

## **The 'Ego' between Passivism and Positivism**

Friday Sermon Presented by

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Al 'Adiliyya Mosque, Aleppo, 24\4\2009

Some Easterners talk about the relationship between the individual and the community, and vice versa. They cancel the particularity of the individual, and adopt communism. This theory has proved a failure because it contradicts the natural moral disposition of man. Moreover, the application of this theory in real life proves to be unsuccessful, that even those who set it, find it incongruous.

On the other hand, the Westerners give the individual, who owns the material, a value superior to that of the community, because the individual owns the capital. This led to crises, and on the realistic level, the consideration of the low poor classes has become cancelled.

Out of this excretion and blood, Islam produces pure milk that is palatable to the drinkers. It does not cancel the particularity of the individual. Moreover, it presents greater consideration for the community, and obliges the individual to assume great responsibilities towards the community, and prevents him from transgressing them.

After this brief introduction about the relationship between the individual and the community, I'd like to talk about a controversial concept that has spread in Islamic and non-Islamic circles. It is the concept of the 'ego'.

Does right education that refines man and leads him to the stages of promotion really cancel the 'ego'?

Does Islam call to cancelling the 'ego' in its educational principles, as it is said, or the issue is vacillating between Over strictness and over excessiveness?

As I was extrapolating facts from the Holy Book, I asked myself the following question:

Is one of the purposes of Islam cancelling the 'ego'?

Out of research and extrapolation in the Holy Book, I found that the Qur'an considers the 'ego' of two types: the dispraised 'ego',

and the praised one. The dispraised 'ego' should be cancelled, but the praised one should be nurtured and be active.

According to what is understood from statistical combination, not out of calculation, but for the sake of presenting examples, the dispraised 'ego' is:

- the 'ego' that is the outcome of malicious motives,
- the 'ego' that rivals deity.

The dispraised 'ego' is the one that is the outcome of evil motives, or that which rivals deity.

On the other hand, the praised 'ego' is:

- the one that is the outcome of virtuous motives, and
- the one that is committed to worship, and does not rival deity.

The above mentioned is a brief description of the two types of the ego. After this extrapolation, let us present some details with examples. The Holy Qur'an provides us with models of the praised 'ego' and the dispraised one.

**Some models of the dispraised 'ego' that is the outcome of malicious motives is the following:**

**1-The boasting 'ego'** mentioned in the Exalted Allah's statement:

{Abundant} was the fruit this man had. He said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument: "More wealth have I than you, and more honor and power in men" (Al Kahf, 34).

The subject matter of the dialogue was around knowledge, proof, or clear evidence, but the debater inserted in the dialogue what was irrelevant to it, i.e., boasting, the outcome of the self that instigates evil, and the quality of arrogance and the will to humiliate the others.

"{Abundant} was the fruit this man had". The fruit is one of the graces of the Exalted Allah Who said: "See they not that it is We Who have created for them among the things which our hands have fashioned cattle?" (Yasin, 71), and: "That they may enjoy the fruits thereof, and their hands made it not" (Yasin, 35).

It is a heavenly made product. If mankind and Jinn gathered to produce one of these fruits, they would not be able to do that, and if they all gathered to create a single or a pair of the cattle they would not be able to do that too.

"{Abundant} was the fruit this man had", and fruit is a heavenly product.

- "He said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument". As the dialogue between the two men was about knowledge, the argument should have gone around this subject only.

- "More wealth have I than you, and more honor and power in men". Hence, man cancels the other debater employing his authority, his wealth and his power. It is a behavior conducted only by those who have malicious souls. But the people whose souls are well-pleased and well-pleasing, run the dialogue using knowledge and evidence. However bad the other debater is, they do not use financial or material strength to cancel him. This is the way Islam rears its children.

2- The 'ego' of superiority. The Exalted Allah prevents any of the debaters to prefer himself to the others. He said: "Therefore justify not yourselves; He knows best who it is that guards against evil" (An Najm, 32).

One example of this type of the 'ego' is when Satan said: "I am better than him. You create me from fire, and created him from clay" (Al 'Araf, 12).

**3- The 'ego' of envy.** An example of this 'ego' is Pharaoh who envied Moses (pbuh) that was given a high status by having knowledge, miracle and glory by Allah. Pharaoh stood before Moses, comparing himself with him. He was the king of Egypt, and Moses was one of the children of Israel whom Pharaoh considered slaves, but suddenly, Moses revealed the irrefutable, miraculous clear evidences and signs.

