

The Answer to a Common Question: Why Should We Emulate?

Why Should We Emulate? Do We Lack Intellect and Wisdom?

One of the most common misconceptions in society, especially among younger and more educated people, is: "Why should we emulate?" Do we lack intellect and wisdom? Doesn't emulation hinder intellectual growth and maturity? Why should we be the intellectual slaves to others and why should we emulate? Interestingly, this misconception is mostly raised in the context of religious and human matters, not in relation to inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellective aspects.

For example, no one is accused of being irrational if she follows a doctor's advice, or no one is considered ignorant if she trusts an architect to design and build her house. On the contrary, refusing to seek advice from experts is considered unwise and attracts criticism. However, when it comes to supra-rational and human matters, many of us consider ourselves experts in these fields, and we wonder "Why should we emulate experts" and why is it necessary?

It seems that this question relates to Islamic jurists¹ and *Marja*² but, in fact, it is related to our lack of knowledge about the essence of religion and the philosophy

¹. *Faqih*

². In Shia Islam, *marja'* (Arabic: مرجع; plural: marāji'), also known as a *marja' taqlid* or *marja' dīnī* (Arabic: / مرجع تقلید / مرجع دینی), literally meaning "source to imitate/follow" or "religious reference", is a title given to the highest level Shia authority, a Grand Ayatollah with the authority to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law for followers and less-credentialed clerics. After the Qur'an and the prophets and imams, marāji' are the highest authority on religious laws in Usuli Shia Islam. (<https://www.al-islam.org/tags/marja>)

of the existence of an infallible Imam because Islamic jurists are considered to be the representatives of and successors to the Imam during his occultation.³

Our uncertainty about the necessity of following Islamic jurists shows that although we have accepted the necessity of following experts as a rational and *fitri* (innate) principle and we apply it in all aspects of life, we have not fully grasped the importance of this matter in relation to supra-rational and human matters. But why is this? Why do some of us not feel the need to consult an expert in human and divine matters? Surely, the answer lies in lack of **self-knowledge**.

Lack of Self-Knowledge Is the Root of All Doubts and Uncertainties

The need for the ignorant to emulate the knowledgeable and for non-specialists to seek the advice of experts is obvious and confirmed by both the intellect and *fitrah*. When we are not experts in a field, or when we suspect we may be making mistakes, we naturally turn to an expert, and that is why there are hundreds of professions and areas of expertise in society.

A tailor takes his car to a mechanic to be repaired, and a mechanic goes to a tailor to get his clothes made. A doctor asks an architect to design his house, and an architect asks a doctor for medical treatment. An athlete sends his child to school to be educated by a teacher, and the teacher enrolls his child at a sports club to

³. The Major Occultation (الغيبة الكبرى Al-Ghaybah al-Kubra), according to Shia, is Mahdi's second occultation. According to Twelvers the Major Occultation which came around 329/941 is still in effect, and will not end until the End of Time when the Mahdi returns to reestablish Justice on earth. Upon the death of his father, while still a child, it is believed that the twelfth Imam entered his first occultation which lasted 70 lunar years. During this time the Hidden Imam is said to have represented on earth by four successive deputies.

improve his child's physical health. None of them asks why we should emulate anyone else, nor do they consider it an insult to themselves.

People of all races and ethnicities throughout the world accept the primacy of expertise and acknowledge that an ignorant person must emulate a knowledgeable one. This is because they know the benefits of emulating experts and see the harm of ignoring this principle. So if the necessity of this issue is not felt in the field of human and spiritual affairs, it is because we have not taken the main dimension of our existence seriously, or perhaps we do not have enough information about it. It is good to go back and review our existential structure and the stages of our life to see whether or not we need the guidance of an infallible expert as a human being, and not as inanimate object, plant, animal, or angel.

Who Are We, and Why Should We Emulate?

We have material and worldly dimensions such as inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual. However, the reality of our existence and the special perfections that make us the manifestation of God and His deputy are not of the kind of inanimate qualities such as color, volume, weight, etc., nor of the kind of vegetative qualities such as growth, nourishment, physical strength, etc., nor of the kind of animal qualities such as starting a family, finding a place to live, recreation, work, etc., nor of the angelic and intellectual qualities such as studying and learning. The truth of our existence is a supra-natural and unworldly truth granted to our bodies from the supra-natural realms. After our temporary stay on earth, we will return to the essence and truth of our existence.

Our life is divided into three stages:

- 1) before this world
- 2) this world
- 3) after this world.

Before this world, we were a single infinite soul, living besides God in total happiness and bliss. However, when we descended into this world and took on a physical body, we were faced with a huge amount of limitations and imperfections in the material world. Since our infinity-seeking and perfectionist soul has previously enjoyed all kinds of pleasures, this world is like a prison or a cage to it. Since our true essence is not made of matter, we can never fully cope with the limitations and weaknesses of the material world. Therefore, during our stay on earth, we always strive to overcome these limitations and return to that original state of freedom and happiness.

The main point is that choosing the path to happiness entirely depends on our own will and desire since God has given us free will. In other words, all of us will inevitably return to God, but all of us do not return to that happiness and original status. Only those who choose the right path of their own free will can succeed on this path, but how? Who can show us the right path? Someone who fully knows the structure of our existence and the stages of our life and is knowledgeable in the seven specialized categories of: knowing the body, the soul, the relationship between the body and the soul, their mutual impact on each other, the natural world, the relationship between nature and our body and soul, the origin of life

(before this world), and the destination of life (after this world). We discussed these categories in the previous articles.

Let us look at all the branches of human knowledge in these seven specialized fields. Despite the progress of human knowledge in various fields, we will see that humanity has not gained a complete knowledge of the natural world, let alone other fields. Moreover, since some of these areas of knowledge, such as knowing the origin and destination of life, are supra-material, they are generally beyond the comprehension of human beings. So who can give us this knowledge?

By reviewing this information and becoming aware of the cycle of our life, we can better understand the necessity of obeying infallible experts and adhering to the specialized program of religion. And now the question “Why should we emulate?” loses its significance and value. None of us can achieve perfection, eternal happiness, and success without the guidance of experts whom God has directly appointed to lead us. This proves the necessity of emulation and obedience to the Infallibles (PBUT) and their representatives during the occultation.

Once again, we reviewed our knowledge about the human life cycle and the need for a guide for our human dimension. We explored the question “Why should we emulate?” and the role of emulation in our worldly and eternal happiness. We hope this knowledge will eventually be put into practice and lead us to the goal for which we have come to this world.