

Research Article

Hermeneutics of Religious Alienation, and Its Spiritual Cure

Ghallab Elew Hamada Osman* 

Department of Philosophy, Sohag University, Sohag, Egypt

Abstract

Religious alienation and its spiritual remedies represent significant contemporary religious and philosophical concerns. This research endeavors to elucidate the concept of religious alienation, explore its epistemological contexts, and analyze its diverse interpretations within Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thought. Furthermore, it investigates the manifestations and associated pathologies of religious alienation, alongside approaches to its spiritual treatment. This study seeks to address several key questions: What constitutes religious alienation, and how has it evolved? What are its primary epistemological contexts? How has religious alienation been interpreted across Jewish, Christian, and Islamic intellectual traditions? What are the observable manifestations of religious alienation, and what are the significant pathologies it can engender? Finally, what constitutes an effective spiritual treatment for this phenomenon? The research will primarily employ hermeneutical and analytical methodologies. Key findings indicate that the hermeneutical extremism of religious alienation fosters the phenomenon of atheism. This is because the actualization of religious alienation serves as compelling evidence for the perceived irrationality of faith, in addition to conceptualizing God as unjust and sacrificing free will. Such outcomes contradict the fundamental tenets of any monotheistic religion. These pathologies pose a significant threat to human security and can only be mitigated by refuting such extremism and fanaticism while simultaneously promoting humanism.

Keywords

Hermeneutics, Religious Alienation, Jewish Thought, Christian Thought, Islamic Thought, Manifestations and Ailments, Spiritual Cure

1. Introduction

The problem of hermeneutical extremism of "Religious Alienation" can be addressed by answering several questions: What is the concept of alienation? How has it evolved? What are its main contexts? What interpretations have occurred concerning religious alienation? What are the manifestations of religious alienation? What are the most significant illnesses it can cause? and what is its spiritual cure?

2. The Concept of Alienation and Its Various Contexts

2.1. The Concept of Alienation

The term "*alienation*" in ancient European languages—corresponding to the English word "Alienation" or its French counterpart "Aliénation"—is derived from the Latin word "*Alienatio*," which is a noun stemming from the Latin verb "*Alienare*," meaning to transfer, deliver, or remove. This verb, in turn, is taken from another Latin word, "*Alienus*," meaning "belonging to another," itself derived from

*Corresponding author: ghallab_alabnody@art.sohag.edu.eg (Ghallab Elew Hamada Osman)

Received: 4 June 2025; **Accepted:** 18 June 2025; **Published:** 3 September 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

"Alius," meaning "the other" or "another". In Arabic, the word "ghurbah" implies being "other" and has appeared in two contexts: *religious and psychological-social*, with meanings not significantly different from its Latin origin. From its earliest uses in ancient Arabic heritage, the word "ightirab" (alienation) had a dual meaning, denoting both positive (acceptable) and negative (rejected) elements at the same time [6]. This contrasts with the connotations of the term in both ancient and modern European languages, which refer only to negative meanings, with no positive implications at all. This lack of positive connotations in European thought has contributed to the *extreme interpretation of the concept*.

The concept of alienation also appeared in *Greek thought*, particularly with *Plato* and his theory of Forms, where he believed that the soul became alienated from the gods when it fell into sin. Then *Aristotle* revealed that the essence of alienation lies in the exploitation of wealth, when people view money as an end in itself, deviating from its nature as a means to satisfy natural needs, thereby disturbing social life. When means transform into ends, humans experience alienation [9]. Alienation in *Augustine* refers to "*Alienation Mentis*" [2]. *Hegel* is credited with introducing this concept into the field of philosophy, defining alienation as the process by which the mind objectifies itself through thought. *Marx* later introduced it into social theory, where through collective labor, humans transform their natural environment. Despite humans creating the social world, this world becomes "alien" to them, not owned by them, but rather owned by other things—things humans themselves created, which then became independent and dominated them and the world, such as: the priesthood, money, and rigid ideas linked to specific interests. It also becomes impossible for humans to recognize their own existence independently, thus suffering an alienation that can only be overcome by knowledge liberated from ulterior motives [5].

