



An Analysis of Allama Tabatabaei's Interpretation of Human Nature as the Cornerstone of Islamic Humanities¹

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Abstract

There are many theories about human nature in both Western and Islamic scholarship. In the history of Western philosophy, the story of human nature has its background in ancient Greek philosophy. There is a wide range of theories of human nature, as numerous as philosophies themselves, presented by many thinkers from different cultures, periods, and schools of thought. Undoubtedly, one of the practical elements in shaping and orientating the humane sciences depends on the type of interpretation of human nature and identity; for instance, a secularist view of human nature in one way and a religious view in another way play a fundamental role in the process of determining the sort of humane sciences. This article focuses on Allama Tabatabaei's explanation of human nature as the foundation of Islamic humanities by using descriptive-analytical and exploratory-inferential techniques. Allama first looks at human nature in terms of its link to the Cause of the causes, the Creator. His concern was human nature from the very outset of the creation of the human soul and before its inherence in the human body to the end of physical life on this earth, and even into the soul's life after Death and finally at the Resurrection. Such an understanding of human nature is the original basis of Islamic human sciences. Although the social aspects of human life and human beings' intercommunication are Allama's focus, they are secondary to the perfection of the human individual and self-actualization.

Keywords

human nature, humanities, secular view, Islamic human sciences, self-actualization, Allama Tabatabaei.

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Introduction

"Whoever forgets his/her self ... s/he will go astray and fall into perdition Such a person sinks into a darkness from which there is no escape." (Tabatabaei, 1986 b, p. 202)

Philosophers such as Socrates (469-399 BC), Plato (428-348 BC), Aristotle (348-322 BC), Epicurus (341-271 BC), and Plotinus (205-270) were among the early Western thinkers who included in their philosophical discussions distinct theories of human nature or at least some vital aspect of the latter. In the last two centuries, besides Christian thought on human nature, the West has witnessed the emergence of the theories of Marx (1818-83), Freud (1856-1939), Lorenz (1903-89), Sartre (1905-80), Skinner (1904-90), Maslow (1908-70) each featuring a different perspective. Regardless of some similarities that may be found in the structure, each of the above is representative of a specific position on human nature.¹ In Islamic thought, on the other hand, Farabi (872-950), Avicenna [Ibn Sina] (980-1037), Biruni (970-1048), Ghazzali (1057-1111), Suhrawardi (1155-1191), Averroes [Ibn Rushd] (1126-98), Ibn Arabi (1156-1240), Mir Damad (d. 1631) and Mulla Sadra (1571-1640) are among those thinkers who dealt with the problem of human nature and tried to present their philosophical or mystical theories of human nature through an Islamic orientation. In a particular sense, the idea of the perfect human being and the doctrine of self-realization has opened new approaches to studying human nature and conduct. Clarifying the concept of self-realization as the cornerstone of the present study demands a clear image of human nature. On the one hand, the *self*, to me, is identified as circulating all elements by which a human person is a human person. On the other hand, human nature is the most apparent elementary component of distinguishing a human from a non-human being. On the level of philosophical discussion, it seems challenging to indicate which one of these two proceeds the other. All that one may say is to notify that the human self and nature are intertwined in reality and the discussion. To this extent, the social aspects of human life are secondary to self-actualization (Cf. Tabatabaei, 1986 b, p. 194).

1. For a summary of Plato's Theory and some recent theories on human nature, see: Stevenson, 1987. To understand Maslow's position, see: Maslow, 1973. For information about other theories, see: Campbell, 1981.

The Origin of Human Beings: Creation Versus Evolution

Looking at the doctrine of Divine Creation, Islam emphasizes that believers do not give up on themselves or feel abject under any circumstances because they know themselves to be attached to the limitless power of the Creator of the universe. They are mindful of Him and sheltered by Him in all circumstances; their hearts are calm, clear, and strong. (Tabatabaei, 1989, p. 20)

Criticizing the Theory of evolution, Allama Tabatabaei argues that it does not encompass all cases of existence and, therefore, cannot be relied upon. "Struggle for existence" and "selection of the best," two significant principles of the Theory of evolution of species, are not universally true, according to Allama. However, they may be so in some cases (Tabatabaei, 1981, p. 5-9). One can observe "many lower species among animals or plants that have managed to preserve their existence even alongside the existence of higher species" (Ibid). One may observe "many wild plants or animals which have been trained and transformed into a higher state while others of their species are still sustaining their lives." Speaking on the social and moral levels, the author maintains that the above principles lead to unpleasant consequences. The "struggle for existence" principle naturally allows and justifies an eternal conflict among humankind. The principle of "selection of the best" negates the right to life of the lower and weaker classes and considers the more vigorous classes justified in their transgressions against the weak (Ibid). In Allama's mind, the principle of causality is the fundamental principle involved in all material change and evolution in beings and their existence (Ibid). He developed his doctrine of creation primarily based on the doctrine of causality and with the support of the following verses of the Qoran.

