

If truth is clear, why do people reject it?

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There is nothing as clear and logical as truth. At the same time, there is nothing as unclear and illogical as falsehood.

This is so because truth is a state of being factual and real. It is an aggregate of things, events, feelings and experiences that are genuine and credible, hence fulfilling.

Conversely, falsehood is a state of being unreal and deceptive. It is an assemblage of ideas, occurrences and emotions that are inappropriate, false and misleading, hence eventually disappointing.

Man himself is a manifestation of truth. Therefore, he craves for and seeks only truth. His being is incompatible with falsehood. Marriage, or joint undertaking, between man and falsehood is one of convenience. There's little love lost between them.

Moreover, for obvious reasons, there is nothing easier and more straightforward than living, inviting to and promoting truth. At the same time, there is nothing more difficult and more dishonest than living, propagandizing and disseminating falsehood.

For example, nothing could be easier than telling the world that two plus two is four; or that the sun is the brightest object (star) in our sky; or that a created thing must have a creator; or that man is composed of body and soul and that he exists for a noble purpose.

However, the problem will be to tell the world that two plus two is anything but four; or that there is in the sky a brighter object (star) than the sun; or that a created thing came about by an accident or on its own; or that man is solely composed of matter and that his existence is meaningless and is only for self-indulgence.

The first set of ideas denotes evident actualities. Hence, they belong to the orb of truth. The second one denotes evident lies. Hence, they belong to the orb of falsehood. It goes without saying that attempting to refute the former and accept the latter is an aberration. Neither is right.

Similarly, there should be nothing more sensible and compelling for man - who is most obviously a mortal creation - than the fact that there is an everlasting Creator and Designer, who constantly communicates with man through the revealed and created signs. The Creator thus illuminates, guides and empowers man. He protects his wellbeing and sanity.

Also, there should be nothing more loathsome for man than to deny the obvious. That is, to claim in the midst of his creation-ness that there is no Creator and that everything is without an aim; to claim in the midst of his terrestrial weaknesses that there is no absolute heavenly authority and rule; and to claim in the midst of his earthly chaos and madness that there is no heavenly peace, justice and bliss.

The prophets used to exclaim in the face of the obstinacy of their rebellious peoples: "What! Can there be a doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?" (Ibrahim, 10).

Angels, the guardians of Hell, too, will be somewhat taken aback when they see the Hell-bound multitudes. What made all these people rebel against their prophets and go senseless and deviate from manifest

truth, beauty and purpose, towards the abyss of error, vice, ugliness and vanity - they will wonder. As a form of their affirmation and censure, the angels will ask those crowds when they arrive at the gates of Hell: "Did there not come to you messengers from yourselves, reciting to you the verses (communicating signs) of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" (al-Zumar, 71).

Once inside Hell, its inhabitants will admit how indiscreet and thoughtless they had been: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we should not (now) be among the companions of the blazing Fire" (al-Mulk, 10). The whole issue revolved only around properly using - or misusing - the divine gifts of hearing, vision, heart and intelligence.

Substance versus inconsequence

This is why preaching truth is an instinct, while preaching falsehood - in one form or another - is a profession. The former is inborn and personal, the latter acquired and institutional. The former is short, delightful and sweet, the latter long, strenuous and mind-numbing. He who speaks and propagates truth is honest, fearless and likeable. Whereas he who speaks and propagates falsehood, more often than not, is fraudulent, cowardly and off-putting.

Thus, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was known as the bravest, most eloquent and most loved individual. Since he spoke only truth, he did not speak needlessly and too much. He advised that everyone should do the same. If not, people should be silent, contemplating. His sermons were very brief, but full of essence. Nevertheless, as such they changed the world. They altered forever the course of human history. After almost fifteen centuries, the Prophet is still regarded by most people as the greatest personality and teacher in the history of mankind.

Every truly wise and knowledgeable person tries to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet as much as possible. People know that only this orientation can give currency to their wisdom and knowledge.

In opposition, a great many philosophers, thinkers, scholars, writers and artists - who operated far from the compass of truth, yet defied it - were known as eccentric, immoral, bohemian and erratic. They talked, theorized and thought so much, but largely failed to make a massive and widespread impact on society.

They themselves lived chaotic, decadent and confused lifestyles, so how could they provide to others a guidance and a blueprint for goodness? They conserved their ostensibly sophisticated and complex thoughts in numerous often multi-volumed *magnum opuses*. However, not many people remain serious about them, yet fewer are swayed thereby. For the most part people simply do not care.

There is nothing better than the power - and laws - of time when it comes to honouring truth and its brethren, and discrediting falsehood and its own comrades. It is rightly said in this regard that only "time will tell" who is who and what is what in the grand scheme of things.

Today in the age of communication, people talk more than ever, but the last thing they certainly do is communicating and understanding each other. They have mastered many complex scientific disciplines, but have failed to get hold of life's most basic questions. Truth is ever more evading, and so are authentic knowledge and wisdom. Modern civilization is not really what the earlier generations dreamed of. The predicament generally boils down to the deliberate dismissal of truth and the adoption of junk existential missions and lifestyles. Falsehood with all its manifestations became a *raison d'etre*.