Furthermore, there are two types of alienation in the twentieth century concerning relationships with religious institutions: "*alienation from religion*," which refers to the rejection and rebellion against coercive religious institutions, especially in their attempts to resist change. This tendency is reflected among some modern intellectuals, as seen in the works of *Shibli Shumayyil*, *Al-Kawakibi*, *Khalil Gibran*, and others. The other is "*alienation within religion*," meaning that a devout believer attributes their inner powers to external forces and surrenders their destiny independently. This is reflected in the tendencies of some *Salafi* movements since their inception, particularly in the writings of *Ibn Taymiyyah* [4]. Having briefly touched upon some philosophers' understanding of alienation, we must now examine the main contexts in which alienation is discussed.

2.2. Epistemological Contexts of the Concept of Alienation

Alienation appears in many *epistemological contexts*, the

most important of which are: *legal, psychological, social, and religious contexts*. Consequently, the semantic meaning of alienation differs according to the context in which it appears.

Richard Schacht is one of the most prominent researchers who indicated that the term alienation refers to four meanings: first, the *illegal transfer of property* from one person to another or from one people to another; second, the *loss of mental faculties or absence of consciousness*; third, the *deterioration of friendly relations* between individuals; and fourth, the *estrangement of humans from God*. Some historians attribute this type of religious alienation to the experiences of *Paul*, *Luther*, and *Calvin* in the history of Christian development [4].

In the *legal context*, the concept of "alienation" denotes the transfer of something from one person to another. That is, what belongs to me becomes the property of another. This transfer of ownership can be either voluntary, according to human freedom, or coercive, where freedom is absent. This duality lies at the heart of the dialectical nature of alienation. Moreover, this term for alienation implies the transferability or saleability of objects and possessions, including human beings. Thus, this legal meaning of alienation includes "*reification*," meaning humans become mere commodities or things available for sale or purchase [8].

In the *psychological context*, it refers to an individual who loses consciousness and is unable to use their mental and sensory abilities to communicate with others and express themselves, experiencing an absence of awareness and a focus on a specific thing that consumes them even from themselves. This meaning is commonly used in psychiatry to describe conditions that extend beyond psychological disorders to mental illness.

In the *sociological context*, it indicates a person's feeling of separation from the social whole to which they belong, reflecting the individual's position in society as a result of the isolation or ostracism imposed by the latter due to deviation from prevailing beliefs and traditions. Thus, the alienated person is one who has departed from social norms [9]. As for the *religious context*, alienation means the *separation of humans from God*, due to sin and committing transgressions. The term alienation has appeared in Latin translations and commentaries of the Bible, especially in texts discussing the idea of sin. Considering these different contexts of the term alienation, it can be said that they converge and share one meaning: the *separation of humans either from something, or from reason and the senses, or from others, or from God* [5]. The context we will focus on here is the religious context, in light of the extremist interpretations of the concept of alienation.

3. Religious Interpretations of Religious Alienation

Religious scholars have used the term "alienation" to de-

note separation, but with different connotations. The first meaning refers to the *state of human separation from God*. The second meaning refers to the *alienation of humans from their bodies* as an impediment to God, because the spirit is against the body. The third meaning refers to the *separation of humans from others*. The fourth meaning refers to *alienation from fleeting worldly organizations* that fall outside the scope of spiritual institutions, on the basis that attachment to the false world is a separation from God [9]. The traces of the concept of alienation can be traced in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic writings.

3.1. Alienation in Jewish Thought

The earliest historical roots of the experience of alienation lie in the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, their disobedience to God, and their descent from heaven to earth, as mentioned in the Old Testament. Regarding the story of Adam's creation and Eve's formation and separation, it is stated that God took one of Adam's ribs and filled its place with flesh, and from the rib, God built a woman. So, the creation of Eve is the first separation in the universe. The second separation lies in Adam's descent from Paradise to Earth, which is the first alienation from God, for Adam disobeyed his Lord, and so God expelled him from the Garden of Eden to work on Earth. Hassan Hammad also indicates that other texts in the "Book of Psalms" convey the meaning of separation from God, as stated in Psalm 54: "1 Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth. 3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them." ([Psalm 54: 1-3]). And in Psalm 144: "11 Rescue me and save me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths speak lies, whose right hands are deceitful" ([Psalm 144: 11]). The intended meaning here is separation from God. As for the idea of "idolatry," Hassan Hammad points out that the Old Testament in "Psalms" described idols and their makers as impotent [5].

For example, Psalm 115 states: "4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 5 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. 6 They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. 7 They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. 8 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" ([Psalm 115: 4-8]). And Psalm 135 states: "15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by human hands. 16 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. 17 They have ears, but cannot hear; there is no breath in their mouths. 18 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" ([Psalm 135: 15-18]).

