

# Critical Analysis of Extravagant Individualism As the Anthropological Basis of Secular Spirituality Emphasizing the Works of Allamah Tabatabaei

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## Abstract

Many spiritualist currents and schools of the new and the contemporary era, which claim to satisfy the human excellence-seeking nature, are in contrast with divine religions and aim to marginalise them. These currents have emerged and grown in an utterly humanistic context. They have epistemological, anthropological and ontological foundations, which must be carefully examined and criticised to prove the ineffectiveness of these schools in quenching man's thirst for true spirituality. Individualism is one of the essential anthropological foundations of secular spiritualities, is centred on the individual's desires, makes him a seeker of all the truth within himself, and does not accept external authority such as revelation and prophets. The basis that regulates and arranges the spiritual behaviour of modern man is based on the needs and desires that come from the "Inside" of man. It negates the validity and authority of any external reference and causes the existential independence of man from heavenly religions. In contrast to the anthropological foundations of authentic and Islamic spirituality, relying on the individuals' existence of the divine and common human nature, it has provided the possibility of general advice on spiritual progress. It regards guiding the revelation and true religion as the only reliable reference for responding to nature and the human excellence-seeking spirit.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Individualism, Secular, Humanism, Allamah Tabatabaei.

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## Introduction

The inability of achieving the modern era to provide hope, peace and sustainable joy for the modern man has led him to find more effective treatments to relieve his pains and sufferings. Emerging thousands of spiritual schools and sects in the last century, all over the world, especially in Western countries, indicates the strong desire of contemporary man for spirituality and mysticism. Dr Stinger, a famous researcher and sectologist, considers the number of American sects to be more than 4000.<sup>١</sup> In some reports, only 500 denominations in England and other western countries are the same.<sup>٢</sup> However, these spiritual-based trends have a very diverse range and include the mysticism of Abrahamic religions to using drugs and free sex. In other words, everything that provides the opportunity to overcome the frameworks of material civilisation is known as spirituality. In the modern and post-modern era, with the slogan "God Is Dead," he manufactured himself as the ruler and centre of his life and defined everything from science and knowledge to the instrument and end of his life in the light of his will and desire. Accordingly, many modern spiritual-based currents and schools emerged and expanded in an utterly humanistic context.

Since the ethereal soul and the infinitely-demanding nature of man needs an appropriate and worthy answer, every school and spiritual cult cannot quench his thirst. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish purity from impurity by considering the foundations and principles of each school. This matter becomes essential considering the features of the communication age, the fading of cultural boundaries, and the influence of these currents in the Islamic world.

Because the failure to explain the fundamental problems and flaws in these currents' structure and intelligent system leads to the inability to recognise the original spirituality and the abandonment of the pure Islamic spirituality, especially in the modern West, with the emergence of "SBNRs" (with the slogan "I am spiritual, but not religious"), secular spirituality, in competition with institutionalised religion, brought its effectiveness in various fields of collective and individual life to ridicule religion and its practices. In this regard, individualism, one of the most critical critics of humanistic lifestyle domination and secular spirituality foundations, has targeted the spirit of collectivism and Ummah-centred in Islamic societies

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١. <https://culteducation.com/group/1248-apologist/336-cults-on-rise-researchers-agree.html>/retrieved June 2022.

٢. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/britain-has-500-cults-using-mind-control-call-for-action-to-avert-wacostyle-tragedy-1370977.html>/retrieved: June 2022.

and will weaken unity in Muslim communities for a long time.

Although spiritual-based currents were sporadically present in different societies for a long time, they expanded independently in the form of a comprehensive socio-cultural current in Europe, America and Canada from the second half of the 19th century and in recent decades have reached the peak of their influence.

The essential affair in forming a school is the foundations and contexts of formation and nutrition of its components. The present study aimed to examine and critique one of the most critical anthropological foundations of secular spirituality, identify their weakness and shortcomings and show their inability to respond to the soul and human spiritual nature. In this regard, we have extensively used the views of Allamah Tabatabaei, who is one of the exponents of the philosophical and anthropological foundations of Islamic spirituality.

## **1. Conceptualisation**

### **1.1. Spirituality**

Spirituality is an infinitive of spiritual and means being spiritual; spiritual is related to "Meaning" opposite to the word and means real, genuine, original, intrinsic, absolute, esoteric and spiritual. This term is also used against the material, formal, and external form and means what is known only to the heart, and the language has no role (Dehkhoda, 1994 AD/1377 SH: 4/2190).

