Human Motivation:
An Islamic Perspective

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This article seeks to elaborate on the Islamic understanding of human motivation. It discusses the importance of understanding motivation as a guide for explaining human behavior. It reviews various conceptions of motivation available within the different schools of psychology. Motivation in Islam, the paper argues, derives from knowledge about human origins, about God and Man's relationship with God and the world around him. Free will and knowledge are important components of human motivation. Iman (faith), the paper insists, is the most basic of human motivations. It is a profound psychological state that influences all forms of motivations. The article concludes by identifying the implications of motivation to education and learning.

Introduction

This paper is a modest attempt at describing the concept of human motivation from an Islamic perspective. Few studies have been directed toward this important topic, although great concern is given to motivation in general. Research in this domain usually includes topics like motivation theories, types of motivation, ways to motivate people, sources of motivation, and the role of motivation in high achievement and perform-ance. Almost every source of information in psychology includes one or more chapters about motivation; sometimes whole books and journals are dedicated to this field.

Actually, the topic of motivating human behavior has occupied philosophers and thinkers since ancient times. The prophets were sent to ask people to believe in and obey the rules and the system chosen for them by Allah. The divine messages brought good news to those who believe in the

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messages and a warning to those who reject them. The miraculous acts of the prophets constituted one method of convincing people that what they brought was the truth.

Many verses in the Holy Qur'an describe the people and the way they received the teachings of their prophets. Such verses include (89:6–13), (79:15–25), (69:4–6), (71:1–4, 10–12), (11:58,66,94), and (7:72,76–78). The following is an example of these verses:

> Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Ad people of the city of Iram with Lofty pillars, the like of which were not produced in all the land. And with the Thamud (people) who cut out huge rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh, Lord of the Stakes. All these transgressed beyound bounds in the lands, and heaped therein mischief. Therefore did thy Lord pour on them a scourge of diverse chastisements. (89:6–13)

It is clear from the preceding verses that motives are an essential component of human personality as created by Allah. Thus, the invitation of man to follow the system chosen for him by his Creator was almost always accompanied by some sort of motivation that stimulates him to do good deeds leading to Allah's acceptance and satisfaction. In the same vein, motivation may inhibit evil deeds that lead to Allah's anger and chastisement.

When Allah mentions ancient people in the Holy Qur'an like Ad and their prophet Hud, Thamud, and their prophet Salih, the people of Madyan and their prophet Shu'aib, and the Sons of Israel and their prophet Musa, He always asked his prophets to beautify good deeds in the eyes of the believers and make the picture of evil deeds ugly and hateful. In Islam, we find this matter even more obvious, for Allah describes Paradise in detail as if the believer is looking directly at it in his mind's eye. The same is true in describing Hell and its burning flames.

Allah, then, created man and endowed him with several instincts, incentives and motives that are significant for his well-being. It is true that instincts and incentives affect man's life and behavior, but their importance stems from their motivating force and influence. It seems necessary, however, to distinguish among a number of closely related concepts in this field such as instincts, incentives, drives, needs, and motives.

Instinct, for example, can be defined as a complex behavior that must have a fixed pattern throughout a species and that must be unlearned.[1] Most physiologists, though, view human behavior as directed by physiological

needs and physiological wants in addition to simple innate instincts. This concept of instinct was put forward early in this century as a direct consequence of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. After reviewing some 500 books on psychology and sociology, one sociologist complied a list of 5,759 supposed human instincts.[2]

Incentives, on the other hand, are viewed as extrinsic forms of motivation. Teachers and educators always are in need of these incentives. Since they can't assume that students are enthusiastic about doing certain tasks like multiplying, dividing, and spelling because these activities are not fascinating in their own right, it is necessary for teachers and parents to look for incentives that magnify their impact.[3]

Unfortunately, instinct theory failed to explain all human motivation, a matter that resulted in proposing the concept of drive and the process of drive reduction as a mechanism of motivation. The idea behind drives is that a physiological need creates an aroused psychological state that drives the individual to reduce this need by satisfying it in some alternative way like eating or drinking. The aim of a drive is basically to lead the individual to homeostasis, i.e., the maintenance of a steady internal state.

The "drive" has been used sometimes to establish the concept and process of motivation. Drive was first introduced into psychology by Woodworth in 1918 and is usually defined as the condition that imparts movement and can be understood through observable events. Some psychologists, however, prefer to use the terms "drive" and "motive" synonymously.[4]

A "need" comprises a major component in the content model of motivation. In this model, the major contributors like McClelland, Atkinson, and Maslow suggest that people act or behave so as to fulfill their needs and satisfy their desires. "Need" in this sense is a condition that exists within the individual. Some needs are basic and essential for the survival of the individual and thus rightly are called "primary needs." But many needs are not related to basic survival—they must be fulfilled for the development and the well-being of man. Needs usually give rise to "drives," which in turn compel the organism to act or behave.