The idea of "idolatry" mentioned in the sacred texts is a fundamental concept in alienation. An idol is merely a human creation, and in human worship of it, there is a separation of the creator from their self and a loss of it. Humans become

worshippers of something they made themselves, thus transforming themselves into objects and imbuing the created object with their own attributes. Consequently, instead of realizing themselves as creative human beings, they find themselves subjected to a rigid object of their own making, and thus become alienated from their lives and their creative potential [9]. Furthermore, alienation defined by idolatry is the *conscious or unconscious alienation of humans from themselves* when they resort to worshipping objects, or when certain personal goals take over their being, making them "blind" to seeing other people and the world around them [2].

3.2. Alienation in Christian Thought

Religious alienation in Christianity is based on the separation of humans from God, meaning it relates to sin and committing transgressions. Sin is not merely a violation of God's law and commands, but in its essence, it is separation from God [9]. As stated in the New Testament, Peter says: "I urge you as foreigners and exiles to abstain from fleshly lusts" [1 Peter 2: 11], and he says: "Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear" [1 Peter 1: 17], meaning that human life on earth is a life of alienation from God. Furthermore, in the New Testament, Paul's letter to the Ephesians in chapter 4 explains the meaning of alienation, where it is found to be a state of spiritual death that signifies alienation from God due to transgressions, sins, and iniquities. Therefore, God calls humanity to move from a state of death to the spirit of existence. The "strangers" in the Bible are those who have moved away from God and walked the path of falsehood. Thus, alienation here implies separation from God [6].

Schacht also referred to the ancient Latin translations of the Bible to prove the existence of the "word" alienation. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul describes the Gentiles by saying: "18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts" ([Ephesians 4: 18]). Here, Schacht refers the phrase "separated from the life of God" to one of the ancient Latin translations, namely: "Alienatae Avita Dei," meaning "alienated from the life of God." The word alienation in this context signifies separation and disconnection from God, or falling from divine grace into sins and transgressions. Similarly, Calvin used the Latin word (Alienatio) when explaining the first and second verses of chapter 2 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where Paul addresses the Ephesians, saying: "1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" ([Ephesians 2: 1-2]). Calvin commented: "Spiritual death is nothing but the alienation of the soul from God...". Mueller also addressed the Latin word (Alienation) found in Latin translations and commentaries of the Bible, taking the twelfth verse of chapter 2 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, in which he addresses them saying: "12 remember

that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world" ([Ephesians 2: 12]). He traces them back to their Greek origin, where we find two words: the first (*apallatrioomai*) meaning "I am alienated from," and the second (*politeia*) meaning "citizenship rights or homeland." When the Bible was translated into modern European languages, translators used these words indicating alienation, which were originally derived from the Latin word (*alienatio*). In the English translation of the Bible, we find the word (alienation) and the verb (alienate), in the French translation the word (*aliénation*) and the verb (*aliéner*), and in the German translation the word (*Entfremdung*) and the verb (*entfremden*). All of them in this religious context mean the separation of man from God when he fell from divine grace and committed sin [5].

Therefore, what has been reported about alienation in early theological writings either means cutting the connection between humans and God—this separation resulting from human sins and transgressions—or human worship of idols to which they attribute, in their belief, divinity; meaning that humans become alienated from themselves to the extent of believing that the creature is originally the creator [5].

We believe that alienation in Jewish and Christian interpretations has entrenched the concept of religious alienation, making humans distant from God, and requiring a mediator to intercede on their behalf. Direct interaction with God is not permissible due to the sins committed by the first parents. The mediator here is represented by religious scholars, which entrenches their power and control over people's lives, in addition to draining their spiritual and material energies. This also leads to the growth of dominance, resulting in various forms of oppression, tyranny, and enslavement, which no religion approves of whatsoever. Accordingly, this *extremist hermeneutical interpretation of the sin incident* would turn religion into a tool for achieving the interests of specific ideologies with material, social, and political objectives.

