

## **The Concept of Freedom in the Quran**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper provides new thoughts about the concept of freedom in Islam, but based mainly on the Quranic verses. Methodologically, it adopts the content analysis approach. It argues that freedom in the Quran is natural, and it supersedes any earthly laws and instructions. The Quran doesn't order governments to allow for freedom because natural built in power is above legislation, and need not to be asserted by law. Freedom in the Quran means the unity of the objective and the subjective, the social and the natural, the individual and the plural, and the teachings in the Quran are in harmony with natural innate powers, and lead finally to self-fulfillment on the individual and social levels. And those who enact laws that contradict the natural will face trouble soon or later. Man has the right to choose his/her faith, and express him/her self by different means. She/he has the right to introduce her/his thoughts and bring out any evidence seen fit. She/he has the right to organize, and receive the information needed for forming educated opinions and decisions. Suppression and repression aren't acceptable by Islamic teachings.*

### **Introduction**

This paper explains the concept of freedom in Islam as it is promoted in the verses of the Quran. The Islamic concept of freedom is a controversial issue on the level of intellectuals and clergy of different religions worldwide. So many people, particularly in the democratic countries argue that Islam establishes authoritarian social and political systems, and allows very little space for freedom of individuals and groups. There are very gloomy conclusions drawn about Islam from the side of western mass media, intellectuals and ordinary people. It isn't the intention of this paper to look into the reasons that led to such conclusions, but to introduce a scientific reading, to the best of my ability, to the concept.

The study of the concept is limited to the verses of the Quran. It doesn't concentrate on the sayings of Prophet Mohammad or his immediate followers. That is because: first, the Quran is the uncontested basic and prime source of Islamic teachings; and second, the overwhelming majority of the sayings don't deal with Islamic thought but with Islamic fiqh (teachings that have to do with daily life adherence with what is legitimate (halal) and illegitimate (haram). Islamic thought which hasn't been a rich field of research in the Islamic heritage deals with right and wrong on a universal level, but fiqh is limited to human daily behavior on piecemeal basis. Only the Quran talks directly and indirectly about issues of political and social thought, and an understanding of Islam should spring only from understanding the Quran.

Some intellectuals draw their conclusions about Islam from the behavior Moslems exhibit in their daily life, and from what they hear from Muslim clergy in the mass media, lectures and public discussions. This situation is similar to the time of Martin Luther who abhorred the then existing Christian teachings, and incited the Christians to read the Bible as the major source of Christian teachings. The situation in the Islamic countries is somewhat similar in the sense that tradition and the judgments (fatwas) of the clergy are the prime source of halal and haram. The Quran, to some extent, has been kept on the shelves and used mainly in occasions of joy and sadness. The Muslims refer to the Quran in general, but they concentrate primarily on the sayings of the Prophet, although the Prophet himself ordered the Moslems not to record his sayings.

This paper is divided into three parts: the basic Islamic philosophical assumptions concerning individualism and pluralism in Islam, the freedom of choice and freedom in general.

Methodologically, the paper depends mainly on content-analysis of the verses of the Quran. It rarely resorts to writings of Muslim thinkers because they concentrate on issues of fiqh rather than thought. Comparison between Islam and democracy in this regard is made indirectly for the sake of clarifying certain points, but not for comprehensive comparison.

The hypothesis of this paper is that freedom in Islam is natural, and it means the unity of the objective and the subjective.

### **Individualism and Pluralism**

Philosophers have shown diversity in their concepts of social organization and welfare, and most of them adopted either individualism or pluralism as basic theoretical assumptions in social building. Some of them such as Machiavelli (**Fischer, Lexington Book**) and John Locke (**Locke, Two treatises of Government**) adopted individualism depending upon that social behavior is individualistic in the first place, and any social togetherness is the outcome of individual decisions based on how individuals view their interests. The individual, as individualists say, is precedent to the society, and his/her social activity is the outcome of his/her personal experience in the development of interests and methods of realizing them.

