

What Is an Inherent Quality? What Does Achieving Perfection Mean?

Defining the Concept of Inherent Quality in Creatures

In Islamic humanology, inherent quality means the existential effect of a thing. But it has also another meaning. In humanology, inherent quality refers to all the abilities or existential potentials of a being. It is these qualities which make a creature superior or inferior to other beings.

In other words, when we talk about inherent qualities, we mean anything that human beings or other creatures can do. For example, the inherent quality of a piece of paper lies in its ability to be used for writing or to fan ourselves with it. We can fold it and make a craft out of it for fun, or we can even put it in fire as fuel. We can also think of many other uses for paper.

When we talk about the inherent quality of something, we do not necessarily refer to its positive qualities. We mean everything that it can do. For example, the inherent qualities of a pen include writing and removing plaster from the wall. To be more precise, all our abilities are considered our inherent qualities, but these abilities lead us to virtue only when they serve our human dimension or true 'self.' For instance, the ability to speak is one of our inherent qualities, but it can lead to virtue only when it is at the service of our human or supra-rational dimension. Now that we are somewhat familiar with the concept of inherent quality, let us see what role it plays in our lives.

Different Definitions of Perfection

Perfection has different meanings in different fields of knowledge. For example, in psychology it means flawlessness where everything is exactly right. However, here to state that something is perfect implies that it has reached its maximum potential. Perfection, in essence, requires the realization of all inherent qualities. Put simply, perfection is attained when something fully actualizes its potentials.

For instance, a horse is considered perfect when it actualizes all the distinctive potentials associated with horses, such as swiftness, a flowing mane, and well-developed muscles. Similarly, a perfect radiator is one that consistently sends out a pleasant warmth without any problems, having all the desired characteristics we expect from radiators.

Perfectionism

Have you ever seen or heard that someone likes weakness, defect, and deficiency? Do you know someone who wants to remain illiterate, feel weak in the body, or live in poverty? If such a person exists, he is mentally ill. Because it is in human nature to hate defects and shortcomings and like to have everything at the highest level. Of course, some people may choose simplicity over wealth; it does not mean they hate wealth. Rather, they consider simplicity as a means of acquiring assets more important than wealth. This characteristic of humans is called perfectionism. Perfectionism and inherent quality are key concepts; without

understanding them, it is impossible to gain self-knowledge. Therefore, we recommend you not to miss the following.

All Creatures Are in Search of Perfection

All beings, including plants, animals, humans, and even inanimate objects are in search of perfection. But what is considered perfect for one being is not the same for another. The perfection of beings is rooted in their potentials. Every being has some potentials that will be actualized in the favorable condition. As each potential is fulfilled, the creature moves one level higher than the previous one and reaches 'perfection' or becomes more perfect. This process goes on until all its potentials or inherent qualities are actualized. In addition, every being, whether it is a plant, an animal, or a human being is perfect only when it actualizes all its inherent qualities; otherwise, it is considered an incomplete being.

There are two categories of perfection:

- Preparatory or primary perfections
- Final, secondary, or true perfections

Any potential which is actualized is considered a perfection, but not all perfections are true. Some perfections are primary and preparatory, that is, they must pave the way for reaching the true perfection. Let us take the following example:

An apple seed has various potentials such as the ability to grow, absorb nutrients, pollinate, reproduce, etc. These potentials are actualized one

by one until this seed grows into an apple tree, and finally we have a tree with delicious and high-quality fruits. At which stage do you think the apple seed fulfills its full potential and reaches its final perfection? Is an apple tree perfect if it grows lots of foliage but not any fruit? The reality is that growing lots of leaves and branches may be the ultimate perfection for an ornamental plant, but that is not the case with the apple seed. Therefore, growing, absorbing nutrients, and pollinating are primary perfections for an apple tree, but the real perfection of an apple seed happens when it grows into a tree with decent and high-quality fruits.

Important Points about Inherent Quality and Perfection

- First, inherent qualities of different beings are different from one another. It means that an attribute cannot be considered an inherent quality for all kinds of beings. For example, sweetness is a quality of the pear, but it is considered a defect for vinegar because the inherent quality of vinegar is sourness. On the other hand, different beings have different potentials, and not all beings have the potential to reach all forms of perfection. For example, the human being has the potential to gain knowledge, so gaining knowledge is an inherent quality of the human being. This is while stone and wood do not have such an existential potential; therefore, seeking knowledge is meaningless for them.

- Second, it is true that primary perfections pave the way for reaching the true perfection, but it is not always the case. Sometimes, primary perfections become obstacles instead of being helpful. For example, having branches and leaves is considered a primary perfection for a fruit tree. Without them, bearing fruit is impossible for the tree because leaves provide essential energy for bearing fruit through photosynthesis. But the same useful perfection will be harmful if it does not function properly. That is because nutrients are consumed by the leaves before they reach the reproductive organs of the tree to produce fruit.
- Finally the third point: Please read the first and second points several times because they are directly related to self-knowledge. They will be highly relevant when discussing different dimensions of human existence.

In this article, we introduced the concept of ‘inherent quality,’ and stated that this concept refers to the potentials which exist in all creatures. Next, we mentioned that inherent qualities can only lead to virtue if they serve our human dimension. We also examined the concept of perfectionism. In the next article, we will introduce the inherent qualities of different creatures. Since these topics are the key to getting into the topic of humanology, we recommend you to follow them diligently.