

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIVING IN ISLAM

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A philosophy of living should find first a meaning for life then it should outline how one ought to live according to the meaning assigned for life. Let us give an example from our topic which is in this case Islamic way of living. As it is known very well, the main source of the religion in Islam is the Qur'an, which means that we must look into this revealed book in order to find out the meaning of life and then explain how the Qur'an recommends us to live according to that meaning of life. However, in this case there is another issue: The Qur'an is mainly concerned with human life which is not restricted to "this worldly" life. Therefore, it chooses a meaning for life which is comprehensive and as such it includes the whole creation. In this sense we must realize that if we do not know what the Qur'an is we will not be able to understand its philosophy of living. Therefore, we must look at the way the Qur'an describes itself.

The Qur'an, first, says that "it is a guidance (*hidâyah*) from God (to humanity)" (see, for example, Isrâ, 17: 82: "And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss." Âl-i 'Imrân, 3: 138: "This [Qur'an] is a clear statement to people and a guidance (*hidâyah*) and instruction for those conscious of Allah"). Therefore, it is revealed as a guidance for the humanity. Obviously this guidance is not about practical things that we do in this world, such as cooking, making bread, shoes and sewing dresses, building houses and manufacturing goods and developing sciences or technological innovations. This guidance is related to the life in the hereafter which is more important than the life in this world because this physical life is transitory and full of unhappy occasions whereas the life to come is permanent and also without pain and injustice.

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Considering this, then, we may infer that the Qur'an as a whole provides a philosophy of living that is geared more towards the life to come without however, neglecting the life in this world. If, on the other hand, one argues that the Qur'anic philosophy of living is not complete, then scholars can reply to this that one who lives a life of the other world will enjoy the life in this world also, therefore, this philosophy of life is complete in itself. In fact by not interfering more the life of a person in this world it leaves more room for individual freedom to live in this world.

Secondly, if the Qur'an is a revealed guidance for the mankind then it must satisfy human beings and their quest for meaning in life. If that is the case, then we must look and see what human beings expect from life. We may try to find out this expectation in human nature (*mahiyyat al-insân*) itself. When we examine human nature we see that there are three fundamental aspects which characterizes this nature: The physical, the emotional and the mental. The first aspect utilizes primarily bodily organs and for gaining knowledge it uses senses; the emotional aspect utilizes feelings and also utilizes bodily organs but it uses the heart as a faculty; and finally the third aspect utilizes mainly intellectual and mental abilities and uses the faculty of the intellect. The first aspect is expressed by the Qur'an as "animality" (*haywaniyyah*) as in the verse 179, sûra (7) al-A'râf: "And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like cattle (*animals*); rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless." The second aspect is referred to as "*bashariyyah*" by the Qur'an as we understand this from the verse 6 of the sûra al-Fussilet (41): "Say, O [Muhammad], 'I am only a *bashar* (human of the second level) like you to whom it has been revealed that your god is but one God; so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness."

Finally, the third aspect, which is the mental aspect and thus refers to rationality, is expressed by the Qur'an as "insaniyyah." A human being is a complete human only at this aspect which already includes the animal and *bashar* aspects. We must notice that the above verse 6 of the sûra al-Fussilet (41) does not say "I am *insan* like you all" because at the *insaniyyah* aspect no human being can ever be equal to the Prophet (a.s.w.) and in fact as far as this aspect is concerned there different *maratib* between all human beings whereas at the *bashariyyah* aspect all humans are equal. By using these Qur'anic terms which also determines the philosophy of living in Islam, we can now express these three aspects as animal, emotional (*bashar*) and human (*insân*). By utilizing all these aspects in a way as guided by the

Qur'anic way of life will be the philosophy of living in Islam. This is indeed the theoretical framework of this philosophy. Therefore, the philosophy of living based on the guidance of the Qur'an should explain life from these three perspectives which we shall try to outline as our theoretical framework.

I. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our five senses are fundamental for bodily pleasures. If these feelings are given to human beings that means they are allowed to be used in the way of pleasure. In fact if the pleasure that follow upon these senses had not been given many would have not used sensation which would have resulted in death. For example, if we had no pleasure when we ate food we would not eat and this would lead to the weakening of the body which may have resulted in death. The same thing with regard to all bodily pleasures all of which are based on the senses and feelings. The Qur'an, therefore, sees these pleasures lawful if they are practiced within the limits prescribed by God (*hudûdullah*), as in the following verse: "These are the limits [set by] Allah, and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be admitted by Him to gardens [in Paradise] under which rivers flow, abiding eternally therein; and that is the great attainment." (al-Nisâ, 4: 13). Each time a pleasure is approved a limit is prescribed as in the following verses: "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but do not waste. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess." (al-A'râf, 7: 31).

It is clear that the Qur'an does not abolish bodily pleasures but it wants to bring limits (*hudûd*) which expresses what is lawful. For example, the law which is also moral, is specified at two levels: first level is forbidden (*harâm*) and that is identified as "God's limit" (*hudûd Allah*). A stolen food or something that is not rightly acquired is forbidden and cannot be eaten. All other food for pleasure is allowed (*halâl*) which is given the second level as "to be abstained" (*makrûh*) if it is done in excess which is considered as wasting also. Therefore, a pleasure is *halâl* if it is rightly owned, *haram* if it is not rightly owned and in between we have *makrûh* if it is *halâl* but done in an excessive way.

We may then say that the philosophy of living in Islam prescribes that if we see life totally devoted to satisfy our bodily pleasures then the other two aspects will be neglected. In that case, since our emotions and mind will not be satisfied that kind of life will be miserable for us. If as human beings we did not have any feelings beyond the source of our bodily pleasures

and we did not have a mind as the source of our thought then life would have meaning for us only if our sense and bodily pleasure were satisfied. The Qur'an definitely makes a distinction between human and other animals. Therefore, we are invited to think about our nature and reflect upon the purpose of creation, as in the following verses: "Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you might use reason." (al-Baqarah, 2: 242); "[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded. (Sâd, 38:29); "Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason." (al-Anfâl, 8: 22). The most fundamental questions that the Qur'an introduces in this context as reflecting upon creation are the following three questions: Who am I? Where am I coming from? Where am I going to? The Qur'an, however, does not leave us in bewilderment with these questions; it also provides guidance in order to solve the riddle of creation so that by meditating on these and using the light of guidance we can find answers for these fundamental question.

When we begin to think, then our aspect expressed as "mind" begins to function. Here, the Qur'an wants to guide us to understand rationally the meaning of life so that we can organize our life the way a human being should live. It is important to understand this guidance of the Qur'an in order to grasp its philosophy of living. Let me try to explain this in a philosophical way to utilize as our theoretical framework which is based on human nature as we tried to outline above.

There is a logical, to be more precise, a rational perspective from which as rational beings we must look at life. If understanding life from this perspective is not satisfied life may seem meaningless to us. That rational aspect is, however, built on what we experience in this life. Our experience consists of what we acquire through our senses in the first place, and our emotions and feelings in the second place. Three issues, therefore, boil down to two aspects from which we view life using our mental capacity: the sensuous aspect; and the emotive aspect. Both aspects are controlled by our mind. The senses are satisfied if their desired purpose is fulfilled. For example, if the eye sees, it will give the world a "seeing meaning" and if the ear hears it will give a "hearing meaning" and so on. The totality of life experience resulting from the senses taken together as the *perceptive representations* will be evaluated rationally by the mind and then, based on the senses, assigned a "perceptive meaning" to the world and life.

On the other hand, the mind receives representations from emotions. An emotion may feel the life as meaningful, if it is satisfied. An emotion is satisfied if its function is fulfilled. Love, for example, would feel life meaningful if its function or functions are fulfilled so that

love is satisfied. We all know experientially what it means for love to be satisfied although it is difficult to express the way our experience of love is satisfied. Taken singly or in totality, emotions, in the assignment of meaning to life, bother the mind by not being fully satisfied. There are two reasons for this;

1. The range of emotions is too wide for us to reach;
2. Sometimes the function of an emotion can never be fulfilled; and this feeling of not being satisfied is ultimately expressed as the desire for eternity.