Pluralists assume the contrary in the sense that the idea of the society is precedent to the individual, and the individual appeared to fit into a pre-ordained or an inevitably evolving social structure that stresses the common weal rather than the personal interests. (**Aveniri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx**) Consequently, they argue that the individual realizes his/her interests through the realization of the common interests, and he/she cannot realize him/herself outside the society. The individual remains part of an organic social structure through which he/she gain meaning and can be fruitful. (**Boylan. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy**)

Islam differs in its basic assumption from the individualists and the pluralists, and as it is understood from the Quranic texts, Islam is both individualist and pluralist, and there are many verses in the Quran that assert the idea of individualism, and many others assert pluralism. But the Quran doesn't approach both ideas as contradictory, but mutually dependent and constitute an integral whole in guiding human behavior. To illustrate this, verses from the Quran are brought to sight:

**Pluralism:** it is evident from the Quranic texts that God didn't create man as an individual but as a couple, or created man as spouses. One of the verses says: "**That He did create in pairs,- male and female, From a seed when lodged (in its place);**". (al-Najm # 53, v. 45-6) here the Quran uses the Arabic word (Zawj) which means spouse. The male is a zawj and the female too; that is, the Quran doesn't differentiate linguistically between the male and the female in as far as creation is concerned. This is asserted in the saying: "**And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.**" (al-Rum #30, v. 21) the Quran doesn't say who was created first: the male or the female, but says that each was created from the other. This means that the female and the male are of the same origin, and both of them are organically connected.

From the organic theory, we learn that all parts of an organic entity or species are interconnected and mutually-dependent, and none of the parts can survive without being organically tied with the other parts. And the whole cannot survive without the organic natural cooperation of all the parts. This is true for men and women in as far as the teachings of the Quran are concerned. One cannot survive or continue to exist if living alone completely separated from the other. This kind of creation isn't limited to humans, but it includes all other creatures. The Quran says: "**And of everything We have created pairs: That ye may receive instruction.**" (Al-Dariyat #51, v. 49) here everything isn't limited to living creatures but to everything. This should be left to the physicists to educate us if natural things are created or made in pairs or couples, or positive and negative.

All are created from the same soul, or as the Quran puts it: "**Glory to God, Who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge.**" (Yasin #36, v. 36) All have the same creation origin: "**He created you (all) from a single person: then created, of like nature, his mate; and he sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs: He makes you, in the wombs of your mothers, in stages, one after another, in three veils of darkness. such is God, your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs (all) dominion.**

**There is no god but He: then how are ye turned away (from your true Centre)?”** (Al-Zumar # 39, v. 6) {It needs to be noticed here that the translator uses the masculine form while this isn't the true Quranic expression. The Quran refers to the soul rather than to individuals and stresses the creation of the soul and its spouse from it} The zawj or the spouse isn't a separate individual, but an integral to another. He or she isn't qualified naturally to stay alone or separate, and he/she cannot easily do that because of his/her natural creation. It is possible for somebody to live alone under a private ceiling, but this doesn't annihilate his/her nature, and remains under the material and psychological pressure of this nature.

The question of plurality isn't limited to pairs or spouse-ship, but extends to a larger scope. The Quran says that an-nass (mankind in general or the unidentified people) are made peoples and tribes. Before this is explained, two things should be clarified:

- a) The Quran uses the word an-nas when addressing human beings in general, and uses the word sha'b (people) when specifying.
- b) There are three stages of creation in the Quran: creation, making and constructing. These three stages mean that the will of God ordained the creation of something, but the first means the making from nil, making means adding things to something that already exist, and constructing means adding to something already made. For instance, man was created first, then made into people, then babies constructed in the womb.

Here the Quran talks about the making of peoples and tribes: **“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).** (al-Hujurat # 49, v. 13)

This verse assures that man is naturally pluralist, he/she is created a spouse and an integral part of a people or a tribe. In this assumption, Islam differs completely from so many philosophers who assumed that societies develop due to need or necessity, and agrees with Aristotle who said that society as an idea is precedent to the individual, and the individual is created to fit into the application of the idea. This is a crucial point in constructing the Quranic theory of freedom.