In the spirituality conceptualisation, sometimes the meaning is spirituality essence or spirituality in connection with reality, which every spiritual tradition refers to as giving authority sources to understand. Sometimes it is considered its cultural and historical aspects. It means the set of conceptualisations that traditional followers had in different historical periods based on their cultural and knowledge status about spirituality (Shakernejad, 2018 AD/1397 SH, 64-65). In the second aspect, the concept of spirituality will be a questionable or fluid affair that takes a unique shape and image in each historical period based on various factors, which is different from the periods (discourses) before and after it (ibid., 62). Accordingly, some believe there is no definite essence or meaning for words such as spirituality or religion. Because according to the experts of this approach, attributing a universal nature to the sense of spirituality is equal to neglecting the historical and cultural signs, the differences in using this word and the influential discourse factors in the conceptualisation of this word (Carrette and King, 2005: 3). Until the end of the 19th century, the word "Spirituality" only had a meaning in the Christian environment, to it

had no entry in some old English Encyclopedia (Hinels, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 126). Therefore, many religions do not have a definite equivalent for this term, which originates from the Christian tradition (King, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 74). The capability of the word spirituality for creating concepts and its ability to be applied in various spaces and its use among educated people in the nineteenth century made it common among people (Carrette and King, 2005 AD: 30). By effecting many implicit meanings and tastefully, it was separated from its Christian context and gradually became a word that can be used in any context with any meaning (Nelson, 2009 AD: 8). Since the middle of the 20th century, this word has become popular in the West with an entirely different meaning; the meaning that supports movements or schools avoiding institutional religion (Wiseman, 2006 AD: 37-38). The present study considers the new meaning of this word as a postmodern concept. Accordingly, modern spiritualism can be defined as a life based on non-religious supernaturalism (Talebi Darabi, (n.d.): 2). In other words, the spiritual-based man in the modern era pursues a transcendent goal and ascension from the material world to a supernatural world, and his soul emotions demand his "Transcendence" and the self-fulfilment of his talents (Hamidiyeh, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 35). Therefore, in modern spiritual life, human interest and tendency towards the beyond of matter and nature is of interest, but without insisting on religiosity and official religions, which form the spiritual migration from traditional religion to spirituality with minimal metaphysics (Malekiyan, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 281-283).

Spiritualism focuses on the element of "Transcendence," and "Giving Meaning" is neither religion, mysticism, nor ethics; some even believe that it should not be confused with new religious movements (Talebi, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 203-233). The relationship between mysticism and spirituality is absolute generality and peculiarity (Hamidiyeh, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 49). Everything that is called mysticism is part of spirituality, and everything that is spirituality is not necessarily mysticism; (Islamic) mysticism is a deep intuitive knowledge of the inner reality and unity of existence (Mohvahhediyen Attar, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 421). The essence and truth of God exist, and the manner of conduct belongs to this knowledge. The two mentioned elements are shared between spirituality and mysticism; regarding this difference, from transcendence and meaning, mystics pay special attention to ultimate details such as demolition and servitude. However, modern spirituality has separated its relationship from religion and is independent and tries to fulfil the role and functions of faith in the contemporary world (Hamidiyeh, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 50). Whereas, in

Islamic sources, spirituality is defined as the benefit of thought, tendency, intention, and behaviour from sincere effort in the moral aspect of action, along with the attempt to connect with God (Ghaffari Qarabagh, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 98). In this research, we criticise the most important anthropological basis of secular spiritualities.

### 1.2. Religion

Although the concept of religion is clear, there are many opinion differences; however, its brief definition is clear to many. The detailed description of its components is a subject of debate and controversy. Many couldn't provide an incomplete list of explanations regarding their multitude (Elyade, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 85). Religion definitions are often bounded and preceded by certain presuppositions in epistemology, ontology, and anthropology that need particular thought. The involvement of different attitudes and sometimes scattered has caused complicated the concept of religion (Elyade, 1995 AD/ 1374 SH: 202). We can also mention moral, historical, psychological, sociological, philosophical and aesthetic attitudes. The main definitions are God, truth or the final goal-oriented definition, functional and intuitionistic. Theologians often propose the first category to define "Religion by what is religion." The second one is mostly from scholars of human sciences, especially psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, who observe the influence of religion on people's behaviour and the formation of social organisations and institutions (Sajedi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 57).

Allamah Tabatabaei, who is considered from the first category, says in the explanation of the word religion: "The total of belief (in the truth of man and the world) and the corresponding regulations that are applied in life is called religion." (Tabatabaei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 21) In another place, he has a particular emphasis on science making act and called the belief that requires action as religion: "Religion is a practical system based on belief in the issue of existence and man as a part of it. In this case, belief is not only the theoretical science of reality and man because theoretical science alone does not require action, but belief is knowledge by following the requirements of theoretical science." (Tabatabaei, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 15/8)

Tabatabaei believes that religion is a revelational reality that has been sent to humanity in the form of a divine program by God Almighty, by holy prophets (Tabatabaei, 1995 AD/1374 SH, 1/424; Tabatabaei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 21). This collection has ideological, monotheistic, prophetic and divine foundations and is not devoid of the source of morality and the call to purify the soul, and it also contains morality source and the invitation to soul refining and laws and regulation aimed at life.

## 2. An Analytical Account of Individualism

Individualism is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century term that emphasises abstract and single individuals, prioritising individual interests, desires and moods (Raymond, 1988 AD: 161-165). Individualism considers the individual as the central unit of reality and the ultimate measure of value. This point of view, while acknowledging the importance of collective mutual roles and the influence of mechanisms and social groups on individual behaviour, does not consider a goal outside of the individual for the action of the forces (Bordeaux, 2004 AD/1383 SH:19). Individuals in individualistic cultures often prioritise their individual goals, even if they conflict with critical in-group goals such as family, tribe, group, etc. Individualists are emotionally detached from their in-groups and emphasise "Self-reliance," independence, pleasure, and the pursuit of happiness (Triandis, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 257).

