



Wisdom of death!

Abdoallah Niksirat

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Faculty of Theology, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran.

a.niksirat@scu.ac.ir

1. Foreword

The death is a unique occurrence that occurs only once each being. According to Heidegger, death is personal and individual; that is, no one can die in place of me. Because the death of everyone is only his own, and I have to die alone (Amedi, 491). In other words, if people are separated from each other in an important event, it is the death, because, contrary to many events in the world, the death is not participatable (Soroush, 1994, 227). Therefore, despite its decisive role in human life, the "secret of death" is extremely difficult, and because of this lack of any previous mental background and prior experience of it, it is very horrible. For humans, the death has meant to be nothing, and the complete abandonment of the worldly material properties and complete darkness.

The main question now is that if death is an inescapable and inevitable fact of human life and other beings, why should we escape it? Why, instead of accepting its reality, we struggle against it unsuccessfully and inconclusively.

2. The beautiful relationship between death and life

Death and life are two sides of a coin, and without understanding one, understanding the meaning of the other, if not impossible, is difficult. Death is a fact like life itself and as the reality of life itself must be accepted, the reality of death must also be recognized. The Holy Quran says: "الذى خلق الموت و الحيات" (الذى خلق الموت و الحيات) (Holy Quran, Malek, 2). With regard to such verses, the interpreters believe that the "death" is not a matter of non-existence because the creation belongs to the existential things; in this verse, God has spoken about the creation of death along with life; this means that the death is a transition and the transition is creatable like the creation of life itself. Moreover, if we, as the general public, consider the death as a negative entity, it is still creatable, because it is not mere non-existence, but rather like the blindness and darkness is a non-existence in the sense of privation that has a portion of existence (Tabataba'i, 2009, 585).

3. The motives of denial and fear of death!

faced with their fear of death, the human beings have a variety of responses. On both sides of this spectrum, there are two main reactions of denial and acceptance with a long human history. The most common and sickest way of dealing with an unpleasant fact is denial and ignoring it, and its recognition and acceptance are also the culmination of mental maturity and emotional development (Motamedi, *ibid*, 8).

One of the most important reasons for denying and opposing the fact of the death is the human ignorance of this decisive event, because "the people is the enemy of that which they do know" (Nahj al-Balaghah, Aphorisms 438 & 172, p. 599). Death is one of the unrevealed mysteries of the universe, and as Mola Ali (as) says, it is the greatest secret that the master of the universe did not want to reveal to



humans or at least all human beings. But why is that so? We do not know exactly, but perhaps one of the reasons is that the foundation of the world is based on "theory of neglect", according to the mystics' view; that is, the pillar and warp and woof of human life are based on a kind of universal and collective negligence of some of the secrets of the universe, including the essential and fundamental question of human life, namely, death. Because if people were aware of their death, then the foundation of this world system would be destructed completely, and they would live differently! Therefore, it is better to be kept the secret of death unrevealed so that the human beings stay alive and the life and worldly subsistence are constituted; because God, is the wise who remains the secret of death as an unsolved mystery to mankind, is not only aware of, before and above all, the materials and the wisdom of the world and never works in vain, but also, in the light of His infinite justice and mercy towards the human beings, is just and pure benevolent.

On the other hand, it is also said that the vanity, laziness and passing of life based on the nihilistic philosophy is contrary to the wisdom and the religion and the practice of all the lords of the nations and the schools. For according to the traditions that for your world be as if you have eternal life and be for you Hereafter as if you dye as soon (Majlesi, 1403, 139). To resolve this apparent contradiction, we say that what is reproachable is secularism and overbearing belonging to the worldly properties; developing the world and serving the servants of God, who lives in the world, are a good worship, and besides the worship of the creator of the world, not against it. Hence, in the response of a person who, without knowledge, reproached the world, Mola Ali said: The world is the place of prostration of God's friends, the prayer grounds of the angels of Truth, the falling-point of the divine revelation and the place of business of God's friends (Nahj al-Balaghah, 131, 588). Therefore, considering the world and its benefits as "the passage", and considering it as a "resting place", offer two different orientations to man, the first of which is the basis of conflict, corruption, aggression, injustice, upheaval, and negligence, and the latter provides the means of justice, Consciousness, sacrifice, altruism, brotherhood and forgiveness.