**Individualism:** Islam is also individualist because responsibility is individualist not pluralist. Everybody is responsible for his/her actions and doings both in this life and the life here-after. The Quran says: “Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds”. (Al-Moddathther # 74, v. 38) And says: **“Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. That man can have nothing but what he strives for.”** (Al-Najm # 53, v. 38-9) That is why the Quran establishes rules of earth punishments, and describes recompense and punishment on the Day of Judgment. **“Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck: On the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open. (It will be said to him:) Read thine (own) record: Sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee.”** (Al-Isra' # 17, v. 13-4) This means that Islam doesn't dissolve the individual into the society but preserves the individual entity that doesn't separate itself from the whole. Dissolving the individual into society or tribe negates the personal responsibility, and personal freedom is consequently negated. To make clearer, the Quran establishes a way of human behavior in a way that the individual doesn't lose sight of the common weal, and doesn't lose the sense of personal responsibility. The one is responsible to the extent she/he is pluralist, and to the extent of fulfilling personal interests. The one observes the common good even in all endeavors including those of personal interests.

The person is pluralist and individualist at the same time according to the Quran. Is this combination of two contradictories or antonyms logically possible? The Quran explains that working within a community or a social group is a virtue that benefits both the person and the community. the community reaps goodness on earth, but the person reaps on earth because she/he is a member of the community, and in heavens because of good doings. Good deeds such as cleaning a street, helping the poor and the elderly, facing an enemy, getting education and doing scientific research are Islamically required, and they are an expression of deep faith and belief in God. Those who do good deeds will be recompensed in Heavens, and those who don't do will face punishment. It is inevitable to do work for the good of the society because the person is a natural member, and this inevitability is no different from the must toward oneself.

This inevitability is also a right because through common achievement, a person can see him/herself materializing or self-fulfilled. To stress the natural integrity, the inevitability is legalized by the sharia as a must.

Working toward personal interest is an inevitability and a right too. The person has to work hard and be productive so as to make a living and achieve advancement, or that is the way she/he is created. Unless he/she be independent in making achievements, life becomes meaningless and loses essence. But while a person is promoting her/his personal interests, he/she continue to observe the common interests. He/she refrains from personal activity that does harm to the society, and elevates the one that is socially productive. All of these activities then are actually worshipping. Worshipping in Islam isn't only rituals, but includes all productive and virtuous activities.

Individualism and pluralism are integral, they bolster each other, and none of them prevails over the other, or of more importance than the other. This integration is categorized as worship that aims at abiding by the Islamic law (sharia) that depends upon a comprehensive ethical code whether on the level of faith, or the level of thought, or the level of daily conduct. (faith is the belief in the supernatural; thought is the scientific examination of phenomena; daily conduct is the permitted behavior and the forbidden).

The Islamic basic assumption is different from both the democratic and the socialist or the communist. It is a one that integrates the personal with the plural, and doesn't deal with them as contradictory, rather they interact not to insure co-existence only, but to provide integrity that protects the human personality that doesn't feed on the common weal. It is the unity of the antonyms which is in harmony with the integral universe on the level of the species and the level of humanity. It provides for the distinction of the individual without separating him/her from the whole.

### **Freedom to choose**

As it is noticed, the Quran establishes a dialectical mutual relationship between the subjective, the person or the soul or the individual, and the objective, the world outside oneself. To be in harmony with oneself and the universe, it is thought that the Quran sets rules and code of ethics that are compatible with creation; i.e., the rules of the sharia must be harmonious with the physical rules of creation, if these rules are truly descending from heavens. The God who creates doesn't order people to do things that are contradictory to nature. He wouldn't ask us to stop eating if we cannot survive without food. This doesn't mean that those who believe in God believe that God is subject to rationality and logical reasoning; rather, he is the source of both rationality and reasoning.