Therefore, our mind is baffled as to how to evaluate the representations received through emotions as far as these two setbacks of emotions are perceived by it. It is thus the case that when our mind is under the influence of these setbacks we tend to assign meaninglessness to life. It is at this moment that our mind struggles to find a rational ground to interpret life with a meaning. In this quest our mind is baffled as it also has a concept of future and a lived experience of the past. It then perceives life to be infinitely wide; as wide as from an infinite past to an indefinite future. We have another feeling as a result of this mental perception that is manifested in the mind: worrying about the indefinite future. If this end of life remains indefinite in the mind either as a result of an emotion or the totality of emotions, or even as a result of the gathering of only some emotions, the mind is conditioned to interpret life as meaningless. This is because the human mind has a theoretical ground for the meaning of an ever-going process. It rationally holds that if a process is incomplete it cannot have a meaning; but if it has a beginning and an end that completes it then it is meaningful; for the mind is then able to explain that process fully. Life is also perceived in this sense by the mind; since the concept of future is indefinite in the mind, life cannot be interpreted on the basis of rational principles receiving representations from both senses and emotions. It always needs an outside element in order to meaningfully interpret life. It is at this point that the Qur'an enters into the hermeneutics of life as the outside element.

My cursory exposition, therefore, sets three points for the Qur'anic philosophy of living: first is the rational point of life; second is the emotional point and the third is the perceptive living. Each point expresses a category in life and the Qur'an evaluates them in an extraordinary manner to elucidate the meaning of human living. My methodology thus shall utilize the verses of the Qur'an to combine them in a logical chain of ideas such that it exposes the stand of the philosophy of living in Islam.

II. THE RATIONAL POINT

The human mind is such that it is able to grasp something if it is definite and complete. On this assumption, if existence is indefinite it will be perceived as meaningless. What makes existence definite from the rational point is its completeness. This conceptual definiteness enables the human mind to perceive existence with a precise beginning and an end, which thus assigns a purpose to life and existence. Therefore, if time in existence is conceived as infinite, life will be interpreted as meaningless and thus the rational element is at once in oblivion. In this sense the Qur'an introduces its rational element and tries to satisfy the human mind by clarifying the beginning and the end of existence and thus of life. But this requires an experiential disposition, which the Qur'an imparts initially.

It thus says that existence and in turn life has a beginning and an end with a specific purpose. Both sides may be indefinite to us in the sense that we do not know the time in which these sides are realized. But they are not left in oblivion of time as infinite. Then, the Qur'an argues that "there is but one God. He gives life and causes to die. Believe then in God." (7/al-A'râf, 158, for quotations from the *Qur'an* see bibliography) Since this is the rational point, the Qur'an does not leave God's existence without meaning for the human mind. But the mind must be prepared to receive such a truth which is not perceived by the senses but by the inner perceptive faculty, called by the Qur'an "heart". (Rahman, 1980, 34) Once the heart is taken into the center of reflection and thinking then all our emotions and feelings are also involved in thinking life. Thus declares the Qur'an: "Have they not traveled through the land so that they have *hearts* to think with, and ears to hear with? It is not the (physical) eyes that are blind, but the *hearts* within the breasts." (22/al-Hajj, 46) This is the way the Qur'an disposes one for the rational point, which is then given in the following manner. Let me quote from the Qur'an on this point:

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and day there are signs for men of understanding; (these men are) those who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting and lying on their sides and (they are those who) contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought): "Our Lord! You have not created this in vain." (3/Alî 'Imrân, 190-195)

For, who other than God created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky, whereby we cause to grow lush orchards-For it is not up to you to

cause their trees to grow! Is there, then, a god beside God? Yet these are the people who ascribe partners to Him! And who other than Him made the earth a firm abode (for you), and set rivers traversing through it, and put firm mountains therein and sealed off one sea from the other? Is there, then, a god beside God? Indeed, most of them do not know! And who other than Him responds to the distressed one when he calls Him and relieves him of the distress, and Who has made you His vicegerents on earth? Is there, then, a god beside God? Little do you reflect! And who other than Him guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea? And who sends forth winds announcing His mercy (i.e., rain)? Is there, then, a god beside God? Far exalted be He above what they associate with Him! And who other than Him brings forth His creation and then re-creates it? And who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there, then, a god beside God? (27/al-Naml, 60-64)

It is clear, therefore, that "God causes the seed and the date-stone to split and sprout. He brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living. That is, then, God; how are you driven away from the truth? He splits the night to bring the day, He makes the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for measuring (the time). That is the judgment of Him, the All-mighty, the All-knowing. It is He who appointed the stars for you to guide yourselves through the darkness on the land and the sea. God has so explained in detail the signs for people who know. And it is God who originated you from a single person, a living place, and a sanctuary... It is therefore God who sends down water from the sky, and brings forth with it vegetation of all kinds... There are proofs (in all these) for people who believe... That, then, is God, your Lord. There is but one God, the Creator of everything. So serve Him, because He is Guardian over everything. The eyes cannot grasp Him but He can grasp the eyes... Now clear proofs have been given to you from your Lord. Whoso sees them it is for his own good; and whoso becomes blind not to see them, it is to his own loss. (6/al-An'âm, 95-104; see also 67/al-Mulk, 3-4; 24/al-Nûr, 39; 2/al-Baqarah, 118; 52/al-Tûr, 29-49)

Thus the idea of God is established in the minds with clear definitions and vivid metaphors so that God "shall show them the proofs in the horizon and in themselves until it is clear to them that this is the Truth." (41/Fussilat, 53) For, the mind cannot grasp God although God grasps the mind. (6/al-An'âm, 103) This is also expressed in a saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. Were He to withdraw their curtain, then would the splendors of His Countenance consume everyone who

apprehended Him with his sight.” (Ghazali, 1952, 77) Since the mind cannot grasp God He reveals Himself in terms of human words so that we can grasp *something* about Him. The Qur’an gives this in the following manner: “God, the Merciful and the Compassionate, is everlasting. He has not begotten, and has not been begotten. No one is equal to Him. (Qur’an, 112); He is the Creator, the Maker, and the Shaper. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies Him: He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.” (59/al-Hashr, 24).

O people! A parable is thus being cited; listen well to it. Those whom you call upon besides God can never create a fly, even if all of them came together to do so. And if a fly were to take away something from them, they can never get it back from it! Both the seeker and the sought are equally helpless. They have not estimated God rightly. God is powerful, mighty. (22/al-Hajj, 73-74)

Once existence is defined in clear terms, the meaning of human life is given with a definite beginning. A definite beginning is wrapped up with a definite purpose so that life is given completeness in the rational point. “Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled without a purpose? Was he not a drop of sperm emitted? Then he became a leach-like clot. Then God made and fashioned him in due proportion. Does He not then have the power to give life to the dead? (75/al-Qiyâmah, 31-40); Do you think that we have created you purposelessly and that you will not be returned to Us? God is too exalted above that. (23/al-Mu’minûn, 115); Does man think that he will be left wandering without a purpose.” (75/al-Qiyâmah, 36) “Nay! Indeed you love the present life, and leave aside the Hereafter. Some faces, that day will be bright with joy, looking at their Lord; and some faces that day will be sad and darkened, realizing that some back-breaking calamity is about to be inflicted on them... That day the return will be to your Lord.” (75/al-Qiyâmah, 20-30)

This completes the cycle of the rational point in the Qur’anic philosophy of living and existence. But we have seen in our analysis of human nature that human beings also have emotions and feelings; how does the Qur’an evaluate life from this perspective? This comprises the emotional point which we shall treat next.

III. THE EMOTIONAL POINT

Human beings are not just rational beings; they are also emotional and sensitive beings. In other words they reflect upon their being and the meaning of life as they are emotional and perceptive of its everyday living. That is why life and existence for them has emotional and perceptive points as well. All these points as aspects of human existence receive their share of hermeneutics in the attempt to grasp the meaning of human living. That is why the Qur’an treats all these aspects with a balance. We have seen the Qur’anic response to the rational point. In the emotional point the Qur’an acknowledges the wide range of human emotions and it introduces itself as a manual of the true nature of emotions. For when we examine our nature we see that many of our aspirations and feelings are not satisfied in this life. As a result they are left open for satisfaction. This feeling of openness provides the mind with a sense of uneasiness. The mind then interprets that feeling as a life long struggle in the hope that one day it will be satisfied. But it sees that there is an indefinite future and thus the accompanying emotion becomes meaningless which is in turn applied to life itself. This point needs a long psychological analysis with respect to many of our vital emotions so that the Qur’anic philosophy of life is fully elaborated. But we shall be content with only one case developed fully by the 20th century Muslim thinker Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1878-1960).