In the traditions of the Infallibles and in the life of religious saints, the death has been spoken of as a bridge leading to the passing of a mortal and transient life into eternal life: for example, Imam Hussein (AS) states: death is nothing but a bridge which transmits you from the pain and intensity to the vast heaven and immortal blessing (Majlesi, *ibid.* 154). Mola Ali (AS) also said in the same vein: "I swear to God my love for and my interest in the death is more than the interest of the infantile child to the mother's breast" (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 5: 52). It is clear that such interpretations of the Quran and traditions is beyond the scope of this article.

Schiller, a Western thinker, praises the courage to face death, and sees the real hero who does not have a fright of facing with death, but courageously welcomes it (Becker, 2009, 314). To Heidegger's point of view, the most fundamental description of the inauthentic life is escape from death (Yang, 2009, p. 296). In his view, if a person is completely confronted with death, his life becomes authentic, but if, in confronting with death, he/she is unsuccessful, he/she is an inauthentic person (*ibid.*, 298).

But in terms of the causes of fear of death, in short, we can say that the motive and the cause of fear of death either is ignorance where the death is regarded as a non-existence, or because of disbelief and lack of faith in the life after death. In other words, it is caused by the lightness or emptiness of the column of good acts and the fullness of the column of the bad acts (Tabatabai, *ibid.* 454).

In other words, in fact, they are not afraid of death, but they are afraid of the Divine torment. The Qur'an counts the "desire for death" as a sign of Divine Authority, saying: «قل يا ايها الذين هادوا ان زعمتم «انكم اولياء الله من دون الناس فتمنوا الموت ان كنتم صادقين و لا يتمنونه ابداً بما قدمت ايديهم والله عليم بالظالمين» (Quran, Holy



Quran, Friday, Verses 6-7). “O Prophet, tell the Jews, the Jewish congregation, if you think that you are truly the believers of God, not the other people, then, if want to die if you are truthful! And yet, because of the evil deeds they sent themselves, they did not even dream of death, and Allah is aware of the deeds of the wicked.” Therefore, the solution to the horror of death is the refinement of the heart and the acts (Pourseyf, 149,2012), and (Allame Tabatabai, *ibid.* 45). Therefore, according to the Qur'anic verses, including the above-mentioned Qur'anic verses and the mystical verses of the mystics, and the practical life of the elders and divine authorities, one of the ways of identifying human truth is to examine the views of each human being and school on the question of death. Ghazali says in the book "rehabilitation of religious sciences": people are three groups in the question of death: those who are pleasure-seeking and are people of negligence, are ignorant of death, the repentant who are fearful and the mystics who are eager (Soroush, 1994, 226). According to Rumi:

Who seeks pleasure, he dies in pain, whoever prays the body, he is not saved

(Molavi, 2008, first book, distich 2302, 696) or elsewhere he says:

The death of one is like him, with enemy it is enemy, with the friend the friend

By the Turk the mirror is pretty bright. By the black it also black

(*ibid.*, Third book, distiches 3439-3440, 482).

And do not be afraid of death

Death is not the end of the pigeon

Death is not inverted to cricket

Death is running in the locust tree's mind (Sepehri, 2010, 302)

4. The good effects and consequences of the memory of death

The explanation and interpretation of the death event is so critical and influential in the human destiny that Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi regards one of the most important benefits of the prophetic mission as an attempt to inform the people of the rewards and punishments of the hereafter (Allameh Helli, 1417, 468).

In other words, one of the prophets' missions is to make people "death'thinking bird", as Rumi says:

We were the parrot of sugar-plum and we became a death-thinking bird through your Highness (Soroush, 1994, 228-227). Therefore, one of the most important services of religion is to teach us the quality and interpretation of the afterlife or after death. The interpretation that Islam offers from the last stage of life and the afterlife represents its eternity. It is clear that such an interpretation creates a certain mobility in the person and society, and it is of great importance in the important and fundamental question of the humanity, namely education. In the same vein, Iqbal Lahori says: "If immortality is a definite fact, no educational system should remain indifferent to it; and if it is possible for a person to achieve it, no educational system - of course, if its aim is not just only the absolute cultivation of reason - cannot neglect it" (Emami, 1998, Kayhan No. 140, 68).

One of the effects of remembering death is its effect on self-knowledge. In the same vein, Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) wrote in a letter to his son Imam Hassan Mojtaba (AS) at the end of his glorious life: "And abject you heart through remembering death (Nahjul-Balaghah, 2011, 31, 466). And also he has said, remember the death and its sudden attack (Azizi, 2010, 245) and prepare themselves for its hardship (*ibid.*, 239), because, as Mola Ali (as) says: You are on the way to the hereafter, and the hunt of death that you cannot escape from it (Nahj al-Balaghah, 2011, letter 476, 31). Therefore, the man always needs the means to remember its true abject and to prevent the rebellion and the pharaoh-like mode of life; because death is a matter of this world that no force comes to it and it triumphs over all (Soroush, 1998,



248). In other words, there are two entities in this world that overcome mankind and manifest him his inability: God and death. In line with this, and considering the letter of Imam Ali (AS) to Imam Hassan (AS), one can say that the remembrance of death has good effects and consequences, including: softening hearts, damaging the excitement of the soul through the inculcation of human inability to him, removing the love of the world and breaking the soul's selfishness (Soroush, 2004, 223-224).

The other positive effect and function of remembering death is to eliminate or at least modify the misleading aspirations: because, as Hafez says, "the death is the bandit of aspiration during the human life". In short, the human beings are always trapped in aspirations that are insatiable and never abandon his lap during the life and the adjustment of such desires that neither end, nor complete fulfillment, is possible only through the death.

The death is a good teacher who constantly reminds people that you have been traveling for a travel, prepare for the travel provisions. Death is a visit and a movement to the eternal beloved and the immortal face and infinite perfection and eternal home. Of course, in such a visit, that wayfarer is ashamed who acts in an unreal mode, because he is not allowed and does not have the permit to pass. Mola Ali (AS) describes the role of the admonitory death: the death is better than any other eloquent speech for those who accept the advice (Nahj al-Balaghah, 2012, 149, 249). Yes, the life of the world is fleeting, and eventually we all have to move from this world and go to another territory. Also, the Prophet (pbuh) said: "The cleverest people is the one who is most aware of death (Saduq, 1400, 27).

The wisdom and another good consequence of remembering death is that it makes, in the words of Rumi, a man to see the end, not the appearance of the world, not the world's fastest and foremost pleasures. As Sheikh Sa'di Shirazi said, "whatever do not last, has not worthy of interest." Therefore, the world and its belongings are not stable and lasting, so that they do not deserve to be attached and, as Rumi says: the man who sees the end is a happy servant (Rumi, First book, distich 822, 40).

5. Conclusion

It seems that the death that at first glance may seem like a simple accident without any need to philosophy and reason is of such importance that, without proper and accurate interpretation of it, the human life cannot be interpreted correctly and cannot have any meaning.

But with regard to the causes and motives of fear of death, one can say that one group seems to be fearful due to their ignorance and lack of true knowledge of death, since they regard death as an absolute and pure nothing, and the human beings are naturally running away from the nothing and non-existence; but does the death means an absolute nothing and non-existence? However, the investigation in the heavenly books, mystical thoughts, and the biography of the elders and authorities of religion makes clear that death does not only mean nothingness and non-existence, but it is the same being and life, in such a way that the real and true life begins after death, the life belongs in the true sense of word to the world after death!

Of course, perhaps the most important reason for fear of death is the black case and the dark background of the black-hearted and treacherous people who know that as soon as their scandalous and disgraceful life is over, they are caught up in the fate of the bad actions that they have committed in the world. This group has the right to fear of the death, of the name and memory of death, because the world for them is as Paradise and the Hereafter is as the Hell and the torment of Allah.

Hence, we conclude that the rational solution to the problem of death is not to forget it, and it is not counterproductive to remove it from human life, since attempting to eliminate or even delay the death is



futile. Therefore, we must accept its reality, and admit that the eradication of the problem is not only not a solution to the problem, but also is a result of the ignorance. Therefore, it is better to prepare for the death journey, and the best capital of this difficult path is piety.