Read the Exalted Allah's words telling about what Pharaoh said: "Am I not better than this {Moses}, who is a contemptible wretch and can scarcely express himself clearly?" (Az Zukhruf, 52).

Pharaoh was describing the Speaker with Allah, the one who was honored by Allah, the one for whom Allah made the Pharaonic palace serve him. It is Pharaoh who took Moses from the sea and served him, but he did that, motivated by envy that is latent in every Pharaoh.

Didn't the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) describe Aba Jahl as the Pharaoh of the Ummah?

That Pharaoh (Abu Jahl), declared his envy saying: "Their fathers presented food, so did we, they gave presents to the pilgrimage, and so did we, but when they said 'a prophet is produced from us', where can we produce a prophet like them?"

It is envy which turns the facts, and makes man desirous of cancelling the others and their merits through his malicious motives.

**Another example of the dispraised 'ego' is the one that rivals deity:**

**-It is the pretending 'ego'.** This is related by the Exalted Allah in the Holy Qur'an concerning Pharaoh who said: "**I am your Lord, Most High**" (An Nazi'at, 24). Telling about Nemrud, the Exalted Allah said: "**He said: I give life and death**" (Al Baqarah, 258).

Consequently, man ascribes to himself what is not his own, forgetting his servitude and poverty to the Exalted Allah. The Exalted Allah said: "**Whosoever is in the heavens and on the earth begs of Him {his needs from Him}. Every day He is engaged in some affair {such as giving honor or disgrace, life or death to some}**" (Ar Rahman, 29).

The whole world is in pressing necessity to the Exalted Allah and in need for Him. When man forgets about his needs, his urgency and his poverty to the Exalted Allah, he rivals Deity. Thus, he has the quality of pretension.

Peace be upon the owner of the Book of Wisdom when he advises people saying: "**Among the attributes of your human nature, draw away from every one that is incompatible with**

**your servanthood, so that you may be responsive to the call of Allah and near His Presence".**

After the examples I have reviewed through what the Holy Koran mentions, I move to the other side, which is often forgotten, namely, the praised 'ego'. In the educational milieu, we usually talk about the abolition of the 'ego' without detail, and without giving attention to the praised and required 'ego'. We often talk about the dispraised 'ego' that grows due to the lack of education.

The praised 'ego' is the outcome of virtuous motives. It does not rival Deity and is committed to the limits of slavehood.

**One of the praised 'ego', that is inevitable for man to have in his customary activity is:**

**1-The 'ego' of identification:** The Exalted Allah draws our attention to the fact that some of the purposes of the vicegerent is acquaintance. He said: "**O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)**" (Al Hujurat, 13). Thus, one should have the 'ego' of definition, and that of the identity.

One sample of this type of 'ego' is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an concerning Yusuf (pbuh): "**I am Joseph, and this is my brother**" (Yusuf, 90), and, "**behold I am your own brother**" (Yusuf, 69).

The outcome of the ego of definition is the 'ego' of obligation in which all mankind become equal:

**2-The 'ego' of obligation** is what we aim at and what we search for. It is the 'ego' on which light should be shed to analyze. Consequently, we move from the 'ego' of definition into the 'ego' of obligation, i.e., 'I am the obliged'.

There has been a lot of dialogue among people on the dispraised 'ego' of exaltation, while there is little mention of the praised dialogue that deals with the 'ego' of "what I should do", and "it is me who should do so and so...".

One type of the 'ego' of obligation mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is the following:

**3-The 'ego' of responsibility.** Read the following example mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "They said: we miss the great beaker of the king; for him who produces it, is {the reward of} a camel load; I will be bound by it" (Yusuf, 72). Yusuf (pbuh) addressed his brothers saying that he was the one responsible for the beaker, and because of his holding this responsibility, he is bound to carry out order. It is a Qur'anic analysis of the 'ego' of responsibility.

As he was the guarantor of the beaker, he felt responsible for preserving it and preventing its missing. Therefore, he stirred great fuss in searching for the beaker.

This is the identity of the Muslim. When he is entrusted with something, he never loses it.

We should not read these verses as a mere story. Certainly, not .. for it presents to us a diagnosis of the Islamic identity. By saying "I shall be bound by it", Joseph means he was responsible for preserving it, so how could he make it be missing?

