



## The Epistemological Foundations of Jihad Based on the Theory of Human Nature by Ayatollah Shahabadi

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### **Abstract**

The issue of jihad is one of the important topics in Islamic defensive thought, especially in Shia Islam, which has been referred to in numerous verses and hadiths. The jurisprudential works of scholars have addressed this issue due to its nature and the responsibility of jurisprudence in issuing fatwas and determining the duties of Muslims in the face of the onslaught of Islamic enemies. The conditions, limits, and dimensions of its structure have been investigated as a jurisprudential issue in light of textual and rational evidence. For this reason, serious criticism of this issue is not observed in Shia theological books. Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Muhammad Ali Shahabadi is one of the Shia jurists who has addressed this issue from a theological perspective in his books, and based on his renowned theory of human nature, he has considered jihad as a form of self-defense rooted in human nature. This article, with an explanatory and analytical approach using library sources, seeks to answer the question of whether, according to Ayatollah Shahabadi's theory of human nature, jihad in Islam has its roots in human nature as a defensive and deterrent strategy against aggressors, protecting Muslims from attacks on their lives, property, and honor, which God has placed like humans. Muslims, based on their principles, reject any use of jihad for the imposition of force and violence against their opponents who do not intend to attack them, by accepting the principle of respecting the rights of other religions and religious minorities.

**Keywords:** *Theology; Jihad; Defense; Human Nature; Ayatollah Shahabadi*

### **Introduction**

Among the branches of the Islamic faith, the issue of jihad and fighting in the way of God with one's life, wealth, and other assets in the struggle against infidels and aggressors, is aimed at the expansion and exaltation of Islam and the establishment of its rites or its defense. (Najafi Jawaheri, 1981, 21/3) Jihad is related to all the pillars of religion, as well as the rules, ethics, and beliefs, and has been the subject of many discussions in Islamic sciences, especially jurisprudence. Considering the importance of jihad in the Quran and Hadith, its rules and conditions have always been discussed in the works of the great Shiite and Sunni jurists, and the chapter on jihad has been present in their works independently. However, the issue addressed in this treatise is the root of jihad from an instrumental perspective, which

necessitates understanding its purpose and roots, indicating the strategy of Muslims in using jihad as a form of defense and deterrence against the aggression of adversaries while maintaining the religious and minority rights and mutual respect in coexistence with those who do not intend to attack or invade.

Ayatollah Shahabadi believes that besides the possibility of proving the issue of jihad from a jurisprudential perspective, its legitimacy can be explained based on a theological perspective. From this viewpoint, the perspectives of theologians and philosophers in presenting the discussions related to the soul and nature as the foundations and principles of jihad can be very revealing, denying the lack of a logical basis for using jihad. One of the scholars of Shia Islam who, based on his Quranic theory of nature, has established a solid foundation for explaining the relationship between the Book of Creation (human) and the Book of Revelation (Quran) is Ayatollah Mirza Mohammad Ali Shahabadi, whose view proves the origin of jihad in human nature. He believes that the principles and branches, jurisprudence, ethics, and religious beliefs have their roots in human nature, and fundamentally, in their thought, "religion is a commitment to what is in nature." (Shahabadi, 1386 "A", 5) For this reason, he has attempted to prove and explain a multitude of divine and revelatory knowledge, including the intellectual and religious foundations and roots of jihad based on his theory of nature, to the extent that he believes that the foundations of jihad from a religious and Quranic perspective are not possible without considering.

### **1. *The Relationship Between Human Nature and Theological Evidence of Jihad***

Jihad, in the discussions of Islamic jurisprudence, is considered to be a divine decree as commanded in the Quran and Hadith, and it carries legal implications based on defensive and initiatory requirements for Muslims. However, this issue has a direct relationship with theological discussions, including the defense of monotheism against polytheism (see: Tabatabai, 1984, 2/97) and the defense of human rights against tyrants (see: Mottahari, 2015, 74).