References:

1. Soroush, Abdolkarim (1994), *Wisdom and Livelihood*, First Book, Tehran, Serat Cultural Institute, First Edition.
2. Baymatov, Loghman (1998), “Wisdom of Death”, *Kayhan Cultural* 140: pp. 22-23.
3. Soroush, Abdolkarim (1998), *Tolerance and Management*, Tehran, Tehran, Serat Cultural Institute, First Edition.
4. Allameh Helli (1417), *A Commentary on Tajris al-eteqad*, edited and investigated by Hasan Hassanzadeh Amoli, Alnashr al-Islami Institute, Seventh Edition.
5. Masoumi, Sahar (2009), *The Secret of Rose*, Tehran, Behnegar Publication, First Edition.
6. Molavi (2008), *Shams Sonnets*, Introduced, Selected and Interpreted by Mohammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani, Volume I, Tehran, Sokhan Publishing, Third Edition.
7. Sepehri, Sohrab (2010), *Eight Books (Water Foot Sound)*, Tehran, Tahouri Publishing, fifth edition.
8. Rumi (2010), *A Comprehensive Commentary of Masnavi*, Karim Emami, Tehran, Publishing Ettelaat, Tehran, Twenty-Second Edition.
9. Makarem Shirazi, Nasser (2010), *New Mofatih*, Publishing Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (AS), Qom, Twenty-fifth edition.
10. Makarem Shirazi, Nasser (2010), *Translation of Holy Quran*, Publishing Astan Quds Razavi, Mashhad, First edition.
11. Yang, Julian (2009), “Death and Authenticity”, *Organon* 26/27, Translated by M. S. Hanayi Kashani, Printing and Publishing Organization: pp. 295-306, First edition.
12. Becker, Ernest (2009), “Terror of Death”, *Organon* 26/27, Translated by Saman Tavakoli, Printing and Publishing Organization: pp. 330-39, first edition.
13. Bataye, Georges (2009), “Similarities between Reproduction and Death”, *Organon* 26/27, Translated by Javad Ganji, Printing and Publishing Organization: pp. 331-339, first edition.
14. De Montine, Michel (2009), “Philosophy, Learning and Dying”, *Organon* 26/27, Translated by A. Ganjipour, Printing and Publishing Organization: pp. 73-82, first edition.
15. Sanati, Mohammad (2009), “A Note and an Introduction to Death in the Western Thought”, *Organon* 26/27, Printing and Publishing Organization: pp. 1-10, and 1-64, first edition.
16. Sadouq, Mohammed bin Ali (1400 AD), *Al-Amali*, Beirut.



17. Majlessi, Mohammad Bagher (1403 AD), *Bahar*, Volume 44, Beirut.
18. Motamedi, Gholam Hossein (2011), *Man and Death (An Introduction to thanatology)*, Publishing Markaz, Tehran, Third Edition.
19. Allameh Tabataba'i, Mohammad Hussein (2009), *Al-Mizan*, Volume 19, Translated by S. M. B. Mousavi Hamedani, Islamic Publishing House, Qom. Twenty-eighth edition.
20. Emami, Ali Ashraf (1998), "Islam as a Dynamic religion", *Kayhan Cultural* 140: pp. 68-69.
21. Ahmadi, Babak (2003), *Heidegger, and Fundamental Question*, Publishing Markaz, Tehran, Second Edition.
22. Rumi (1998), *Spiritual Masnavi*, edited and Prefaced by Abdolkarim Soroush, Scientific and Cultural Publication, Tehran, Second Edition.
23. Shirvani, Ali (2011), *Translation of Nahj al-Balaghe*, Nasime Hayat, Qom, Sixth Edition.
24. Azizi, Abbas (2010), *Nahj al-Balaghat according to Subjects*, Salah Publication, Qom, Twelve Edition.
25. Pourseyf, Abbas (2012), *Summary of the Exegeses of Al-Mizan and Nomouneh*, Publishing Shahed, Tehran, Fifth Edition.