



**Üzeyir Ok**

## **Need for cognitive certainty**

» There are a number of “needs” for human cognition in social psychology. These include need for cognition, need for closure and need for certainty. Need for cognition refers to one’s interests for long rhetorical discussions with people around. For instance, a young theologian would be willing to discuss in an argumentative way on the matter of pre-destiny (qadar) for hours. Need for closure represents one’s inclination to put a clear cognitive boundary between what are familiar, known, committed and believed and what are not. Such inclination does not allow any leak from “outside” into “inside”. For instance, a young committed believer sees unfamiliar comments, faiths, or thoughts as threat and does not like to take them into account in philosophizing regarding life and existential matters. My favourite term is the last one, i.e. cognitive certainty. If we examine our “selves” closely we will find that we are seeking after cognitive certainty and battling with uncertainties in our life. When

we face with uncertainty for our future, say, for tomorrow or next month or year, our limbic system senses it as a threat and takes an alarm position to get rid of it. For instance, if we do not know the time of the exam tomorrow; or if it is uncertain for us how to find a source of funding for our debt to be paid tomorrow we may not sleep well that night. Similarly, if we drive on a motorway with no line or with lines but the lines were terribly blurred with overuse, this may create deep stress particularly in rainy nights when, additionally, struggling to see the number of a house in a narrow street.

Religion, mathematics, physics all disciplines have all commonalty in that they all try to remove uncertainty from our life. Religion removes uncertainty both for this world and afterlife by putting guidelines on how to live this life meaningfully on an agreed “platform.” Mathematics help us work on our material world systematically in a calculated way. Even music helps us express the complex and inexpressible

inner voices as expressible. It should be because of this reason that the Quran suggests to keep the records of our dealings in trade in order to avoid from the harms of deteriorated memory. It gives answers to questions forwarded by believers in order to make their cognitions cleaned from obsessions (“waswas”), gossips and whispers (“najwa”). It is utterly important to note that the most distinguishing feature between developed and developing countries, to my view, is the degree of solving the problem of uncertainty in private life (psychological), public domain (sociological, ideological) and in the material world (urbanization). As these domains are interdependent, the more we solve the problems of uncertainty the more happiness we, the Turkish people, will feel. I believe that we need a nationwide campaign regarding this. Therefore, the motto is “Remove uncertainty and be happy!”