Apart from the mentioned aspects and the evidence presented in the theological policies of theologians, jihad has its roots in human nature, which is a subject of examination and proof in theology. Ayatollah Shahabadi, in his book "Man and Fitrah," has deduced and proposed the nature of this relationship based on the central verse 30 of Surah Ar-Rum: "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know." (Quran, 30:30), which is famous as the Fitrah verse. He believes that considering the appointed nature of the term "fitrah" in the mentioned verse, which implies the obligation of the verb "to adhere," the discovery and achievement of human perfections are the responsibility of fitrah.

The concept of "fitrah" and "fitriyyat" encompasses anything that is a technical term in logic. This word, derived from "fitrah" on the pattern of "fa'alah," signifies creation, and its weight in Arabic indicates the quality of the action. Therefore, the concept of "fitrah of Allah" implies inherent qualities of existence, i.e., the necessary nature and attributes for the discovery of one's perfections (Shahabadi, 2008, p. 316).

### **2. *The Importance of Considering the Role of Human Nature in Defense***

The importance of human nature in the issue of jihad is due to the inherent characteristics of natural attributes, which include: 1. Inherent Existence in Human Nature (Shahabadi, 1387, p. 317), 2. Immunity from Error Due to its Presence and Conscience (Shahabadi, 1387, p. 317), leading individuals to pay attention to their decision-making and behavioral orientation. However, nature is different from essence; as the essentials of existence are called nature, and non-essential aspects are called nature; it is not said that nature is water, but it is said that its nature is such; so it is correct to attribute nature to God. (Shahabadi, 1386, p. 127)

### **3. *The Evidence of Nature for the Necessity of Defensive Jihad***

According to Ayatollah Shahabadi, nature commands defensive jihad for two reasons:

#### **3-1. Love of Self**

The first reason for the necessity of defensive jihad is the love of self, which is a characteristic arising from nature. Since "self" plays a central role in nature, a person loves anything similar to themselves and opposes anything unrelated or in conflict with them, arising from self-love. Therefore, according to the command of nature, anything that stands against self-love is confronted.

#### **3-2. Love of Survival**

The other reason is the love of survival, where the possessor of nature, in addition to loving their essence, desires survival. This leads to a tendency to seek self-preservation and avoid harm. This is the basis for the role of nature and the proof of defensive jihad through it.

### **4. *Types of Natural Defense***

Natural defense, due to the establishment of nature in all creatures, encompasses the entire system of existence, and creatures defend themselves for the reasons mentioned. However, the method of defense varies, and it is not limited to killing enemies. In animals, defense may involve fighting, fleeing, or even feigning death or blending in with the environment. In plants, defense involves combating anything that hinders their growth and development. In the human system, individuals stand up against anything that violates their physical, mental, or social integrity, considering it their right to defend themselves.

#### **4-1. Defense of the Human Body**

In the human defense system, a great internal war is always being waged, even when asleep. Defense of human rights and possessions, such as property and offspring, is necessary. However, if a person only defends themselves at this level and considers it necessary, this defense is ultimately animalistic. It could be said that the defense of the body is the first existential layer shared with animals, and other layers are also involved, such as the defense of the family, the defense of one's kind, and even the defense of geographical boundaries that humans share with some animals.

#### **4-2. Defense of Intellectual and Belief System Realities**

At a higher level, humans express truths in their intellectual and belief systems and consider these beliefs essential to their existence in the realm of the soul and spirit. With this perspective, anyone who imposes limitations in this realm forces humans to defend themselves and their beliefs.

It should be noted that the definition of a human determines the scope of human rights. Sometimes, definitions of humans lower them to the level of plant or animal life. For example, humans are sometimes described as having great power and authority, being able to use others for their ends, and supporting their families to the point of sacrificing their lives. This is the animalistic aspect of human life. An individual with such characteristics could also be considered a good animal, but if human life is based on the life that its nature seeks, this becomes human life. A human who responds appropriately to the call of nature is on the path to evolution. Based on this understanding of humans at each level, specific rights of possession and defense are defined for them.

### **5. *The Role and Position of the Truth of "Self" in Natural Defense***

In explaining jihad based on human nature, the most important question is how the essence and truth of a human, which requires defense, is described. To answer this question, humans must know and understand "who am I?" because the answer corrects the relationship of a person's self with the universe and leads to a precise understanding of the interactions or defense actions they should take concerning other beings. Humans establish these relationships (interaction and defense) based on their self-awareness. When the possibility of living with others exists, they form their relationships through cooperation, and where this possibility does not exist, they defend themselves for their preservation. This effort to preserve and defend oneself is the essence of jihad.