Individualism has various economic, political, social, philosophical, and theological aspects and supports freeing people to do whatever they consider to be in their interests (Palgrave and Macmilan, 2008 AD: 790). According to the individualists, all social factors should be explained based on people's actions, opinions and needs. In individualism, aspects of his distinction from others are considered rather than what a person has in common with others. This concept tends to see a single human being in isolation, and society or the world is considered a background or context.

Therefore, a high degree of perfection and self-sufficiency is considered a unique human being. Separation and autonomy are the fundamental metaphysical qualities of a human being (Arblaster, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 20). Georges Bordeaux believes that no more precise, preciseness principle considers man as the best goal. Everything is considered subject to individual goals. Although he does not reject the importance of collective mutual roles and does not ignore social mechanisms and the influence of the group on individual behaviours, considering a goal outside the person for these actions is rejected. According to this view, everything revolves around the individual, and society, in the word, is an environment to preserve and maintain the individual's life and create the possibility for his flourishing (Bordeaux, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 95-97). Self-referentiality, including the strains of individualism, emphasises the absence of reliable and stable references. Structures and guidance boards that determine the way of working and the direction of a person moving in traditional societies do not exist in today's and modern societies, and there are no instructions written on them.

Abstract systems, with all their influence in everyday life, only offer

multiple possibilities, not fixed and regulated instructions and prescriptions for action (Giddens, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 122-123).

The initial uses of the word individualism were by French sociologists, such as Alexey de Tocqueville, in the description of the American society and Saint Simon (Bayat et al., 2011 AD/1390 SH: 395; Madani, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 124). However, this term is used in its French form in anti-revolutionary texts criticising the Enlightenment. Of course, the difference between individualism, which expresses anarchy and social disintegration, and individuality, which expresses freedom, progress and individual growth, has been noted in France (Bahrani, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 18-19). Individualism has different readings, including exclusivist individualism, expansionist individualism, methodological and epistemological individualism, and particle and property individualism.

Among Western thinkers, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jerry Bentham played a role in explaining the philosophy of individualism. Hobbes explained particle individualism, Locke described property individualism well, and finally, moral individualism owes to Bentham.

Hobbes' opinions about particle individualism played a significant role in shaping Western thought about man, especially in England and America, and political science, economics, sociology, and psychology benefited from it. Hobbes is the propagandist of the theory that people are like atoms and moving material particles, each of which seeks power and wealth at the expense of others.

In his opinion, society is a set of opposing atoms in motion that are constantly seeking to maximise their profits and interests.

It should be mentioned that humanism, which was the result of two religious reform movements and the Renaissance movement, in terms of values, freed the individual from the shackles of feudalism and made the individual the protector and defender of his salvation instead of the church. In the 17th century, humanism was further expanded by Puritanism; but neither the Renaissance, the religious reform movement, nor the subsequent Puritanism reduced people to Hobbes's social particles. He was the one who assumed people to be individuals in their community (Palgrave and Macmillan, 2008 AD: 791).

Therefore, the interpretation of "Particleism" means that the individual is a more fundamental reality than the group or society. The tendency to isolate the individual from the social context and emphasis on proud self-sufficiency and "Being alone" are the manifestations of "Individualism." Regarding the separation of the western man from his homogeneity, the civil society is also called "The Society of Strangers." According to Hobbes,

human beings live as isolated particles before establishing a government for themselves. They are always in conflict due to conflicting interests and selfishness (Jahaniyan, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 42).

From this point of view, the existence of society is valid. Otherwise, each person would go his own way and leave the community as an unuseful tool. Accordingly, bourgeois individualism (monopolistic or particle individualism) was called by John Stuart Mill in the book "Political Economy of the New Man" (1851), "Equipment and Arming of Each Man Against Another" and the book "Socialism" (1879), individualism was defined as "The Dispute about Material Interests" was considered the same (Hunt, 2006 AD/1358 SH: 34). The political and economic domination of the bourgeois turned the concept of the individual, from "Unique Human Being," to an exceptional and elite human being and a minority that has the ability, efficiency, and ownership.

Finally, the concept of the individual, which in its standard form, includes all people. Based on it, human equality was guaranteed in the worldview, and rights turned into elitism and anti-equality.

The concept of "Individual" or "Citizen" gradually developed and evolved with the people's uprising, especially the workers, demonstrations and strikes, the destruction of factory machinery and the danger of falling capitalist system, and included all people. The common interests of the governments and the capitalist classes required them to establish a system of laws and regulations in favour of the working class to prevent destruction. Accordingly, the liberal capitalist economic system turned into a regulatory or directive capitalist financial system, and monopolistic individualism became expansionist individualism (Namazi, (n.d.): 79).

In the 17th century, John Locke proposed property individualism, a concept by which a person's life belongs to him. This life is his property and does not belong to God, society or government; he can treat it however he wants. Locke believes that man has massive foundations of property regarding his mastery over himself, his ownership of himself and his work. Therefore, the right of material property is a clear expression of the request that we already have over ourselves, our actions and our profession, and even a person who does not have any material property still owns his body, skills and work (Arblaster, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 38-39).