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time, and He is firm in power; He throws the veil of night over the day, which it pursues incessantly, and (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, made subservient by His command; Surely His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (A'raf, 54).

Moreover, certainly, We created man of an extract of clay. Then We made him a tiny life germ in a firm resting place [womb]. Then We made the life-germ a clot; then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then

We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators (Mu'menoon, 12-14).

Allama emphasized that the relationship between Cause and effect requires that any effect stand by its Cause, either in terms of its existence or its primary and secondary perfections. Based on reasoning, Quranic proofs, and a religious worldview and belief system, Allama observed the Islamic notion of creation in his epistemology, human nature, and conduct ontology. The originality of the creation was Allama's focus. Elaborating on this doctrine, he maintained "that any two things are different from each other in their respective particulars even if they are united in their common and general characteristics" (Tabatabaei, 1983, p. 63-64). Allama concluded "that every being is different from all other beings. It follows that everything is unique and has no similarity or likeness to anything else. Moreover, Allah has given things their uniqueness, distinction, and originality, as He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth" (Ibid).

Another passage by Allama demonstrates his seriousness in establishing the doctrine of creation.

Our minds and hearts tell us that this world of being with its wondrous system did not come about by itself; such an astonishing world of creation could not arise without being arranged by someone. A Creator must undoubtedly have brought about this vast and glorious universe through His limitless knowledge and power (Tabatabaei, 1989, p. 20).

In his commentary on some Quranic verses touching on the existence of the human species, Allama insisted on the Truth of divine creation versus evolution. He stated that, as various verses indicate, the present human species was generated from the same Adam and Eve and was never the product of any other species of animals, such as chimpanzees, etc. Indeed, human nature is a unique species of creatures God brought into existence, having created them from the earth (dust, clay) (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 2, p. 112). As wise beings, we are equipped with a "God-given instinct" by which we seek the Cause of every occurrence we witness. According to the law of causality, no single thing can come into being without Cause, of itself, and by chance (Tabatabaei, 1989, p. 43-44). In expressing himself thus, Allama draws our attention to an inner perception of our existence and the existence of the universe with the help of what he called "our instinctive realism" (Ibid, p. 44). Allama's conclusion is clear. He remarks that according to this instinctive realism, it is not accepted that the system

of being came into existence without any support. It has not arisen willy-nilly. It instead "proclaims that the world of being certainly has a support that is the Source of being and the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and that this limitless Being and source of knowledge and power is God from whose oceanic being the system of existence springs." He stands by the Quranic verse: "Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)." (Ibid, p. 44-45, Taha, 55).

Also, Allama indicates that the existence of a material and corporeal world is related to an incorporeal universe where there is no matter. However, the traces and precepts of matter are present. This second universe is, in fact, the Cause of the material world. Again, a universe precedes the material world without matter nor its traces or precepts. The latter is considered the Cause of the Cause of the material world. These two pre-existent worlds are respectively called the World of Form¹ or Limbo ("*al-Barzakh*" -the connecting link) and the World of Wisdom or Spirit (Tabatabaei, 1986 a, vol. 2, p. 197-201, 217-221). Hence, Allama drew an image of human beings in terms of their existence in three realms, i.e., the world of matter, the world of form or imaginative faculty that belongs to the angelic realm, and the world of wisdom or spirit (Ibid).

