

ALI 525: Cultivating a Virtuous Character

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INTRODCUTION

Session One Outline

1. Human Nature and Free Will
2. Doing Vs. Being
3. Human Function as Servants and Representatives

Human Nature and Free Will

- ▶ Humans have two basic natures
- ▶ The first is worldly and inclined towards ingratitude and heedlessness

and one of His signs is that He created you from dust, then lo! you are mortals (who) scatter. (30:20)

And He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them; most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful. (14:34)

Human Nature and Free Will

- ▶ The second nature is godly and inclined towards gratitude and remembrance

When your Lord said to the angels; Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust: So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him (38:71-72)

Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in straitness, and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others). (3:134)

Human Nature and Free Will

- ▶ We have the free will to choose between these two natures

Surely We have created man from a small life-germ uniting (itself): We mean to try him, so We have made him hearing, seeing. Surely, We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful. (76:3-4)

- ▶ Questions ???

Being vs Doing

- ▶ Nature = Essence = State = Being
- ▶ Nature is what a person “is” and not what a person “does”
- ▶ What is the primary is a person’s nature and not a person’s deeds
 - ▶ Good deeds can have no effect

Being vs Doing

Quranic Examples on Essence

The deeds of those who deny the existence of their Lord are like ashes blown about by a strong wind on a stormy day. They will achieve nothing from their deeds. (What they have done) is a manifest error. (14:18)

The wandering Arabs say: We believe. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Ye believe not, but rather say "We submit," for the faith hath not yet entered into your hearts. Yet, if ye obey Allah and His messenger, He will not withhold from you aught of (the reward of) your deeds. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (49:14)

The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart (26:88-89)

► Questions ???

Being vs Doing

- ▶ The essence of the human being is the soul

And guard yourselves against a day in which you shall be returned to Allah; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. (2:281)

- ▶ The destroyed soul is the material or worldly soul
- ▶ You higher nature should always be in control
- ▶ Questions ???

The Soul

- ▶ The type of soul that we have dictates our fate in the after life
- ▶ Three Types of Souls or Nafs
 - ▶ Nafs Al Ammarah
 - ▶ Nafs al Lawwamah
 - ▶ Nafs al Mutma'inah – The soul that is at peace with God

The Soul

- ▶ A destroyed soul
 - ▶ Surrendered itself to the material world
 - ▶ Their essence is material
- ▶ You are what your soul is and need to have it under control
 - ▶ The Islamic point of view is to keep your mind and thoughts under the control of your higher nature

Humans as Servants and Representatives

- ▶ Our higher nature is connected with what God created us to be and to do
- ▶ Fulfilling our purpose makes truly human
- ▶ The Quran speaks about two purposes: To serve and represent God

*And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me
(51:56)*

- ▶ Servanthood is made of two parts: (1) Obedience (2) Surrender

Humans as Servants and Representatives

- ▶ Surrender and the receiving of Grace
- ▶ Surrender as peace and love
- ▶ The story of creation, the verse of the covenant and the verse of the trust

Humans as Servants and Representatives

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it;- He was indeed unjust and foolish; (With the result) that Allah has to punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers, men and women, and Allah turns in Mercy to the Believers, men and women: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (33:72-73)

▶ Question???

Humans as Servants and Representatives

- ▶ Human beings have the ability to fulfill a role of representing God in this world while being the best of servants
- ▶ We can reach the best human state through servanthood and representation
 - ▶ *“Insaan-al-Kamil”* – A complete and true human being