to demands of civil society, it should be possible for us to develop hypothesis about the human nature and how it might have contributed in the growth of earliest civilization.

RATIONAL SOUL AND SCIENTIFIC STUDIES OF THE HUMAN NATURE

After examining his findings in the fields of cognitive neuroscience, behavioral genetics, evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology, over the past few decades, Nevin Doran Hunter believes that these newly conceived scientific disciplines have initiated a re-examination the relationship between government and human nature, going beyond theology and metaphysics to relate the human nature to the art and science of ethics and morality.⁴⁴

Among these four disciplines, particularly cognitive neuroscience and evolutionary psychology are relevant to our current discussion. The discipline of cognitive neuroscience, as elucidated by Hunter, “studies the biology of cognition with a focus on mental processes and their implications for human behavior”, while evolutionary psychology attempts to explain “how the mind and behavior have been impacted by evolution”

Quoting Steven Pinker, Hunter says that such scientific tools aim to “apply evolutionary theory to the mind, with an emphasis on adaptation, gene-level selection, and modularity.”⁴⁵

Drawing from the research papers and books utilizing these contemporary behavioral and biological scientific tools Nevin Doran Hunter brings forth some very important observations. He explains that, “the human brain is “hardwired” to trust (to have faith and confidence in the reliability and actions of someone else); to have a natural sense of justice and fairness (to treat others as you want to be treated); to know the importance of cooperation (working with other people for a common end); to be conscious of the sense of benevolence (to be kindly and charitable toward others); to feel empathy (to share and understand the feelings of others); and finally, and most importantly, the human brain seems to be structured to know what is right and wrong.”⁴⁶

In our opinion, this is what Ibn Khaldun was suggesting, as quoted above, when he spoke of role of crafts such as arithmetic and writing in elevation the potentially rational soul of man. According to him, the rational soul’s “emergence from potentiality to actuality is depicted by the rise of new sciences and perceptions derived first from the world of senses, then what is acquired afterwards by the speculative power, until it becomes active perception and pure intellect.”⁴⁷ Obviously, with the passage of time and continuous practice, human ability has progressively grown and improved. But one must be careful in simplifying such view of progress. The twentieth-century historian of science, George Sarton in his *Introduction to the History of Science* has cautioned against the notion by some “that if mankind had walked humbly and constantly in their [Greek] footsteps, the progress of civilization would have been considerably accelerated.” Such notions are related to our lack of understanding of the nature of progress. Greek civilization, he observed, “ended in failure, not only because of the lack of intelligence, but because of the lack of character, of morality.”⁴⁸

It is this suggestion of morality of character that concerns us in this discussion, and it is here that the role of religious ideas that crops up in our present context. Although a systematic examination of the validity of religious ideas do not fall into the scope of this study, we shall undertake some elements of the teachings of religions in this context. It is important to note here that when Ibn Khaldun, a believer, suggests that a rational soul exists in human beings, he takes it for granted that this rational soul was planted (“hardwired”) in the human being by Creator

God. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, however, would challenge such a notion. According to him, “We [human beings] are biologically programmed to impute intentions to entities whose behaviors matters to us.”⁴⁹ He does not think that there is any role of any supernatural creator in this process of human evolution and declared religious beliefs as delusion. He suggests this in the context of humanizing trust which is necessary to organize the society and good governance. We, however, would like to devote our attention to the nature of those “hardwired” aspects of the human nature without falling into traps of the almost unending controversy between religion and science mostly in the context of the debate about the existence of God.

CONCLUSION

We would like to highlight the point that during the last over 5000 years of written history, all teachings related to morality and human responsibility have originated within religious teachings. Historians generally held the view that almost all civilizations in history are rooted in teachings of religions. Civilizations secured cooperation of people and their participation in the socio-cultural-political process through ethical and moral teachings. Our interest in religious ideas lies here. Our question is—if religious ideas were able to stimulate people to cooperate for growths and rises of civilizations in history, why can’t they do it now? This question, however, will demand assessment of religious ideas—which one of them contributed beneficially for humanity and which one negatively. In our opinion, evolutionary growth of human ability to reason every action should be able to do exactly that.

We would again like to return to Ibn Khaldun who explained his perception of man’s advantageous ability to think as being “the result of (special) powers placed in the cavities of his brain. With the help of these powers, man takes the pictures of the *sensibilia*, applies his mind to them, and thus abstracts from them other pictures. The ability to think is the occupation with pictures that are beyond sense perception, and the application of the mind to them for analysis and synthesis. This is what is meant by the word *af’idah* “hearts” in the Qur’an: “He gave you hearing and vision and hearts (16: 78).”⁵⁰

Interestingly the Qur’anic verse that Ibn Khaldun quotes continues suggesting that human beings should be grateful to God for His “hardwired” gifts to them. This seems to correspond well with Doran

Hunter's observation when, after surveying the literature on recent findings about the human nature, he suggests that, "[t]he human brain seems to be "hardwired" with a "moral grammar" that naturally inclines us to make "right" decisions; whereas, exponents of moral government stress the forms, processes, and principles that would facilitate the operations of a moral government."