Nursi analyzes the meaning of life with respect to our passionate yearning for eternity. For we usually conceive our world as very broad, whereas in reality it consists of a brief “now” (an instant) which is very narrow. But since both sides of our narrow world are transparent, like a mirror, they are reflected one within the other and stretch as far as the eye can see. While being narrow as a gap between two walls, our world appears to be as large as an open field. For despite both the right side, which is the past, and the left side, which is the future, being non-existent, they are reflected one within the other, because of their indefinite character, and thus unfolding the wings of present time, which is extremely brief and narrow. Reality is mixed with imagination, and we begin to suppose a non-existent world to be existent.

Our “present time” in this life resembles that of a line, which is being spun around at high speed, which thus appears to be broad like a surface, although in reality it is a fine line. Our life is in reality narrow, and like a fine line, but due to delusions and imagination, its sides have drawn far apart. When something goes wrong in our life our respective emotion or emotions in that situation yields a feeling of openness which in turn provides the mind with a sense of uneasiness. Our life is set into an emotional stirring and we begin to move uneasily.

In this situation we resemble a person in between two walls on which there are mirrors and he perceives the walls to be very far as they are reflected in each other; and then when he moves he hits his head on the walls thinking them to be distant. So are we in a similar situation when the mind interprets that uneasiness with delusions and it thus dispels our illusions. We then see that that broad world is narrower than a grave, finer than a line. (Nursi, 1995, 186)

This is what worldly life is according to the emotional point of the Qur'anic hermeneutics of living. It thus proclaims: "What is the life of this world but only like a play and amusement? The best life is therefore in the Hereafter for those who are righteous. If only you understood." (6/al-An'âm, 32; see also 29/al-'Ankabût, 64; 47/Muhammad, 36) The Qur'an makes us realize that our life indeed passes faster than lightening, it pours away more swiftly than a river. Since worldly life and the life of the flesh and animal consist of this short and imaginal world, the Qur'an invites man to leave behind this corporeality, and enter the level of life of the heart and spirit. We shall find at this level a sphere of life, a world of light, broader than the world we can ever imagine. (Nursi, 1995, 186) The Qur'an claims to have given the key to that world by discovering the mysteries of Divine Unity and knowledge by making our spirit work. This emotional point is then worked out fully with a reference to this aspect of the human end by considering the beginning, as it says that "God originated life the first time, and shall bring it back again, because He knows all creation." (36/Yâ Sîn, 79) "So look at the works of God's mercy; how He gives life to the earth after it was all dead (in winter). He is surely the life-giver of the dead, and He is powerful over every thing." (30/al-Rûm, 50) Then it will be said to them in a new life: "You have, indeed, come to Us (today) alone, as We had created you in the first place." (6/al-An'âm, 94; also 19/Maryam, 95)

We have said that the scope of human emotions is very wide and that there is no limit for their satisfaction. The Qur'an considers human beings endowed with such emotions to be too huge to fit into the finite worldly life. It thus invites humans to see this by opening a wider scope of life that can actually satisfy those emotions: "(We give) good tidings to those who believe and work righteousness that they will be rewarded Paradise below which rivers flow. They are offered fruits and blessings therein." (2/al-Baqara, 25) And the Paradise shall be brought near to those who had the fear of responsibility. (They will be said): This is what you had been promised- it is for every penitent who was heedful-he who was humble before the Merciful in the Unseen and came with a sincere heart. Enter the Paradise in Peace. This is a day of Eternal Life. (50/Qâf, 31-34)

The Qur'anic emotional point reaches a satisfaction at this end by realizing that the range

of a life to come is sufficiently wide for the scope of human emotions and aspirations in life. But this brings a responsibility in this limited life. That responsibility is laid by the Qur'an on human beings as a moral challenge, or rather as the Qur'an expresses a "trial" to see "who will choose do the good." (And who will choose to do evil.) (67/al-Mulk, 2 and 76/al-Dahr, 1-3) This is the actual living where humans take this challenge, a challenge expressed by the Qur'an as a "Trust" that only man volunteered to take. (33/al-Ahzâb, 72)

We thus argue that the Qur'an provides the rational point, represented by the mind, and the emotional point, represented by the heart, as the ground of the perceptive point, represented by our worldly aspect. The perceptive point is the moral arena where man faces a formidable challenge that must be cherished by the two aspects which make up the field of faith. All these points are actually manifested in human life converging thus in actual living, which will be treated next.

