

Queens College CUNY

Enlightened or Dined

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Saba Jobah

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By practicing the virtue of self-control, you are actively cleansing yourself of overindulgence. This issue can lead to greed, vanity, and blurred judgement that makes you a slave to your physical abilities, experiencing momentary gratification. Avicenna is a Muslim physician and philosopher who discussed external senses, internal senses, and self-consciousness. When you feed your external senses, you are using a momentary solution that opens you to bigger issues. Through control of your consummation with your external senses you can start to tap into your internal senses. Using your internal senses to navigate the world will grant you access to “common sense, retentive imagination..., ability to rationally use that information” (Henley & Hergenhahn,78). Controlling yourself from overindulging through your external senses such as “sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell” (Henley & Hergenhahn,78) exposes the mundane external existence. As your chackles fall to the ground you are enlightened of the otherworldly yet forgotten internal spirituality and gain self-consciousness.

Avicenna’s internal and external senses aligns with Aristotle’s Hierarchy of Souls drew a connection between the sensations of your surroundings as a part of your soul/spirit. The Hierarchy of Souls included the Nutritive, Sensitive, and Rational Souls in humans. Through the “...functions of vegetative, sensitive soul, and rational thought...humans are able to grow, reproduce experience pain/pleasure, and have memory.” (Henley & Hergenhahn ,47). These physical abilities can either be tools for the betterment of yourself and your surroundings or they can lead to overindulgence. According to Plato’s Theory of Knowledge, “All knowledge is innate can be attained through introspection...Once the soul moved to the body, sensory information contaminated this pure knowledge”. (Henley & Hergenhahn ,45) Luckily, Plato goes on to explain the possibility of “remembering the soul’s experience”. (Henley & Hergenhahn

,45) If self-control is maintained, the balance created will grant you access to soulful bliss as a return to your knowledge will be achieved.

Being born into Islam and as I maintain my status as a practicing Muslim, I have witnessed the beauty of self-control. I fast during the month of Ramadan by eating a meal before sunrise and then breaking my fast with my family at sunrise. Fasting in my opinion is one of the most important pillars of Islam as it connects back to the pillars of Faith, prayer, and alms. By controlling yourself and fasting you are creating empathy to impoverished individuals. Throughout the year we are busy being greedy and self-centered and sadly neglect those in need. Fasting slows us and shifts our attention to the pains of having to work on an empty stomach to enjoy the simple reward of food. Self-control is enforced here to create a community through charity backed up by true empathy rather than promoting individualism for momentary gratification.

Likewise fasting eliminates the sensory distractions from your prayer and faith. The demands of your body can draw you away from practicing Islam properly. Modesty in your relationships and even consumption of food are main practices for Muslims. Everything is meant to be balanced and never overindulged. If one was to stray away from self-control of fasting, they are also predicted to also lose touch with their prayer and eventually their faith. Self-control in Islam is also practiced through the avoidance of the consumption of any drugs and alcohol. These have attractive attributes but once again if control is maintained you will be able to experience the world through clear lenses.

What obstacles did you encounter in practicing this Virtue and how did you, or do you, still strive to overcome the difficulties?

Over-eating is my personal obstacle with practicing self-control. My binge eating habit is a symptom from a disease I finally got a diagnosis for. I have brought up my concerns to multiple doctors with all of them not believing me until I insisted even though I also suffered from acne and hair loss. Not knowing these directly connected and being doubted by multiple doctors made me have anxiety attacks. However, feeling alone drove me to do research and I discovered that my symptoms were possibly from PCOS. To put it to the test I cut out as much processed foods and wheat products. This also helped me begin to control my appetite. Within a few weeks I noticed I was having less acne and hair fallout. This helped me muster up the courage to pressure my doctor to test me for PCOS and I finally received my PCOS diagnosis. I was actively damaging my physical health by lacking self-control in my eating habits. My physical health dwindling led to my mental health to crash. In my case I saw a clear connection between body and soul.

PCOS sadly does not have a cure and so my plan is to seek medication and carry on with my healthy personalized diet that requires self-control. Through the struggle I have witnessed the progress in my life and in the people surrounding me. I can confidently take charge of projects and give my full commitment. In seeking control over what I put in my body through my external senses I have maximized my internal senses. When I noticed I had an eating issue I spoke up. I used one of my senses to balance out the other and to eventually achieve my goals of health and growth.

All in all, the philosophies of Avicenna, Plato, and Aristotle are deeply intertwined with the important practice of self-control. Individuals can get lost and sick in the pursuit of basic pleasures for your senses. If an individual can hold back on these pleasures, then their minds and bodies would be freed to be more productive.

Work Cited

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