



Sheikh Tantawi and Nobel Prize 'In Search of the Humane'

AS mentioned in the last week's article, 70 years ago, in the year 1939, Sheikh Tantawi Gawhari was the first Egyptian to be nominated for the Nobel Prize. The claim for nomination was based on his two published books: *In Search of the Humane* and *Political Dreams*. In the previous article we gave a quick review of the *Political Dreams* and now we'll present "In search of the Humane" that was published in 1910.

This book was inspired by an astronomical event that shook humanity at the time and made many wonder about the truth behind their existence; the passage of the comet Halley in May 1910 near earth. This event takes place every 75 years, but this time rumours spread that Halley's tail might touch earth which in effect was going to inevitably bring life on this planet to an end.

Sheikh Tantawi imagined a dialogue between an inhabitant of Halley who decided to visit the earth and himself. The dialogue started with a momentous question from the alien: "Where is humanity?" The alien, struck by the human behaviour, was wondering why humans were behaving more like animals when they were supposed to represent the highest species on earth?! Why was there no cooperation between individuals and nations though it even existed among animals?! And he questioned, along with Sheikh Tantawi, whether there were means to actually bring nations together for the benefit of everyone.

It was a great astonishment for the alien to find out that although human beings were surrounded by such a well-ordered universe and were subjected to a series of wise people and prophets, yet their behaviour was more oriented towards savage life lacking both wisdom and good reasoning. He attributed this to the long history of the battle of survival between humans and animals that made humans acquainted with animal ways more than anything, resulting in the acquirement of some essential animalistic traits for survival needs like the anger of the lion for example.

In the discussion, Sheikh Tantawi played the advocate for the human behaviour, affirming that no matter how savage human beings seem to be, we still have among us prophets, scientists and wise men. The alien's answer to that was: "Yet you have challenged your prophets and you forced your wise men to follow the opinion of the public. And though you have access to knowledge and wisdom that can raise you up to the level of angels, you human beings prefer to live with savage features". The question raised during the conversation: "Where is the human being today from the perfect humanity?"

Comparing humans to animals, the alien was bewildered by wars. "Never", he said, "did we see a group of lions attack and kill another group of lions, yet this happens quite often between human beings! They provoke war among themselves (the same species) and they kill each other". The debate continued and it always ended with the question "Where is the humane?" Finally, at the end of the book they try to put together a vision of a real human mutual understanding that would help nations to co-exist.

To download Sheikh Gawhari's books, you can visit the website: www.tantawi-gawhari.net