Jeremy Bentham described moral individualism by three principles that ultimately result in utilitarianism:

1. Individual happiness and pleasure should be the goal of individual action (secularism);
2. Every individual happiness and pleasure is supposed to be assumed and

calculated for one person and no more (atomism);

3. The goal of social action should be to maximise the overall utility.

These principles show sovereignty in the West's economics, sociology, ethics and political philosophy (Palgrave and Macmillan, 2008 AD: 770).

In this regard, Schumpeter believes utilitarianism is a life philosophy, and a good life means having as much money as possible and using it desirably (Schumpeter, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 170-172).

Methodological individualism is another reading of individualism that defines all social affairs based on people's opinions, needs and actions. John Stuart Mill explains that this individualism is based on the conflict of material interests and the struggle to acquire them. So that human beings gain and maintain benefits not based on the coordination of goods but on competition and pushing back or being pushed back (Hamidiyeh, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 204). Various currents of thought played a role in believing in the absolute value of individual existence and institutionalising it. By basing religion on the salvation of individual souls, the Christian movement searches for the highest value in man himself. The course of religious reform, by establishing the relationship between the creator and the creature, places man in a position - even if unequal - to speak with divinity. Based on Greek philosophy, the humanist current considers man as the scale of everything. The rationalist current of the Enlightenment era calls a person to participate in perfecting the wisdom hidden in himself. Finally, with the help of Rousseau and Kant, the naturalist movement placed the principles of any ethics on inner freedom. It makes the absolute value of freedom unique to the individual (Giddens, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 93-94). Liberalism, one of this period's most common intellectual currents, was very influential in institutionalising individualism, with the slogan that every desire is permissible and legitimate (Arblaster, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 40).

Liberal thinkers emphasise that each person is the most reliable judge of their desires. Because if this principle is abandoned, the way will be paved for the absolute rule of a minority of intellectuals who claim to know better than the people themselves what they want and aspire to (ibid., 43). In the classical liberal scheme, "Individual" is usually understood as a single being, self-enclosed and locked in his subjectivity. Intellect is a tool to achieve one's desires. Every person is inspired and motivated by their desires and dreams and is the best judge of their interests. Therefore, institutions should avoid judging instead of individuals. No morality or doctrine can compel one; because he is the source of all values. It requires complete individuality and the absence of public interests (Vincent, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 55). This problem can lead to anarchism. Humanism is one

of individualism's most essential roots, which has cause-and-effect relations. Individualism, which regards society as a perfect (and not an ultimate) being to serve human beings, originates from the humanist idea that man as an autonomous being is the end and natural goal of the world's life. There is absolutely no superior being than a man who wants to be his servant (Hamidiyeh, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 211).

Self-centred humanist theories have established and consolidated individualism in the philosophical and moral dimensions, although an individualist person is not necessarily self-centred. In ancient Greece, Aristippus was one of the self-centred hedonists who considered immediate and direct satisfaction of personal needs without regard for others to be the supreme goal of existence (Abbagnano, 1998 AD: 70). According to the traditionalists, the modern era is the era of manifesting the individual reason dominance over all world affairs. Descartes said: "I think. Therefore I am." And (in Sayyid Hosein Nasr's interpretation) he didn't say: "I think because God willed," a deviation in human commitment began, which Guenon calls "The victory of the earth over the sky." (Aslan, 1998 AD: 46)

Guenon explains his objection to the centrality and authority of the individual as follows:

"Human beings no longer recognise any real power and position in spiritual and theological matters, and no legitimate government in the field of non-spiritual and immoral affairs." (Guenon, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 104)

We should say that individualism has positive aspects such as responsibility and self-reliance; relying on these positive aspects is the point of difference between positive and reasonable individualism and extreme individualism. The secular spirituality base is not the positive aspects of individualism but the excess of modern man's independence, selfishness and narcissism derived from radical individualism.

### **3. The Relationship between Extreme Individualism and Separation of Spirituality from Religion**

The phenomenon of individual originality (turning inward) is the most significant change in spiritual life and a fundamental transformation in the spiritual lifestyle of modern Western man, which is called spiritual humanism. It is based on the most important intellectual foundations of newly emerging western movements, namely humanism and secularism (Vakili and Gudarzi, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 62-7). Socrates in the temple of Delphi with the sentence "Know Thyself," Augustine with emphasis on the journey to the "Inner Self," Rousseau with the expression "Inner Light," and Wittgenstein with the word "Introspection" (meaning meditation of the

mind and tool of self-awareness), provided the philosophical foundation for the expansion of individualism in all aspects of life, especially spiritual affairs in the history of western philosophy. Rethinking in all areas of social and personal life is an essential feature of the modern world. Unlike the rethinking of the pre-modern era, which was limited to the reinterpretation and explanation of tradition, in the modernity era, rethinking continuously re-evaluates social practices, and people modify and transform their identity by the new achieved information about their selves (Giddens, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 46).

