

Human Dignity in Islamic Thought: A Comparative Analysis with Western Ideologies

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Abstract:

Human dignity is a fundamental concept in Islamic philosophy, ethics, and religious teachings, serving as the foundation for a set of human rights, privileges, and responsibilities. In Islam, human dignity is rooted not in social convention but in ontology and the inherent nature of creation, grounded in divine commands. In addition to intrinsic dignity, Islam recognizes acquired dignity, primarily based on piety and faith. The Qur'an emphasizes that intrinsic dignity reflects an innate honor encompassing reason, free will, the divine breath, and the power of choice, shared equally among all humans. This study aims to examine the foundations of human dignity in Islam and compare them with Western ideologies, including liberalism and fascism. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology based on extensive library research, the study investigates how many Western schools limit human dignity to social, economic, racial, or individualistic conditions, often neglecting its ontological and ethical dimensions. Findings indicate that the Islamic perspective, emphasizing both intrinsic and acquired aspects of dignity, contrasts sharply with Western approaches that reduce human worth to external factors. The study concludes that the Islamic framework offers a comprehensive and morally grounded approach to human dignity, providing valuable insights for redefining human rights and ethical standards.

Keywords: Foundations, Human Dignity, Intrinsic Dignity, Acquired Dignity, Western Schools.

Introduction

The issue of human dignity has long been a fundamental topic in the fields of law, philosophy, ethics, and mysticism. Human dignity, as a rank and status granted to a person by virtue of being human—regardless of religion, culture, language, race, nationality, or social status—plays a foundational role in preserving freedom, justice, and human rights (Hosseini et al., 2017, p. 167). From an Islamic perspective, human dignity is inherent in the very creation of man, and God emphasizes this intrinsic dignity in numerous verses, such as: *"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam"* (Qur'an, 17:70). This dignity not only underpins human rights and privileges but also serves as a central axis for establishing justice, freedom, equality, and peace within society.

However, in contemporary human societies, the issue of human dignity has often been neglected. In some systems, the weak and oppressed are treated as mere tools or instruments, devoid of intrinsic value. Philosophical and political schools such as fascism, Nazism, legal positivism, and other frameworks regard human dignity as contingent upon external factors, such as government, race, or religion, denying any inherent worth to the individual (Hashemi, 2005, p. 148). In contrast, extreme humanist perspectives attribute an unconditional intrinsic dignity to humans, emphasizing human rights, prohibitions against degrading punishments, and the right to life, often without consideration for social responsibilities or limitations.

The necessity of this research arises from the need to understand the true status of human dignity and to clarify the differences in its foundations between Islamic thought and Western schools of thought, as well

as its practical implications for ethics, law, and society. Previous studies have addressed human dignity in Islam and Western human rights, but comparative and analytical investigations into the differences in philosophical foundations and practical consequences have received limited attention.

The main objective of this article is to examine and analyze the foundations of human dignity from the Islamic perspective and to compare it with Western schools of thought to elucidate the position of human dignity within the Islamic legal framework. Accordingly, the key research questions are:

1. How do the foundations of human dignity in Islamic thought differ from those in Western schools?
2. How is human dignity reflected in Islamic thought, and what implications does it have for societal ethics and law?
3. How does the Islamic legal system interact with human dignity and individual responsibility within society?

Following a funnel approach, this study moves from the general importance and necessity of human dignity to specific topics and research questions concerning philosophical and legal differences between Islam and Western schools of thought.

A: Conceptual Definitions

Conceptual definitions of key terms play an important role in understanding and interpreting research. Therefore, the present study begins by clarifying the relevant concepts.

1. Concept of Foundations

The term *foundations* (mabani) in Arabic is the broken plural of *mabna*, derived from the root *bana*. The word *bana* in Arabic can mean laying a foundation, constructing a house, or doing good. The term *mabani* has also been used to refer to a building or even letters of the alphabet (Ma'toof, 2007, pp. 7–106).