Before getting into the freedom to choose, I should point that so many Muslims don't believe that there is a freedom of choice in Islam, and even there isn't freedom in Islam at all. They argue that God has established his rules and codes of behavior in the Quran, and Prophet Mohammad explained and interpreted the verses, and the need to loom over them isn't there. The Muslim doesn't need to think of what is good and bad, or of what is virtuous and evil, but needs to look up the details of how to behave from the already established and clarified rules and codes. They paralyze the human brain, and always put it inside a circle of inability and deem it untrustworthy.

It is evident that these people don't differentiate between creation and instructions of behavior. The one cannot choose in the realm of creation, but can choose if he/she is ordered or advised. One cannot choose whether to use his/her teeth for eating, but can choose not to believe in God. Also there is a problem in the way they understand the rules in view of time and space. (**kilanee et. al, p 140**) People of different parts of the world differ in understanding certain ideas due to cultural differences. In terms of time, the form and scope of understanding ideas and revelations differ according to the scientific and epistemological advancement.

However, there are Muslims who don't accept inherited and rigid forms of understanding the teachings of Islam, and call for changes that respect the human brain and rationality. Qardawi who is very well known in the Islamic world is just an example. (Qardawi, p. 14) He always calls for enforcing human reasoning in understanding the texts, and calls for open mindedness on all issues.

Back to freedom of choice, the Quran states: **“By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it.”** (Al-Shshams # 91, v. 7-10) this means that man has been created with an ability to differentiate between right and wrong, and an ability to choose between purification and corruption.

Man is endowed naturally with the power to know and distinguish between things and differentiate between ideas, and to make the choices she/he sees fit. This is asserted in the verse that says: **“And shown him the two highways”**. (Al-Balad # 90, V. 10) these two highways are the paths of right and wrong, and means that man is given the ability to know the two paths and choose the one or the other.

It is evident that the freedom to choose in the Quran isn't something that is learned or achieved by education, but it is natural, or an innate power built into man. The one doesn't develop the power to choose through education, but can improve her/his methods in making the choices. This is similar to the power of eating which isn't developed by education, while the art of eating could be developed through learning.

Man is rational and a thinking creature. That is why the Quran contains hundreds of verses that ask humans to think and look into things and ideas before deciding. One verse, for instance, says: **“Now let man but think from what he is created”**. (Al-Tareq # 86, v. 5) and another says: **“Then let man look at his food”**. (Abass # 80, v. 24) For more clarification on the status of human brain in the Quran, the following verses are helpful:

*Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the Night and the Day; in the sailing of the ships through the Ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;- (here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise.* (Al-Baqara # 2, v. 164)

*For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb, - those who understand not.* (Al-Anfal #8, V. 22)

*With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes and every kind of fruit: verily in this is a sign for those who give thought. He has made subject to you the Night and the Day; the sun and the moon; and the stars are in subjection by His Command: verily in this are Signs for men who are wise.* (Al-Nahel # 16, v. 11-12)

Man has memory also. The text says: **“The Day when man shall remember (all) that he strove for”**. (Al-Nazi'at # 79, v. 35) while another verse tells: **“We did reveal to Moses the Book after We had destroyed the earlier generations, (to give) Insight to men, and guidance and Mercy, that they might receive admonition”**. (Al-qasas # 28, v. 43) since man has a memory, he/she can reassess matters and evaluates what he/she is doing: **“Nay, man will be evidence against himself”**. (Al-Qiyama # 75, v. 14) man has the natural ability to weigh things and learn from his/her experience.

As long as man's thinking ability is preordained or implanted in his/her structure, then he/she is free to choose; otherwise, this innate divinely implanted power is meaningless. When a believer talks about God, she/he has in mind that the talk is about a creator who acquires the ultimate wisdom, mercy, knowledge, might and comprehension, and who wouldn't create things haphazardly. This power of reason is endowed to enable man to choose, but not to restrict him/her or forbid him/her from making the choices seen suitable.