The first revision level in the modern era is the general rules and regulations compiled and presented by moral and religious systems that determine how a person should be. In the pre-modern era, a person is obliged to make these laws and rules the model of his personal life without any doubts and to accept the pre-determined rules for any form of individual behaviour. The modern person's rethinking allowed him to criticise wisely these general rules and align them with new information and knowledge.

In this era, he can doubt these public sources and revise the predetermined orders and rulings (Giddens, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 120).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, individualism was strengthened by the philosophical and scientific works of such people as Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, Hume, Kinross, and above all, Kant.

They believed that the greatness of a man is not a function of his alleged divine origin but rather a function of the analytical capabilities of his earthly existence. The goal of human beings is to understand the activities appropriate to this world, which are suggested by their intellect and mind, not in the constant obedience of God. Therefore, in the shadow of illustration humanism, individual originality was proposed more completely: denying any authority, even metaphysical. With Kant's critical reason, man was freed from pure and unquestioning obedience to God (a concept that is the basis of traditional religion). Illustration humanism changed the view that human beings have meaning only in a metaphysical context, while the topics of the soul, divine and transcendental order, and faith (Luik, 1998 AD: 532).

After that, Jean-Paul Sartre denied human nature as an objective and permanent thing by expressing the importance of existence over substance. He considered his autonomy the highest honour and dignity (Sartre, 2007 AD: 52). In his spiritual school, Paulo Coelho, emphasising the fundamental differences between people, considered preserving these differences as one of the duties of the seeker and stated: "All human beings are different and should do everything they can to remain different." (Coelho, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 170)

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So, the postmodern era, with features such as accepting the plurality of opinions, accepting relativism and lack of certainty, the prevalence of diversity and the reasonableness of instability, brought modernity into a new stage culturally. In this cultural, intellectual atmosphere, values such as actuality, certainty and stability became anti-values; consequently, the institutions that presented fixed, definite and dogmatic readings of themselves also fell out of acceptance; therefore, opposition to religion (especially Abrahamic religions, which herald certainty) was accepted. In the postmodern culture, worship and definite propositions are not justified; hence, religiosity in an institutional form is not prosperous either (Shakernejad, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 90-92).

Modern spiritualism is not against religion regarding the prominent feature of "Eclecticism and Selection" from traditional beliefs. However, it does not accept adherence to religions. At the same time, it allows its followers to choose between their religion or different spiritual options, regardless of their backgrounds and cultural context, based on their psychological characteristics and inner needs. This trend, which was influenced by the growth of capitalism and open shelf stores in the West, can be called the spirituality of "Self-service" or "Supermarket." (Wouter, 2002 AD: 299)

Therefore, the established individualism in the modern and postmodern era is the anthropological basis and, accordingly, the epistemology of contemporary spiritualism. So, the "Inside or Self" of man is the centre of all cognitions, and by breaking the structure and challenging the traditional forms, they establish a new theology called "Self-centered Religion" or "Self-Religion", which narrates the unity of "God and Man." (Wouter, 2002 AD: 300)

The basis of this spirituality is the modern "Self-divinity of Man." Therefore, the best and most crucial motto of postmodern mysticism is sentences like "Find God within Yourself" or "Blessed Is the One Who Discovers Himself" (Wouter, 2002 AD: 299-300), which removes the feeling of loneliness and distance from God. Although, according to them, God does not mean the God of official religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). One of the most critical dimensions of individualism that played a significant role in forming secular spirituality was religious individualism, related to individual independence and private life. Accordingly, a believer has the duty and the right to communicate with God in his way, and he can achieve this goal only by his efforts. This doctrine emphasises spiritual equality and the internalisation of religious consciousness. Religious individualists (Protestants) reject accepted beliefs and religion, or any

external religious authority, calling themselves freethinkers, and accept individual interpretations of the Bible as the final authority. Denying mediators (such as a church or clergy), direct and heartfelt communication with God, attention to faith instead of religion and sharia, and individual interpretation of religion are characteristics of this type of individualism (Gordon, 1998 AD: 304).

Several factors caused forming religious individualism and, finally, the creation of secular spiritualist currents; the following are among the most important:

1. Doubts about religion as a general narrative of man and the world by denying the reality of general concepts;
2. Attention to freedom-seeking and independence-seeking of modern man;
3. Religious tolerance on the basis that religion is one of the personal affairs, which is respected and at his disposal according to the idea of individualism;
4. Materialism and Empirism by showing the metaphysical irrational, and even anti-rational;
5. Developing rationalism and reliance on rational and empirical understanding;
6. Expanding non-religious images of God in line with emerging deism was also influential in this field. The image of God during the illustration period was mainly the image of watchmaker God because this image, by removing the absolute greatness of God, can serve human individualism and excellence;
7. The reduction of religion to faith (fideism) by emphasising personal faith and inner life effectively expanded religious individualism (Copleston, 2017 AD/1396 SH: vol. 4-9).

The concept of spirituality also found a fundamental change in the field of individualism and modernity discourse. Paying attention to the inner life, the superiority of feeling over reason, and particular emphasis on an individual's unique relationship with God was among the influential factors in forming this transformation. The early forms of psychological knowledge, influenced by the new theological view in the nineteenth century, gave a scientific face to individualistic, personalised and emotional spirituality (Carrette and King, 2005 AD: 39-40).