Drives and incentives, however, are strongly interrelated, so that not only are we pushed by our need to reduce the drives and achieve optimum arousal, but we also are pulled by incentives. In this respect, incentives are viewed as positive or negative stimuli that lure or repel the individual. Our

internal needs energize and direct our behavior, but so do the external incentives for a certain behavior for which we feel driven.

In the Holy Qur'an, this interrelatedness between internal needs and external incentives underlies the concept of reward and punishment. If one reads the Holy Qur'an, for instance, he will come across a myriad of these internal needs and external incentives that are used as the basis of what the Qur'an and Muslim scholars describe as yearning (*targhīb*) and awe (*tarhīb*). Instincts, internal needs, and external incentives are all used as components of the main principles of motivation, i.e., reward and punishment. Examples of these include eating, drinking, getting married to beautiful women, dwelling in lofty palaces and mansions, protection from fear and hellfire, success in this life and the Hereafter, high achievement, self-respect and self-actualization, as well as being fed rotten food and boiling liquids, chastisement, being deprived of security and respect, being neglected and ignored, and dwelling forever in hellfire.

Motivation, the basic concept, runs through virtually all aspects of human life and behavior, especially those aspects related to learning and teaching. Forms of motivation, as will become evident throughout this article, are diverse and include among other things rewards and feedback, feelings of success and achievement, concern for others, and the development of one's capabilities. It goes without saying that motivation is the most important concept of education. It is important both as a concept that enhances educational behavior and as a goal of education. It is also important because other procedures, such as managing classrooms efficiently, maintaining discipline, preparing clear and attainable objectives, and teaching the gifted and talented, are all directed toward enhancing students' motivation to learn and teachers' motivation to teach.[5] To psychologists, a motivation is a need or desire that serves to energize behavior and to direct it toward a good.[6]

Motivation in Major Psychological Approaches

Almost all psychologists agree that motivation is the basis for initiation, continuation or termination, and maintenance of human behavior. Motivation also directs human behavior toward the desired goals. Psychologists, however, differ in their interpretation of motivation according to the theoretical school to which they belong.

Psychoanalysts, for instance, view motivation as an unconscious impulse. Our behavior, according to this view, is totally determined by the

multidimensional conflicts of the id, ego, and superego: the three major components of the human personality. The id is the actual personality at birth, the sole function of which is to fulfill the instincts and seek objects that satisfy them. In this sense, the id is usually guided and urged by lusts, pleasures, and instincts. An example of this are the baby's cries and agitated limb movements when it is hungry, which are believed, according to Freudian psychology, to be energized by the hunger instinct. The main principle that activates the id is the pleasure principle that seeks immediate gratification for the instinctual needs.[7]

According to Freud, the ego emerges when psychic energy is diverted from the id to energize the important cognitive processes such as perception, learning, and logical reasoning. It is the rational part of the human personality, and it serves the reality principle, i.e., finding realistic ways to gratify the instincts. The ego, moreover, must invest some of its energy to block the id's irrational impulses.[8]

The superego, which is the third component of the human personality, is the person's internalized moral standards. It develops from the striving of the ego for perfection rather than for pleasure or reality. It is normally developed between the ages of 3 and 5 as the child internalizes the moral values and standards of its parents. Thus, the superego is directed by culture and a social value system.

According to behaviorists, motivation constitutes the why of our behavior. When behavior is obstructed by some barrier and we feel imbalanced and tense, any release of this tension becomes a motivating force. Although there are various schools within behaviorism, such as radical behaviorism, neobehaviorism, and the school that embraces social learning theory, they all agree that the intensity and the continuity of our behavior are determined by contingencies of reinforcement and situational variables.[9] According to the behaviorist tradition, the major mechanism of human motivation is reinforcement and punishment, or what Thorndike described as the law of effect. Reinforcement or reward raises motivation by increasing the probability of certain behavior occurring in similar conditions, while punishment lowers motivation by decreasing the likelihood of some other behavior from occurring under similar conditions. These two (i.e., punishment and reinforcement) are the major, if not the only, consequences of human behavior. As Skinner has put it, behavior is totally governed by its consequences. If these consequences are pleasant, the individual will be moti-

vated to continue with his present behavior. If otherwise, he will be motivated to stop and abstain from his present behavior.[10]

The cognitive approach emphasizes that motivation is a function of the individual's perception of the value and importance of his behavior on himself and his society, the individual's expectancy and anticipation of the outcome of his behavior, and the performance level, i.e., the competence of behavior. When high personal competence is connected to skill, it is said that the individual has high self-efficacy.