It should be noted that in response to the question "Who am I," many misconceptions have led to wars. In other words, everyone's misconception leads them to define a form of "self" and consider the defense of that form necessary, leading to the development of wars through the expansion of the concept of "self."

If "who am I" is defined in the context of the body, everything necessary and suitable for the body becomes essential, and if someone wants to stand against it and cannot cooperate with it through interaction, war, and defense become necessary, and it is necessary to stand against it. This is a minimal view of "self" and its sphere of action. However, if the concept of "self" develops and goes beyond the physical stage, for example, reaching the concept of family, and a person sees themselves as one with their family, defense of the rights of the family and what is important to the family is considered defense of oneself. Now, if "self" develops differently, such as becoming national and being defined in a geographical context, defense is also understood in the same way and becomes necessary. With this perspective, any attack on the country's "self" is an attack on the individual. So far, "family self" and "national self," although developed in different ways, were all in the realm of the body.

If "who am I" transcends the realm of the body and reaches a stage where it applies to the human psychological and spiritual system, defense of that "self" is also understood in the same context, and acceptance of matters compatible with the spirit also becomes important. Therefore, just as a human, by nature and for survival, move towards fulfilling their physical needs and deal with obstacles through interaction or aggression to overcome them, in the same way, in their internal aspect, they find potentials that go beyond material and limitations, and they see their perfection in the flourishing of these potentials and overcoming their shortcomings and limitations, moving towards refinement and making efforts to overcome obstacles.

In the realm of human thought and belief, individuals come to understand certain truths and consider those beliefs as the essence of their existence in the realm of the soul and spirit. With this perspective, anything that creates limitations for them in this realm is seen as preventing their life in this realm, and they see it as necessary to defend against it. Ayatollah Tabatabai, under the verse "And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people using others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds" (Quran, 2:251), states that repelling others from what is contrary to human interests is a natural and general principle shared between believers and non-believers. This distinction between interests and repelling the enemy may be just or unjust because if we do not accept the common nature between the believer and non-believer, the believer cannot have a nature on which to base their actions. However, the point here is that although this natural and general principle leads both believers and non-believers to defend themselves, humanity has benefited more from it than it has suffered.

Furthermore, in the interpretation of the verse "Those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, 'Our Lord is Allah.' Were it not that Allah checks the people, some using others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might" (Quran, 22:33), it is stated that although fighting is

legislated to preserve temples and repel people from one another, fighting is the last resort used to repel enemies, because to preserve the existence of some people, we will have to resort to the destruction of others. The defense of human interests and life is a natural and ongoing tradition among people, and natural traditions lead to the Almighty God. Therefore, the existence of tools for confrontation in the human body and also tools of thought shows that humans can defend themselves in many cases without resorting to war.

It is clear from this explanation that all wars throughout history have been related to the defense of one's true or imagined self, and no one claims to be warmongering. In the human system, any kind of opposition in some way returns to the defense of one's right to act in the world. However, the point here is that sometimes a person sees an imaginary and beyond-real limit for themselves; for example, a person who has a specific range of existence and rights may consider themselves the owner of others and say, "I am your most exalted lord." As a result of this false recognition, they defend their alleged rights and consider others as their slaves and captives.

What needs to be realized is that even in the realm of understanding the inner self and discovering unlimited potential, it is possible for a person to pursue the path of flourishing and overcoming shortcomings in a delusional manner and not only fail to reach perfection and happiness but also become lower than animals, or, without knowledge and certainty, follow a path and preserve a valid appearance, but internally be troubled and disbelieving, leading them into the trap of hypocrisy and duplicity. Based on this, the Almighty God states in the verse of human nature: "So direct your face toward the

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The only way to respond to the natural needs and the flourishing of human talents is to adhere to the divine religion, which the Creator of humanity has established based on the nature and disposition of humans. As explicitly stated in the verse, all humans are created with the same nature, and changes in eras, climates, and ethnicities do not lead to a change in human nature. This is what makes these divine laws valuable and unique.

