



ALI 586: Spiritual Guidance from the Life of Imam Ali (a) Session Two

What do you understand by this sentence?

There is one and only one Reality, in the face
of which everything else is but an
appearance.

Reza Shah-Kazemi, Justice and Remembrance

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden,
and He has knowledge of all things.

Sura al-Hadid, no.57, verse 3

سُنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

Soon We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and
in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that He
is the Real

Sura Fussilat, no.41, verse 53

According to Imam Ali (a) the spiritual faculty of the intellect must transcend its rational faculty.

The intellect must be seen, first and foremost, as a spiritual faculty.

Without intellect, the spirit is reduced to unconscious existence

Without spirit, the intellect is reduced to lifeless thought.

Taken from *Justice and Remembrance*, by Reza Shah Kazemi

The Spiritual Intellect of Imam Ali (a)

For Imam Ali (a), the true intellectual is one who;

- thinks correctly
- acts ethically
- exists as an authentic being
- seeks to realize the ultimate Reality

Then He, glorified be He – gathered up a quantity of dust, from some hard earth and some soft earth, some sweet earth and some salty, and poured water onto it until it was pure, then kneaded it into some moisture until it stuck together, then He fashioned from this a form with curves and joints, limbs and parts . . .

Then He breathed into it of His spirit, and it stood up as a human being, endowed with intellectual powers with which to reflect, thoughts by which to conduct himself, limbs to put to service . . .

Nahjul Balagha, Khutba #1

فَبَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولَهُ . . . وَيُثِيرُوا لَهُمْ دَفَائِنَ الْعُقُولِ

Then Allah sent His Messengers . . . to unearth for them
the buried treasures of the intellect.

Nahjul Blagha, Khutba #1

Difference between reason and intellect

Reason – conceptualizing and logical faculty. It is dependent on intellect for reaching full potential

Intellect – human intellect has the potential to understand the unlimited truth of God, provided this gift of reasoning is deepened and enhanced by the divine knowledge present in revelations and the signs present in the creation.

With the intellect, one is able to contemplate or ‘see’ the Absolute; with the reason, one can only think about it.

The Aql

Al- 'aql in Arabic is related to the root 'ql' which means basically to bind. It is that faculty which binds man to God, to his Origin. By virtue of being endowed with al-'aql, man becomes man and shares in the attribute of knowledge, al-'ilm, which ultimately belongs to God alone.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr. "Intellect and Intuition: Their Relationship from the Islamic Perspective."

Imam's conversation with Kumayl ibn Ziyad An-Nakha'I Hadith #147, Nahjul Balagha

يَا كُمْيَلُ بْنُ زِيَادٍ، إِنَّ هَذِهِ الْقُلُوبَ أَوْعِيَةٌ فَخَيْرُهَا أَوْعَاهَا
فَاَحْفَظْ عَنِّي مَا أَقُولُ لَكَ

○ Kumayl, these hearts are containers. The best of them is that which preserves (its contents).

So, preserve what I say to you.

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا

He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to [the extent of] their capacity

Sura Ra'd, no.13, verse 17

النَّاسُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: فَعَالِمٌ رَبَّانِيٌّ وَمُتَعَلِّمٌ عَلَى سَبِيلِ نَجَاةٍ، وَهَمَّجٌ رَعَاعٌ أَتْبَاعُ
كُلِّ نَاعِقٍ يَمِيلُونَ مَعَ كُلِّ رِيحٍ، لَمْ يَسْتَضِيئُوا بِنُورِ الْعِلْمِ، وَلَمْ يَلْجَأُوا
إِلَى رُكْنٍ وَثِيقٍ

People are of three types: One is the scholar and divine; then the seeker of knowledge who is also on the way to deliverance. Then the common riffraff who run after every caller and bend in the direction of every wind. They seek no light from the radiance of knowledge and do not take protection of any reliable support.