

Lecture 2: Human Intellect

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ

Now let man but think from what he is created!

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ

He is created from a drop emitted-

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs¹²²

The previous lecture was about the importance of thought. There is a purpose behind every strength or ability that Allah gives us. Man must use these strengths and abilities or else he will prevent himself from achieving their blessings. The power of thought is the best ability and the best blessing that Allah gave man. This power is what separates man from animal. In the Qurʾān it says that man is respected.² This respect comes from the power of thought. Man will reach the high status that he was created for if he uses this power, but if he refrains from using it he will become lower than animals.

The Qurʾān answers the question about why some people go to Hell from the tongue of those who are in the Hellfire. They said: “If we listened to the warnings and used our power of thought we would not be in the Hellfire.”³

Man must think about what he was created from so that he can understand his God. He will see the great power of creation when he realizes that he was only a drop of water which changed into a blood clot which changed into bones and flesh and then his spirit was blown into him. One must ask the following questions when he grows up and is able to use his intellect: what was I and what have I become?

It Is Impossible For Something To Come Into Existence Without A Creator

The first thought: Is it possible for something to come into existence by itself? Everything that has been created has a creator.

The late Sayyid Ibn Tḥḥ writes in the book *Kashf al-Mahajja*: “The thought that every thing that has been created has a creator is in man’s divine disposition (*fitrat*). From the days where he is able to use his power of thought he knows that every effect has a cause.”

We will use a two-year-old baby as an example for this. Suppose a baby is sitting down and does not know that you are behind him, then you drop a toy over his shoulder. Before the baby takes the toy he will look behind him at the person who put it there. He does this because he knows that there was nothing there and now something appeared and nothing can appear without a cause.

This is one of the self-evident truths. So, every thing that has been created has a creator. The characteristics of this creator can be found in what he created. It is clear that the creator is extremely wise and intelligent if his creation has knowledge and wisdom. The creator must also be extremely powerful.

Would someone accept that a watch came into existence by itself? Would someone accept that an animal made a watch? It is clear that the person who invented a watch, who made the little and big parts of the watch run together in unison, must have had enough knowledge and power for the task.

The creator, being knowledgeable and wise, becomes evident when one looks at creation. If one seriously looks at his body he will see that there is not one extra vein or organ in it. Everything has a purpose.

The Fingernail

To make an example, we will allude to a part of the body that is normally overlooked. One of these parts is the fingernail. The fingernail, like hair and feces, is made from the excess of food that one eats. What is the purpose behind this? Why is the fingernail hard? Many uses for the fingernail have been discovered. The fingernail is something that the tip of the finger can lean against. As you know, man uses his hands a lot.

Sometimes he picks heavy things up with them, and because of that, the finger needs something to lean against in order to relieve some of the pressure of the heavy thing. Man would not be able to lift heavy things if the fingernail was not there and the finger did not have anything to lean against. When one does not have a fingernail he feels pain when he tries to lift up something heavy. What an amazing part of the body this fingernail is!

Was The Creator Unaware?

Is the Creator unaware of this body? Is he physical? Would the mind accept this?

Some say that Allah has not seen the places that we have gone. One must use his mind and think about the degree of his eyesight. Eyes are a body part that is common between all animals. These eyes have the ability to see big things but cannot see small things. It cannot even see air. So how can one so easily dismiss something that he has not seen? Air, which is physical but very small, is invisible for mankind. But, one accepts it, because he feels it and he breathes it. Sometime one is unable to see the water in a glass. In short, there are conditions for one to be able to see something. Is one unable to deny the existence of electricity?

A Proof Of The Day Of Judgment

The concept of resurrection is accepted after one uses this faculty of thought. Is it possible for one to create this amazing body without a purpose?

What is all this wisdom and knowledge that has been given to man for? Was man created to live on earth for a couple of days, eat, sleep, produce babies, satisfy his desires and die? This would be pointless. The Qur^{ān} says:

“Did you think that we created you in vain and that you will not return to us?”⁴

The creation of man would be in vain if the Day of Judgment did not exist. Man would have been created to eat in order to defecate and defecate in order to eat. This is a never ending circle which is illogical.

One would be able to figure out that there has to be another world; the world that man was created for. One would be able to figure this out without using the help of Prophets and revelation. One would understand that this world is not the principal dwelling place of man. One would realize that there has to be another world, a world without the difficulties, discomforts, diseases and evil found here, a world full of pleasure and success. This world is the dwelling place for animals, but the next world is the dwelling place for man.

They ask: “How is it possible for man to be given life and raised after he has died and been decomposed?” The answer is in the verse: “Verily He is able to bring him back.” Allah is definitely able to bring them back; He just has to create them again.

Whatever is found in this earth is an example of Allah's power and strength. Allah says in chapter *Hijr*, verse 21:

“There is not a thing but its (sources and) treasures are with Us; but We only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures.”

Some of the bounties that Allah will give can be found, to a small degree, on the earth. For example, one of Allah's bounties is a beautiful fragrance. Some fragrances, like flowers and perfumes, can be found on earth. The best fragrance was that of Prophet Muhammad (S), because he is heaven.