As noted earlier in the discussion of the behaviorist tradition, motivation is mostly external. It is reflected in the form of reward or punishment. On the other hand, the cognitive approach emphasizes internal motivation, which springs from inside the individual. Accordingly, this approach speaks about achievement motivation, competence motivation, cognitive drive (knowledge motivation), curiosity and discovery motivation, arousal motivation and sensation seeking, and attribution motivation. The common factor among all these types of motivation is that they all stem from inside and thus become a distinguishing mark of the human personality, although, of course, they might be greatly affected by outside conditions and external factors as well.[11]

Humanists look at motivation from a content point of view and believe that motivation is strongly influenced by the needs of the individual. When a need is not satisfied, the individual becomes tense and anxious, and any behavior that reduces this tension is termed motivation. Moreover, humanists distinguish between basic needs (deficiency needs) such as food, drink, and safety, and metaneeds (or growth needs) like the need for knowledge, beauty, and self-actualization.[12] Maslow even suggested that these needs are arranged hierarchically, so that the higher the need is, the less physical it becomes, and the less associated with survival it is. Growth needs are crucial in promoting the well-being of an individual, while deprivation needs form the physiological bases of human motivation.[13]

Motivation can be viewed as both physiological and psychological in origin, as is the case with arousal and sensation seeking. In this type of motivation, the stimulation of certain parts of the nervous system (mainly in the cortex) pushes the individual for more work and activity. But this is only one half of the process. Psychological states that characterize an individual are usually accompanied by physiological activities, mainly the active functioning of the sympathetic nervous system. Psychological states include the feelings of pleasure, satisfaction, and relaxation.

Theoretical Explanations of Motivation

The psychoanalytic approach views motivation in terms of basic instincts, mainly the sexual instinct and the aggression instinct, each of which is demonstrated by a number of motives. This approach is attacked, however, because it proposes a group of obscure psychological constructs by which it tries to explain a complex human behavior. The suggestion that instincts motivate behavior does not satisfy the behaviorists, who consider those instincts vague and misleading.

Moreover, this approach is severely criticized by social psychologists who blame the instinct-oriented scientists for not agreeing upon a specified number of those instincts. Some claim there are hundreds of them, while others say there are two. Social psychologists also note that even if we assume the accuracy of the approach, we would notice wide differences between people and tribes in the same basic instinct.[14]

Unfortunately, the attack of behaviorists on the instinct theory is not complete in itself. They argue that our behavior is completely governed from outside, and as Skinner put it, behavior is governed by its consequences. In his book *A Matter of Consequences,* he states that the chapter on education in *Science and Human Behavior* began:

> In an American school if you ask for the salt in good French, you get an A. In France you get the salt. And the A was probably reinforcing only as an escape from a threat of punishment. Students studied to avoid the consequences of not studying.[15]

In this case they denied the role of the individual and his will in shaping his own behavior. According to behaviorists, our behavior is totally controlled by how others respond to it. If we receive any kind of reinforcement, we tend to repeat the behavior in similar conditions in the future. Otherwise, if we receive some sort of punishment, the behavior will stop and fade.

In modern psychology, motives can be divided into many types, depending on the basis/bases used for their classification. For instance, according to their origin, they can be classified into primary and secondary (acquired) motives; according to their consequences, either rewards or punishments; according to the level of being aware of them, either conscious or unconscious; and according to the importance of their satisfaction, hierarchically, from biological needs at the bottom to safety needs, belonging needs, self-esteem needs, cognitive and knowledge needs, esthetic needs, and finally self-actualization needs at the top.[16]

An Islamic Paradigm of Motivation

In Islam, it is difficult to talk about motivation without referring first to man's origin, his aim in this life, and his relationship with other people and with his Creator. This includes his place on this earth and how he should relate to other creatures, living or inanimate.

Man was created with the purpose of becoming God's representative on earth. We read in the Holy Qur'an the following verse:

> Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth. They said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy name? He said: I know what ye know not. (2:30)

For the purpose of this representation and administration of earth and the investment of its resources, God endowed man with the ability to think and use his mind. This ability is essential for the concept of accountability. Since man has the ability to think and distinguish between good and evil, he must be responsible for his behavior and must be held accountable for his decisions.

The mental ability God endowed man with rests upon two important dimensions: knowledge and will. This idea can be clarified by the following illustration (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. An Islamic Demonstration of the Purpose for Creating Man.
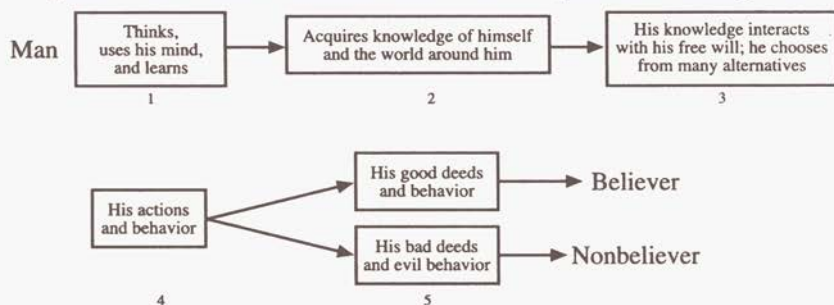
Without the necessary knowledge, it is difficult for man to behave, for knowledge enhances man's behavior. Recently, some psychologists have come to believe that knowledge comprises one important motive in human beings, and they termed it the "cognitive drive" or "cognitive motivation."[17] The more one knows about the world around him (and about himself), the more one becomes motivated to obtain knowledge. The knowl-

edge of concern here, of course, is that which enables him to distinguish between right and wrong, between good and evil, and between lawful (*halal*) and unlawful (*haram*).