The reason for rejecting truth

Nonetheless, why do many people still reject the clear and sensible truth, embracing the ambiguous and irrational falsehood instead? How can a sense be repudiated in favour of a nonsense?

How can a normal person, for instance, consciously be a hedonist (believing that life's purpose is but physical pleasure-seeking), a nihilist (believing that life is meaningless and purposeless), an agnostic (believing that truth is neither known nor knowable), an evolutionist (believing that life is an accident and is a result of natural selection and evolution), a polytheist, a liberal, etc.?

Certainly, it takes a lot of deluding valour and contagious arrogance to subscribe to something like that.

The situation could be explained as follows.

A person actually never rejects truth. He cannot do so, for he is a part thereof, and so is everything around him, known and unknown. Man is a microcosm of truth. The universe is its theatre.

What is more, in life there is only one thing: truth. There is no falsehood; it is a fiction. What is normally called falsehood is a qualified absence of truth.

When a person is said to be rejecting truth, he actually misdirects and abuses God's gift of freedom. He does so as a result of his many artificial priorities, obsessions and personal interests, which he has chosen for himself and has placed on a pedestal. He posits those things between himself and his association with truth, causing in turn his intellectual and emotional waywardness, as well as his spiritual negligence and laxity.

Truth is not rejected thus. It is only being challenged and stood up to. It is being distorted and misrepresented.

In doing so, a person thinks he is in the know, but is downright ignorant; he thinks he perceives things and proceedings, but is nothing but blind; and he thinks he is in the right, but is merely arrogant and is doing a great disservice to his cause.

Instead of keeping his intrinsic relationship with truth clear and sustained, such a person renders it distorted, hazy and cluttered. Before seeing truth, he sees everything else. Before attending to it, he attends to everything else. Since his lifespan is short and his capacities extremely limited, he has time only for his immediate passions.

Under such conditions, truth is always relegated to a back seat. It must settle for second best. It is obscured and rendered dormant. Hence, one of the meanings of *kufr* (non-belief) is "hiding" or "covering something". *Shirk*, in the same vein, is not denying or rejecting God either. It signifies the acts of associating things and ideas with the Almighty, placing them at the same level of legitimacy and authority as He.

For such a person - having thus become either blind or myopic - truth becomes too distant to be seen, too irrelevant to be taken care of, and too subdued to be heard. He does not renounce truth as such. He only neutralizes it. He also incapacitates himself to recognize and internalize it. He creates a universe of impediments between it and himself. He becomes of the heedless (*ghafilun*).

It is due to all this that it is rightly said that calling to truth actually means removing those impediments. It is also a task of ridding truth of its false mantles, making it visible and appealing again, and

simultaneously enabling people to see it. A caller to truth is a reminder, reviver and restorer, all at once. Accordingly, a person reverts, rather than converts, to truth.

Nobody is invited to truth as something novel and strange. Both people and truth were there entire time. They just needed to be freed from their respective sets of fetters and imputed froths. They needed to find each other again.

Thus, whenever a person dies - i.e., when all masks fall off and all veils are lifted - the first thing a person will see is truth in its true and pure colours. He will come to his senses. The next thing he will desire is to be returned to this world, to be given another chance and to set things right. He will have realized then that what he had done was utterly reckless and foolish.

Three examples

For example, Satan, as the greatest rebel against Heaven and the perfect incarnation of falsehood, never really denied or rejected truth. How could he when he directly communicated with Almighty God (the Absolute Truth) and unambiguously witnessed the most consequential dimensions of both life and truth?

However, he was so arrogant, selfish and egocentric that he became completely blinded thereby. Nothing mattered, nor truly existed afterwards, even after he had been told, and he so accepted, that Hell will be his ultimate abode. Satan was a victim of his own self-professed "reputation" and "status".

Pharaoh likewise was an avowed enemy of truth. He was Satan incarnate in his own right. However, Prophet Musa (Moses) reminded him at one point that he was fully aware that the signs he had brought to him were from Almighty God. As if Musa told him that the effects

of that very knowledge which Pharaoh had should have extended to the realm of his total consciousness and, of course, action.

Musa told Pharaoh: "Verily, you know that these signs have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as clear evidences (proofs)" (al-Isra', 102).

Epitomising by and large all people who act in like manner, Pharaoh when he was dying collected his faculties and attested to truth: "At length, when drowning overtook him, he said: "I believe that there is no god (deity) except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims" (Yunus, 90).

However, the testimony was too little, too late. Pharaoh was told: "Now? And you had disobeyed (God) before and were of the corrupters?" (Yunus, 91). Pharaoh was not directly accused of rejecting or denying truth. Instead, he was called to account for rebelling against it and its heavenly source, which resulted in him disobeying it and becoming a mischief and vice-monger. He yet attempted to rival and outdo truth.

Even the behavioural models of the most adamant members of the Makkan chiefs and other Quraysh leaders fit into the same mould. They did not deny or reject Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), nor did they question his integrity. Rather, it is the signs or revelations of Allah, which persistently denounced their venal and self-centred conducts, that they denied and flouted (al-An'am, 33). They did not want those revelations to dictate their lives, thus setting themselves against the revealed guidance and its heavenly origin.

Once Abu Jahl confessed to the Prophet: "We do not call you a liar, but regard as false (inadequate and unauthoritative) what you are presenting."