This is not left in the Quran as a matter of abstract thought or a subject of debate among scholars, but is given a legislative status in the sharia code. It is stated clearly: **“The truth is from your Lord”: Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it)**. (Al-Kahf # 18, v. 29) Adopting a religion isn't coercive, and people are free to believe or not. This is asserted in the following; **“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out Clear from Error: whoever rejects Evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy handhold, that never breaks. And God heareth and knoweth all things”**. (Al-Baqara # 2, v. 256) People are free to choose their own creeds and religion, and it is absolutely prohibited in Islam to oblige anybody on his/her religious beliefs. If Islam is so strict on the matter of belief, then it allows at large, as will be discussed later, of opinion.

It needs to be noticed that the freedom of choice is respected in the Quran for a couple of reasons: first it is an innate endowment that should not be resisted or quelled or suppressed, and undermining the freedom of choice is undermining human nature; and second, it is part of the legal code. Human nature shouldn't be suppressed because it is an expression of God's will, and it is made to express itself. If this nature is suppressed then trouble is expected for the suppressed and the suppressor. Historically, those who suppressed their own people caused so much pain for themselves and for their own people, and, at so many instances, led to atrocities and blood-shed. Suppressing human nature is a very grave crime that leads to chaos.

### **The natural and the legislative**

The natural, in Islam, is distinct from the legislative, but the legislative couldn't be separated from the natural. Since the natural is precedent to the legislative, then the legislative should be harmonious and compatible with the natural. One needs to notice that man cannot deviate generally from the natural because it is built in, but can deviate very easily from the legislative. The power of the natural is in itself, but the power of the legislative is ethical or coercive, which means that behaving according to the natural is expected and doesn't need legislations, while human behavior needs to be legislated.

To be clearer, the natural has to do with the species or the physical and immaterial construction of man, while human behavior is subject to human awareness that is related to the rational power. Natural behavior is inevitable but could be cultured by human rationality. Talking to people is natural, but the way one talks to others is subject to many social and educational factors. However, human behavior is the one that is rationalized and expresses the will of the person. It is the outcome of evaluating different factors, and is determined willingly by people who are held responsible for their actions. Human behavior entails awareness, freedom and responsibility, while natural behavior entails the possibility of systemizing it into a culturally acceptable behavior.

Islam doesn't legislate on the natural, but on how to make the natural "civilized". It doesn't order people to eat, but tells them what to eat or what not to eat. It doesn't order people to get married, but tells them how to organize marriage. It doesn't tell them that they are free, but tells them that its message is to free humanity from slavery, and asks them to free slaves. And probably this is the point that attracts those who deny the freedom of the Muslims. They say that the Quran didn't mention freedom at all, and didn't legislate on it. They miss the point that natural matters aren't the subject of legislation, not only in the Quran, but also in all constitutions and judicial experiences.

Since the natural, according to Islam, is the creation of God, and the revelations are his orders, then these revelations are in complete harmony with the natural. God wouldn't ordain a code of behavior that would contradict nature that he created. Thus, man can achieve integrity, perfection and self-realization when the code of behavior he/she abides by compliments his/hers nature; I. e., when the subjective, human behavior unites with the objective or the natural code. This is what the Quranic teachings want to assert, it is the unity of the objective and the subjective, and man becomes free once he/she achieves this. Once man becomes united with God's creation, he/she becomes in harmony with the internal self and with the universe outside the self. This is freedom in Islam. Freedom is achieved as long as one applies the sharia law. But what is the sharia law that one should apply or abide by? Although this paper doesn't delve into the details of the answer to this question, the researcher sees that this law, as it is in the Quran is divided into two parts: one that is clear-cut doesn't need interpretation such as the prohibition of adultery, loan sharking, and gambling. The other part is subject to discretion and jurisprudence such as consultation among Muslims, the scientific approach to understand natural phenomenon, marriage from more than one woman, and co-education.