3.3. Alienation in Islamic Thought

The word "alienation" did not appear in the Holy Quran, although the state of "*human separation from God*" was clearly expressed by the Quran in the story of the creation of Adam and his descent from Paradise to Earth, as mentioned in *Surah Al-Baqarah*. By tracing this story, we can identify three states of human existence—according to Mahmoud Ragab. The first state concerns the creation of Adam before he approached the forbidden tree. This first state of human existence reveals three characteristics: *divinity, knowledge, and power*. "Divinity" relates to the essence of humanity created by God in His image according to His essence: "...The nature of Allah upon which He has created mankind..." ([Quran 30: 30]). And because humans are characterized by divinity, God commanded the angels to worship him: "And [mention, O Muhammad], 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]). As for "knowledge," it relates to the knowledge God bestowed upon humans, their knowledge of their Creator and Lord, and also of the world: "And He taught Adam all the names..." ([Quran 2: 31]). "Power" is represented in human control and dominion over the earth and sky, and their control over birds, animals, water, and air: "And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority...' ([Quran 2: 30]) [6].

The second state relates to Adam and Eve approaching the forbidden tree. Here we find two phases: The first is the phase of *clear knowledge of their nakedness*, and the *beginning of separation from God*. Instead of love, shame appeared and took its place, and one of its consequences was the emergence of division and duality, as Adam and Eve began to see themselves as male and female. Also, that deep rift appeared between God and man. Adam lost the first—original—state of his existence, and left what he was before, when he disobeyed his Lord. For this, he fell prey to despair, and fear overcame him. The second phase reveals God's help to Adam and His not abandoning him in his distress and anxiety through His love for him and teaching him words of repentance: "Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" ([Quran 2: 37]). Thus, God cares for Adam and forgives his sin. The third state begins when Adam and Eve are commanded to "descend" from Paradise: "...and We said, 'Go down, some of you to others as enemies. And for you on earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time'" ([Quran 2: 36]). Now the process of expulsion from Paradise is complete, and man has become separated from God, bringing about a comprehensive change, a pivotal transition: from love to shame, from unity to duality and then multiplicity, from tranquility to anxiety, from trust in God to pain and suffering. But God's love is boundless, and His mercy is vast; He extends hope to man and promises guidance: "We said, 'Go down from it, all of you. And if guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve'" ([Quran 2: 38]). This guidance promised by God, at the dawn of humanity, and after Adam's fall and expulsion from Paradise, is a salvation for those who follow it, and guidance is actually realized in historical time through revelation [6].

Therefore, according to the Quranic perception, man does not exist as cursed or condemned, but rather as existing in a crisis. The three existential states or experiences that appear separate yet are actually connected to each other are: *nearness to God, disobedience to God, and separation from God*. And the three types of souls that the Quran has always spoken about are: the *enjoining soul (An-Nafs al-Ammarah)*, the *self-reproaching soul (An-Nafs al-Lawwamah)*, and the *tranquil soul (An-Nafs al-Mutma'innah)*. And the three realms of existence: the heavens, the earth, and what is between them. Man became alienated from God when he disobeyed His

command, descended from heaven, and became existent on earth, living in a crisis, awaiting God's help and kindness until He guides him. This is about man, so what about God? God never abandons man in his ordeal; He encompasses him with vast mercy, that is, boundless, limitless love. If man has become alienated from God, then God has not become alienated from man. God is close to man, closer to him than his jugular vein. Just as God is close to man, He is at the same time distant, for He is an absolute and transcendent being, whom neither eyes nor minds can perceive [6]. Thus, we find that the interpretation of alienation in Islamic thought, compared to Jewish and Christian interpretations, is *more rational in understanding and interpretation*, and it imbues humans with their value, individuality, and independence, and does not make them mere followers subject to the opinions of religious scholars. This, in turn, eliminates many manifestations and ailments of alienation.

It is worth clarifying here that alienation, viewed from the perspective of heavenly religions, where it signifies a *separation from God and a deviation from God's path*, or is synonymous with sin, error, and idolatry. Alienation in this sense differs from what *Feuerbach* and *Marx* intended, who held extremely violent stances towards Judaism and Christianity, and indeed religion in general. In their view, religion is a domain in and through which humans lose themselves, and by which they become alienated from their real existence. However, despite this difference, there is a common element: *separation from what is considered the origin and source*. In the view of religions, it is God; in the view of these philosophers, it is reality and humanity. Furthermore, religious alienation, whether in sacred texts or among these philosophers who do not believe in them, is unacceptable, because by it, humans become subject to something other than what is considered the origin. Therefore, the focus has been on *human liberation*, i.e., conquering this type of alienation through methods and means that differ from one religion to another, and from one philosopher to another [3].

