

ALI 504: Family and Social Change

Session Three

Words for Reflection

In modernity we remade the human person into a “buffered self,” protected and autonomous and independent, free to determine their own good and pursue their own “authentic” path. We shut out incursions of the divine and demonic to carve out a privatized space to be free on our own terms. But we didn’t realize the extent to which we were shutting ourselves *in*.

<https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/not-meant-to-be-alone/#>

Congratulations, modern man!

You liberated yourself by locking out transcendence;
the price was sealing yourself in a cell.

We thought we were our own liberators; turns out we
might be our own jailors.

House them where you live
in accordance with your means
and do not harass them to restrict them
and should they be pregnant, maintain them until they deliver.
Then, if they suckle [the baby] for you
give them their wages and consult together honourably.
But if you make things difficult for each other
then another woman will suckle [the baby] for him.

Sura Talaq, no.65, verse 6

Society

Society represents a group of human beings, who, under the compulsion of a series of requirements and under the influence of a set of beliefs, ideals and goals, are amalgamated with one another and are immersed in a continuum of collective life.

Ayatollah Mutahhari, Sociology of the Quran

Relationships

Relationships are like threads in the fabric of life. They contribute to the overall design and plays a part in our well being in life.

Human beings need to connect with other human beings. Sharing thoughts and opinions, memories and ideas etc. all help us feel better about life.

Hadith

The best of you are the best in manners, those who are close to others and others are close to them.

Holy Prophet (s)

There is no good in one who has no close relationships with others.

Holy Prophet (s)

Changes in society

Social isolation has become a quiet epidemic in affluent Western societies.

Individualism is deeply embedded in North American founding philosophies. Today's families and societies function as a collection of individuals. Each one strives for independence and individual success.

Defining social isolation

Social isolation is a complex issue linked to physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, and influenced by personal, community, and societal factors.

It can be defined as a state in which an individual lacks engagement with others, has few social contacts, lacks quality and fulfillment in their relationships, and lacks a sense of belonging

An example

Since Britain voted to leave the European Union more than a year ago, Europeans have mockingly said that the decision will result in an isolated, lonely island nation. But Britain, in fact, already has a serious problem with loneliness, research has found. More than nine million people in the country often or always feel lonely, according to a 2017 report.

The issue prompted Prime Minister Theresa May to appoint a minister for loneliness. “For far too many people, loneliness is the sad reality of modern life,” Mrs. May said in a statement. “I want to confront this challenge for our society and for all of us to take action to address the loneliness.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-britain-loneliness.html>

The Canadian experience

Single person households are now the most common household type in Canada – the first time in recorded Canadian history this has been the case. Previously, from 1867 to the time of the 2016 census, Canada's most common household type had been one filled with a family.

Andrew Wister, director of the gerontology research centre at Simon Fraser University in B.C., said studies have found about one in five Canadians experience some degree of loneliness or social isolation.

Social isolation can have serious repercussions, including impacts on a person's mental health and mortality, and Canada could learn from the U.K.'s approach in raising public discourse on the issue, he said.

We need to look at some of the decisions we are making as a society on how we are choosing to live that may be contributing over time to creating the circumstances that lead to loneliness and isolation – decisions like living in single-family homes in the suburbs, driving alone in cars, communicating through social media rather than in person

Emotional isolation

Emotional isolation occurs when someone is unable or unwilling to share their emotions with others. Someone may be reluctant to discuss anything but the most superficial matters.

a person may feel emotionally isolated despite having a social network.

Isolation in your relationship is about the detachment of one's authentic self.

Some questions

- 1) Do you have a sense of feeling alone, despite having many relationships?
2. Do you feel no one understands you?
3. Do you avoid close relationships due to a fear of getting hurt?
4. Do you keep people at a distance because you don't trust them?

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/uk-loneliness-minister-appointment-highlights-need-for-canadian-action-experts/article37654170/>

<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/more-canadians-are-now-living-alone-than-ever-before-statscan>