

Absurd Wars

The Dualities of Existential Anxiety... Eternal Torment or a Sustained Test?

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الْحُرُوبُ الْعَبَثِيَّةُ .. ثَنَائِيَّاتُ الْقَلْقِ الْوَجُودِيَّةِ، عَذَابٌ دَائِمٌ أَمْ امْتِحَانٌ مُسْتَدَامٌ؟

I marvel at injustice, which ceaselessly strikes justice, while justice is the very reason for its existence. Beauty never stops mocking ugliness, though without ugliness, its own charm would not exist. The black of night never tires of denying the white of day, and the day summons the night to complete its own cycle. Evil finds no rest in its pursuit of good, for evil cannot stand if good abandons it.

The core of the issue is that man is one upon whom wrath has been brought down; he was placed in life so that his inner self may be rectified through adversities. Since his creation, the Almighty has burdened him with loads his back is too weak to carry. Anxious dualities that neither bring contentment nor leave their bearer, man, to rest in tranquility.

The two are in a firm, existential bond, where one opposite never rests from cursing the other. And if man possessed insight and foresaw the long-term consequences of its action, he would praise it abundantly and lay down for it firm foundations and carpets, honoring it.

And the truth is, if one opposite were to perish, the other would never rise again after it. The return would be to the primordial state, when time was a coiled embryo and space a conceived sketch. To where no universes reside and no creation roams, and the Eternal One, in the non-existence, alone, had not yet descended to His creatures with the virtues of His name.

The Duality of Life and Death:

In the primordial origin, there was nothingness – a terrifying death for which no companion could be found in existence. From the seed of death, life sprouted as a spectrum of a rich, radiant color. Then the two became inseparable in a firm bond, contending yet never parting; as long as they endure, their coupling, in the view of the cognizant, is eternal.

So how can life complain of death, when life would be perpetual misery if death turned away and left it in orphanhood, burdened with senility? And how can death vanquish life, when life is its consoling branch, when the abode became desolate and turned into a savage wilderness?

For if death were ever to become barren, debate would be obliterated, thought would vanish, and the universe would level out into a mute 'A' with no 'B' to follow it and no 'T'. Thus, there can be no life that is not sealed by death, and no death can thrive that is not a prelude to a life of which it is the reaper on its preordained, eternal day.

The Duality of Light and Darkness

And in the primordial origin, there was darkness. Then it happened that night gathered its blackness, and light breathed forth as a radiant dawn. From that day, night has been vomiting its morning, and morning has not ceased to sweep away its night gradually.

And the white of inner purity prevails over the black of actions, so it is not disgraced among mankind. And when ignorance darkens souls with obscurity, knowledge illuminates what was once hidden from people.

So, souls illuminated by the light of faith rejoice, while ignorance drowns the stubborn disbeliever in the gloom of his cave. And the two never meet except in strife, and they never part as long as there remains a trace of breath.

For the face of the sun, when it overflows with light upon the world, darkness paints a mole on its two radiant cheeks and the forehead. And the night, when it seals vision with the kohl of its essence, a beam of light streams through, perceptible only to one with enlightened insight.

And the eye cannot discern the light of morning if the latter does not penetrate the darkness of its inner canvas. And a star cannot be perceived in the realm of the sun, but in the blackness of night, it shines, sweet and strong.

And when light greets a cheek with a gleam, you find the shadow carpeting the opposite cheek. And as long as the sun runs its course, light will continue to flood one side and darkness veil the other, wretched one.

The Duality of Justice and Injustice:

Justice is the soul's revolt against the injustice of souls. As for injustice, it is an innate disposition and a habit for those with power. You will not find a living being who has not wronged another, once he possessed power and the necks of the subservient yielded to it.

"Injustice lies latent in souls; power brings it forth and weakness conceals it." ⁽¹⁾ A statement uttered by the Imam, and after him, creation has not ceased to repeat and reiterate it. And here is he who once claimed the prophecy, standing as a witness that "injustice is a trait of souls, and chastity is only found in the souls of the impotent." ⁽²⁾

So blessed is he who possessed power yet deviated from wronging creation, and blessed is he who was weakened yet rebelled against his weakness and the injustice of his oppressors. And from that day, injustice has been the master and justice the rebel, so you will not find an oppressor without justice being the goal of the rebels.

And justice remains a jealously guarded treasure, as long as injustice reaps followers and disciples for itself. And the two will never cease struggling, as long as there are among creation those who are too proud and who plunge into the fray seeking vengeance for the weak.

So how can injustice conceal justice, when it is the vile planting and justice is the stubborn fruit? And how can justice conquer injustice, when it only gains strength from the tyranny of the second, for it is in its fire that iron is tempered?

The Duality of Good and Evil:

Like a banished beast, this human grew up, and his abode was in a hostile environment. Beings with fangs roamed the expanse, and hunger was a beast that ravaged without having fangs. Beings with claws clamor around him, and the torn nails was his own sole weapon. A reckoning without justice, and the loser is man, if the Creator, by His intent, one day disowns him.