4. Manifestations and Ailments of Religious Alienation

Religious alienation has many manifestations, the most important of which is *loss of human trust and belief in God's unresponsiveness*, leading to a state of disappointment and a belief in God's inability to change things, and that God has not done them justice from oppression. Therefore, alienated individuals tend to move away from the spirit of God, and suffer from *despair, loss of hope, and dissatisfaction*. *Feuerbach* indicates that in a state of alienation from God, humans believe their Lord is unwilling to help them, free them from their ordeal, or achieve their goals, leading to their distancing from Him, and a feeling of *inferiority, loss, and isolation*. *Smith* points out that religiously alienated individuals feel a *loss of meaning*, that God is unjust, and that divine justice does not

exist, in addition to feeling anger towards God and abandoning all religious worship. *O'Brien* believes that alienation from God is represented by the individual's feeling that God has moved away from them in their time of great need and has not offered help or assistance [3].

A group of researchers also presented some *negative emotional traits* that appear in individuals suffering from alienation. *Berg* indicated that those alienated from God complain of feelings of *guilt, anger, resentment, and fear of death*. *Fontana* and *Rosenheck* noted that individuals who show a negative shift in their religious beliefs face pathological challenges to their beliefs such as *meaninglessness, pain, deteriorating mental health, and high levels of disability*. Similarly, a study by *Caldeira, Carvalho, and Vieira* on a number of cancer patients who were also religiously alienated found that they felt *depression, low body immunity, weak ability to face life, and began to withdraw from their families and friends*. Furthermore, *Ehman* identified seven pathological characteristics in religiously alienated individuals: *discontinuation of religious practices and social activities, inner conflict about the meaning and purpose of life, feeling of injustice, despair and hopelessness, withdrawal from social relationships, sadness, and surrender to reality* [3].

Most psychological studies agree that the manifestations of alienation from God can be crystallized into four: *"transformations in images of God," "existential loneliness," "religious skepticism," and "spiritual isolation."* "Transformations in images of God" often appear after an individual experiences a painful and shocking incident that their individual strength alone could not effectively confront, leading them to feel guilt and blame others and spiritual forces for not helping them.

"Existential loneliness" is manifested in the individual's feeling of *insignificance, shallowness, and emptiness in their material and social existence*. Through this, the individual feels lost and weak in the face of the challenge of evil, pressures, and life's difficulties. They also feel eternally punished by God, and that divine mercy has vanished towards them. Therefore, they become indifferent and uncaring about it, and their faith in other things may become stronger than their faith in God's existence, opening a path towards *atheism*. "Religious skepticism" represents another manifestation of the feeling of alienation from God, where the alienated person begins to *re-examine many religious values, beliefs, and acts of worship*. This skepticism appears in the extent of their usefulness in achieving their desires and their security and salvation from all evil. Since the alienated person begins to lose faith, they abandon many religious rituals and refrain from practicing them diligently or abandon them entirely. This skepticism may also extend to lead the alienated person on a path different from their previous religious life, as it may lead them to *doubt God's existence* and the evidence that confirms it. The alienated person also directs a set of questions to themselves, such as: Does the God I believe in deserve my worship? Is my religion fake? Is there another religion more worthy of worship than mine? and so on. "Spiritual isolation"

begins at the most severe stages of alienation, appearing in the alienated person's feeling of loneliness and separation from their coreligionists with whom they live. They feel that they do not belong to them, that they are strangers to them, and that their thoughts and beliefs do not align with theirs. Therefore, they begin to isolate themselves from others, not participating in religious and social events, disliking their presence with them, and attempting to discuss the usefulness of their religious ideas and what they have achieved for them [3]. Through careful consideration of the manifestations of the feeling of religious alienation, we believe that humans often suffer from many diseases such as *suicide, atheism, terrorism*, and other illnesses that can lead individuals to lose the very sense of life itself.

5. The Spiritual Cure for Religious Alienation

As for the treatment of this religious alienation, a group of researchers has attempted to develop programs and recommendations on how to *restore an individual's trust in their Lord*, repair their spiritual relationship with Him, and enable them to overcome this ordeal successfully. Among these programs, *Foster* outlined a set of steps, which include helping the individual with the ordeal they are suffering from, trying to convince them anew of the importance of their spiritual values in overcoming their burdens and pressures, gradually and positively engaging in them, and making them live in a comfortable spiritual atmosphere. Similarly, *Haase* recommends that repairing the spiritual relationship in those who have experienced painful experiences is achieved through providing *existential well-being*, making them feel that they are treated kindly and live with dignity and honesty. This helps the individual find meaning in life, provides hope, and raises self-esteem. Although the two previous researchers emphasize providing comfort and existential well-being for the alienated individual, *Naray Nasamy* recommended a very important point for changing the life of the spiritually alienated individual. He believes that change begins by helping the individual *overcome their pathological fears*, making them feel divine justice anew, convincing them of the importance and benefit of the harmful experiences they have gone through in developing their personality, overcoming future ordeals, and encouraging them to resume formal religious activities such as prayer and attending places of worship. *Lloyd-Richards* also developed the "*Management of Spiritual Distress*" program, which emphasizes dealing with a person's fears and irrational thoughts, answering their existential questions, providing a life of trust, developing psychological and social skills, helping the individual accept spiritual concepts and values anew, in addition to practicing religious activities, and encouraging individuals to talk to religious scholars and discuss spiritual issues with them. *K. I. Wachholtz* indicated that such programs are statistically significant

in restoring individuals' spiritual experiences and tolerating and managing psychological pain well, as the level of anxiety decreased among individuals suffering from religious alienation, their spiritual experiences developed, and they became skilled at how to invest them in their daily lives, and they began to feel happiness and existential well-being again [3].

Such ailments can also be treated by developing what is known as "*Psycho Immunity*," which is a person's ability to face crises and afflictions, endure hardships and calamities, and resist the resulting thoughts and feelings of anger, resentment, hostility, revenge, despair, helplessness, and pessimism. There are several processes through which an individual's psychological immunity can be activated, including *contentment instead of discontent, optimism instead of pessimism, patience instead of impatience, gratitude instead of ingratitude, love instead of enmity, forgiveness instead of revenge, truthfulness instead of lying, remembrance (of God) instead of heedlessness, and reliance (on God) instead of dependency*. Also, by developing "*spiritual needs*," God has placed within humans needs that mental health scientists call "needs for religion" or "spiritual needs" that drive them to seek a God whom they glorify, sanctify, associate with, seek refuge in, and strive to please through worship. Needs for religion are linked to the spiritual dimension of mental health, which prompts humans to worship God and seek refuge in Him in good times and bad, finding in Him protection, care, forgiveness, mercy, sustenance, etc., thus feeling security and tranquility, and finding in their existence with God strength and determination to face pressures and calamities [1]. Especially in the case of atheism, a connection can be made between *faith in God and human hope*, and this hope relates to human destiny and happiness in this world without directly addressing the higher creative cause of humanity, but it can ultimately be shown that hope in God includes affirming God, who is good for humanity [7].

6. Conclusions

The concept of "alienation" is one of the concepts that has been of great interest to many theologians and philosophers, both ancient and modern. In its simplest meaning, alienation is "*separation, distance, and discontinuation of communication, whether voluntary or involuntary*." Its connotations and meanings have varied according to its contexts of use. There is economic alienation, which Marx was interested in; political alienation, which social contract philosophers were interested in; social alienation, which Durkheim was interested in; psychological alienation, which Freud was interested in; and so on. As for the concept of "*religious alienation*," it is: "*the dissolution of the trustworthiness of connection and communication between humans and God*." Religious alienation is closely linked to monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—in general, and to the incident of original sin that appeared in each of them in particular. It was mentioned in the "Old Testament" in the second and third

chapters of "Genesis," as well as in the "New Testament" in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter five, and also in the "Quran" in Surah Al-Baqarah. It is worth clarifying that the holy books share in presenting the events of this incident, even if they differ in the nature of these events.

This incident generally affirms that *Adam (peace be upon him) committed a sin*, disobeyed his Lord's commands, and yielded to Eve, who in turn was tempted by Satan, so God brought them down from heaven to earth. The problem is not in the sin Adam committed, but rather, the real problem lies in the *extremism and hermeneutical exaggeration* in interpreting, understanding, and explaining the incident of that sin, by claiming there is an original sin committed by Adam and inherited by all humanity from Adam until the Day of Judgment. For this reason, atonement was deemed necessary, so the proponents of each religion began to engage in a kind of *exaggeration and extremism* in the mechanism for their followers to atone for that sin, which leads to extremely dangerous consequences even for the religion itself, because no heavenly religion has ever stated this. The reason for this is an attempt to make humans subject to the authority of religious scholars, as they alone hold human salvation, which contradicts the logic of human natural reason.

Such *hermeneutical extremism* was manifested in both *Saint Paul and Augustine* when they interpreted the inheritance of sin as biological inheritance. This extreme understanding and interpretation will lead to extremely dangerous consequences, which are the *entrenchment of the idea of human religious alienation*, their isolation from their Creator, and the severance of communication between them. Human happiness will not be achieved except through the existence of a savior in every time and place through whom the process of reconciliation and reconnection between humans and their Lord takes place. This destroys the act of personal communication between the Creator and the created, and this is something that can only be removed by giving rational understanding new connotations to both terms and texts to achieve a moderate interpretation and rational understanding of each, on the one hand, and trying to revive the divine light that God instilled in the heart of every human being, on the other. If the state of religious alienation has occurred as a result of the extremism of some in understanding and interpreting religious texts, this is due either to these extremists conforming to their own ideologies or attempting to harmonize the texts with what the temporal and spatial context imposes.

Furthermore, the state of religious alienation is closely linked to many forms of alienation that have become widespread in our contemporary world, such as political alienation, economic alienation, social alienation, environmental alienation, psychological alienation, etc. The increase in such types of alienation can often lead to the growth of religious alienation. When humans live in a state of isolation that is supported by most of the political, economic, social, environmental, and psychological situations in which humans live, this negatively reflects on their psychological and mental state, leading to catastrophic

results that threaten human security at all levels. The state of religious alienation experienced by contemporary humans often takes a dual form; sometimes it appears openly, especially when its owner declares it, and sometimes it appears covertly, especially in daily practices without declaration.

The growth of such extremism can lead to extremely dangerous consequences for contemporary human life, foremost among them the emergence of psychological diseases such as (suicide) and intellectual diseases such as (atheism). As for suicide, we find that humans live in a state of religious alienation according to the extremism in its interpretation or understanding in a distorted way, which results in a pessimistic, despairing tendency within humans about the futility of life, loss of security, psychological disturbance, emotional instability, and loss of inner and spiritual tranquility, etc. Humans lose the taste of life, and in this state, it is depicted to them that they are far from God's companionship and care. What is the benefit of life as long as humans are alienated from God on the one hand and God is angry with humans on the other hand? The result of this is suicide.

Moreover, the hermeneutical extremism of religious alienation contributes to the growth of the phenomenon of "atheism," because the realization of religious alienation is clear evidence of the irrationality of faith, in addition to the conception of God as unjust, as well as the sacrifice of free will, which contradicts what any heavenly religion calls for. These diseases threaten human security and cannot be limited unless that extremism and exaggeration are refuted on the one hand, and humanism is elevated on the other.

Author Contributions

Ghallab Elew Hamada Osman is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Abd al-Latif Khalifa, *Studies in the Psychology of Alienation*, Gharib Publishing, Printing, and Distribution House, Cairo, 2003.
- [2] Abdullah Abdullah, *Psychological Alienation and Its Relationship to Mental Health*, University of Algeria (Ben Youcef Ben Khedda), 2008.
- [3] Ali Saleh, Alienation from God, Arab Psychological Sciences Network.
<http://www.arabpsynet.com/Documents/DocAlypsy-AlienationFromGod.pdf>
- [4] Halim Barakat, *Alienation in Arab Culture: Human Labyrinth Between Dream and Reality*, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2006.

-
- [5] Lazhar Masa'idia, *The Theory of Alienation from Arab and Western Perspectives*, Al-Khaldounia Publishing House, Algeria, 2013.
- [6] Mahmoud Ragab, *Alienation: Biography and Term*, Dar Al-Ma'arif, 3rd ed., Cairo, 1988.
- [7] Patrick Masterson, *Atheism and Alienation: A Study of the Philosophical Sources of Contemporary Atheism*, translated by Hiba Nasr, The Islamic Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017.
- [8] Sami Khashaba: *Intellectual Terms*, General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo, 2008.
- [9] Salah Al-Jamai: *Psychological-Social Alienation and Its Relationship to Psychological and Social Adjustment*, Zahran Publishing and Distribution House, Amman, 2010.

Biography

Ghallab Elew Hamada Osman, is a faculty member in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Sohag University, Egypt. He holds a Master's degree from Cairo University in 2015 and a PhD from Ain Shams University in 2020. He is an academic referee and Vice President of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit at the Faculty of Arts, Sohag University. He specializes in theology and European medieval philosophies.