In legal terminology, *foundations* refer to the principles that explain the value of legal rules and serve as the basis for all legal norms. Every school of thought rests upon a set of foundations upon which its rules and regulations are established. In other words, the foundation or basis that compels individuals to observe the law is called the *foundation* of law. In Islamic jurisprudence, the term *milak* is sometimes used instead of *mabna*. In this context, *milakat al-ahkam* refers to the principles upon which social rulings and regulations are based (Office for Cooperation between Seminary and University, 2007, p. 174).

2. Concept of Law / Rights

The term *rights* (huquq) is the plural of *haqq*, which literally means certainty, truth, the opposite of falsehood, permanence, obligation, justice, and is also one of the names of God (Hasan, Amidi, 1995, p. 526). The root *haqq* denotes stability and affirmation (Ahmad ibn Faris, 1984, vol. 2, p. 15). In part, *rights* refer to the field that deals with legal entitlements and their protection under the law (Mohamed, 2013, p. 70).

In legal terminology, *rights* are defined as a set of general and binding rules governing social life, whose enforcement is ensured by the state (Aqa Bakhshi, 2018, p. 317). The scientific study of rights refers to the analysis, examination, and historical evolution of legal rules (Hayati, 2010, p. 8). In this discussion, the latter, more general definition of rights is intended.

4. Concept of Human Beings

Linguistically, the term *bashar* (human) refers to any human being, male or female, singular or plural. Some scholars distinguish between *insan* and *bashar*, defining *insan* as a human being in terms of inherent potential and moral capacities, and *bashar* as a human in terms of physical body and outward appearance (Raghib al-Isfahani, 1992, vol. 1, p. 124).

4. Concept of Human Rights

There is no universally accepted definition of human rights among scholars. However, two widely cited definitions can be noted here:

- Human rights are a set of general privileges naturally possessed by every individual simply by virtue of being human (Falsafi, 1995, p. 66).
- All individuals, by virtue of their humanity, possess rights that are independent of social status, nationality, religion, race, color, or gender; these are referred to as human rights (Ja'far Langarudi, 1999, p. 231).

5. Concept of Human Dignity

The term *dignity* has multiple meanings in dictionaries, some of which are highlighted here. *Dignity* refers to value, honor, respect, nobility, prestige, humaneness, status, esteem, position, rank, integrity, freedom from baseness, purity from corruption, benevolence, generosity, chivalry, and magnanimity (Dehkhoda, 1994, vol. 11, p. 16070). In *Mo'in Dictionary*, dignity is defined as generosity, intelligence, and greatness (Mo'in, 1999, p. 840). In Raghīb al-Isfahani's *Mufradat*, it is stated: "When God Almighty is described by the term *karam*, it refers to His benevolence and the manifestation of His gifts. If a human is described by this term, it refers to the ethical and praiseworthy actions manifested by the person. Until a person performs such actions, the term *karīm* does not apply" (Raghīb al-Isfahani, 1992, p. 428).

In terminology, dignity is generally divided into two categories: **intrinsic (inherent) dignity** and **value-based or acquired dignity**. Numerous definitions have been proposed for these two types. Intrinsic dignity is the honor that all humans possess solely by virtue of being human, without exception; it is independent of race, color, language, gender, political or social status, or other distinctions (Arzhang & Dehghan Simkani, 2015, p. 25). Intrinsic dignity forms the basis of natural (fitra-based) rights. These natural rights are derived from human nature and disposition and are discovered and inferred through human reason. Acquired dignity, on the other hand, pertains to qualities and achievements that a human attains through personal effort (Jafari, 1991, p. 279).

In terminological terms, dignity has also been described as follows: the essence of a human reflects the fullness of divine truth, and every perfection inherent in God is mirrored in humans by participation and derivation. This emphasizes the intrinsic dignity of human beings. The human essence is a complete mirror of the divine and rightly serves as God's vicegerent. Every individual should strive, according to their capacity, to approach this reality, elevate themselves to this noble and valuable station, and polish their vicegerent nature to witness beauty and perfection within themselves (Hosseinzadeh Amoli, 1999, pp. 23–24).