And where the soil is salty, thorns and their prickles grow. A beast is not reasoned with by tears, nor do its character soften with tenderness and compassion. And man's character was not formed from reflection and choice; rather, he drew his nature from a bitter well. So, a little evil is beneficial in a predicament, and nothing is weaker than good when hunger continues to assault him. And good becomes the luxury of an indulgent one, whose belly is full and whose treasures overflow with abundance. And evil becomes a necessity for survival, when safety is scarce, injustice roams freely, and the banners of misery are hoisted.

And when the fires die down, tranquility returns, and peace prevails, stock up on as much good as you can, so it becomes your character. But never forget your share of evil, for perhaps in the dark days it will benefit you. And balance, as best you can, the division between them, for evil, like good, are your provision and supplies in life. So do not incline wholly to good lest you be wringed, nor lean entirely towards evil lest it break you. And know that good, when out of place, is evil, and evil, in its place, may hold much good for you.

Fear is evil, but it is your means to caution and wariness. Suspicion is evil, yet it is the path to greater certainty. And miserliness is evil and most despicable, yet a little of it preserves your white coin for a day of gray hardship. And envy is evil and most sharp, but a part of it drives one towards excellence. For no soul is content with a state of confinement; it measures and compares, and then strives for lofty honor. And jealousy is evil and conflict, but without it, a wretch would not choose to repel humiliation from wealth being plundered or honor being sullied in the dust.

And bigotry is evil, yet in some of it lies the preservation of beliefs and the endurance of homelands. So, no enemy can approach the ramparts of the sanctuary, nor can a hateful traitor tamper with the structure and foundations. Were it not for it, beliefs

and kingdoms of thought would have collapsed from the terror of dangers and the guile of those lying in wait among humankind. Were it not for it, no lofty principle would be safe from loss, and all these religions would not have been safe from extinction.

And lying is evil, but in some of it lies facilitation for people and mercy for the wretched among humankind. And it has long been held in good custom that bringing benefits is secondary to warding off harms. How then is the case with mending rifts and soothing hearts, both of which, as I know them, are among the finest of actions and the noblest of intentions?

So be truthful in word and deed, for I have never ceased calling for them, as truthfulness is a cleansing for the soul and a salvation from sins. But do not wound the self if the tongue shows kindness with one, for some lying is a balm for the pains in hearts. And people have long distinguished between a beneficial white lie and a black, barren one. Adhere to the white one, for its sin upon its utterer is small, but its benefit for the distressed other is truly great.

The Duality of Beauty and Ugliness:

I have found nothing more wretched than beauty reproaching ugliness, and nothing more miserable than ugliness meeting it with submission. For ugliness is nothing but a scarcity of beauty, and beauty is nothing more than a lack of repulsiveness.

And beauty soon folds away quickly, and ugliness does not linger in the eye for long. What was beautifully pleasant yesterday has today become classified among the losses. And what was ugly in a time past has now become beautiful, to which people point with consideration. How the measures of beauty have changed since the time of Adam, and how the attributes of maidens considered virtuous have altered

So be humble, you with the beautiful countenance, for your beauty is not a permanent gift. And do not be grieved, you of unfortunate appearance, for not all expression ends with it. For how many a beautiful person has been marred by the ugliness of their inner character, and how many an ugly person has been adorned by the beauty of their spirit, becoming in comeliness an unparalleled figure! So strive, both of you, as long as you live, for prowess in action, for the beauty of action bestows

upon form a dazzling quality. For the fire dies down unless you feed it with firewood, and the light fades unless the fire's blazing fuels it.

Eternal Torment or a Sustained Test?

Since the wretched human was born, life has been wringing him intensely. It breathes gently upon him in a few of his moments, and in many moments it hurls a merciless hurricane at him.

Anxious existential dualities forever weigh down his back, even if he lived on this earth for ages. They do not calm down for a single moment, nor do they leave him to enjoy his life, content and satisfied.

And between one scale and its fierce counterpart, the poor wretch remains lost and perplexed; they do not let him enjoy tranquility as long as he remains human. And he does not stay on one pan for a second before the second pan, the opposite, seizes him with the grasp of one yearning and infatuated. And with them, his life passes, sluggish and heavy; they reduce his joy to a single line while filling the vast remainder with sorrows.

And God, Glorified and Exalted, although He has undertaken to protect man from calamities, has left him as booty for the dualities, and does not repel their guile from him as a punishment.

For the disobedient one, when he disobeyed the Most Merciful over an apple, He burdened him with its sin, and it sufficed as his reckoning. The poor wretch did not relish the pleasure of its taste before calamities came to him in bundles, and Eve a red ribbon with which the response was tied.

So, tread lightly, for you are in torment, and do not rush towards grief, for you will surely reach it. Do not grieve over a parting, for loss is inevitable, and do not rejoice over a union, for tomorrow you will part from it. And fortune has never perdured for a fortunate one among people, and misfortune has not settled over an unlucky one with clouds that do not disperse. And glory has not become eternal in any abode, nor has any land refused to have its pillars grow therein. These are the days, as I have observed them, alternating states; he whom a time has delighted, other times have grieved him.

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(1) *This is a saying of Imam Ali.*

(2) *Al-Mutanabbi said, confirming the saying of Imam Ali: "Injustice is a trait of souls. If you find one who is chaste, it is perhaps for a reason that he does not oppress."*

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