In this discourse, spiritualism focuses more on the "Individual" and his personality development; it considers individual experience as the only valid source of spiritual truth (Wouter. J, 2002: 299). They believe that man's "Self" is the first principle of spiritual forces; even the human body

is considered a self-healer that can heal itself (Pike, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 250). In the new age spirituality, the concept of " Self-transcendent " has often replaced the concept of God; therefore, they interpret "New Age" spirituality as "Their Religion." (Wouter, 2002 AD: 300)

The phrase "Find God within You, not Outside" can be considered their most central slogan (Pike, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 226-267).

In this type of spiritualism, a person, focusing on personal excellence, builds his system of values and beliefs based on his psychological and spiritual needs by choosing freely from the shelves of the world's spirituality market and searching for the whole truth within himself. He chooses self-authority and does not recognise external authority, such as revelation and prophets. Therefore, spiritual individualism, in the individual autonomy and existential independence of man from heavenly religions and the teachings of divine teachers, considers the validity of any external reference invalid.

Osho, for an instant, is one of the spiritualists who, while being pessimistic and unimportant to the place of reason, consider the real wealth and real kingdom realm of man, attention to "Self-inside":

There is only one way to know the ocean: dive into yourself. Christ repeatedly told his followers: "The kingdom of God is within you." (Osho,2006 AD/1385 SH: 63)

Krishna Murthy also emphasises the importance of the "Inside" of the person and states: "There is no guidance, no teacher, and no one to tell you what to do. You are alone in this cruel and crazy world." (Murthy, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 168)

Paolo Coelho often refers to the phrase "Listen to the voice of your heart" in his works by proposing the idea of listening to the inner voice and the heart's desires. He, influenced by Jung, believes: "In this direction, the call of good and bad has no meaning; even if the heart leads a person astray, we should listen to the heart call" (Coelho, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 124 and 128).

Accordingly, individualism, by establishing self-reference and denying any external reference for the religious program, caused forming individualistic spirituality and the separation of spirituality from divine religions.

#### **4. The Originality of the Individual or Society According to Allamah Tabatabaei**

To examine and criticise individualism, we should answer the question, 'which individual or society has authenticity and truth?'

The meaning of originality here is its philosophical meaning (to have actual existence). In this regard, Allamah believes that society and the individual are objective and have properties and effects; therefore, both the individual and the community are original. This theory is "Individual Originality" because it does not consider the existence of the social individuals to be dissolved in the presence of society and does not consider the community to have a single existence like chemical compounds. But because it considers the type of people combination in terms of mental, intellectual and emotional issues as a particular type of combination in which the society has an independent life, it is "Social Originality;" although this collective life does not exist separately and has been scattered and dissolved in individuals (Tabatabaei, 2011 AD/ 1390 SH: 4/138; Tabatabaei, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 201).

When the individual and the society have an independent life and identity and have an organic relationship like the body cells' relations with the soul, it can be concluded that the relationship between the individual and the society is a real relationship (Tabatabaei, 2007 AD/1428 GH: 302-303). Guided by nature and creation, man continuously wants his benefit from everyone, so he gives credit to "Employment" and wants everyone's benefit for his benefit: "The Credit of Society" and in favour of all, emphasises social justice and gives credit to "The Goodness of Justice and the Obscenity of Oppression." (Tabatabaei, 2008 AD/1387 SH, A: 200). Allameh's intention of profit-seeking here is to ensure "Survival of One's Existence and Instinctive Desires." (Tabatabaei, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 201)

Therefore, after stating the sentence that man constantly wants his profit, it does not mean that war and conflict are natural, but immediately follows it by saying:

"... For his benefit, he wants everyone's benefit, and for everyone's benefit, he wants social justice."

During the discussion, he refers to the philosophy of ethics, politics, society, and Shariah (Cultural congress on the occasion of the death anniversary of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 144-145).

Therefore, Allamah's meaning of profit-seeking is not the profit-seeking of the individualists, that a person always seeks to secure his wants and benefits. Instead, the human being has limited this matter according to his nature and institution. Consequently, he seeks the benefit of all and social justice; society gains credibility and stability.

Therefore, Allamah considers all three virtues of employment, community, the goodness of justice and obscenity of oppression as fixed

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virtues (Tabatabaei, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2/208).

Allamah Tabatabaei saw and recognised the manifestation of human social nature in the principle of employment documented in the thirty-second ayah of Surah al-Zukhruf.<sup>1</sup>

But he does not mean that human beings established society by thinking and for practicality, and to make their profits stable and permanent, have accepted justice; instead, the interests of the individual and the society are the same, and this interest is the same as justice. So, as a result, Allamah does not mean an individual against a community. He believed that all existence pays attention to a single goal and destination; therefore, he saw a balance between all beings, human and non-human, including the individual and the collective.

So, suppose a person wants his profit. In that case, this profit-seeking is guided by nature and creation, not that man considers himself the centre of the existing circle and does whatever he wants. Everything is subject to his whim and will (Cultural congress on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 148).