Intrinsic dignity, beyond vegetal life and animal instincts, is endowed with the human spirit and the divine breath. Humans are honored because of this unique spirit, which no other being possesses. This spirit originates from higher faculties, knowledge, capability, human passion and consciousness, free will, and the power of choice. It encompasses the highest scientific and cognitive capacities, which are the greatest potential of a possible existence. Allameh Tabatabai states: "Human dignity lies in the gift of intellect and reason, which is unique to humans. Through reason, humans can distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. Other faculties, such as speech, enjoyment, and mastery over other beings, are founded on reason and stem from it. Human excellence is such that the blessings granted to other creatures are received by humans in a fuller and superior measure" (Tabatabai, 1991, vol. 13, p. 156).

B: Types of Dignity

For better clarity, it is necessary to examine the types of dignity.

1. Intrinsic (Granted) Dignity

From the Qur'anic perspective, humans possess both granted (intrinsic) dignity and acquired dignity. Granted dignity, which is referred to as *inherent status* in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, belongs to all humans solely by virtue of being human, without any exceptions. It is independent of color, language, race, gender, religion, or social, political, and economic status. As previously mentioned, these rights remain valid as long as a person does not distance themselves from their human nature.

The Qur'an considers human dignity as a divine gift and endowment from God—a real and existential reality, not something conventional or contractual. Therefore, no government can undermine or compromise human dignity through legislation. The most prominent evidence of this type of dignity is found in verse 70 of Surah Al-Isra: *"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided them with good things and preferred them over many of those We created, with [definite] preference."*

This verse clearly emphasizes three key points:

1. **This dignity comes from God:** The Qur'an uses the expression *"We honored the children of Adam"*, and therefore it is appropriate to refer to intrinsic dignity as *granted dignity*.
2. **The term "children of Adam"** instead of *human* or *man* indicates that granted dignity is shared among all humans and is not exclusive to believers or Muslims.
3. **God-given dignity entails consequences**, such as potential superiority over other creatures and the allocation of certain blessings to humans (Javan Arasteh, 2022, p. 63).

2. Acquired Dignity

In addition to the potential God-given dignity, another type of dignity is acquired dignity. This form of dignity is specific to humans who, through effort and endeavor, strive to strengthen their human honor and identity, and by cultivating piety and purifying the self, draw closer to God. It is evident that this type of dignity can have various levels, depending on the effort, determination, and competence of each individual. The clearest reference to acquired dignity can be found in verse 13 of Surah Al-Hujurat: *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."* (Al-Hujurat, 13)

The differences between potential granted dignity and actualized acquired dignity can be summarized as follows:

1. Granted dignity is involuntary, whereas acquired dignity is voluntary and intentional.
2. Granted dignity encompasses all humans, whereas acquired dignity is specific to certain individuals.
3. Granted dignity is potential, and it attains value when actualized through acquisition.
4. The permanence and continuity of granted dignity depend on the preservation of one's humanity (Javan Arasteh, 2022, p. 66).

What is referred to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as inherent status and dignity, however, is dignity without a divine origin. The guiding principle is that a human has rights solely by virtue of being human, and external or incidental factors should not prevent them from enjoying these rights or diminish their honor and dignity. The assumption of this declaration is that the rights it recognizes are justified by human dignity; therefore, they are universal, timeless, and binding for all governments, cultures, and nations. In this human rights system: *"Since being human cannot be denied, destroyed, or taken away, human rights are ultimately inalienable; even the most bloodthirsty torturers and the most humiliated victims remain human."* (Sharifi, 2001, pp. 73–74)

What is this intrinsic human status that has become the legal foundation for humans and distinguishes them from horses, cows, sheep, or pigeons? Here emerges a clear contradiction between the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on one hand and the evaluation of humans in Western philosophy on the other. In Western philosophy, humans have long been stripped of value and honor. The statements that were once made about the elevated status of humans, rooted in Eastern thought, are today ridiculed and disparaged in most Western philosophical systems (Motahhari, 2011, p. 137).