In this regard, Hunter epitomizes the concept of intellectual humility in dealing with these concepts, ideas, and notions, warning that one needs to "remember that great minds and progressing science can make monumental mistakes and also assume too much credit for discovering what human experience has already declared to be acceptable or unacceptable."⁵¹

We end this essay by suggesting that sciences for governance and human nature must be guided by ethical principles. Earlier concepts based on science, such as Social Darwinism has been proven fatal in history, but now some new disciplines have made excellent progress and replaced the old way of the understanding of human nature and made substantial impact on social, political and economic institutions. Yet one finds many in the Wall Street motivated by Social Darwinist views.

It is pleasing to see new findings about the human brain, but very little has been discovered about the human heart which the Qur'anic verse (16: 78) refers to. In other words, this may lead scholars to conduct new researches about the human nature and its impact on good governance. In our opinion, one should not reject religious ideas as illusion only because in history such ideas have been exploited by the church, rather religious ideas should be taken seriously for new research. Religious ideas might have the potential for guidance in the world today.

NOTES

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash*, 40.
2. Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilization*, trans. Richard Mayne (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 11.
3. Ibid., 3–23.
4. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*. James Strachey. tr. and ed. (New York: Norton, n.d.) 42.
5. Ibid., 37.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 55.

8. Ibid., 56.
9. Ibid., 58.
10. See, N. Doran Hunter, "Human Nature, Science and Moral Government: An Exploratory Essay," in Abdullah al-Ahsan and Stephen B. Young (eds.), *Guidance for Good Governance: Explorations in Qur'anic, Scientific and Cross-cultural Approaches* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2008), 65–113.
11. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. and ed. James Strachy. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961).
12. Ibid., xi.
13. Ibid., 26–27.
14. Ibid., 27.
15. Ibid., 30.
16. Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 450–451.
17. Ibid., 448.
18. Richard Leaky, *The Origin of Humankind* (London: Wedienfeld & Nicolson, 1994), 3–4.
19. E.H. Carr, *What is History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962) 56–57.
20. Marvin Perry et al., *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics and Society*. Vol. 2, 9th Edition (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 2009), 580.
21. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Great Books of the World: 49 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990), 302.
22. Ibid., 303.
23. Morton O. Beckner, "Darwinism," in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vols. 1 & 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 302.
24. Freud, *Illusion*, 33.
25. Ibid., 33–34.
26. Ibid., 39.
27. Immanuel Kant, "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" in *On History* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 53.
28. Ibid., 53–54.
29. Ibid., 68.
30. Ibn Khaldun's ideas are extensive and complex; they demand separate treatment. However, attempts will be made here to simplify some of his ideas for this article.
31. See Abdurrahman Muhammad bin Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 3 vols. 2nd ed. (Beirut: *Lajnatul Lubnan al-Arabi*: 1965). *Al-Muqaddimah* or The Introduction has been translated and used by many authors. The complete and most acceptable one is *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction*, tr. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books,

- 1958). We use Rosenthal's translation with some changes wherever necessary.
32. Rosenthal, I: 89–92.
 33. Ibid., II: 406.
 34. Ibid., I: 263.
 35. Ibid., I: 322.
 36. Ibid., I: 249–250.
 37. Ibid., II: 95–96.
 38. Ibid., II: 102–103.
 39. Ibid., II: 106–107.
 40. For detailed work on the subject, see Ian Hodder, *The Leopard's Tale: Revealing the Mysteries of Catalhöyük* (London: Themes and Hudson, 2006) and James Mellaart, *Catal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia* (London: Themes and Hudson, 1967).
 41. Braudel, *History of Civilization*, 22.
 42. Ibid., 316.
 43. Although foundations of these nationalities were claimed to be scientific, they were never final. A number of new nations have emerged in Europe even in the 1990s, and a number of other “nationalities” are struggling to achieve the status of nationality.
 44. Nevin Doran Hunter, 67–68.
 45. Ibid., 68.
 46. Ibid., 70.
 47. Rosenthal, II: 406.
 48. George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, 3 vols. (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company for Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1927), I: 9–10.
 49. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 183. Also quoted in Hunter, 76.
 50. Rosenthal, II: 412.
 51. Nevin Doran Hunter, 112–113.

Qur'anic Guidance for Good Governance

A Contemporary Perspective

al-Ahsan, A.; Young, S.B. (Eds.)

2017, XII, 227 p. 2 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-57872-9