The fragrances of the world are limited and will not overstep their bounds. They are limited in the fragrance itself as well as the duration of the fragrance. But, the fragrances of heaven, according to a tradition from Imam Sadiq (a) last for one thousand years. Also, there are traditions that say that one who severs relations with his family will not even be able to even smell the fragrance of heaven.

The Pious Will Benefit From Allah’s Everlasting Rewards

Allah will give his eternal blessings to the pious.⁵ The conditions for receiving these blessings are being unattached to this world and refraining from following carnal desires.² On the Day of Judgment, people will have the form of their insides, not their outside appearance that they have in this world. Man is an amazing creature because he has a part of every other creature; he can become any other creature. Man can become a predator like a wolf or leopard. Man can become a farm animal like a sheep. Man can also become a pig or a fox. On the other side, the good actions of angels can be seen in man. Man can become whatever he wants while he is in this world.

How Much Should Man Strengthen His Nature

If the purpose of life was to fill one's stomach, becoming like a sheep would be enough. If the purpose of life was following one's base desires, becoming like a pig would be enough. If the purpose of life was obtaining power, becoming like an arrogant leopard would be enough. If one climbs a certain leopard's mountain it will attack him in such a way that he would never try to climb that mountain again. But, there is no danger in being below a leopard that is full. A person who is after power is ready to commit any atrocity to his rivals in order to get ahead.

In short, there is an example of every form of existence in man. One may reach salvation if he controls himself, does not try and push himself in the front, and is not after satisfying his carnal desires.

Greed Compels One To Commit Any Crime

Greed is found in some animals, especially the ant. A greedy person becomes lower than an ant or mouse. This trait causes one to commit atrocities, to be unjust and to sell things for way more than they

are worth. They think that they will be able to keep their wealth.⁶

There are others who walk the road of the angels. They become true human beings. How easy it is to be an animal and how hard is it to be a human! Sometimes man serves others and forgets that he was sperm and will become a decomposed dead body.

Have you heard that Imam 'Alī (a) went to the marketplace and bought two shirts with Qanbar? Imam 'Alī (a) gave the better shirt to his servant Qanbar. Qanbar said: "But, you're my master and the leader (*khalīfa*) of the Muslims?"

Imam 'Alī (a) said: "I would become shy in front of Allah if I placed myself above you."

'Alī (a) was created and Qanbar was created as well. If 'Alī's (a) station is higher than Qanbar it is only because Allah gave it to him, but, in regards to being created, they are the same. The Shī'a must use these kinds of examples to show 'Alī's greatness. One should not consider himself higher or better than another. One should not sit comfortably while someone else is serving him; instead one should serve others.

Bearing The Difficulties With Travelers Who Are Visiting Imam Husayn's Grave

The following has been related by some trustworthy people in Najaf by one of students of the late mujtahid Akhīnd Mullā Husaynqulī. When the student met his teacher, Mullā Husaynqulī asked him what he did the previous night. The student said: "Nothing."

Mullā Husaynqulī said: "What did you do in the middle of the night?"

The student said: "I did not do anything; I was sleeping."

Mullā Husaynqulī: "This can't be; tell me everything from the beginning of the night."

The student said: "Last night I had some guests who came here from Karbala to visit Imam 'Alī's (a) shrine. My room was small and we all slept there after dinner. In the middle of the night I felt something heavy on my chest and woke up in discomfort. I saw that one of these travelers was in a deep sleep with his foot on my chest. I wanted to move his foot, but then I thought that he is on a ziyārat trip and is also a scholar. The Prophet (S) also said that we must be respectful and generous to our guests. I bore this difficulty until he moved his leg himself.

Mullā Husaynqulī said: "That is it. I can see the gleam in your face from this action last night. You did not have this light before, did you think what you did was small?"

I Wish I Could Be A Flower, But If I'm Not I Do Not Want To Be A Thorn

A real man wants others to be comfortable and does not seek comfort for himself. He tries to lessen other people's struggles and difficulties instead of making difficulties for others. He tries to give other people honor, not take honor away from people. He tries to fill people's stomachs, not eat people's bread. Man can have the characteristics of angels or animals. An animal does not want to serve others while an angel's job is serving humanity.

In short, how have you built yourself? Look at yourself. Have you become a wolf? A fox? If you have you will be this in the next world. If you have become an angel you will be one in the next world as well. Your place will not be heaven until you acquire the traits of an angel.

Bashīr And Mubashshir Are The Same As Nakīr And Munkar

Have you heard that two angels come and interrogate the dead person on the first night, after he is buried? The popular opinion is that their names will be Nakīr and Munkar. These two words come from the Arabic root meaning something distasteful or something that will cause harm and unhappiness. Who are Nakīr and Munkar sent for? They are sent for people who have died before they purified themselves. But, Nakīr and Munkar are not sent for the pious, instead Bashīr and Mubashshir, the givers of glad tidings, are sent.

In one of the supplications of the month of Rajab we say: "O' Allah do not send Nakīr and Munkar to me on the first night in my grave; instead send Bashīr and Mubashshir." So, the two angels that come to the believer's grave are Bashīr and Mubashshir and the two angels that come to the unbeliever's grave are Nakīr and Munkar.

1. 86:5-7.

2. Refer to 17:70.

3. Refer to 67:10.

4. 23:115.

5. Refer to 3:133 and 26:90.

6. Refer to 104:3.

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