The part that is put clearly in specified wording is of few teachings, and limited mainly to major and simple virtues that Islam share with other religions such as Judaism and Christianity. The majority of the teachings are subject to interpretations and different understandings due to difference in time and space, and to different levels of knowledge and scientific advancement. The Muslims, for instance, couldn't interpret the Quranic verse that talks about the growth of the embryo in the womb until scientists have explained the stages. And they couldn't interpret the oval shape of earth until the scientists discovered that.

Since perfect interpretation of the Quranic text unfolds through time and space, and since its gradual emergence is associated with scientific advancement, the unity of the objective and the subjective is in progress rather than a final reality. The unity is in a process of ascension as man ascends in scientific achievements, and his/her understanding of his/her freedom remains inseparable of the level of the awareness that scientific achievements incite. Since scientific achievement means the discovery of universal codes whether on the human level or the rest of things, freedom of man in Islam is associated with universal realities rather than mere abstract ideas. This explains why science and topics related occupy around 700 verses out of 6004 verses that constitute the Quran. As man discovers more of the universal realities, she/he can develop the right legislation or ethical code that remains in harmony with the universe, and her/his comprehension of human freedom keeps ascending or rising. So, freedom in Islam is in a process of becoming as long as scientific progress doesn't come to an end.

## Applications

Islam unites the objective and the subjective, the absolute and the relative, the social and the natural, the inner and the outer, the individual and the plural. This isn't only theoretical, but it has its applications in the Quranic teachings. Following is examples of these applications:

### Freedom of Expression

There isn't any text or indication in the Quran that forbids the freedom of expression, or limits it to certain extents, or suppresses it by any means. On the contrary, the Quran encourages people to discuss matters openly, protest, accept ideas or reject them, and bring about all pretexts and evidences that might be available to contest the Islamic teachings. The Quran puts no restrictions on the freedom of expression what-so-ever, to the extent that Satan or the devil is allowed to speak up. The Quran says:

*(God) said: "O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones? (Iblis) said: I am better than he: thou createdst me from fire, and him thou createdst from clay. (God) said: Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed. And My curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment. (Iblis) said: O my Lord! Give me then respite till the Day the (dead) are raised. (God) said: Respite then is granted thee- Till the Day of the Time Appointed. (Iblis) said: Then, by Thy power, I will put them all in the wrong. Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy Grace)." (Sad # 38. V. 75-83)*

The Quran adds:

*(God) said: Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures). He said: Give me respite till the day they are raised up. (God) said: Be thou among those who have respite. He said: Because thou hast thrown me out of the way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on thy straight way: Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: Nor wilt thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for thy mercies)." (Al-Araf #7, v 13-17)*

If Iblis or the Satan is given the freedom to speak up and try to convince people with "his" views, then one can easily conclude that ordinary people have the freedom to do so. Ordinary people supposedly aren't as strong or mighty as Iblis, and they pose a modest danger to the system or the regime compared to the danger that Iblis might impose.

More than that, people are encouraged by the Quran to challenge the Islamic teachings, and bring verses or (suras) chapters of their own. The Quran says: "**And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (If there are any) besides God, if your (doubts) are true.**" (Al-Baqara #2, v,23) and says: "**Or do they say, "He forged it"? say: "Bring then a Sura like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can besides God, if it be ye speak the truth!"**" (Yunus # 38, v. 38) the Quran here doesn't provide for the freedom of speech only, but opens the door for everybody to write his/her Quran in challenge of the revelations, and to prove its truthfulness. Besides, the one can defend his/her beliefs in other gods without restrictions.

The Quran doesn't ask the believers or the Muslims to suppress non believers and none-Muslims, but to bring them to open discussions and debate, and let everybody bring out her/his pretexts and proofs. Everybody should have the chance to show the evidence she/he has without any kind of intimidation or frightening. The Quran asserts: "**O mankind! Verily there hath come to you a convincing proof from your Lord: For We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest.**" (Al-Nisa' # 4, v. 174) and proceeds: "**Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.**" (Al-Nahl # 16, v 125) and adds: "**Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's Will).**" (Al-Imran # 2, v. 64)

### Freedom of Belief

The Quran doesn't force people to adopt Islam, or oblige them to do so, or punish them if they don't. As pointed earlier, the one has the freedom to believe or not, and faith remains the one's choice.