IV. THE PERCEPTIVE POINT

The challenge man is facing in this life is the realization of the purpose of creation and thereby live according to that realization. The real challenge man encounters is to know why he is here, and why there is good and evil dwelling at the same time alongside him. Man is so much emerged in this life into his immediate concerns, and more particularly his selfish interests and material concerns that he forgets to pay attention to the "end" of life, called by the Qur'an *al-âkhirah*. Thus he constantly violates the moral law. "You were (sunk) into heedlessness of this, but today We have removed your veil and your sight is keen" (50/Qâf, 22) The Qur'an thus charges man to build a true sense of responsibility called *taqwâ*, which is essential for an ethically-based order in society. Indeed this goal is set for man as an ideal order on earth exemplified in the following manner:

It is the same whether we explain the Truth or not, such human beings will not believe. Therefore, God has sealed their hearts and hearing; and on their eyes is a veil... They would (try to) deceive God and the believers; but they deceive only themselves and yet they do not realize. In their hearts is a disease and God has increased their disease. There is a grievous penalty for them because they cry lies (even to themselves). When it is said to them: "Do not make corruption on the earth", they say: "Why, we only want to

establish order.” They are truly the ones who cause corruption, but they do not realize... They resemble a man who kindled a fire, and when it lighted all around him God took away their light and left them in utter darkness, unseeing, deaf, dumb and blind; they will no longer return (to the Truth). Or (they resemble those) left under a rain-laden cloud from the sky; in it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning. They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, trembling from the fear of death. But God is ever encompassing the rejecters of Faith (i.e., Truth)... If God willed He could take away their faculty of hearing and seeing. For God has power over all things. (2/al-Baqarah, 6-20) The Qur’an sees in its message a healing word for those who have a heart and understanding, and earnestly listening, witnessing the truth. (50/Qâf, 37)

It is the Qur’anic point that morality is nourished by a spiritual life; and that moral life devoid of spirituality is somehow lifeless, static and devoid of dynamism. That is why it encourages man to be attentive to its message to build spirituality. In this sense the Qur’anic spiritual life is taken as the basis of moral responsibility. The Qur’an tries to give its message around this idea of spiritual life as it perceives itself a divine message from God to man. There are extraordinary men called “prophets” who are able to receive such divine messages. Through their sensitive and impregnable personalities and their reception and steadfast and fearless preaching of the Divine Messages, the Prophets shake men’s consciousness from a state of placidity and moral decadence into an alert state where they could see good as good and evil as evil. (Rahman, 1980, 80) Thus it warns: “Human personality has been permeated with greed or selfishness (hence be attentive against this nature of your personality).” (4/al-Nisâ’, 128). “He, who makes his personality pure, shall be successful, while he who corrupts it shall be in the loss.” (91/al-Shams, 9-10) “The successful are those who can save themselves from their own selfish personality.” (59/al-Hashr, 9)

The Prophet forms a community with his followers as the Qur’an indicates: “We have thus made you a justly balanced community (*ummah*) over the nations; and the Apostle a witness over you.” (2/al-Baqarah, 143) “Let there arise out of you one community calling to good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.” (3/Ali ‘Imrân, 104) Such an understanding of life assumes moral imperatives that are dictated by the Qur’an, the most important is the message that “whosoever kills a person, other than for murder or for spreading corruption in the land, shall be as if he slew mankind altogether. And whosoever

saves a life shall be as if he saved the life of all mankind. (5/al-Mâ’idah, 35) This way evil acts that may destroy human personality and in turn the society are perceived to be immoral acts that should be avoided. Avoiding an evil may sometimes be very difficult because human temptation is at times so strong that we may give in. Therefore, to build spirituality to support our moral conscience, reflection upon our nature, meditation and worship is vital. It is this system of perceptive life that the Qur’an projects as its manifestation of philosophy of living in Islam.

We must point out one more related issue in order to complete our analysis of human nature also: When one lives the king of life as prescribed in the Qur’an a human being develops another aspect which has already been identified as spiritual. This leads to the uplifting of a human being to reach an aspect that is shared by “angels”. Therefore, we can conclude that such a human being develops an angelic aspect which enlightens all other aspects. In such a case a human being does not commit any more the shortcomings that may be committed at lower levels. A human being is a complete human being if s/he lives the life of reason which may elevate her/him to the level of angels by utilizing the divine guidance.

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