## **6. The Reality of "Self" in the Quran**

The verses of the Quran convey the definition that the Almighty has of the human being at the beginning of the creation of the Prophet Adam. In these verses, Prophet Adam is introduced as a human model and as a symbol and reality that shows the ultimate goal of humanity, and towards which humans move. Therefore, the meaning of this Adam is not just an exemplary Adam, but a real Adam who is also a symbol of humanity.

Hence, this story is not just the story of Prophet Adam, but it is also the story of the creation of the vicegerent of God (perfect human) and the story of the creation of humans (the human species). When it is said, "And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority,'" (Quran, 2:30), it then introduces the successor (successive authority) and says, "And He taught Adam the names - all of them." (Quran, 2:32)

In the continuation of these verses in the blessed chapter of Al-Baqarah, we see that God commanded Prophet Adam to inform the angels of the divine names: "He said, 'O Adam, inform them of their names.'" (Quran, 2:34). When the angels became aware of their realities about the divine names and found the vastness of the existence of Prophet Adam, it was commanded that the angels prostrate to Prophet Adam. Therefore, everyone prostrated to him except Iblis, who disobeyed this command: "And [mention] when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam'; so they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers." (Quran, 2:34)

A subtle and precise point that emerges in this blessed verse is that God Almighty expresses the prostration of the angels and the refusal of Iblis in one statement so that through this, the complete recognition of the human personality is made clear. According to this statement, in the context of "self-recognition," it is understood that humans are "worshiped by the angels," and in the context of "recognizing their opposites," it is understood that humans are "hated by Satan" and in conflict with the existence of Satan. This precise human psychology in the Quran provides a clear understanding of who "I" am.

Human beings, as the vicegerent of God, and their teaching of the names and the prostration of the angels indicate their position. As the vicegerent of God, humans become connected to the Lord, because God encompasses all attributes, and considering the innate disposition placed in human existence, humans must become the vicegerent of God in all names and attributes. When the ultimate goal of human perfection is to reach this point, it becomes evident the greatness of human and the recognition of their status.

If we consider humans as the vicegerent of God in the world, it gives them a special responsibility. In the Quran, it is stated: "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him." (Quran, 45:13) or in another place, it says: "It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth." (Quran, 2:29) Now, if the potential to conquer the heavens and the earth is given to humans, firstly, there must be the possibility of conquering in the heavens and the earth, as it is a mutual relationship. Secondly, if the vicegerency of humans in the world is in this way, there must be the possibility of a connection between humans and the world, otherwise, being the vicegerent of humans is meaningless. The vicegerent must have a connection with the world in which they are supposed to be the vicegerent, so the possibility of the connection between humans and the world and its beings is necessarily present. Now, if the connection between humans and the world is possible, there must be a point of unity and commonality between humans and the world, which binds them together, and this point of unity is the same as the concept of monotheism, which humans seek to bring the multiplicity of the world to unity.

Therefore, the unity of the world is only possible through humans, and because humans are the vicegerent of God, the world also becomes an expanded existence for humans, and the rest of the events and realities are the manifestations of the vicegerent, that is, humans. If the realities of the world become manifestations of humans with this perspective, the world has expanded into the human; thus, the vicegerent is someone for whom the world is an expanded and detailed existence. Based on this, the world is called the great human, and the human is called the small world; this is the same interpretation of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) in the poem attributed to him.

However, it should be noted that after the descent, when humans intended to return to God, they had to follow the religion ordained by God. That is, after the religion comes, there are two groups in front of the religion and the manifestation of these two groups is in these two verses: "We said, 'Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. But those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - those will be the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.'" (Quran, 2:38-39) Both groups return after the descent, but the return of the second group is to the fire of Hell.

In other words, if a person remains at the level of animality, given the potential for becoming the vicegerent of God, this potential is merely for earthly life, physical needs, and sleep. If human potential is limited to these matters, it leads to bloodshed and corruption, as indicated by the angels and enmity mentioned in the verse. However, if life does not remain at the level of animal life, meaning that a person responds to the call of their innate disposition, this becomes the acceptance of repentance and the return that results in the initial descent being named human descent.

