



### Abstract

In the field of psychology, the research on man, which started in the ancient past, is an on-going study even during this modern and scientific age. It is an undeniable fact that with the passing of time from the primitive to modern, new things have emerged with regard to the study on man and his nature. Being perennial in nature, the old and the new studies conducted on man, try to unearth and bring to light many of man's potentials, which were not known previously. Although at times many of these studies complement one another in answering the intricate questions on the nature of man, there are also times when they contradict one another in their understanding on man. In view of this reality, this qualitative research is an attempt to provide a contrastive analysis on the concept of man portrayed in the mainstream Western and Islamic psychologies.

### Freudian Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud being an avowed atheist portrayed an image of man which is contradictory to what has been described in Old and New Testaments. In contradiction to the scriptural messages found in the Torah (Book of Genesis) and Bible which state that man has been created in the image of God, Freud gave a negative image of man who is not very much different from the rest of the animal kingdom. To him, man is an intellectual beast doomed for destruction. His idea of putting man as equal to animals is a reflection of what has been said by Charles Darwin (1809-1882). He further thought that man is controlled by his libidinal impulses and therefore should be un-socialized and irrational in his behaviour. As such, Freud believed that man has no freedom to cut loose from the shackles of his psychosexual development. As a consequence of not having the freedom of choice, man's behaviour is determined by the warring parties of his psyche, namely the id, ego and superego.

### Behaviourism

The behaviourist school of psychology came to existence in the West at the same time with the emergence of psychoanalysis. Among the great figures in this school of psychology were Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), J.B. Watson (1878-1958) and B.F. Skinner (1904-1990). Unlike the psychoanalysts, the behaviourists have a different concept of human nature altogether. In their concept of human nature, much emphasis has been laid on explaining that man is nothing more than an outcome of his own environment. In the behaviourist concept, the environment refers to the physical as well as the social condition of family, society and the country at large. With the assumption that a child is a 'tabula rasa' at birth, this school of psychology does not entertain the notion that a child is born with some form of innate knowledge. According to them, man is nothing more than a mechanical object that can be conditioned and programmed to do any task. J.B. Watson strongly believes that a child comes to this world in a state of neutrality without any inborn potentials. He further believed that under the most conducive environment the child could be moulded into any desired type of personality, either good or bad, through the system of education and by the nurturing of the parents and teachers.

### Humanistic Psychology

The establishment of this school of psychology has been inspired by the principles found in the existential and phenomenology philosophies that emphasized much on the 'here and now' in the human life. It got its name from the basic belief that every individual has basic goodness, and his or her needs have to be respected. By this outlook on man, it came with a kinder or compassionate concept of human nature compared to psychoanalysis and behaviourism. One among the many concerns of humanistic psychology is to highlight the many positive aspects of human nature that has been overlooked by earlier schools of psychology. They paid much attention and emphasized strongly on the aspects of human nature that are uniquely of human potentials such as reflection, reasoning, judgment, self-awareness, rationality and creative imaginations. Moreover, humanistic psychologists believe that every individual has a freedom of choice, a tendency to enjoy interpersonal relationship, can have his own intention and purpose in life and also able to undergo spiritual experience, otherwise called as 'peak experience' in one's life. Humanistic psychologists present a very optimistic and positive concept of human nature. They believe that man is good intrinsically and can guide, regulate and control himself towards a 'fully-functioning person' and towards his 'self-actualization'.

### Islamic Psychology

The Islamic concept of human nature is a comprehensive and all encompassing one. According to Islamic psychology, among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man stands on the highest pedestal to be called as the best creation of Allah the Almighty. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that God has created man in the most beautiful and excellent manner: "*We have indeed created man in the best of moulds*" (*Al-Qur'an, al-Tin: 4*; Ali, 1989). This exalted position and stature makes man superior to angels and other luminous creations like the sun, moon, stars, etc. Apart from being the best creation, man in the Holy Qur'an has been addressed as the *Khalifatullah fi al-Ard* (Allah's vicegerent on earth). This esteemed position was conferred to man in spite of the protest and remonstrance that came from the angels on the eve of his creation. Islamic psychology rejects the doctrine of 'Original Sin'. On the contrary it believes that man is born in the state of *Fitrah* (in the primordial nature). Other aspects of man explained in Islamic psychology is that man is the receipt of the *Amanah* (Trust), he is given the *Mithaq* (Covenant), he is given the freedom of choice, man has a dual nature; body and soul, man has been created for a purpose, his presence in this world is a test, man has to bind a good relationship with his self, God, nature (flora and fauna) and with fellow human beings (Muslims and non-Muslims), etc.