

# Nausea

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**Al-Islam.org**

**Article**

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<http://peacethroughunderstanding.blogspot.com> [2]

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There are different forms of nausea. One becomes sick because of having eaten food that has spoiled or from the motion of a plane in rough weather. Another kind of nausea has been diagnosed by the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. (In fact, Sartre's first major work, published in 1938, was a novel entitled *La Nausee*.) Sartre describes nausea as the manifestation to consciousness of the body's contingency, and he sees this as fundamental to even the physical varieties of nausea.

Existentialism extends the concept of the contingent from that which is simply not necessary to that which is not necessary for the fulfillment of some purpose or other, and finally to that which is ultimately meaningless; it then interprets the non-necessary as that which lacks purpose or meaning.

Nausea is the typical modern Western disease. Western man is at sea; he has lost his moorings; he is adrift.

Both existentialist philosophy and liberal social philosophy proclaim the absolute freedom of the individual, but facing that freedom produces vertigo. One is free to choose one's lifestyle (within economic and social limits), but this freedom turns out to be a source of discomfort rather than fulfillment. All value choices are considered to be matters of independent personal decisions, but guidance in decision-making is abandoned.

The scope of religion is narrowed to the provision of a sense of personal spiritual comfort through communion with the sacred. Religion is viewed as a leisure time activity, rather than the source of both personal and community values.

Conflict between the modern Western worldview and the traditional Islamic worldview often occurs when Western cultural advances are perceived as threatening the centrality of religion. Thus, the Martyr Ayatollah Murtadha Mutahhari complained that in the West religion is seen as a matter of personal preference, like an aesthetic preference. Just as one might prefer vanilla to chocolate, one may prefer one religion to another. Ayatollah Mutahhari warned that this way of viewing religion trivializes religion and undermines the program set forth by the Prophets (peace be upon them all).

The scholars of Islam have emphasized issues of justice in their preaching, calling upon the oppressed people of the world to liberate themselves from tyranny and to serve God rather than despots. Many of those who have converted to Islam have been attracted by Islam's clear guidance to righteous living, its firm stance against injustice, and its open invitation to develop the luminosity of spirit brought by the loving consciousness of Allah.

In Islam, moral authority is found the absence of which in much of Western society is manifested in government and corporate corruption, which in part has led to the current economic distress, as corruption undermined deregulated institutions. So, the most recent manifestation of the nausea with which Sartre characterized the modern condition may be found in the feeling of those who have watched their fortunes plummet in the freefall of the values of properties, stocks, and other financial instruments.

Islam prescribes a cure for nausea. Instead of self-indulgence, it preaches self-effacement. To correct aimlessness, it establishes an orientation, strikingly symbolized by the Ka'ba in Mecca as the universal *Qibla*, the direction of prayer. To alleviate vertigo, it offers balance. To repair disorder, it presents harmony. The contingent is not without purpose, Islam teaches, but a sign by which the Necessary of Existence is proved.

Islam's diagnosis of modern nausea is that it is a symptom of disorientation. The remedy is the well-oriented journey of the spirit, and the first step on this journey, we are taught by Martyr Mutahhari, is repentance. He describes repentance as a process of reorientation. Repentance is a revolution within the self, a revolt against the dictatorship of desire and folly carried out by the self's own most noble characteristics and wisdom, under the guidance God has sent through his Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), a guidance that continues through His Chosen Imams (peace be upon them).

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