These three realms may be seen separately in discussion, yet they are intertwined in a real sense when attributed to human nature. The components of the nature of human beings are neither purely material nor are they purely angelic or spiritual. What constitutes human nature's components is a complex mix of material, angelic, rational, and spiritual elements. These elements are present in every individual; however, three types of human beings may be found based on the dominant element among these three. Some individuals mainly desire to satisfy their material appetite, neglecting their spiritual nutrition. They seem firm in their material gain but weak in their spiritual success. Then there are those whose significant ambition is to degrade their material longing and isolate

1. Allama's consideration of the World of Form (*'Alam ol-Methal*) differs from Plato's Theory of Forms, although one may find some similarities. While Plato's Forms, to his understanding, has to "do with what is ultimately real," Allama's Theory of Form has to do with what is between pure spiritual and pure material worlds and functions as a connecting link among them and not as an ultimate reality in this cycle. For more about Plato's Theory of Forms, see: Plato, 1955, p. 485-507, 526-527, 596 & Stevenson, 1987, p. 28-30.

themselves from human society lest their spirits are hurt. There is another group whose primary aspiration is to stay in an imaginary world of the representative faculty. None of these three groups represents a perfect image of a human being. For an ordinary person to move towards self-realization and perfection, the primary task is to reconcile these three realms and provide internal justice and peace.

At any rate, the human body corresponds to the material world, the human imaginative faculty to the world of form, and human wisdom to the world of spirit. All these elements, in Allama's eyes, originate in God's command and His creation. Hence, humans have been created from the beginning of their mundane lives with a connection to the Eternal Being and a potentiality that helps them contact the highest Celestial Realm (*al-Malakut al-A'la*). The latter, to Allama, is the "World of Divinity" (*'Alam al-Lahut*) (Tabatabaei, 1986 f, p. 103-104). In their virtually hierarchical level, the other three are respectively called:

1. the world of almightiness (*al-'Alam ol-Jabarut*)—the realm of the spirit or abstract wisdom,
2. the world of the heavenly kingdom (*al-Alam ol-Malakut*)—the realm of form or the imaginative faculty— the world of angels,
3. the earthly world of human nature (*al-'Alam on-Nasut*) (Ibid. & Husayni Tehrani, 1982, p. 71-72).

Accordingly, every human lives continuously in all three realms and conditions, whether s/he recognizes them or not. As was mentioned earlier, these three realms are not attributed to all human individuals to the same degree or extent. Human nature came into existence accompanied by the latter three. Human nature is more material than intellectual or spiritual at the very level of its existence. However, the groundwork for developing the two other stages and faculties remains (Ibn Sina, 1992, p. 218-219). This kind of development occurs by the principle of substantive motion mentioned above.

Body and Soul

To understand Allama's position on the soul and body is to appreciate his understanding of the Quranic verses that served as his reference. Allama's philosophy in this regard goes hand in hand with his Qoranic studies. His philosophical and psychological knowledge of the soul and body depends mainly on his understanding of the Qoran's position on the soul and body.

The following verse, for example, is the key one upon which Allama founded his idea of the soul and its nature. "And they ask you about the soul. Say: The soul is one of the commands of my Lord, and you are not given aught of knowledge but a little" (*Isra*, 85).

Allama, following the influential master of Shi'i transcendental philosophy, came to believe that the human "soul is corporeal in its occurrence and spiritual in its permanence" (Cf. Hosayni Tehrani, 1982, p. 71). He established this doctrine based on his fundamental principle and Theory of "substantive motion." According to the Theory of substantive motion, Molla Sadra "examined exhaustively the question of motion and its relation to the natural world While other philosophers restricted motion to accidents, he enunciated a theory of 'substantive motion' according to which not only is natural substance in motion, but substance as such is principle basis for accidental changes" (Mesbah Musavi, 1994, p. 1).

In Allama's eyes, the following verses not only prove the process mentioned above of transformation but also link all stages of the perfection of the human soul to the existence of God as its Creator, Who is present in any single stage:

Moreover, indeed, We created human beings from an extract of clay. Then, We made him/her a tiny life germ in a firm resting place. Then We made the life-germ a clot; then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators (Mu'menun, 12-14).