Where are those who would say: I am responsible for the preservation of the trust .. I am responsible for the preservation of the safe .. I am responsible for the preservation of the country .. I am responsible for the preservation of national honor .. I am responsible for the preservation of the honor ..? It is the 'ego' of responsibility that should not be absent from the arena of a virtuous Islamic society.

**4-The 'ego' of calling to Allah .** Mentioning the proselytizers, the Exalted Allah said:

"and I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again!" (Ghafer, 42).

How much we need the calling to Allah 'ego', as we live a time where the 'ego' of calling to the self, to the personality, to the image had been plentiful.

Sorrowfully enough, there appear Islamic images whose outward appearance gives the impression of calling to Allah, but after a while one is surprised to find that it is a call to personality, to the image, and to the human individual.

The Exalted Allah said: "Then there came running, from the farthest part of the City, a man, saying, 'O my People obey the messengers' " (Yasin, 20). He did not say "follow me".

Today, we suffer the crisis of calling to the individual and following him. In fact, it is a great disaster on the Islamic proselytizing level.

The 'ego' of proselytizing will not be accepted unless it is a calling to Allah: "and I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again!".

Suffice the deception and cheating we undergo. We deceive one another, and deceive the others. We sell and buy in the name of Islam.

**5-The 'ego' of teaching:** It is mentioned in the Exalted Allah's statement when He tells about His Messengers: "I fulfill towards you the duties of my Lord's mission. I am to you a sincere and trustworthy adviser" (Al 'Araf, 68).

"I fulfill towards you the duties of my Lord's mission", i.e., I convey to you the knowledge of Allah.

"I am to you a sincere and trustworthy adviser", in my teaching you the knowledge of Allah, I do not mix my teaching with the self-desire.

We have talked formerly about the word 'Nasuha (advice) that is derived from the Arabic word 'Khalusa'. Thus 'advice' includes the meaning of 'faithfulness'.



Consequently, the word presented by the proselytizer cannot be considered 'advice' unless it is void of any blemish and self-desires.

### **6-The 'ego' of good example:**

This is mentioned in the following verse: "**Say thou: this is my way: I do invite unto Allah, on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, I and whoever follows me**" (Yusuf, 108).

This type of the 'ego' is very grave, and no one should practice it unless he is verified with sincerity to the mission. Following somebody should be to no one but to our Master Muhammad (pbuh). Consequently, if someone is to be followed, he should be a good example, and it should be taken into consideration that he is a true follower of a particle of the Muhammadan aspect (for no one can be verified with all the Muhammadan qualities). As long as this particle is connected with the Muhammadan example, he can be followed, not because of his own personality, but because this particle in his behavior is verified with following Muhammad (pbuh). Consequently, following will be to our Master, Muhammad (pbuh), and the person who is followed will be nothing but a mirror of our Prophet (pbuh), for there is no other legislator but Muhammad (pbuh).

If the behavior of the followed person is a mirror of the Muhammadan example, he can be considered a good example to be followed as he is a reflection of the Muhammadan traits, not a reflection of his own preliminary independence.

**7-The 'ego' of faith:** This is mentioned in the Exalted Allah's words in which He teaches the proselytizer what to say: "**I am the first to believe**" (Al 'Araf, 143). These words were said by Moses (pbuh).



**8-The 'ego' that testifies monotheism.** It is said by Ibrahim (pbuh): "He said, nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing): and I am a witness to this {truth}" (Al Anbiya', 56).

Abraham (pbuh) lists himself among those who are witnesses. The Exalted Allah said: "There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, his angels, and those endowed with knowledge" (Al Imran, 18). Consequently, if you are one of the people of knowledge, you will be among those who witness monotheism.

Out of the 'ego' that does not rival deity is:

**9-The 'ego' of repentance:** Telling about the Aziz's wife who repented and returned to Allah, the Exalted Allah said: "The Aziz's wife said: 'Now is the truth manifest {to all}; it was I who sought to seduce him from his {true} self. He is indeed of those who are {ever} true {and virtuous}'" (Yusuf, 51).

This 'ego' of admission was changed into the 'ego' of repentance, because, by this admission, she aimed at announcing repentance. She ascribed sin to herself in order to get away from this sin and become pure and acquitted of it.

