

## **Dimensions of Human Existence | Another Dimension Besides the Body**

### **What Are the Dimensions of Human Existence, and What Do They Include?**

Despite our differences of opinion and other differences, we humans have one thing in common, and that is we are all in search of perfection and everything we do is because of our conscious or unconscious desire to achieve perfection. Someone who pursues wealth considers wealth a perfection. A seeker of knowledge considers knowledge to be a perfection, a seeker of pleasure and lust considers pleasure to be a perfection. A person who takes care of his body and face considers beauty to be a perfection, etc. Thus there is no difference between people in terms of seeking perfection. The crucial difference lies in determining what constitutes true happiness and genuine perfection for humans. Is it knowledge or wealth? Is it beauty or power?

- Which milestone marks the attainment of human perfection?
- Have we reached perfection if we become the richest person in the world?
- What if we become the most famous scientist?
- What is the height of our desires?

If these are true perfections, why do we thirst for more as we achieve more? Why do so many of the world's most famous, most beautiful, and richest people commit suicide just when they are standing at the pinnacle of these perfections?

It is not possible to answer these questions without knowing the dimensions of human existence. It is impossible to understand what is the true perfection of

human beings and when we can truly reach happiness and peace until the dimensions of human existence are properly understood and distinguished from one other.

We have different wishes and dreams, and we want to be the best in all of them; we seek perfection in all aspects of our existence, but not all of them are human perfections because they do not bring peace to our hearts.

We can only reach peace when we connect with the Absolute Perfect. Therefore, we must step on the path of self-knowledge and study the dimensions of human existence. We must know on which part of our existence we should focus to get closer to the Absolute Perfect.

There are two views about the dimensions of human existence. Materialists and schools that consider all the universe to be equal to matter consider the human being as a completely material phenomenon that has only one dimension, i.e., his body. They relate all human behaviors and thoughts to the chemical interactions of the brain and believe that a person can be fully understood only through sense and experience. As discussed in the article on experimental humanology, this kind of theory is unable to answer many questions about humans. Therefore, it is not the subject of our discussion. Whatever we are pursuing in this lesson and future lessons are the views taken from Islamic humanology, which is considered the most reliable source for understanding the dimensions of human existence due to its compatibility with *fitrah* and the intellect.

## **Introducing the Dimensions of Human Existence and Their Levels**

We all have a clear understanding of 'self' and do not need any reasoning to prove the existence of what we call 'I.' Although our looks, appearance, and body parts have changed throughout our lives and our body today is very different from our childhood's, we are the same person we were as a child. When we talk about ourselves and say 'I,' we refer to the same identity which we used to refer to when we were children. Our 'self' is constant from the beginning to the end of life and changes in the body do not affect it. For example, if someone loses a part of his body during an accident, neither he nor others will ever feel that a part of his identity and 'I' has been lost.

These and many other reasons show that apart from the body, we also have an immaterial dimension that is not affected by material changes. This immaterial dimension or the 'true self' is called the spirit, soul, or heart in Islamic culture. (The immaterial dimension of a human before attachment to the body and after being separated from it is called the spirit. When it is with the body and manages the affairs of the body, it is called the soul, and because it is the source of transformation, alteration, and emotions, it is called the heart. In fact, all three of these interpretations have the same meaning, and they all refer to the immaterial dimension of the human being, but each of them refers to one of its aspects).

So in general, the dimensions of human existence fall into these two categories:

- **Material dimension (body)**
- **Immaterial dimension (spirit, soul, or heart)**

Can your car do anything on its own? Can it turn on and drive by itself? If there are any technical problems with the car, can it repair itself? Certainly not! Your car is just a tool and has no life whatsoever.

Our body works the same towards our soul. The life of the body depends on the soul, and if the soul is separated from it, it will no longer be alive; this is what happens at the time of death. Therefore, the body works only as a tool and cannot be the source of any effect by itself. The essence of our existence which shapes our choices, relationships, behaviors, and thoughts is our soul. Thus when we say 'I' did such and such or enjoyed something, we are actually referring to our soul, not to our body. Our essence is our soul, and our body is a level of the soul, which is called the inanimate dimension. Apart from our body, our soul has other levels and aspects, which in other words, are the dimensions of our existence. The dimensions of human existence listed in order from the lowest to the highest level are as follows: "inanimate, vegetative, animal, intellectual, and supra-rational," which we will introduce below.

- **Inanimate Dimension:** a huge amount of our daily conversations are made up of self-talks. Self-talk is our inner dialogue with ourselves. In fact, most of the time we talk to ourselves. Have you ever wondered who or what is the self that speaks and the self that hears? We usually think that our tongue or our thoughts are the speakers and our hearts are the listeners, while the main speaker is our heart or soul. Even when we talk to others, it is still our soul that speaks, not our tongue. The tongue by itself is an inanimate element and does not have the ability to speak. Our thoughts come from our soul and not from our brain. In general, seeing, hearing, speaking, etc. are basically the work of the soul, and the body parts are the tools of the soul.

The body is the lowest level of the soul. In terms of having a body, we are no different from inanimate beings, including the chair we are sitting on and the

mobile phone we are holding. We are considered 'inanimate due to having a body because our body has volume, weight, color, smell, and elemental properties like inanimate things.

- **Vegetative Dimension:** One of the dimensions of human existence is the vegetative dimension. In addition to having inanimate characteristics such as weight, color, smell, etc., plants have delicacy and beauty, they grow and feed, reproduce, and are able to transform their weak body into a strong and robust one through growth and nutrition. We also have all these capabilities. Therefore, our vegetative dimension puts us in line with plants. In fact, because of these characteristics we are plants, not humans.
- **Animal Dimension:** In addition to inanimate and vegetative qualities, animals have more advanced capabilities, such as lust and anger. They get married and are committed to their family. They are responsible and work hard to continue their lives. They have a social life and are able to rise from an ordinary member of the group to the position of the group leader. They have positive characteristics such as loyalty, modesty, decency, and kindness, and they serve their own species and others. All these characteristics are also present in humans. Of course, some of them, such as lust and anger, may be more advanced and complicated in humans, but this advantage does not raise them above the level of animality. Therefore, another dimension of human existence is the animal dimension, and due to having these capabilities, we are equal to animals and have no special superiority over them.

- **Intellective Dimension:** Some people think that among all beings, only humans are given intellect, while angels also have this quality and are created from pure intellect. Intellect is not the reason for human superiority over other creatures. In the intellective dimension, we are angels, not humans. What makes us superior to other creatures is having the supra-rational faculty.
- **Supra-Rational Dimension:** Our being human is related to our supra-rational faculty. This dimension forms our human part and true self. By having the supra-rational faculty, we find the ability to be educated unlimitedly and can go through the levels of perfection up to infinity, while the rank of other creatures is determined, and they cannot go beyond their limit. All the dimensions of human existence are a prelude to the growth and development of the supra-rational faculty, and they must serve this dimension. In fact, our main investment in life should be for the attainment of supra-rational perfections, not inanimate, vegetative, animal, or intellective ones

In the next lessons, we will talk about each dimension of human existence and its relationship with human perfection separately. We invite you to study future lessons in order to better understand these concepts.

Please share your opinions about each lesson with us.