Another motivation related to knowledge is achievement. Psychologists like Atkinson and McClelland describe some people who are high in achievement motivation, on the basis of their scores in some projective tests like that of the SAT. According to these psychologists, people who are high in achievement motivation are characterized by the full functioning of all their capacities, confidence in the face of the external world, a sense of responsibility for their own behavior, and high creativity.[18]

Once man acquires knowledge, he has to use another motive to direct and guide his behavior, namely, the motive of free will. Whether man has free will or not is a philosophical question for which Islam has a moderate and rational answer. Having been endowed with the tools of knowledge and the devices of distinguishing between good and evil (*halal* and *haram*), man can freely choose which route to follow. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

> [Have We not] shown him the two highways. (90:10)

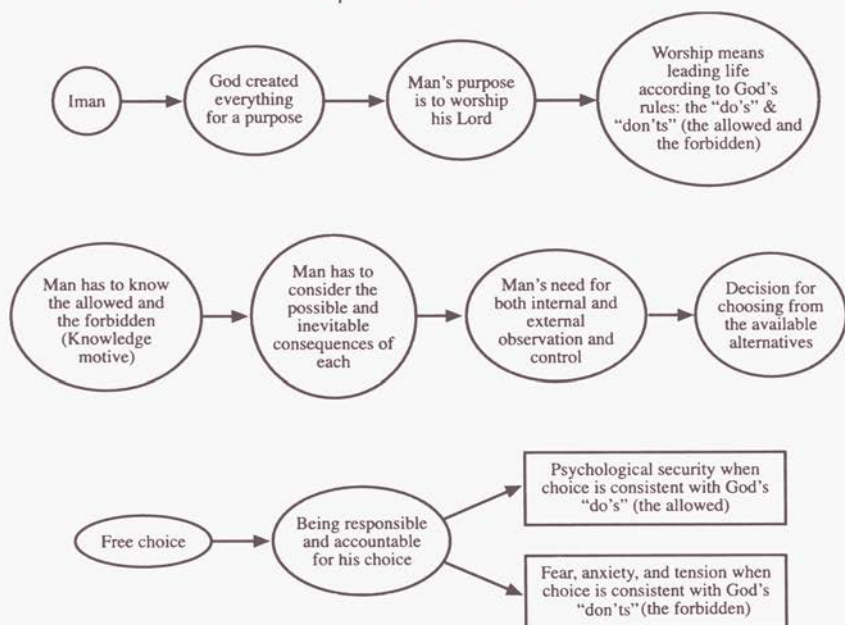God showed man the two ways and left the choice up to him:

> We showed him the way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful. (76:3)

Contingent on this free choice, which is actually an honor that God granted man, is the fact that man is fully responsible for his choice. This responsibility works as another motive for man's behavior, i.e, his behavior should be determined by his wisdom in choosing the right and avoiding the wrong deeds. There awaits man various rewards if he chooses the right path and various severe punishments if he decides to choose the wrong path. The delayed consequences of this choice have to be kept in mind before man decides to choose.

The basic motive in Islam remains *iman* (faith). The evidence for its importance comes from the fact that it is mentioned more than seven hundred times in the Holy Qur'an, whether directly or derivatively. Actually, *iman* forms the basis and the energizing force for all motivation. Its functions include activating behavior, maintaining behavior, in addition to screening behavior and purifying it from all impurities.[19] *Iman* comprises the strong Islamic base for directing, re-educating, and influencing man's behavior in this life. Abu Sulayman invites scholars and researchers to study this concept and states that it is a simple, clear, and very comprehen-

sible concept. The essential components of this motive are the strong unshakable belief in Allah (the Eternal, the Absolute, and the Creator of the universe) and the strong unshakable belief in the fact that man must be held accountable for his deeds in this life.[20] *Iman*, as the basic motive, is related to other types of motivation and to man's psychological state. This relationship is demonstrated below (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Relationship between *Iman* and Other Motives and Consequences of Human Behavior.

