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Lesson 4: Humanology (Anthropology) Part 3

In the previous lesson we concluded that the human being is different from other animals in the three dimensions of: insight or attitude, inclinations and action or performance. What causes the human being's superiority in the area of insight is not sensory organs and comprehension, for there are many animals whose sensory range far surpasses that of the human being. The secret of the human being's superiority in the dimension of insight and awareness lies in the power of thinking, deduction, reasoning and understanding the unknown through what is known. It is this very same factor which broadens the human being's knowledge and creates new awarenesses which are followed by new innovations.

When we look into the area of inclinations, we observe that it is true that the human being possesses a series of inclinations towards the exalted and the metaphysical, seeking the transcendent, love for the good and the benevolent, humanitarianism, seeking the truth and other human inclinations and emotions. But if these tendencies are merely seen as being esoteric and natural inclinations not concerned with awareness, they will be unconscious and sometimes very weak just as instinctive perceptions are.

These tendencies are most readily suppressed in face of the human being's animal tendencies. Therefore the human being's tendencies and inclinations can emerge, actualize and grow in the correct direction when they are concerned with awareness and controlled by reason.

Also in the area of action, it is correct to say that the scope of action of the human being is much greater than that of the animal, but it is quite obvious that the human value of these acts depends to what extent they have been influenced by human motives and to what extent the human being has, in practice, succeeded in freeing the self from the compulsory web of inhuman instinct and motives.

For instance, the human being becomes thirsty and hungry as his or her instincts dictate or even becomes inclined to help the wretched and the infirmed by arousing his or her emotions. The sensory inputs then recognize the need and will perform the required action through the hands, feet and other bodily organs. But the 'human' peculiarity of these actions emerges when the will and decision for action depends upon reason and logic in addition to instinctive and emotional motives. For example, eating and

drinking is done to keep healthy and the satiation of emotions and sentiments is done in a framework of logical laws and relies upon the guidance of reason.

We can now conclude that first, the basic factor of the human beings advantage in all areas including insight, (inclinations and performance) is when all the human being's forces and dimensions of existence be covered by knowledge and thinking, be in the framework of rational laws and be controlled and governed by reason. But should the human being's reason, on the contrary, be condemned by his or her instinctive and emotional inclinations, he or she would be placed on a slope of decline and be lower and more misled than animals because of the damage that would incur to his or her human and evolutionary talents. Of course, the sense of judgment of the mind follows a series of basic criteria and principles which we will discuss in the next lesson entitled 'world view'.

Second, from what we have understood about the human being, we can gather that while having many things in common with animals, the human being has privileges particular to the self. Consequently, a kind of dualism emerges from human life and existence. The human being comes to possess two kinds of lives and two kinds of actions. One is the material and animal life. The other, a spiritual and religious or cultural life. It is at this point that one of the most basic and fundamental issues in humanology is brought up. That is, where lies the originality of the human being. Is the human being's material dimension primary or his or her spiritual dimension? Which of these two form the infrastructure of human life? Are these two aspects independent or is one the variable of the other? It is at this crucial point where the path of many schools of thought separate one from the other.

Is humanity the infrastructure or the suprastructure?

The schools of thought which are popular today unanimously accept this fact that besides the material, physical and animal interests and needs, the human being also possesses a series of needs, emotions, inclinations, pains and cures which do not directly spring from his or her material and animal desires. It is these very same tendencies and perceptions that construct humane cultural life and later shape the spiritual aspect of human life. Science, philosophy, art, literature, ethics, etc., are all different facets of the human being's cultural life.

What is under dispute is this: Are these facets which make-up the spiritual dimension of human life dependent upon the human being's material and animal life, or rather do they enjoy originality and independence?

Naturally, from the point of view of the world view of materialism, the materialistic aspect is primary in human life. Marxism, as the most common materialistic school of thought, believes in the primacy of an economic monopoly in human life.

Based upon this idea, all human activities, views and inclinations solely move upon and are dependent upon economic production. What forms the infrastructure of a change in society is the improvement of

the tools of production. The result of this view is that, essentially, there is no fundamental difference between the human being and the animal, for although a cultural and immaterial dimension in the human being exists, this dimension is totally dependent upon the human being's material and animal life and possesses no independence.