According to Allamah, social life is not a requirement of human instinct (as seen in some animals and insects). Still, the man turns to social life according to the employment principle and achieves his interests. Social life is the result of human thinking about how to benefit from the surrounding world, so social life is fulfilling human rationality to accomplish its goals. He considers implementing justice and entrusting affairs to the Vilayat in the same direction and in continuing human effort in line with the principle of employment (Tabatabaei, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 68-70).

The religions of collective and individual originality are parallel and related while opposite. In both religions, judgment and man's will dominate in everything. Still, in one, a human being means an individual, and in the other represents a collective human being and has no man, the universe, origin and end except human beings (ibid.).

In contrast, according to Allamah Tabatabaei, the purpose of creation is human nature, which is the existence of the individual, not the social group of individuals, and the human being who is led towards the social contract

هُم يُقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا. ۱. وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ: Is it they who dispense the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have dispensed among them their livelihood in the present life, and raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others into service, and your Lord's mercy is better than what they amass.

is for the individual maintenance (Tabatabaei, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 202).

However, an individual does not mean an independent individual who assigns everything by whim or his own independent will. Instead, it means human nature and an individual with a "God-given Nature." Man is not a social atom but a small world, and society is built according to the nature of this small world. Therefore, individualism is not proven against collectivism or collectivism against individualism (Tabatabaei, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2/198-199), and individual and collective originality religions are not discussed. Society does not consist of the totality of individuals in the sense of independent parts possessing talents and personality traits, nor is the nature of individuals a shadow of society's soul (Cultural congress on the occasion of the death anniversary of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei, 1985 AD/ 1364 SH: 145). Therefore, Allamah considers the tolerance bitter of the low in social life reasonable in the adaptation between the perfection of the individual and the society, and he does not accept society's ideal without regarding the individual perfection (Tabatabaei, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 192).

While the development of individualism in the civilised world has caused the laws to have no inherent and belief executive guarantee, people respect these laws only for the sake of etiquette and social contract and sometimes "Ceremonies." Regarding the lack of an authentic and stable moral base in the depth of the civilised human soul today, there is no deep and steady faith in the law; therefore, social relations in today's world are fragile and shaky. Purity, loyalty, love, sacrifice, and forgiveness are not flourishing in today's civilised society, and in all aspects of life, considering the "Individual Originality," every "Individual" considers herself higher and nobler than the "Society."

In the ideal society of Islam, due to the existence of a primary and rooted base in the depth of the human soul and the involvement of religion in all aspects of human life, all laws, regulations and social systems are implemented even in the most dangerous situations of life. Society enjoys a solid and rooted system (ibid., 40).

### **5. Proving Common Human Nature**

Great psychologists such as William James have emphasised the existence of a common element among human beings (such as religious sense) (Motahhari, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 1/75). Carl Jung also highlighted the presence of nature differently by proposing the theory of the collective unconscious, which, in his opinion, is inherited by all human beings, and they share in it (Azarbaijani, 2008 AD/1387 SH:127). Proving the existence

of a common issue according to the Qur'an is not tricky. Several verses refer to the quality of human creation. In some of them, the blowing of the divine spirit of the human existential essence and the holy caliphate is considered the central philosophy of his life. The Qur'an emphasises the origin of a single soul for all human beings; therefore, assuming faith in the truth of the Qur'an, we have no choice but to accept human nature.

The Qur'an's emphasis on following the ordinary and unchangeable structure of humans, on which the divine religion is based, is another proof of the existence of a common thing among humans, which is referred to as nature:

"فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ."

So, turn yourself towards the Hanif religion, which is, by God's nature, the nature that God created humanity based on, and there is no change in God's creation, this is the direct religion, but most people do not know.

According to Allamah's statement in al-Mizan, the above verse means that you should be a part of nature. It means that this religion, which is obligatory to pay for, is the same religion the creation calls and the divine nature leads to it, and this nature cannot be changed. Accordingly, religion is nothing but the tradition of life and the way and method that is obligatory for a person to practice it to be happy. The goal of every human being is happiness, just as all kinds of creatures have been naturally guided towards their happiness, and that goal is their ideal, and they have been created in such a way and equipped with a device that goal is appropriate with that goal. As it is narrated from Musa (AS), in response to Pharaoh, he said: "الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى" (al-Taha/50), and he also said: "رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى" (al-A'la/2-3) (Tabatabaei, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 16/267)

Therefore, human beings, like other creatures, are created by a nature that guides them to complete their shortcomings and satisfy their needs and inspires them with its benefits and harms and says: "وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا" (al-Shams/7-8) At this time, he is equipped with a physical device to perform his necessary actions, as he said: "ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ" (al-'Abas/20) means then he provided the means and way of life for him.

Allamah Tabatabaei, in agreement with other Muslim thinkers and opposite the individualists, believes in the existence of a common element among all human beings, which is nature. Emphasising the presence of an everyday affair, he concludes the necessity of existing a typical plan of happiness and a single Sharia. Therefore, man has his nature, which guides

him to a specific tradition of life and a particular path that leads to a clear goal and end. It is the only path, and the human being who lives on this path is a single type whose gains and losses are parallel gains and losses about the structure of the soul and body; it is not different in different people.