Iman → God created everything for a purpose → Man's purpose is to worship his Lord → Worship means leading life according to God's rules: the "do's" & "don'ts" (the allowed and the forbidden)

Man has to know the allowed and the forbidden (Knowledge motive) → Man has to consider the possible and inevitable consequences of each → Man's need for both internal and external observation and control → Decision for choosing from the available alternatives

Free choice → Being responsible and accountable for his choice → Psychological security when choice is consistent with God's "do's" (the allowed)

Being responsible and accountable for his choice → Fear, anxiety, and tension when choice is consistent with God's "don'ts" (the forbidden)

Clearly, once the motive of *iman* is connected with the motive of knowledge and controlled by external factors, they together become the essential incentive for man's behavior. These two motives, however, are strongly related, since they both include the meaning of knowledge. Essentially, *iman* can be viewed as the highest level of knowledge, where one has no doubt whatsoever about the things he knows. While knowledge provides the individual with the necessary information about what's right and what's wrong, it is *iman* that causes man to do good and avoid evil.

In this sense, *iman* becomes a great force that is consistent with human nature. The relationship between the behavior of a Muslim and his *iman* is that of means and ends. This is the motive that shapes the spirit of Islamic ethics, Islamic brotherhood, the sense of responsibility toward this life and the Hereafter, the awareness in the unity of the Muslim society, the spirit of equality and belonging, and the protection of the idea of Islam and transferring it to other societies.

As a motive of human behavior, *iman* is not a simple declaration of belief on the tongue, the mere practice of certain Islamic rituals, or the cognitive knowledge of the cornerstones of Islam. God condemns hypocrites, those who say something that is not in their hearts. He says in this respect:

> And the hypocrites also. These were told: Come fight in the way of Allah, or (at least) drive (the foe from your city). They said: Had we known there would be a fight, we should certainly have followed you. They were that day nearer to unbelief than to Faith, saying with their lips what was not in their hearts. But Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal. (3:167)

Iman is, rather, a profound psychological belief that goes beyond doubt and that permeates the self overtly as well as covertly. Al-Qaradawi says in this respect:

> *Iman*, in its essence, is not only work done by the tongue, body or mind. Rather, it is a psychological function that reaches the depths of the self and touches all its dimensions whether they be cognitive, affective, or free will.[21]

According to this Islamic view, *iman* serves as a monitor for even the most basic physiological needs like food, drink, and sex. When the individual Muslim feels hungry and the desire for having food urges him to act, it is *iman* that controls and monitors the whole process, allowing him to pick the right food, maintain the correct habits during eating, and consume the appropriate amount of food. In this respect, he will choose certain foods and avoid others; he will use his right hand and start the process with the name of Allah; he will not fill his stomach with food; he will end his eating by giving thanks to his Creator. The same is valid for drinking and even having sexual activities. When his heart is filled with *iman*, the Muslim goes on to choose freely but wisely from the alternatives available to him in any given situation.

Thus, *iman* leads to wisdom, which is mainly the choice of the correct thing from a number of alternatives. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, addressing this issue of wisdom and true knowledge:

> Say: Not equal are the things that are bad and the things that are good, even though the abundance of the bad may dazzle thee. So fear Allah, o ye that understand, (so) that ye may prosper. (5:100)

Once this *iman* is established in the human personality, it must be coupled with free choice, so that man becomes fully responsible for his own behavior. In the Holy Qur'an it is clearly stated that this religion is not compulsory since both ways are made clear to men:

> Let there be no compulsion in religion (*din*). Truth stands out clearly from error. Whoever rejects *taghut* (anything worshipped beside Allah) and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy handhold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things. (2:256)

It has been decided this way because after knowledge of the *halal* and *haram*, and strong belief (*iman*), there remains no excuse for the individual not to choose goodness and avoid evil.

Other internal and external motives accompany the *iman* motivation to maximize its effectiveness. Some of these are what I call the three "t"s: *taqwa* (fear of Allah), *tahrid* (arousal), and *tawbah* (repentance). There are verses in the Holy Qur'an to support the existence of each of these motives. An example of the *taqwa* motivation is the following verse:

> Enjoin prayer on thy people, and be constant therein. We ask thee not to provide sustenance: We provide it for thee. But the Hereafter is for righteousness. (20:132)

Actually, the word *taqwa* and its derivatives are mentioned more than 258 times in the Holy Qur'an. As for *tahrid*, it is mentioned explicitly only once, while it is mentioned many times implicitly. Allah says:

> O Prophet! Rouse the believers to the fight. If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred; if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the unbelievers, for those are a people without understanding. (8:65)

And finally, there is a complete *surah* (chapter) in the Holy Qur'an named "Repentance" (*Tawbah*). Moreover, this word and its derivatives are mentioned 93 times. One example is the following:

> Except for those who repent, mend (their life), hold fast to Allah, and make their religious devotion sincere to Allah; if so, they will be (numbered) with the believers. And soon will Allah grant to the believers a reward of immense value. (4:146)
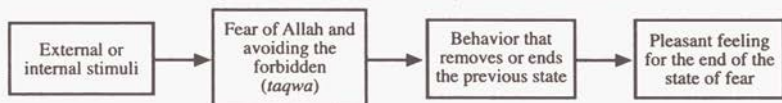
The motivation of fear is the human emotion that enables man to either avoid danger and problematic situations or face and solve them. This motivation is usually connected with types of anxiety and tension due to the threatening nature of the situation.[22] The Holy Qur'an, however, looks differently at this motivation and views it in the context of *iman* mentioned earlier. In this context, fear is called *taqwa* and refers to the fear of God represented by adhering to His orders and commands and avoiding His disobedience. When someone says we have to fear God, he means that we have to be afraid of His punishment and thus avoid whatever He doesn't like. The concept of *taqwa,* as a distinguished religious motivation, includes the following, according to Al-Isawi:

- Abstaining from all that God asks us to avoid, such as disobedience, sins, and evil deeds. Thus, it is a kind of prevention from falling into these wrong deeds, protecting us from their unpleasant consequences. It is a kind of avoidance behavior.
- Commiting to all that God ordered people to do, including good work and good deeds, because in doing so man can protect himself from God's anger and punishment that He prepared (kept) for the disobedient.
- Controlling man's instincts and biological drives in such a way that corresponds with God's orders, by seeking lawful means of satisfying these instincts, needs, and drives. By doing so, man learns obedience to God and His Prophet and respect for law, and he achieves the development of values, *taqwa,* and *iman.*[23]

Taqwa, in this sense, becomes a motivating force for human behavior that directs man toward the best and gears him toward more self-growth and control over his instincts and desires, leading consequently to personality growth and integration.[24] *Taqwa* (the fear of Allah) soon becomes, by His help, "an internal feeling that is responsible for the execution of Islamic regulations. It becomes that latent guarantee that dominates all other guarantees, since it is superior to those man-made regulations that have only

external control. It is so easy to cheat the external control when there is no internal conscience to guard human behavior."[25]

Figure 3. Model of *Taqwa* Motivation.

| External or internal stimuli | → | Fear of Allah and avoiding the forbidden (*taqwa*) | → | Behavior that removes or ends the previous state | → | Pleasant feeling for the end of the state of fear |

As for the *tahrid* motivation, or the arousal of man's abilities and potentials, it is evident from the verse mentioned earlier (8:65) that once it is maximized, the ability of a believer becomes ten times that of an ordinary man. Rousing the believers, whether in war or in peace, requires, of course, the investment of all possible forms of reward and punishment. It is the desire of the believer to get the highest levels of these rewards that drive him to behave according to his Lord's regulations and laws.

The concept of *tawbah* (repentance) comprises another very important type of motivation, for without repentance the Muslim will stay on the wrong path without directing his efforts toward good deeds. Repentance urges the individual to do more good work to compensate for the wrong he has done, in addition to providing him with the assistance he needs to abstain from wrong deeds. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

> When those come to thee who believe in our signs, say: Peace be on you. Your Lord hath inscribed upon Himself (the rule of) mercy. Verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance and thereafter repented and amended (his conduct), lo! He is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (6:54)

Repentance is interwined with the motivation of reward and punishment. Those who miss their prayers and follow their lusts will face destruction, except those who repent and follow their repentance with righteous work. Actually, being forgiven and accepted by the Lord is in and of itself a great reward sought by every Muslim. Not only will they not be wronged, but they will be admitted to the gardens of Heaven (19:59–60), and even their evil deeds will be changed into good ones, as is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an:

> Unless he repents, believes, and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good, and Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (25:70)

The consequences of repentance, however, are not restricted to changing bad deeds into good, but go beyond that to include many other rewards. For instance, repentance is made a prerequisite for success in this life as well as in the Hereafter:

> But any that (in this life) had repented, believed, and worked righteousness, haply he shall be one of the successful. (28:67)

It is also a necessary condition so that the believers open the way for the pagans and treat them as brothers. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

> But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every strategem (of war). But if they repent and establish regular prayers and pay zakat, then open the way for them, for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (9:5–6)

Allah even describes those who do not repent as being people who do wrong (*ẓālimun*), and promises them with the hellfire:

> Those who persecute the believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the chastisment of the burning fire. (85:10)

Allah stresses the importance of repentance by the fact that he makes its rejection (i.e., He does not accept it from people) a kind of severe punishment by which He threatens the unbelievers:

> But those who reject faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of faith—never will their repentance be accepted, for they are those who have gone astray. (3:90)

Finally, the consequences and rewards of repentance are not confined to those in the Hereafter but also are included in this life. Allah makes it a means for getting better sustenance and improving the quality of life. Allah says:

> And o my people, ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him (in repentance), he will soon send you the skies pouring abundant rain, and add strength to your strength. So turn ye not back in sin. (11:52)

However, it should be noted here that the vehicle for all motivation is the great process of reward and punishment, or what the Holy Qur'an describes as yearning and awe (21:90). In the final analysis, it is to achieve a reward, or to avoid a punishment that people behave the way they do. Here it must be mentioned that the reward and the punishment in the Holy Qur'an are

both qualitatively and quantitatively different from those mentioned elsewhere.

Reward and punishment in the Holy Qur'an are generally delayed rather than immediate. While contemporary psychology emphasizes the importance of immediate reinforcement (reward) following behavior, and that delay in presenting this reinforcement inversely affects behavior, the Holy Qur'an concentrates on the delayed rewards in the form of promises from Allah to be given to the believers, almost always, on the Day of Judgment. However, a Muslim is fully confident that those promises will be fulfilled, since they come from Allah who never breaks His promise.

The Qur'an mentions all known or imagined rewards and punishments; for example, the basic biological and physiological rewards of food, drink, companionship, and clothing (76:17–18; 56:18–23; 78:23; 55:56–58; 47:15). A brief look at some verses of *Surat al-Naba'* will demonstrate what awaits the believers and those who reject the Truth.

> Truly Hell is a place of ambush for the transgressors, a place of destination. They will dwell therein for ages. Nothing cool shall they taste therein, nor any drink, save boiling fluid. And a fluid, dark, murky, intensely cold. (78:21–25).

> Verily for the righteous there will be an achievement—gardens enclosed and grapevines, maidens of equal age, and a cup full to the brim. No vanity shall they hear therein nor untruth. Recompense from thy Lord, a gift, (amply) sufficient. (78:31–36)

No doubt, a wise person, endowed with true knowledge, full of fear of Allah and the desire not to make Him angry, roused effectively to behave, with the free will to choose, will try his best to be on the side of the believers and the righteous and will work hard to avoid being among the disobedient. Once man fully believes that the Hereafter is coming and that people will be divided into two groups—those in misery and those in pleasure—he will be highly motivated to be among the second group.

Another look at the above verses (as well as others that describe reward and punishment) will show that the main types of reinforcement and punishment were addressed in the Holy Qur'an, long before they were specified by modern psychologists like Skinner. For instance, positive punishment is clearly represented by staying in Hell for ages (78:21–32); drinking boiling fluid if they ask for water (78:25); having their flesh being roasted in the hellfire and changing the roasted flesh to new flesh so that they may taste the chastisement (4:56); preparing chains, yokes, and blazing fire for

the rejectors (76:4); being fuel for the hellfire (72:15); being dragged on their faces through the fire (54:48); and much more.

Negative punishment, on the other hand, is demonstrated in many verses in the form of deprivation. Examples of negative punishment include being prevented from drinking any cool drink (78:24); being deprived of guidance and forgiveness (4:168); being prevented from speaking or even putting forth pleas (77:35–36); unrelenting punishment (43:75); sealing the mouths; and letting the hands and feet bear witness to what they did in this life (36:65). Actually, there are hundreds of other examples of positive and negative punishments that encourage the individual to avoid punishment or end deprivation.

Positive and negative rewards are also stressed in the Holy Qur'an on many different occasions. Examples of positive reinforcement are numerous and include the following: raised couches upon which to recline with all kinds of meat and fruit to eat (36:56–57; 52:22); meadows and gardens in which to play, with all that is wished for made ready (42:22); the companionship of maidens with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes (52:20); felicity (59:20) and prosperity (62:10); lofty mansions in which to dwell, beneath which rivers flow (39:20); a beautiful place of final return and a nearness to Allah (38:25); and guidance to the straight way (37:108).

Negative rewards mentioned by Allah include the following: protection from fear and grief (46:13; 43:68); preservation from the chastisement of the blazing fire and from tasting death more than once (44:56); forgiveness and removal of sins (61:12; 48:5); hearing no frivolity or mischief (56:25); delivery from the evil of a day of frowning and distress (76:10–11); hearing no vanity or untruth (78:35); removal from the blazing blotting-out fierce fire (92:17); and being saved from the fire (3:185).

The four types of punishment and reward are rarely referred to in the Holy Qur'an in isolation. Rather, they are often mentioned collaboratively. Sometimes punishment is associated with some sort of reward for the incompatible behavior; for example, the Qur'an says that Allah is strict in punishment and oft-forgiving (5:98), that He forgives sins and accepts repentance and at the same time is severe in punishment (41:43; 40:3), and that He is swift in punishment and oft-forgiving (6:165; 7:167).

Sometimes the two types of reward (reinforcement) are mentioned side by side to emphasize a certain behavior, for example, the connection between the most generous sustenance (positive reinforcement) with the forgiveness of sins (negative reinforcement) in 34:4. Another example is protection from the hellfire (negative reinforcement) and admittance into

the gardens of Heaven (positive reinforcement) mentioned in 3:185. At other times, positive and negative reinforcement are coupled together to emphasize the danger underlying a behavior. One example of this is joining severe chastisement and deprivation from purification and listening to Allah (negative reinforcement) as mentioned in 2:174.

