

they are better than those who mock them.” The Persian poet reminds us: “Don’t say I am better than anyone for the first one who said that was the accursed Satan.” Accursed... “I am better...” How often have you said or “felt” this way...

Allah’s knowledge is in the present tense. There is no past and no future in His awesome knowledge. Allah is not pleased with ingratitude. We should note that ingratitude is of two types. The one type mentioned in chapter two, *Baqara*, says that it is the same if you warn them or not, they will not believe. This type of ingratitude is permanent and leads to the Fire. The other type of ingratitude is one that is the result of one’s conditioning and social environment that can be overcome through action-by-knowledge. The person must be awakened to their ignorance and then illuminated through the process of re-learning one’s inherent nature and then becoming the guardian of that nature.

That’s why the closer people are to an aboriginal state, generally the closer they are to what’s called in the Quran *fitra*, the inherent nature of human beings. The more distant we get from that, not only the more out of sync, but the more unhealthy we get. Because there is an effect on the soul and on the body. Look at that early period, they lived around animals. People are so divorced from that...people drink milk without even reflecting on the fact that it comes from animals. The Quran asks people to reflect on milk and where it came from and how it’s made and the miracle of milk itself. The same is true with travelling in natural environments like the desert. It’s an extraordinary thing. A lot of people who live in cities become so divorced from natural experiences. They don’t even see the stars and a lot of what the Quran is telling you to do is just look up in the heavens: These stunning verses – By the night when it envelops. By the sun in its brilliant morning light. By the star when it descends...and We have ornamented the heavens with constellations...these verses are telling people to connect and to look around, to look at the order and reflect on it. Satan said to God you will not find many grateful ones amongst them. Gratitude is what Satan is trying to remove from the children of Adam. Gratitude is the quickest way to really being in a healthy state. For the early community that was much easier than it is for modern people that are glued to artificial

lights as opposed to celestial lights. The lights of their computer screens, cell phones and television...so that the more divorced they are the sicker they’re feeling. Thus you have widespread depression, widespread self-loathing, feelings of emptiness. **Disorders/sicknesses that have reached epidemic levels.**

The worst delusion is the “intellectual” one... Richard Dawkins “The God Delusion” falls in this category. In attempting to prove his point that religions are stupid, Dawkins quotes Carl Sagan in *Pale Blue Dot*: “How is it that hardly any major religion has looked at science and concluded, ‘This is much better than we thought! The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said, grander more subtle, more elegant?’ Instead they say, ‘No, no, no! My god is a little god, and I want him to stay that way.’ A religion, old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the Universe as revealed by modern science might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths.” Really? What Sagan failed to understand (and Dawkins, by quoting him) is that there is such a religion that directly ascribes the magnificence of the universe to the glory of the God who created it.

The BIG God says: “Certainly in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day, there are clear signs for the **intelligent**, those who at all times remember God and **constantly reflect** on the creation of the heavens and the earth and say: O Creator! You have not created this expanse of splendour and magnificence in vain. You are Pure and Transcendent, so preserve us through Your favour from the torment of the fire.”(3:190-91)

Dawkins is aware that demagogic ranting that displays confidence in the face of counter evidence is the way to sway unlearned masses. “So do not let the life of this world delude you (Mr. Dawkins) and do not let the Deluder delude you concerning God.” (Quran, 31:33) You’re struggling with your own moral nihilism and appear to be unwilling to confront it!

Become grateful. If you show gratitude God will increase you in the feeling of gratitude. He’ll give you more reasons to feel grateful. That is a law of cause and effect according to Muslim beliefs. If you display ingratitude, conversely you will find more and more reasons to feel ungrateful. That’s the way the universe works. **“Abandon those who have turned their religion into a game and a diversion and who have been deluded by the life of this world.”** (Quran, 6:70)

The Delusion Delusion

A mirror, if used as it should be, is a tool whereby we can see what is wrong with our appearance and correct it. If it is misused it becomes a narcissistic means whereby one gazes into one’s own **delusion**. When looking at the faults of others we can either choose to see the reflection of our own shortcomings, which engenders compassion and sympathy toward the one afflicted, or we can **narcissistically** contemplate our **perceived superiority**.

The Din of Islam is a totality that cannot be fragmented or taken piecemeal. Each aspect of Islam defines and delimits the other aspects. The penal code of Islam cannot be applied without the principle of innocence until proven guilty; nor can the implementation of the severing of the hand of consumer thieves be applied without economic security provided for all citizens of the society; not simply by the illusory welfare state of Islamic idealists but by individuals who make up the community fulfilling their responsibilities. So why this fragmented picture of Islam.