Where is this 'ego' in which admission of nonfeasance is present with repentance, as well as with resolution that man will change his behavior and activity and what he has been doing when he intends to follow a virtuous behavior?

**10-The 'ego' of behavioral submission to the order of the Exalted Allah:**

The Exalted Allah said: "and I am the first of those who bow to His Will" (Al An'am, 163), i.e., 'I announce my submission and compliance with the order of the Exalted Allah. I shall not contend with the Exalted Allah in any of the orders He commands me to do.

**11- Proclaiming the Graces of the Exalted Allah:** It is not the 'ego' of talking about personal attributes. An example of this type

of 'ego' is what Joseph (pbuh) said to his brothers: "**Don't you see that I pay out full measure, and that I do provide the best hospitality?**" (Yusuf, 59). He did not say that out of boasting. He rather said that in obedience to the Exalted Allah's command: "**But rehearse and proclaim the Bounty of your Lord!**" (Ad Duha, 11).

As I have mentioned concerning the conscious good example, this 'ego' is grave, and no one should attain its level unless he is verified with slavehood, because talking about the Graces of Allah might be equivocal to man so that they become comingled with self-pretension.

Joseph (pbuh) said "I do provide the best hospitality" only after he became committed to slavehood to the Exalted Allah. He should have never said it if there had been rivalry to Deity in his soul.

Another example is what is related in the Holy Qur'an concerning Solomon (pbuh): "**One who had knowledge of the Book said: I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye**" (An Naml, 40). It is the 'ego' through which one talks about the bounties of the Exalted Allah.

"**One who had knowledge of the Book said**". The more man is promoted in the knowledge of the Book, the more slavehood he feels and the more prostrating he becomes to the Exalted Allah. The Exalted Allah said: "**And when the Quran is read to them, they do not fall prostrate**" (Al Inshiqaq, 21). Reciting the Holy Book and adhering to its knowledge makes man attain the status of slavehood in which he feels ever prostrating to the Exalted Allah.

**In conclusion, we call to cancelling the dispraised 'ego', i.e., the 'ego' of boasting, and support the 'ego' of obligation that leads to flourishing. We refuse boasting and support flourishing. We support the one who would say: "I have to perform renaissance..."**

We support the 'ego' that bears the responsibility of heavy burdens, the one that is verified with obligations. We refuse the 'ego' that makes man appear boasting and pretending.

When the 'ego' is based on pretension, it becomes destructive and harmful because it leads to hatred, enmity and rivalry. On the other hand, the 'ego' of obligation that leads to renaissance and flourishing should be sought by the youth, by children by the leaders and the ruled, and by the officials.

Man should seek the 'ego' of obligation, and say: "I am charged with this obligation... . It is me who should gather the firewood, as our Master, Muhammad (pbuh) said when each of his Companions assumed the responsibility of one task. So He assumed the most difficult and hardest task. He said: **"And I have to gather the firewood"**.

Oh brethren, we have to seek the 'ego' of obligation, because expectation and prognostication with the pretext of nullifying the dispraised 'ego' is, in fact, making Shari'a inactive. It is remoteness from building renaissance and civilization that Islam calls to.

Islam makes the interior of man and his exterior well balanced. Islam rejects the 'ego' to be only in the interior. Islam rather wants you to hear the inner 'ego' (as we are taught by the Exalted Allah) say: **"Verily, I am Allah: there is no god but I"** (Taha, 14). You have to hear it from your interior.

You have to hear nothing but **"Verily, I am Allah: there is no god but I"** from your interior, and to hear it said by Allah.

Your practical, behavioral legal exterior should proceed forward to be in the forefront, **"Allah and His Angels bless those who pray in the front row"**. Precedence should be sought. The committed 'ego' to slavehood in your interior should be at the top, and the 'ego' of obligation should be in the front.

The 'ego' has been cancelled from your interior to appear in you exterior and motivate you to perform your duties, and serve your

principles and culture, as well as to obey the commands of your Lord. You have to do that in order to preserve the honor of your country, to defend your identity that the Exalted Allah wants to be a pure virtuous example.

Consequently, from this research, we understand Islam to be a factor of cancelling the 'ego' that enters into the interior of man, and makes man proceed to the 'ego' of obligation through which man becomes beneficial and useful.

Allahum..., guide us to You favorably, and make us understand Your Book. Oh Allah, make the Holy Qur'an the spring of our hearts, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness