

## Most Important Principles and Rules of Thinking

### How Should We Think?

#### What Are the Most Important Principles and Rules of Thinking That Edify Human Beings?

No one is born a thief, criminal, or murderer. All major sins start from a simple corrupt thought that seems harmless at first, but if nurtured and acted upon, it destroys not only the individual's own life but also the lives of those around him. Similarly, all acts of repentance and regret stem from a simple illuminating thought, which can be a brief spark, but if taken seriously, it can compensate for the dark past of individuals and open up a new path to them. The power of our thoughts is infinite, for both creation and destruction. Thoughts shape our inward state, and ultimately, we become what we dwell on most.

We constantly think, and our minds are never truly empty, not even for a moment. Surely you would agree that many of these thoughts are either useless or harmful; they either waste our time or jeopardize our mental health. Clearly, not every thought can be useful and constructive. Only thoughts that contribute to the growth of our supra-rational or human dimension are truly beneficial, bringing us closer to our true Beloved, which is God. Such thoughts can create lasting happiness and peace within us and guarantee our bliss in this world and the hereafter. Thinking is the first step before acting, and if the thought is wrong, the actions will be wrong as well; therefore, to correct our actions, we must first correct our thoughts.

In this lesson, we will discuss the principles and rules of thinking that edify human beings. In other words, we will explore the conditions our thoughts must meet to foster creativity and growth within us. Although the principles and rules of thinking that edify human beings are more than what we will introduce in this lesson, the following are the most important ones.

### **Time for Reflection**

One of the most important principles and rules of thinking, that edify human beings, is to create an environment that allows for reflection. We usually are not in the habit of dedicating separate time to reflect, which is why this idea may seem strange, but the reality is that thinking requires silence, solitude, and concentration, and amidst the noise and busyness of daily tasks, we cannot think about important matters and reach meaningful conclusions.

Indeed, thinking requires courage, and often we lack such courage. We usually prefer to choose action over reflection because true reflection confronts us with our true self, and often we are not courageous enough to face ourselves. As a result, we prefer to engage in practical actions like worship instead of creating conditions necessary for reflection. Meanwhile, thinking is more impactful than action, which is why they say, "One hour of your contemplation is better than seventy years of worship."

### **Reflection on the True Self**

One of the other principles and rules of thinking is to consider what benefits our true self. Nowadays, calls to harness the power of thought are far more frequent than in the past. Bookstore displays, city billboards, and social media are filled with seminars, classes, and books that teach people how to use the power of thought and mental imagery to harness the universe for material gains. While we are not here to debate how realistic, ethical, or purposeful these techniques are, the main issue is whether this approach aligns with our true self's interests. The question is whether these thoughts bring us closer to ourselves or further away. Do they lead to the maturity of our human dimension or merely make us intelligent, wealthy, and powerful animals? Naturally, Islamic thought encourages ideas that promote wealth, power, success, and knowledge. However, it has a fundamental condition, which is that thinking about any subject must be in line with the true self, arising from it and contributing to its evolution; otherwise, it is absolute harm, even if it appears outwardly successful. This issue is not just about the laws of success, but it also applies to all our decisions, relationships, behaviors, and thoughts.

Knowing which thoughts truly serve our true self's interests has no way other than self-knowledge. Until we understand all dimensions of our existence and distinguish between the natural and human dimensions, we cannot understand what is beneficial or harmful to us.

It is true that we are created free and have the choice to adopt any mindset, but are we also allowed to? Certainly the answer is no, because we have an eternal and everlasting life ahead of us, and we must gather the tools we need for that life here and take them with us. Many thoughts are in conflict with our humanity and degrade us to the level of inanimate objects, plants, or animals. If we leave our

minds open like a roadside caravanserai to the constant arrival of various ideas, we become slaves to our own thoughts; as a result, they take control and steer us in any direction they desire.

### **Removing the Veil of Habit**

One of the other principles and rules of thinking, which edify human beings, is to lift a thick veil of habit<sup>1</sup> that blocks our view and prevents us from seeing the reality of beings and understanding the inner truth and purpose of their creation. Habits arise from the constant exposure to and repetition of phenomena, making the most amazing events of creation seem ordinary. However, if our thinking is structured and based on self-knowledge, it gradually lifts this veil of habit and unveils the inner truth of the universe.

When we look in the mirror, we see nothing but the reflection of objects; the mirror itself has nothing of its own and is just a reflector. Similarly, the universe reflects the beauty of its Creator, with each phenomenon reflecting an aspect of His beauty. If we fail to realize this, we become engrossed in the phenomena themselves, and our thinking loses its creative power, leaving us trapped in trivial, shallow thoughts.

Indeed, ripping off the veil of habit is not easy at first, but if we start and persist, slowly our perspective changes and we begin noticing things that we have never imagined before in the seemingly simple and repetitive events of life. Initially, we

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<sup>1</sup>. Familiarity with certain things and seeing them every day can make us overlook their true magnificence.

can start by focusing on our own bodies. For a while, try closing your eyes when performing daily tasks; imagine how life would be like without light or sight.

What other thoughts do you have on this topic? Please share them with us.