God describes the possibility of return at the stage of human descent as follows: "We have certainly created man in the best of stature; Then We return him to the lowest of the low." (Quran, 95:4-5) This indicates that humans are created with the best structure and potential, and then they are placed in a state of non-existence and non-activity so that they can respond to the call of their innate disposition and return toward God. Therefore, repentance causes the descent of Adam to become human and to emerge from the stage of animal descent. Here, repentance means that a person does not only see themselves as a body to return their attention to, but it means returning to God through divine guidance and reaching perfection.

Therefore, the reality of who I am is the same as the position of the vicegerent of God, whom God has realized all perfections for through the teaching of the names, for all complete humans and the potential for all humans. The manifestation of the divine names and attributes and the teaching of the names is the highest perfection that humans have achieved, and nothing higher can be conceived. With this perspective, descent becomes the true antithesis of me, and the vicegerent of God becomes the true me.

All love and hatred are based on this "true me". This is why religion seeks to lead humans to the knowledge of their true selves, and for this reason, it expresses the system of their spiritual self and strives for the expansion of human selves. What causes a person to be deceived by Satan is that Satan shows them their illusory self and presents it as their true self, while in reality, it is nothing but "a mirage in a lowland which they supposed to be water until, when they come to it, they find it is nothing." (Quran, 24:39) Therefore, all relationships of the "self" are based on self-awareness and the defense of the "self" becomes necessary.

During this "expansion of the self" and the expansion of the love of essence, a person reaches a point where they find that their essence is identical to the Creator. They see that divine love is their love. Based on this, if someone truly love themselves, their self-love leads them to the love of God; because they see that before belonging to themselves, they belong to God: "Indeed, Allah intervenes between a man and his heart." (Quran, 8:24) Therefore, the perfect human, their self-love is drawn to the love of the Creator. Here, the reality of their "self" becomes something else. All the worlds of existence and divine creatures are their "self"; because they are connected to the Creator and there is nothing else and no other in front of them.

In the view of a person who does not believe in the afterlife, jihad is considered suicide, and enjoining good is seen as destroying their honor and interests. This person sees everything from a worldly perspective and only possesses materialistic intelligence. But for someone who believes in the afterlife and has faith in it, when they measure the short life of the world against the eternal life of the afterlife, they see that their ratio is zero to infinity, and any number compared to infinity becomes zero. Spending zero to obtain infinity and having a relationship with infinity is valuable. With this perspective, if they are killed and become a martyr and leave everything behind, in the face of the infinity they seek, what they have lost is nothing; because the life of the soul and spirit has a higher priority and perfection compared to the life of the body. The body of the martyr also becomes transient, but we believe in "Do not think of those who have been killed in the way of Allah as dead." and that death has only become an incident for their body, and their soul and spirit have a life with their Lord: "Rather, they are alive, with their Lord, being provided." (Quran, 3:169)

## **7. The Innate Position of Defending the Truth of Human Realization in the Sovereignty of Monotheism**

As long as man is not corrupted, he is naturally inclined to worship God and has an innate relationship with monotheism, seeking it as a rational principle. The fact that man is inquisitive in his system of existence is a rational argument for a natural system. Furthermore, through conscience, one can also reach this natural system. Of course, some rational arguments for monotheism are also evident and by human nature. All humans are seekers of monotheism, and no one directs their existence towards multiplicity, except out of neglect. From the beginning of history, even if people turned to different masters: "Are multiple lords better, or God, the One, the Prevailing?" (Yusuf, 39) they were seeking to get closer to "God," but they would err in their application. Of course, proving the innate nature of Islam requires a detailed discussion, but certainly, devotion to God is hidden in human nature. Now that we have accepted the innate nature of monotheism in human existence as a basis, accepting this basis will have implications in the social dimension, especially in the discussion of jihad. If monotheism is to be established, the sovereignty of monotheism must be realized, and the rights of a monotheistic person, especially if the polytheists are in power, cannot be fulfilled. This reality has been present throughout the time of the prophets, and they have strived to achieve it by preserving the ranks of jihad.