Allama explains that the above verses demonstrate the originality of both body and soul. As Allama mentions, six verses in the Quran indicate that human beings were initially created from the earth. For instance, "Allah created you of dust" (Fater, 11). Or as in the case of Adam, "... He created him from dust, then said to him Be, and he was." (Al-e' Emran, 58 & Hosayni Tehrani, 1982, p. 153). The creation of Adam from pure dust and clay and of his descendants who were generated from him demonstrates that the creation of human beings is undoubtedly of corporeal substance. Moving forward from the first stage, according to the Theory of substantive motion, we find that corporeal substance is transformed into something else. The exact process of transformation continues in the intermediary stages when a human being is first in the form of a clot, then

a lump of flesh, then a collection of bones, and finally bones clothed with flesh. At all stages of this beautiful process of creation, one sees that something corporeal is transformed into another corporeal object. According to the doctrine mentioned above, this suggests that the human soul is corporeal in its occurrence [*Jesmaniyat ol-hoduth*]. After God covered the bones with flesh, He "caused it to grow into another creation," transforming Allama from a corporeal stage to a spiritual one [*ruhaniyat ol-baqa*]. This is where these material objects grow into the 'human soul.' This same soul is no longer material. It is then an abstract immaterial and spiritual being that belongs to the corporeal body and resides there until the Death of the body. At that point, the soul departs from the body, and the latter perishable object remains in its earthly station without the soul. After the Death of the body and after it is abstracted from matter, the soul departs for God (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 2, p. 113). These phenomena all occur by substantive motion. This innate motion of substance occurs in corporeal objects and the immaterial human soul (Cf. Hosayni Tehrani, 1982, p. 151-154). This shows us how the doctrine of substantive motion functions as a fundamental premise and essential principle in Allama's position on the journey of the body and soul (Ibid).

When seen in this manner, Allama's interpretation of dualism is a developmental transformation of several sequential corporeal objects into an incorporeal existent being. This dualism does not suggest that human nature, at the very outset of its existence, begins as a composite of body and soul (Ibid). On the contrary, Allama's dualism is translated as a permanent and active transformation from a lower corporeal form to a higher one when the soul appears in the fetus, and human nature achieves its incorporeal state. Allama did not mention when this transformation occurred. However, it is clear, as depicted in the Qoran: "... We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of creators." (Mu'menun, 14), that this process appears after the body of the fetus is shaped by getting flesh and bones in its fourth month of life (Cf. Mesbah *et al.*, 1995).

It is permutation and transformation but not composition and combination. At its origin, a human being is a pure material (dust, life-germ) but a perfectible object, which becomes immaterial in its journey towards perfection and becoming a soul (Hosayni Tehrani, 1982, p. 152-154). In this sense, Allama believed that body and soul should be

seen in the process of transformation, according to which the material portion of human nature is transformed into an immaterial human soul and becomes spiritual (Cf. *Ibid*, p. 151-152). Allama maintains that the human body "is continuously undergoing change and transformation," yet "the reality of 'I' remains fixed. It does not undergo any change or transformation" (Tabatabaei, 1986 a, p. 163).

Allama explained that a brief look at the Qoran indicates that, in a real sense, the soul and body are distinguished. He gives the example of paste, a combination of water and flour. To this extent, whenever the soul is with the body, the human individual is alive, and as soon as it leaves the body, the latter dies. However, a closer look at the particular Quranic verses helps us discover a richer concept of the soul-body relationship. God says: "... I have made him [Adam - human being] and breathed into him of My spirit...." (*Hejr*, 29). According to Allama's interpretation, inhaling the divine spirit into the human body is to make the body more human and not to add something to the body that contradicts it in essence. The assumed contradiction is that the body is corporeal, perishable, and mortal, whereas the soul is incorporeal, imperishable, and immortal. Thus, a human being is one actuality, one fact, not a combined being made of two opposite substances. A human being is one when the soul is breathed into the body and separated from it (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 20, p. 138-139).

Allama insisted that a human being is one real being from which all functions of a natural organism and immaterial soul are derived. He emphasized the fact that it is the soul and not the body that makes a human being human. Moreover, this is what is meant by the pronoun 'you.' He confirms the idea of soul-body unification, relying on an Imami tradition narrated from the sixth Imam of the Shi'a, Imam Sadeq, who was asked, 'Why does a human person feel the departure and separation of the soul from the body, whereas he feels no such a feeling when the soul resides in the body?' The Imam answered: 'It is because the body grows up and develops itself side by side with the soul [in this mundane life]' (*Ibid*).

Based on certain other Quranic verses (*Mulk*, 23), Allama maintains, after its unification with the body and its organs, the soul acquires the powers of hearing, seeing, and thinking ... These powers are among the corporeal actions that cannot be performed without the intermediary of bodily organs and faculties (Tabatabaei, 1986 a, p. 173).