As seen so far, obliging people to a certain faith or the adoption of certain belief is contrary to God's tenets of creation, and incompatible with the sharia tenets. It is true that there are Muslims who coerce people or work toward that, but that isn't Islamic.

If it was to God's will, the idea of recompense or punishment on the Day of Judgment would be meaningless. Responsibility is associated with freedom, and those who are un-free couldn't be held responsible for their actions. The Quran says:

*To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what God hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a law and an Open Way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute. (Al-Mai'da # 5, v 48)*

And clarifies: **“If it had been God's Plan, they would not have taken false gods: but We made thee not one to watch over their doings, nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs.”** (Al-An'am # 6, v. 107) also adds: **“If then they run away, We have not sent thee as a guard over them. Thy duty is but to convey (the Message). And truly, when We give man a taste of a Mercy from Ourselves, he doth exult thereat, but when some ill happens to him, on account of the deeds which his hands have sent forth, truly then is man ungrateful”.** (Al-Shura # 42, v. 48) there are also many verses all over the Quran that assert this.

### Freedom to Form Opinion

Probably, the freedom to make opinion is a unique term in the literature on freedom. The Quran brings it out because those who don't have enough information or data about a particular issue cannot form an educated opinion. One might make an opinion although there is an information shortage, but that wouldn't be helpful in reaching the right decision toward a certain matter. Islam is very much assertive on the decision-making because faults and mistakes are very costly in the life of individuals and the community. That is why precision and research are essential in providing the necessary data required by rational and intelligent decision makers.

The Quran instructs: **“Those who conceal God's revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit,- they swallow into themselves naught but Fire; God will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them: grievous will be their penalty.”** (Al-Baqara #2, v. 174) and describes those who don't convey God's message: **“Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the People in the Book,-on them shall be God's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse.”** (Al-Baqara # 2, v. 159) and orders the Muslims to investigate before deciding: **“O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done.”** (Al-Hujurat # 49, v. 6)

By inference, this Quranic teaching means that information should be available to specialists and to ordinary people so as to be able to develop their own views. Governments, parties, institutions shouldn't be hiding a bit of information that benefits the decision-maker, and the Muslims are supposed to work hard on this in their own countries because Muslim governments aren't Islamic in their way they transmit information. Besides, Islam rejects thought terror, and gives space for all thoughts to express themselves freely even if they are thought to contradict Islamic teachings. Islam, as so many Muslim scholars argue, prevails through the establishment of justice, but not through thought terror. (Qotob, pp 34-37)

### Freedom to Organize

As mentioned earlier, the Lord gave Iblis the opportunity to organize “his” supporters, and mobilize “his” forces if “he” wishes to lead people astray and away from the straight path of God. The Lord gave him the permission and promised not to act against “him” until the Day of Judgment. And it was shown that people are given the chance to argue and bring out their evidence against the teachings of the Quran. This means that people have the right to organize themselves in order to achieve their goals. They have the right to organize to promote personal or private interest, and also for the sake of achieving a common good, or hold the government. If people don't trust their government, they can organize themselves so as to put enough pressure that will produce change.



As stated above, if a Muslim government doesn't gain the trust of the people through the establishment of justice, then it is hard to describe it as Islamic. Suppression and repression lead to chaos and revolution, while justice leads to trust and tranquility.

### ***Conclusion***

The writer is sure that he is presenting something new in the Islamic political thought, and this paper will invoke a lot of controversy. The facts presented in this paper aren't traditional, and they aren't ritualistic; rather, they are scientific. But improvements in understanding the tenets of Islam start to roll once controversy starts to boil. Islam came to free people, and there are strong evidences in the Quran that man is rational, responsible, and naturally capable of making choices. He/she is responsible to the extent that he/she is free, and he/she is creative to the extent he/she is free and responsible. The advancement of humanity is tied with freedom, and the Quran assures that freedom provides the wheels of taking off.

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