Among Western philosophers, there exist existentialist perspectives that view humans as animals descended from apes (*Darwinism*), as beings dominated by lustful emotions (*Freudianism*), as superfluous, wasteful creatures (*Nihilism*), or as beings without identity (*Existentialism*). How can such perspectives speak of human dignity and honor? (Eisa Nejad, 2005, p. 183). Here, it becomes impossible to establish a

connection between anthropology in Western philosophy and the "intrinsic status of humans," because Western thought has dealt severe blows to human dignity. The dominance of such ideas over the political, social, and cultural spheres of the West has left natural consequences; and for this reason, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been violated, first and foremost, by the West itself. The philosophy that the West practically implements in life leaves no path for the Declaration of Human Rights other than failure (Motahhari, 2011, p. 141).

Difference Between *Takrim* and *Tafdhil*

Allameh Tabataba'i, in comparison with other commentators, has clearly articulated this issue. He states: "*Takrim consists of giving special attention to something and valuing it for what is unique to it and not found in others. The distinction between Takrim and Tafdhil lies precisely here. Takrim is a personal concept, and in the act of Takrim, nothing else is considered; only the individual being honored is meant, who possesses dignity and worth. This is unlike Tafdhil, which involves superiority over others, even though the person shares in the same basic gift as others.*" (Tabataba'i, 1991, Vol. 13, p. 214).

Allameh Tabataba'i, after explaining the difference between *Takrim* and *Tafdhil*, states:

"Now that the meanings of *Takrim* and *Tafdhil* have been clarified, Tabataba'i writes: A human being possesses a characteristic among all creatures of the world that others do not, and that is the gift of intellect. The meaning of the human being's superiority (*Tafdhil*) over other creatures is that, aside from reason, humans also excel in other qualities and attributes; every perfection found in other creatures reaches its highest degree in humans. Thus, it becomes clear that the superiority of humans over other creatures, as a gift and honor from God, means that whatever has been given to other beings, humans have received a greater share of it.

For example, if an animal eats, it consumes simple food such as meat, fruit, plants, or other natural sustenance. However, humans, who share this aspect with animals, have the additional capacity to take these same materials and innovate various types of cooked and raw foods. They invent diverse foods and culinary techniques—so numerous that they cannot be counted—along with drinks, clothing, methods to satisfy sexual instincts, ways of establishing dwellings, and social behaviors. In comparison, animals and humans differ in these respects."* (Tabataba'i, 1991, Vol. 13, pp. 215–217).

C. Foundations of Human Dignity in the Islamic Legal Tradition

Human dignity in Islam is a principle rooted in ontology. Its source and origin lie in the very nature of human creation and it is justified on the basis of divine injunctions. In other words, intrinsic human dignity is itself grounded in a series of fundamental moral and religious values, which are examined and evaluated below.

1. Freedom of Will and Choice

One of the ethical and religious principles underlying intrinsic human dignity is the freedom of will and choice. This freedom encompasses several concepts: first, human beings are purposeful entities, meaning that a significant part of their volitional independence lies in their inherent purposefulness. Consequently, humans are the ultimate end of the universe and give meaning and color to existence; all other creatures exist in service to and are subordinate to humans. Freedom and will, as one of the foundational bases of intrinsic human dignity, are also emphasized in religious teachings. From careful reflection on the following hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it can be inferred that freedom of will and choice is among the most important theoretical foundations of human dignity. The Prophet said: "*Nothing is more honored in the sight of God than humans.*" When asked, "*Even the angels?*" he replied: "*Yes, for the angels, like the sun and moon, are compelled; but humans have been created free and with choice.*" (Al-Muttaqi, 1409 AH, p. 192)

2. Capacity for Reason and Reflection

The human capacity for independent reasoning and reflection—to discern what is ethical, right, and wrong—is innate in all humans. By means of their natural intellect, humans can make decisions and reflect,

not only to shape their own lives but also to establish laws that organize and enhance the lives of others, promoting mutual respect and aiding others in society (Sullivan, 1380 SH, p. 45). Scholars and commentators, in interpreting the Qur'anic verse *"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam"* (Al-Isra, 70), emphasize that the verse signifies that the children of Adam are endowed with honor and superiority through their intellect, speech, and the ability to distinguish right from wrong, both for worldly and spiritual governance (Tarihi, 1395 SH, p. 152).

3. Possession of the Divine Spirit

Human dignity in Islam is based on divine revelation. It is not only because humans possess free will and intellectual capacity, but also because they are endowed with the divine *spirit* (nafkhah). God created humans in His image; thus, the human essence, as a reflection of the divine names, has a spiritual nature that connects and harmonizes with the universe. Accordingly, humans embody the highest form of divine identity (Ibn Arabi, n.d., p. 151).

Furthermore, according to the Qur'an, humans are beings into whom God has breathed His spirit: their bodies are connected to the earth, and their souls to God. That is, humans possess a celestial reality that is not confined to their physical existence. Humans have an immaterial essence, called the *nafs* or *spirit*. Regarding the first human, Adam, God says: *"And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down in prostration to him"* (Al-Hijr, 15 & 29). The command for the angels to prostrate before Adam was contingent upon the infusion of God's spirit, indicating that the value of Adam, and humans generally, lies in their spirit, not their physical body. Thus, the essential part of humans—their spirit—possesses characteristics that form the basis of dignity. God affirms this feature: *"O mankind, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you"* (Al-Isra, 17 & 70).

Returning human dignity to mere physicality has no scientific or rational justification, for there exist animals more beautiful or delicate than humans. If physicality were the criterion for dignity, it would not be unique to humans, as other creatures have traversed similar evolutionary paths. Yet God never declares Himself *"Best of Creators"* regarding any other creature; only humans are described thus: *"Then We fashioned him in a new creation, so blessed is God, the best of creators"* (Al-Mu'minun, 14 & 23). Therefore, the foundation of human dignity must be sought in aspects beyond the physical and natural dimension (Javad Amoli, 1397 SH, pp. 79–80).

4. Granting the Status of Divine Caliphate

One of the greatest honors that God the Most Generous has bestowed upon humans is the status of caliphate and vicegerency on Earth. Humans possess such value and stature that God has appointed them as His representatives on Earth.

A possible objection might arise that this caliphate was exclusive to Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) and that humans descended from him do not share in this dignity. In response, it must be stated that there is no doubt that the status of Divine Caliphate is not limited to Adam but pertains to all human beings, for several reasons:

1. If this status were exclusive to Adam, there would have been no need for the angels to ask God whether He would place someone on Earth who would commit killing, corruption, and bloodshed. Moreover, if this position were limited to Adam, it would have been incompatible with his infallibility. Even if the angels had asked about Adam, God would have had to respond that this being would not commit corruption or bloodshed. However, God does not give a negative answer to them (Nasri, 1379 SH, p. 453).
2. Some other Qur'anic verses explicitly indicate that God appointed humans as His caliphs on Earth. Examples include verse 165 of Surah Al-An'am and verse 39 of Surah Fatir: *"He it is Who has made you successors (khulafā') on the earth; so whoever disbelieves, his disbelief is only against himself, and the disbelievers' disbelief does not increase their Lord except in hatred, and it only increases their loss"*

In this regard, Allameh Tabataba'i states that this caliphate and vicegerency is not exclusive to Adam but that others also share in this station. The universality of this caliphate is also indicated by verses such as: *"Then We made you successors on the Earth"* (Yunus, 10–14) (Tabataba'i, 1370 SH, vol. 13, p. 220).

Another question arises: what is the nature of the Divine Caliphate, and what is meant when it is said that humans are God's vicegerents on Earth? The answer is that this station is not an honor that is actualized in humans from birth. Rather, it exists potentially within every human being, and through faith, righteous action, and striving in servitude to God, a person can attain this status.

D. Foundations of Human Dignity in Western Schools of Thought (Liberalism, Fascism, and Nazism)

1. Foundations of Human Dignity in the Liberal School

From the perspective of liberalism, human dignity is understood as individualism, the freedom of human desires up to the limit of others' freedoms, pursuit of pleasure, wealth and abundance, good housing, high social status, civil liberties, natural rights, property ownership, security, equality before the law, and similar factors. In other words, if a person enjoys these conditions, they are considered dignified and respected; otherwise, they are regarded with contempt. Based on this view, the following principles can be inferred:

1. **Primacy of human interest and taste:** This principle emphasizes the desires and preferences of humans and their fulfillment as a fundamental foundation of liberalism, rooted in humanism. Humans are considered the center and axis of the world. Accordingly, any desire—whether instinctive or rational—is deemed fundamental, while desires beyond human interests (divine, religious, or state-imposed) are largely ignored.
2. **Choice and freedom:** Based on humanism, liberalism asserts that humans are the owners of themselves, possess free will, and are free to pursue their goals, even if those goals are irrational.
3. **Self-sufficient reason:** According to this view, human intellect and reason are regarded as superior to divine knowledge and prophetic guidance, and leadership of the individual and society should be entrusted to human reason. Liberals emphasize the human capacity to solve social problems through reason rather than relying on revelation.
4. **Materialism:** In the liberal perspective, humans are material beings, part of nature, composed of body, senses, and needs. Humans cannot separate themselves from the material world or disregard it. While liberalism does not deny the human soul, its primary focus on physical pleasure greatly elevates the value of the body. Accordingly, pleasure, utility, and the fulfillment of physical needs are central to human activity (Sanehpour, 1387 SH, pp. 21–22).

From the liberal viewpoint, human dignity is self-derived and endowed with inalienable rights, commonly referred to as civil liberties, natural rights, or human rights. According to the U.S. Declaration of Independence, human rights include the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen recognizes the rights to liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. These rights are inalienable and universally applicable (Shapiro, 1386 SH, p. 24). All of these rights, according to liberal principles, are realized through these foundations.

Liberals believe that a person has no value in life without freedom (absolute freedom). Consequently, they have consistently sought to free individuals from oppressive and restrictive constraints imposed by governments, institutions, and traditions. Individuals must be autonomous and independent, free to choose their occupation, express their beliefs, change nationality, and move from place to place (*ibid.*, p. 28).

2. Foundations of Human Dignity in the Fascist and Nazi Doctrines

In the fascist doctrine, the value and significance of a human being are determined by their dependence on the state. The individual exists in service to a state that has full authority and discretion over their life and death. It is the state that, through its absolute sovereign power, grants public freedoms to individuals. Consequently, the state can easily revoke these freedoms at will. Fascist ideology is thus fundamentally

anti-human-dignity and attributes no inherent value or worth to humans as humans. In this framework, human rights are considered meaningless and futile.

Similarly, Nazi ideology links the value of a human being to their race, asserting that an individual exists in service to a population or group that controls their life and death. These ideological currents classify humans according to racial characteristics and distinctions into “developed” and “backward” categories.

The positivist and legal-positivist approaches are among the currents that deny any divine source or origin of human rights and maintain that all authority derives from what the government or state authorities decree (Rahiminajad, 2011, p. 124).