Another point that Allama focuses on is the immortality of the soul. The

soul is the part that every human person refers to with the pronoun *I*. "It is a conception which we are never oblivious of – as long as we are alive and conscious" (Tabatabaei, 1983, vol. 2, p. 221). The actual element of humanity makes us human, and this is the only substance one recognizes as *I*. This is the element using which one can understand, perceive, intend, and act. In these processes, the body is an instrument for the soul's activities (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 10. P. 120-121). Allama argues that one may become oblivious to one of one's organs or limbs and "even of the whole body." However, one never neglects the "I" (Tabatabaei, 1983, vol. 2. P. 221). As was mentioned earlier, this is the cornerstone of the knowledge by presence.

Furthermore, Allama believed in the immaterial soul. He maintained that our soul "is not like our external limbs which we feel with our senses of sight or touch, etc., nor is it like our internal organs which we know by senses or experiment." The soul is immaterial since "it is neither divisible nor governed by time or space." Moreover, there is no doubt that our body and its limbs and organs, "as well as the faculties and characteristics found in it, are all material." They are material because they are subject to all characteristics of matter, such as "gradual change, dissolution, and divisibility." These phenomena are not seen in the case of the soul; therefore, the soul is not material (Ibid).

The above discussion demonstrates a two-sided image of human nature, material and spiritual. Thus, human beings have two opposite inclinations to the material world or the Divine immaterial sovereignty (Cf. Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 1, p. 369-374). What follows is a further discussion found in Allama's writings, which complements his perspective of the human soul and provides us with a clearer understanding of him.

A Major Distinction between the Human Soul and Angels

The unification of the soul and body described above is the primary distinction between the soul on the one hand and angels on the other. They both are abstract beings, having the exact origin beyond time and space and lacking the defects of the corporeal and material world. However, the soul moves downward from its celestial realm to the scope of the material dimension of human nature since it cannot execute any action without the help and intermediary of the human corporeal body. Hence, it resides in a human body and, through interconnection with that body, finds its way to

perfection and fulfillment. On the other hand, the angels stay in their heavenly rank and position of angelic intellect (Tabatabaei, 1986 a, p. 173).

Two other differences between the human soul and angels are found in Allama's explanation. Due to its descent to the realm of matter and its residence in the mundane life of the human body, the soul finds two ways opening towards its journey: one directs it to destruction and devastation, while the other guides it to the exalted ranks, to eternal happiness, to heaven where it shall abide. Depending on which path of the two the soul willingly chooses and based on the type of actions performed in concert with the body, the soul journeys towards either its adversity or its happiness. This is while the angels have only one way to follow: the path of happiness and prosperity (Ibid, p. 175).

The notions of misguidance and guidance and the concept of adversity and happiness originate in the Quran and Islamic traditions. As depicted in the Quran, human beings are advised to reflect on whether someone has power over them and if this someone sees them. He is the One Who created human beings and has given them two eyes and a tongue and two lips, and pointed out to them "the two conspicuous ways." (*Balad*, 4-10) In other verses, God says: "(I Swear by) the soul and Him Who made it perfect. Then, He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it. He [she] will indeed be successful in purifying it. Moreover, he [she] will indeed fail who corrupts it" (Ibid).

Allama also pointed to a third difference, one that lies in the hierarchical level of existence, where the position of the soul is higher than that of the angels to the extent that the soul has power over them. According to the Quranic verses describing the Divine Light or Holy Soul, as well as Prophetic or Imami traditions interpreting these verses, this same soul coming from the highest celestial realm (*al-malakut al-a'la*) is with the Prophets and with the Imams, the Prophet Muhammad's successors. This holy soul, or as Avicenna refers to, this holy reason (Ibn Sina, 1992, vol. 2, p. 364-367) always assists the Prophets and Imams as the Guides of human beings Tabatabaei, 1983, p. 177-179 & 1986 a, vol. 15, p. 152-153).

Allama's Division of the Soul: A Hierarchical Conception

Relying on an Imami tradition narrated from the Sixth Imam of the Shi'a, Imam Sadeq, Allama presents his division of the soul in terms of three respective hierarchical levels, as shown in the following table.