Perhaps one of the most dangerous habits of untrained Muslims is to look at verses of the Quran or take a hadith and without full understanding of the context of the matter begin to make universal applications of some principle that has not been fully grasped, and to make matters worse attempt to force upon others one's misunderstandings. A particularly sad aspect of this is the all too common harsh condemnation of other Muslims for their respective beliefs, behaviours and attitudes.

The Quran is very specific about commanding to good and condemning evil. So specific that after belief in Allah, this could be understood as the first fruit of belief in Allah: You are the best community that has been brought forth for humankind, you enjoin right and forbid evil and you believe in Allah. It is common in the Arabic language to mention the most important thing last. But this state of being that is so praised in the Quran and this group that is the Party of Allah in no way precludes the fundamental teachings of Islam that engender mutual respect, mercy and compassion between people. **For some reason, it is easier for us to condemn others without reflecting on the context and the variables involved in any action and characteristic.** To give an example, there was once a Bedouin man who came to the Prophet (p) who was distributing some wealth. The Bedouin grabbed the Prophet's mantle and jerked it in a way that left a

welt on the precious neck of the Prophet (p). The man then said: "Muhammad, give me some of this wealth you are giving out." The Prophet (p) turned and looked with displeasure at the man and asked: "Tell me why I should do that, after your harsh treatment of me?" The man replied: "Because you are one who does not retort a bad action with another bad action." The Prophet (p) laughed and gave the man some charity.

There are several lessons to be learnt here but two are particularly striking. The first is the fact that the Prophet (p), in his ingenious yet subtle way, forced the man to question his action and this in itself is enjoining right and forbidding evil. Often people are unaware of their bad behaviour and gentle reminders can wake them from the sleep of heedlessness. But secondly, and most importantly, the Prophet (p) recognized who he was dealing with and why that affected his behaviour. The man was a desert Arab, unlike the Prophet (p) who was a city Arab. The Prophet (p) said: "Whoever lives in the desert becomes harsh." In other words, the physical topography has a profound effect on one's character. An awareness of an individual's social and cultural background is an essential ingredient in assessing that person's action with any equity. It was not so much the individual that was at fault but rather the social matrix that produced him. Each climate & culture has elements & aspects that will impinge on & often dictate and condition how one will act in any given situation. As individuals we must be aware of these more often than not unrecognized social contexts in order to understand people.

The Quran says "We have created you from a male and female and then made you into a plurality of races and tribes that you might know one another." So, although our source is one and there are many more common factors in our ethnic natures than dissonant or uncommon ones, the reason for this diversity is for mutual recognition and awareness to result from these differences; both meanings that can be glossed from the Quranic term *lita'arafu*, to know one another.

One of the tasks of each human being that is of paramount importance in achieving his or her respective humanity, is to be able to recognize personal shortcomings and begin to rectify them. A deeply

impacting way to go about this is through the mirror of the other. The Prophet (p) said: "The believer is the mirror of the believer." In fact the word for mirror in Arabic is from a word which means to see. But from it we also get the word for man and its derivative for women, *Almaru*. Even more wonderful is the word for pupil of the eye, which is the same word for human being, *Insan*. So we can derive some wonderful glosses from these semantic fields. We are collectively mirrors of each other. But there is another important reason why the other serves as a mirror for us. It is through the other that our own blessings are perceived. The Prophet (p) said: "Do not look at those more fortunate than you but rather look at those less fortunate for by doing that you will be less likely to belittle the blessings of Allah."

It is through this practice of looking at the faults and trials of others that we can perceive our own good fortune. If the Prophet (p) ever saw an afflicted person he used to say silently: "Praise be to the One Who has protected me from that which He has afflicted you with and preferred me over so much of His creation." Another aspect of this is his admonition to us: "Do not ridicule those of you who are in tribulation, for perhaps Allah will remove the affliction from the one you mock and try you with it." Jesus (p), the son of Maryam (p) said: "Humanity falls into two categories, the blessed and the afflicted, so if you are blessed thank God and have compassion toward those who have been afflicted."

If we take to heart these concepts it becomes extremely difficult to maintain a delusion of superiority. It becomes more difficult to hate people or become intolerant of them simply because one begins to recognize the state of the great majority of humanity. "Surely humanity is in a state of loss, except for those who believe and do righteous works, and enjoin what is true and enjoin patience." Enjoining what is true does not mean self-righteously and arrogantly deriding others. "Let not one group mock another group for perhaps

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