E: Human Dignity and Its Application in (Islamic Legal Doctrine, Liberalism, and Fascism)

Although there are some commonalities among the three schools of thought, all acknowledge the principle of human dignity—regardless of interpretation or analysis—as the foundation of equality of rights, opposition to inhumane behavior, the establishment of peace, freedom, and justice based on human dignity, the protection of personal honor and reputation from violation, and the development, advancement, and cultivation of human personality. Nevertheless, significant differences exist among these perspectives, which can be summarized as follows:

The most notable distinction among the three schools—Islam, liberalism, and fascism—lies in the acceptance or rejection of *acquired dignity*, which is based on human-divine values. These differences arise from their epistemological views and understanding of human nature and have implications in the domains of law, social and political issues, and more. While Islam considers both the spiritual and physical dimensions of human beings and gives special attention even to their psychological aspects, Western schools (liberalism, fascism, nihilism, etc.), as reflected in international legal systems, tend to focus more on the physical dimension of humans. This divergence has led to challenges in legislation between Islamic and Western frameworks.

For this reason, Islam prohibits the worship of anyone other than God and forbids hierarchical master-servant systems among humans: *“Say, O People of the Book, come to a word that is equal between us and you: that we worship none but Allah and associate nothing with Him, and that none of us take others as lords besides Allah”* (Al-Imran, 3:64).

Acquired or voluntary dignity refers to the attainment of perfections that a human achieves through faith and righteous actions of their own choice. This dignity, which is truly elective, is contingent upon acquiring faith, knowledge, piety, striving (jihad), and righteous deeds. The following Qur’anic verses clearly illustrate this type of dignity: *“Allah will raise those of you who have believed and those who were given knowledge in degrees”* (Al-Mujadila, 58:11). God elevates the ranks of the faithful and the knowledgeable.

“Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you” (Al-Hujurat, 49:13).

“Allah has preferred the mujahidin over those who remain behind with a great reward” (An-Nisa, 4:95-96). God grants superiority and a great reward to those who strive over those who do not.

Indeed, God and the Noble Messenger never desire actual humiliation for anyone; they seek only goodness, blessings, greatness, and dignity for humans. Regarding the station of dignity, it suffices that in the first revelation sent to the Prophet, God speaks of His own honor: *“Your Lord is Most Honorable”* (Al-‘Alaq, 96:3). God also sent His prophets to realize human dignity, and among the prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the most deserving of this role: *“There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves; grievous to him is your hardship; he is concerned for you and is kind and merciful to the believers”* (At-Tawba, 9:128). He came as a human among humans, deeply concerned about their suffering, ignorance, and poverty, and compassionate toward the believers.

“He permits them the good things and forbids them the impure, and removes from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them” (Al-A’raf, 7:157). He allows lawful, pure provisions, forbids the impure, and lifts heavy burdens and chains from humanity.

According to Muhammad (peace be upon him), no being possesses dignity before God like humans. This unique distinction is not even granted to the angels: *"Nothing is more honored by Allah than the son of Adam."* When asked, "O Messenger of Allah, not even the angels?" he replied: *"The angels are constrained, like the sun and the moon"* (Riyashi, 1379 SH, Vol. 1, p. 426, Hadith 1547). Regarding human superiority over angels, Imam Baqir states: *"Because the angels are servants of the believers"* (Hadith 1552).

Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said: *"Indeed, Allah is Generous and loves generosity"* (Vol. 11, p. 514). Furthermore: *"Whoever honors his brother, he indeed honors Allah"* (Hadith 5158).

From the Qur'anic revelations and prophetic traditions, it is evident that humans possess inherent dignity in the sight of God and the Prophet (peace be upon him) and, through their efforts, can also attain the highest levels of acquired dignity.

Just as Islam emphasizes knowledge-centeredness, meritocracy, and expertise in assuming responsibilities, it also considers piety and God-consciousness essential in attaining social, political, and other positions. This, however, does not imply infringing upon the rights of others or depriving them of their recognized entitlements. Just as knowledge-centeredness is widely accepted as a priority among the wise of the world, Islam gives absolute priority to piety. For this reason, the Qur'an explicitly states that disbelievers have no right to govern over the believers: *"And never will Allah grant the disbelievers a way over the believers"* (An-Nisa, 4:141).