If someone obstructs the realization of this innate right, defending this right becomes necessary, and fighting against it becomes obligatory. In other words, now that we have recognized that the natural life of man is dependent on his social life, the right of human disposition has expanded into the sphere of society, and defending this right becomes necessary in the social dimension; because human nature is an accepted and definite matter, and the religious system also essentially conforms to this nature. Therefore, human disposition in the natural system and the perfections of his innate nature, which is becoming religious and adhering to religion, is a natural right for man, and defending it is an established right for him. (Tabatabai, 1363, 2/33) On this basis, the prophets called on people to rise against oppression; because disbelief in the tyrant takes precedence over belief in God: "So whoever disbelieves in the taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold." (Al-Baqarah, 256) Belief in Allah is related to the realization of the sovereignty of faith, and the realization of the sovereignty of faith in Allah is achieved through disbelief in the tyrant and rising against it. Of course, this matter is also hierarchical. In whatever rank a person wants to accept faith, they must first accept disbelief in the tyrant at that rank. Therefore, the realization of human life is considered in terms of the ranks of disbelief in the tyrant and the ranks of faith.

Also, with this perspective, if human life is that natural system of human life and the natural system of human life is based on the establishment of the natural social life, and the natural social life is also based on the establishment of religion in society, the establishment of religion in society will be the duty of every human being; because nature is common among all humans. Therefore, defending the realms of social life is also necessary as an innate right for the development of the individual. Thus, the ultimate goal of jihad in the divine system is different from what is seen in other systems and has a completely different nature. In divine jihad, we understand the ultimate goal to be to place oneself in the path of God. That is, to reach a point where the development of our "self," its reality, and its limits, align with the divine religion, and to consider defending the religion as defending oneself. As mentioned earlier, anyone who finds themselves in this valley does so because they see themselves and the divine religion as one, and they consider any violation of the sanctity of monotheism as a violation of their "self," so their jihad is a defensive jihad, not an offensive one. Generally, with this perspective, offensive jihad will no longer have any meaning. Various interpretations have been presented regarding the ultimate goal of jihad in the Quran. In the Quran, in some verses, the end of the struggle against polytheism and the dominance of faith in the world is considered the endpoint of the war. (Al-Baqarah, 193)



## **Conclusion**

In this study, we analyzed the movement in the material world and the reasons for the necessity of defending creatures, and we concluded that the defense of oneself, which is the basis of jihad, exists in the nature, instinct, and disposition of all beings, relying on the love of existence as a natural, instinctive, and innate command, and that humans, with the knowledge they possess of themselves, defend themselves against threats and obstacles for their survival. However, it should be noted that the definition of man determines the limits of human rights. Sometimes, definitions of man can reduce him to the level of plant or animal life. On this basis, in explaining jihad based on nature, the first step is to clarify the essence and reality of the human "self," which requires defense, so that man can recognize his true nature; because this knowledge corrects the relationship between man and the world of existence and leads to a precise understanding of the interactions or defenses against other creatures. Therefore, religion tries to bring man to the knowledge of his true nature, and for this reason, it expresses the true nature of the human "self" as his spiritual system and seeks to develop the "self" of humans. What makes a man fall for the deception of Satan is that Satan shows his "illusory self" as his true nature.

The true "self" of a human being is the divine vicegerency, in which God has realized all perfections through the teaching of names for complete humans and has made it possible for all humans. The manifestation of names and divine attributes is the highest perfection that humans strive to achieve. Now, if someone obstructs the realization of this innate right, defending this right becomes necessary, and fighting against it becomes obligatory; because nature is an accepted and definite matter for humans, and the religious system, in short, complies with this nature. Therefore, man's possession of the natural system and the perfections of his innate nature, which is becoming religious and adhering to religion, is a natural right for man, and defending it is an established right for him. As a result, the position of jihad in the divine system is completely different from war in other systems. In divine jihad, we understand the ultimate goal to be to place oneself in the path of God; that is, to reach a point where the development of our "self," its reality, and its limits align with the divine religion, and to consider defending the religion as defending oneself. Whatever threat exists for this truth, human nature instinctively confronts it.

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