Therefore, because a human being is human, he does not have more than one happiness and misfortune. Thus, only one fixed tradition must be established for him in practice, and a single guide should guide him to that limited goal, and this guide is the exact nature and type of creation. And for this reason, he added "لا تبديل لخلق الله" after "فطر الله التي فطر الناس عليها".

Unlike the individualists, Allamah does not consider the criteria of good and evil to be relative and chosen by each individual; instead, he believes that every human being -without exception- with his God-given institution understands the difference between good deeds and evil deeds. And he considers good deeds -even if he does not follow them- good and necessary, and evil deeds -even if he is caught in the- bad and necessary (Tabatabaei, 2008 AD/1387 SH, B: 183). He considers people who have unpleasant traits to be out of human nature and bankrupt in life. The reason is selfishness and belief in an individual life that is not compatible with nature. Because human nature introduces social life to us and considers personal life doomed to failure (ibid., 239), he also believes the stages of human growth and education are different and hidden in his nature. The possibility of actualisation and achievement is impossible apart from these stages (Hosseini Tehrani, 1995 AD/ 1416 GH: 180).

In proving humans having happiness and misery, Allamah states that if the satisfaction of human beings differed regarding differences between them, a righteous and united society that would guarantee society people happiness would not have been formed. If the people's happiness were different according to the difference in age, the lands they live in, and the social tradition, which is religion, would be based on what the region requires; at that time, humans would no longer be a single type, but they would be different according to different logics. Also, if the happiness of man was different according to the times' requirements, that is, the ages and centuries were the basis of religious tradition, the people of the ages would not become a single type, and people in every age and time would be different from the man of another time. Human society did not develop, and humanity did not move from imperfection to perfection. Because there is no imperfection and perfection unless there is a common and fixed aspect between all past and future people. The basis of religious tradition is the structure and foundation of humanity, which is a single, shared and constant truth among all people and nations. Society has a single and stable

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tradition: the human being; this tradition is the pillar of humankind and the partial traditions that differ according to the differences in people, places, and times. This verse confirms it: “ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ” (Tabatabaei, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 16/268-269).

Therefore, individualists believe that absolute happiness is not dependent on personal understanding and desire. Still, it depends on the right action and accordance with the creation system and human nature. It depends on the constant, general and honest knowledge and knowledge of God and a realistic logic that convinces the external, internal, and conscience senses. It also gives positive answers by truth and reality to the intellect, heart, instinct, human inspiration and inferences (Shariati Najafabadi, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 239).

Accordingly, the truth of religion is the beliefs about the world's creation, man and practical tasks, which adapt human life to it, not a ceremonial matter that is in man's control to accept any religion. The truth of religion is manifested in Islam, so it has roots in human nature to make man and his authority subject to Islam laws. For example, we use the light of the sun, it is a fact that a free person is never free to give an opinion about it every day, but he has to accept its proof and base his life issues on it. If religion tells us every human being is free to take any religion, it has admitted its formality and caused its destruction (Tabatabaei, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 8/299). Islam is called the "Religion of Nature" because human nature requires it, and it guides towards it. This religion is called "Islam" because, in this religion, the servant submits to the will of God Almighty. The example of His will - which is the attribute of the verb - consists of all the causes associated with the creation of man and his developmental requirements (including a deed or leave) just as He said: "إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ" (Tabatabaei, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 16/288-289).

So, if we say "Islam is the religion of truth," it means that Islam is the tradition of formation and a method that the creation system is by, and human nature invites him to follow it. The exact nature on which God created human nature; there is no change in God's creation; it is the stable religion (Tabatabaei, 1995 AD/1374 SH; 9/321).

Therefore, the most critical pillar of Allamah's argument in criticising individualism is existing a single human nature; hence, the values and the path of human happiness and evolution are not numerous and different based on the will and desire of human beings but are unified, that the necessity of existing religion and divine law is proven by it. In this regard, the spiritual manner of humans is not based on spiritual individualism, and the answer to the institution and man's excellence-seeking nature is following

the divine religion and Sharia, which is entirely in line with the existential and natural needs of man.

### Conclusion

The following results can be obtained from the said content:

1. What has led the spiritualist currents of the new age towards confrontation and separation from religion are the foundations that have emerged from the humanistic context of the modern world. A person with the slogan "God Is Dead" puts himself in God's place and pursues transcendence in everyday life based on his desires.
2. The dominance of the humanistic view of life leads to bitter consequences, including the disintegration of human society in different dimensions and the confinement of the individual within himself. By declaring his existential independence, a person doesn't accept any external authority and does not follow the guidance of revelation. Accordingly, religion and sovereignty become meaningless in the intelligent system of humanism.
3. The main point of humanism influence is negating or discolouring the social dimension, paying too much attention to the individual's individuality and individual centrality in choosing the lifestyle and interaction with the world and other human beings. Moral relativism and hedonism rule over human life, leading to other cultural problems.
4. Allamah Tabatabaei, inspired by the anthropological foundations of authentic Islamic spirituality, emphasises parallel human nature and considers it the basis and philosophy of sending messengers and true religion. Therefore, it defines man not as cut off from the sky and independent but as a small world that, having a divine nature, has no choice except to submit to the religious teachings by nature.

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