Accordingly, "the soul of faith [*ruh ol-Iman*] accompanies a human being's body until s/he commits a great sin, then it departs from the body" (Ibid & al-Qomm, 1983, p. 447). Allama indicated that 'the soul of faith' has been devoted to faithful believers. From his point of view, this division has been more or less depicted in the Quran, where describes the believers, it says: "These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and whom He has strengthened with an inspiration from Him" (Tabatabaei, 1983, vol. 2, p. 176 & *Mujadeleh*, 22). Allama, describing the holy soul, which is with the Prophets and their successors, remarked that this soul is considered the light of guidance using which God's servants have been guided to the right path (Ibid, p. 176-177).

Finally, in Allama's eyes, the above-mentioned hierarchical levels of the soul are not but different manifestations of the one soul, the soul which springs forth at the command of God. He concluded that these levels originated from the same essence and root but differed in an analogical sense and division. This means that they represent different gradations of the same soul and not different sorts of the soul. From this standpoint, the soul of God's prophets or their successor, for instance, is much stronger and more enlightened than the souls of their followers. Furthermore, even the souls of the prophets, as well as those of their followers and ordinary people, are not in the same rank among themselves (Ibid).

Hierarchical Groups of Human Beings (Theological Division)	Gradations of the Souls with Each Group
<p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">God's Prophets and Their Successors</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the soul of body 2. the soul of power 3. the soul of passion and appetite 4. the soul of faith 5. the holy soul
<p style="text-align: center;">II</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Believers; the Followers of God's Prophets</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the soul of body 2. the soul of power 3. the soul of passion and appetite 4. the soul of faith ◆ the holy soul is excluded
<p style="text-align: center;">III</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unbelievers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the soul of body 2. the soul of power 3. the soul of passion and appetite ◆ the souls of faith is excluded ◆ the holy soul is excluded (Ibid, p. 177-178).

A Hierarchical and Theological Division of God's Servants Seen in
Terms of Their Respective Soul-Gradation

Death: Finality or Beginning; Annihilation or Eternity?

Allama's position on Death is based on his studies and interpretation of the Quranic passages. Accordingly, there is a death [*mawt*] and an appointed term [*ajal*] for everything on earth, including human beings. "Do they not reflect within themselves: Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them two but with Truth, and (for) an appointed term? -Moreover, most surely most of the people are deniers of the meeting of their Lord" (*Rum*: 8). No single being may live on the earth beyond its appointed term, nor may it die before that (A'raf, 34). The appointed term [*ajal*] of a living object is the time when its period of life and activity terminates. Moreover, only God knows when this appointed term, this terminating time will be. Just as the soul resides in the body by and through the command of God, so does the appointed term exist in everyone (Tabatabaei, 1986 c, p. 204). The separation of the two poles of human life, human nature's earthly and heavenly substances, is called Death, just as their togetherness is called life. After this kind of separation, the soul returns to its source, to the world of light and sacredness, whereas the body remains in its earthly world, which is its origin (Ibid, p. 206).

In Allama's view, Death is not a simple experience, such as the absence of feeling, motion, and life that happens at the time of Death. It is instead a return to the One Truth that occurs through exodus from material life and admittance into the spiritual realm. Human life is eternal and never comes to an end, even when Death overtakes our body. This is because, in Allama's mind, Death causes nothing but a transformation from one place to another. Relying on a Prophetic tradition, Allama indicated that human beings are created for eternity, not annihilation (Ibid). In this way, our life in the mundane world is considered an introduction to future life and a bridge to the Hereafter. In their worldly lives, human beings consciously or unconsciously, rightly or wrongly, advocate a worldview or cling to a belief system and act accordingly. These beliefs and actions provide the *how* of their future when they die and after their departure to an unearthly and eternal life. Then, their tranquility and happiness, misfortune, or grief will be actualized by what they believe and how they act in the earthly life. As depicted in the Quran, we shall receive nothing except what we strive for and will be fully rewarded for our striving (*Najm*, 39-41). Alternatively, as the Qoran says: "Whoever does good, it is for his[her] soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it; and your Lord is not unjust to the

servants" (*Fusselat*, 46). Allama explained that what we are supposed to receive in the Hereafter is generally called reward, which may be either good or bad, depending. He maintained that one's earthly life is an investment by which one can prepare and provide the requirements and facilities for his/her life in the world of the Hereafter (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 20, p. 356-357).

Allama, insisting that human Death is in God's hands and occurs with His permission, elaborated on the inevitability and predestination of Death. He pointed out that there is no way to escape from Death and that Death leads us to our Lord (Ibid, vol. 4, p. 55; vol. 15, p. 22; vol. 17, p. 268-269). God is the One Who "takes the souls at the time of their death" (*Zumar*: 42). However, when He intends to take those souls, He merely commands the angel of Death and other angels who are the latter's companions and helpers (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 17, p. 208-269).