According to this thesis, not only the primacy of human tendencies and inclinations such as idealism, perfectionism, humanitarianism, ethics, love for beauty and the arts, inclination towards benevolence, the seeking of truth, etc., are negated but also that the human being's capacities, thoughts and ideas could never be observed as a reality since these views and thoughts merely reflect the economic condition of society and the progress of the tools of production.

It is surprising that when ethics and humanity are discussed, the advocates of these schools of thought, while considering human life as being dependent upon animal needs and introducing the human being as being merely a tool-making and productive animal, boasts about philanthropy and humanism and present themselves as the adherents of human values and would like to resolve this apparent contradiction with this wrong justification, "We are materialists in philosophy and idealists in ethics," unaware of the fact that they are destroying the foundation of their philosophy and prove that in their opinion, ethics has no philosophical or rational support.

The Human Being from the Point of View of Islam

According to Islam's realistic school of thought and action the human being is a being which is born of matter but takes steps towards emancipation from this bondage. The course of the human being starts from the world of matter and continues towards dominating it. The more the human being progresses in his or her evolutionary course, the more he or she frees the self from the bounds which ties the self to matter. It could be said, "It is true that in the past, the human being was more dependent upon material and animal conditions but after achieving the station of humanity, the human dimension, without being dependent on the material and economic aspects, could independently grow as a genuine aspect."

Therefore, the human being of the future will be a cultural person, free of the determination of matter, and will freely bow only before the ideals and values which are related to his or her human life. In our opinion, This belief would be nothing other than faith in God and serving Him which is accompanied by the human being's freedom from servitude to all his or her self-made idols and all kinds of multi-theism.

According to the humanology of Islam, the human being possesses a dual nature. He or she has been moulded from the earth and the soul of God. Thus, by using the God given talents and by utilizing his or her will-power and choice, he or she could move on the path of evil or good ad Infinitum.

Also from the view of Islamic philosophy, based on the hypothesis of the movement of essence, the human being arises from a material and physical origin and then ascends towards the metaphysical world.

By noting what we have so far understood about the human being, we can more than ever comprehend the importance of cognition, world view, and ideology in human life. Also, it would make us acknowledge the necessity of an ideological debate as, first, the human being has many deficiencies and short falls in his or her various dimensions of existence from the very beginning.

Secondly, the human being is naturally inclined to remove these deficiencies and raise the self towards perfection and prosperity.

Third, in order to achieve prosperity, the human being should inevitably choose a way and tread it.

Fourth, various religions, faiths and schools of thought set many different ways before the human being which sometimes are contrary and opposed to each other.

Fifth, these ways could not be experimentally travelled. Besides, the human life-span is too limited.

Sixth, knowing that all the ways cannot be treaded, the human being is compelled to select one (the necessity for selection).

Seventh, it is obvious that discernment is necessary for selection (the necessity for discernment).

Eighth, in order to discern the correct path, he or she should have standards and criteria.

Ninth, gaining standards and criteria would necessitate fundamental and basic discussions, so that after accepting a definite world-view and ideology, we would recognize the correct path from a dead-end and find the way to prosperity and perfection.

Conclusion: Ideological discussions are of the utmost importance.

Summary of the Lesson

1. In the area of insight, the differences between a human being and an animal, rather, the secret to the higher position of the human being is comparison to other animals is the human being's power of thought, independence and ability to reach conclusions.
2. In the area of inclinations, the secret of the difference is the shelter of the human being's consciousness, intellect and thought which constructs or builds the human being's inclinations.
3. In the area of performance and action, also, act's are human acts when will-power and intellect or reason dominate over instincts, not the reverse.
4. The human being contains two types of activity which, as a result, brings about two types of life, a material and animal and a spiritual.
5. From the point of view of materialism, primacy exists in the material dimension of the human being but

from the Islamic point of view, the human being is a creature who is born into the material but then frees the self from the bondage of the material.

6. From the point of view of Islam, the human being contains a dual nature which consists of the earth and the Spirit of God. Thus, by taking advantage of his or her will-power and chasing either the good or the evil. In any case, it is the human journey towards gradual development and perfection.

Questions to ask yourself

1. What is the nature of the human being?
2. What does a materialist think about a human being?
3. Prove the necessity for reasonable and logical ideological discussions.
4. What is meant by the word 'criteria'?

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