Finally, it should be noted that all human motivation stems from and rotates around *iman*. Allah states clearly in the Holy Qur'an that people of faith are not like those who disobey. Allahs says:

> Shall we treat the people of faith like the people of sin? What is the matter with you? How judge ye? (68:35–36)

Evidently from the above verses, once man chooses to be among the people of faith, he will be treated as such by Allah, deserving distinguished treatment. The interrelatedness of this whole process is shown below in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The Interrelatedness of the Different Types of Motivation.
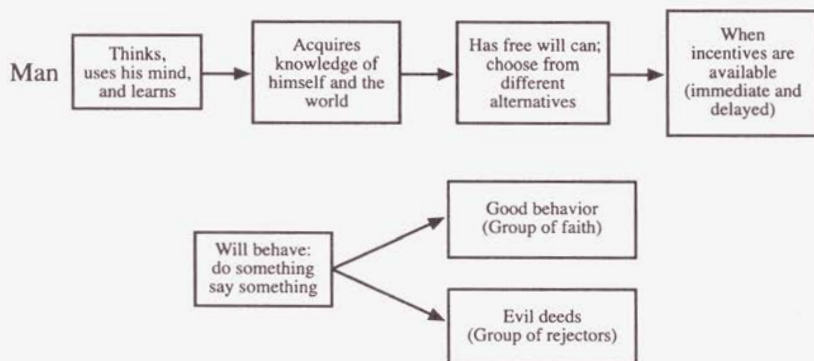
The figure shows that man, once endowed with the ability to think, will soon acquire the knowledge necessary to choose the correct path from a number of alternatives. Internal (free will) and external (incentives and rewards) motives activate human behavior and provide man with the energy and desire for correct behavior. Depending on his knowledge, free will, and wisdom, man will choose to be among one of two groups: the believers or the rejectors.

Basic Characteristics of Islamic Motivation

The Islamic educational legacy pays great attention to the issue of motivation and discusses it under various headings such as heart conditions; student and teacher morals; problems of knowledge, hope, and fear; imitation; control of consequences; and piety.

According to early Muslim scholars, motives are divided into two main types: those related to the teacher (inspiration, zeal, and having mercy on students), and those related to the student (curiousity, imitation, and self-respect). From these two types comes a third type that includes the common motives between the teacher and the student (love, respect, and desire for knowledge).[26]

Early Muslim scholars specify the basic traits of Islamic motivation. One of these traits is the vertical interdependency of motives, or what can be called the hierarchical nature of motives. Al-Mawardi, for instance, discussed the hierarchical feature of human needs long before Maslow talked about them. Al-Mawardi's views in this regard can be considered the antecedent of Maslow's ideas about human motivation.[27]

Another characteristic of human motivation from an Islamic point of view is the clarity of aims and objectives. The aim of a Muslim, who is in the state of choosing to behave, is very obvious: He seeks the acceptance of Allah. This clarity of aim leads the Muslim to choose the honest means for achieving objectives, and thus he knows beforehand how to reach his goal and achieve his objectives. Allah states this clarity of objectives in the Holy Qur'an:

> Verily, (the ends) ye strive for are diverse. So, he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), and in all sincerity testifies to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to ease. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient, and gives the lie to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery. (92:4–10)

Thus, the road is very clear in front of the individual, and he has to choose where to go.

A third distinguishing feature of human motivation from the Islamic viewpoint is the vitality and high importance of goals and aims. The goal of motivation is highly significant for the well-being of the individual, both in this life and in the Hereafter. When the goal is vital and important, the individual will double his efforts to achieve it.[28]

The fourth characteristic of human motivation from an Islamic perspective is realism. Motivation deals realistically with human beings in a very natural manner that corresponds to his pure nature. In this sense, man is considered a moderate being; he is not a devil and he is not an angel. Since he is a human being, he is susceptible to falling into sin and error. But here comes the motive of *tawbah* (repentance), mentioned earlier, to make up for those errors and wipe out those sins, and even change them in his record into good deeds. Allah, who created man and knows him completely, offers him both positive and negative incentives to urge him to work properly. This combination of positive and negative incentives comprises the core of realism as a characteristic of human motivation from an Islamic perspective.

The final distinguishing characteristic of motivation as portrayed in the Holy Qur'an is comprehensibility. Human motivation encompasses all possible kinds of behavior, regardless of how simple and unimportant it might seem to be. Even the simplest good action, like smiling in the face of another Muslim, removing a thorn or a bone from the road, or even being familiar with one's spouse will deserve some kind of reward from Allah. The reward of a good deed depends on an individual's sincerity and the affect of the deed on others; this reward may be multiplied ten times or more, according to the will of Allah. This comprehensibility of human behavior ensures the comprehensibility of the incentives used to reward man for his good work. These incentives, as was mentioned earlier, include every possible kind of positive or negative reward or punishment. They include all possible means of yearning and awe as the Holy Qur'an describes them.

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