What is taken at the time of Death is the soul and not the soul and the body together. When Death occurs, it occurs to the corporeal body, then the soul is separated and disconnected from the body and begins its journey to its Lord. The body is now left without any spirit, motion, or life. In one sense, Death and sleep resemble one another and can be an analogy to each other in that, in both cases, it is the soul that is taken and the body that is left. After Death, the soul begins its new life in a situation with no material and perishable qualifications and descriptions of the earthly life. This is why Death is considered "a minor resurrection" (Tabatabaei, 1986 c, p. 212). Allama came to another conclusion, noting that the soul and body are recognized as two distinguishable substances, separable from one another (Tabatabaei, 1970, vol. 17, p. 268-269).

Allama went into some detail and touched upon many issues about the question of Death, such as the life between the period of Death and the major Resurrection. However, I need not expand any further my discussion of Allama's position on Death.¹

Conclusion

Allama studied human nature as a part of an all-encompassing nature. He

1. For more details on the issue of Death from Allama's point of view, see his extensive work on the problem of death "*al-Insan ba'd al-Dunya*," pp. 203-314.

linked both nature and human nature to somewhere beyond the natural span of life. Allama first looked at human nature in relation to the Creator at all stages of human life. His concern was with human nature from the very outset of the creation of the human soul and before its inherence in the human body to the end of physical life on this earth, and even into the soul's life after Death and finally at the Resurrection. For Allama, the doctrine of creation seems fundamental. Although the social aspects of human life and human beings' intercommunications are Allama's focus, they are secondary to the perfection of the human individual and self-actualization (Ibid, 1986 a, p. 194).

Developing human personality, perfection, and actualization is self-realization's cornerstone and chief substance. As a fundamental notion in self-realization, it is taken for granted that human beings are adequately equipped with the means and capacity to journey onwards to the world of the self and to actualize the ultimate end of their lives. Otherwise, the discussion of self-realization would be valuable and appropriate. When seen in this manner, the magnitude of our knowledge of human nature would significantly shape our understanding and conceptualization of self-realization. The more knowledge we obtain, the more accurate the perception we gain and develop. In this regard, every ramification of thought might affect our conception. Therefore, evaluation of Allama's doctrines of self-realization can only be attempted if one reads carefully the assumptions or presuppositions he raised, the premises he established, and the principles or disciplines he created or advocated through his remarks on human nature. Moreover, this is what is intended by the present investigation.

Allama studied human nature with a three-dimensional approach. He discussed human nature in terms of its origin and creation, its mundane life span, and its extra-mundane departure. Allama's writings on human nature thus conceive of three stages of human life. We have seen how Allama studies human nature in terms of its situation before it comes to the natural world when it lives in the natural world, and after it departs from the natural world. With this in mind, he intended to identify two distinct realms of life and define the origin and destination of human life.

The corporeal world [*al-dunya*] is one of these three stages. The term *al-dunya*, as contrasted with *al-akhirah*, refers to nature, the natural or material and mundane world, just as the latter is meant to refer to the world

after. *Al-dunya* is originally from *donuww*, meaning what is nearer, or from *dani'*, meaning what is lower and lesser in terms of its worth compared to the coming world's (Qorashi, 1982, vol. 2, p. 360). At any rate, it is called *al-dunya* to describe either the nearer and visible or the lesser and lower world, which is the world of matter and corporeality, just as the hereafter is called *al-akhirah* to indicate that it is either the further or the more fantastic world that comes after, where human beings will reap the consequences of what they did in the material world (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 57, p. 355). The latter universe is the world above nature and the natural domain. In one of his interpretations of a Quranic verse (Teen: 4-6), Allama maintains that the lowest of the low is nowhere other than *al-Dunya*, where all human beings enter, whether believers or unbelievers. God will then raise the believers to a better world and a more extraordinary life because of their faith and good deeds (Tabatabaei, 1986 b, p.198-199).

As one discovers a consistency in Allama's belief system and worldview, one can easily understand the same consistency in the implications of Allama's thoughts and concepts. Seeking a scientific approach to his study of human nature, Allama directed the Theory of Divine Creation to oppose the Theory of natural evolution.

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