Similarly, Islam does not tolerate the rule of the extravagant and corrupt and commands people not to obey them: *"And do not obey the command of the extravagant, who cause corruption in the land and do not amend"* (Ash-Shu'ara, 26).

The emphasis on piety alongside knowledge-centeredness is important because piety itself serves as an effective practical safeguard, reducing dependence on extensive bureaucracies and supervisory institutions and preventing oppression and injustice. As Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him), said: *"Indeed, God-consciousness is the key to the rectitude of action"* (Mansouri Larijani, 1374 SH, pp. 109–110). Acceptance of piety as a critical criterion in human dignity similarly reduces many political, economic, cultural, and social corruptions.

Neglecting the spiritual and ethical dimensions of human beings can lead to the violation of their inherent dignity, as a person devoid of spirituality and human-divine values will not adhere even to the most basic human rights (Katuzian, 1400 SH, Vol. 1, p. 112).

From a liberal perspective, human dignity is viewed in terms of individualism, freedom to pursue one's desires up to the limits of others' freedoms, hedonism, wealth and abundance, good housing, high status, civil liberties, natural rights, property, security, equality before the law, and similar attributes. In this view, a person possesses dignity only if they enjoy these privileges; otherwise, they are treated with disregard. Materialism is a central principle in liberal thought, which regards humans as material beings and part of nature. This perspective emphasizes the physical aspect—body, senses, and needs—linking humans inseparably to the material world. While liberalism does not deny the human spirit, its primary focus on bodily pleasure places the highest value on the physical dimension. Accordingly, pleasure, utility, and personal ends constitute the exclusive goal of human activity (San'e Pour, 1387 SH, pp. 21–22).

In the fascist doctrine, the value and significance of a human being are determined by their dependence on the state. The individual exists in service to a state that has full authority and discretion over their life and death. It is the state that, through its absolute sovereign power, grants public freedoms to individuals. Consequently, it can easily revoke these freedoms at will. Fascist ideology is entirely anti-human-dignity and attributes no inherent value or worth to humans as humans (Rahiminajad, 1390 SH, p. 124).

F: Conclusion

Based on the theoretical foundations of human dignity in Islamic concepts and teachings, both inherent (intrinsic) and acquired dignity can be observed. Inherent human dignity is the respect and honor that all people naturally share, grounded in the powers of reason, the ability to think, freedom, will, choice, and

the divine aspect. This type of dignity is inseparable and indivisible from the human being; without it, the very concept of humanity cannot be conceived. As long as the term “*Bani Adam*” (children of Adam) applies to a person, they possess human dignity and natural rights. Human dignity is not lost through the commission of crimes; rather, it is the person’s actions that are subject to blame, not their essence, because actions are distinct from essence. Therefore, Qur’anic verses and traditions that liken disbelievers to animals due to their failure to use their rational, auditory, and visual faculties—or even describe them as lower than animals—never imply the removal of their inherent dignity.

Liberalism considers human dignity in terms of individualism, freedom to pursue desires, hedonism, wealth and abundance, good housing, high social status, civil liberties, natural rights, property, security, equality before the law, and similar attributes. In this perspective, a person possesses dignity only if they enjoy these privileges; otherwise, they are treated with disdain. Materialism is a fundamental principle of liberal thought, which regards humans as material beings and part of nature. This connection emphasizes the physical dimension—body, senses, and needs—and humans cannot consider themselves separate from material affairs nor neglect them. Although liberalism does not deny the human spirit, its fundamental focus on bodily pleasure places high value on the physical dimension. Accordingly, pleasure, utility, and personal ends constitute the exclusive purpose of human activity.

Similarly, Nazi ideology ties human value to race, asserting that an individual exists in service to a population or group that controls their life and death. In the fascist doctrine, the value and significance of a human being are determined by their dependence on the state. The individual exists in service to a state that has full authority and discretion over their life and death.

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