

Ultimate Questions in Philosophy of Religion

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In this text Shaykh Mansour Leghaei delves into the philosophy behind several intrinsic matters of Faith such as belief in God, free-will or predeterminism, the question of evil and much more.

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Chapter 1: The Sleepwalkers!

*If you would be a real seeker after truth,
you must at least once in your life doubt,
as far as possible, all things.
“Discours de la Méthode”; Descartes. 1637.*

Knowledge, Faith And Doubt

How certain are you about your religion and religious beliefs? Have you ever doubted any of your beliefs? Most of us claim we believe in our religion but when it comes to action, we fail, why? Why don't we act upon our faith or least we often lag behind?!

With a simple experiment you can test your faith and distinguish it from knowledge. We all know that a dead person is absolutely harmless. (Knowledge)

But why is it that we are scared to sleep in a room where our deceased grandmother lies down?!

This is the difference between mere knowledge and knowledge with faith. Mistakenly we refer to our collection of information as 'faith'.

Let's face it, we have received most of our beliefs from parents, teachers and others whom we trust without verification. Faith without knowledge is 'blind faith'. Blind faith puts a lock on the door and anesthetizes the desire to seek knowledge and truth. That is why any challenge to our blind faith poses

a serious threat to our belief system and we find ourselves desperately speechless.

Is It Okay To Doubt My Faith?!

We all may have experienced days where we doubt our ability to do certain things, doubting the subject we have chosen, the career we have chosen, the school we send our children to and even doubting ourselves and what we believe. It seems there are always hooks to hang our doubts upon. That is because doubt is a natural human mental state. Doubt, if managed wisely can ignite certainty and serenity and hence is holy. Without doubt, no human discovery and invention would have emerged!

Islam not only allows doubting our faith but it often encourages us to ponder, criticize and question what is offered to us by our surrounding society. Thus, Prophet Ibrahim (S) began his spiritual journey to Allah by first doubting the predominant doctrines of his contemporaries. He began to wonder and then doubt if stars were his deities. He then considered, though soon doubted, the Sun as a deity. In his quest for truth, he realized that they (the sun and stars) all set one after the other. He therefore denounced all the false deities and while turning to the Almighty Allah, he proclaimed:

“Verily, I have turned my face toward Him Who has created the heavens and the earth as a monotheist, and I am not one of the polytheists.”(6:79)

The Almighty God in the Qur’an repeatedly blamed those who do not reflect. According to a famous narration from the Prophet Muhammad (S), *‘an hour of reflection is more virtuous than 70 years of worshipping (without reflection).’*¹ Obviously, questioning and doubting are inevitable ingredients of reflection.

When I was studying at the Islamic seminary of Qom, I had a philosophy teacher who was encouraging me to study the holy Qur’an critically. His reason being ‘if you don’t criticize and give satisfactory answers others may pose those questions to you and then you’ll be speechless.’

Therefore, I aim at doubting all our beliefs in order to distinguish the truth from the false and then to rebuild a sound belief system. I am going to doubt and question even our own existence, let alone the world around us and its Creator!

Types Of Doubt

There are different types of doubt:

Doubt As Hard Skepticism (Blind Skepticism)

As there is an unhealthy ‘blind faith’, there is an equally unhealthy type of ‘blind skepticism’. Blind skepticism is the state of mind of people who are suspicious of any ideas that seem to criticize their lifestyle. Hard skeptics doubt and question for the sake of argument only, they are not asking to learn.

Therefore, hard skepticism is destructive and doesn't solve any problem. It is not healthy to be or remain a chronic doubter.

Doubt As Earnest Questioning (Methodological Skepticism)

Skepticism is not necessarily a bad thing. It protects us against believing everything we hear.

Methodological skepticism is a scientific and sincere quest for truth. It scrutinizes all knowledge claims with the goal of sorting out true from false.

Asking honest questions when you doubt is the only way to grow and is a very healthy method for learning. Therefore, doubt is the first step towards knowledge. It is a forceful engine behind learning.

While we try to stay away from doubt as hard skepticism, we believe doubt as earnest questioning is the path to certainty. Unless we doubt in order to examine our inherited belief system, we will not be able to determine the validity of what is true and what is not. We will begin our intellectual journey from scratch, examining the reality of the world around us and depending on its result, we will build up our belief system onwards. Let me commence the journey with the following famous story:

The Sleepwalkers

Gibran Khalil Gibran, known as Kahlil Gibran, a well-known Lebanese poet and artist of the early twentieth century, in a prose poetry named '*the sleepwalkers*' says:

"In the town where I was born lived a woman and her daughter, who walked in their sleep.

One night, while silence enfolded the world, the woman and her daughter, walking, yet asleep, met in their mist-veiled garden.

And the mother spoke, and she said: "At last, at last, my enemy! You by whom my youth was destroyed -- who have built up your life upon the ruins of mine! Would I could kill you!"

And the daughter spoke, and she said: "O hateful woman, selfish and old! Who stand between my freer self and me! Who would have my life an echo of your own faded life! Would you were dead!"

At that moment a cock crew, and both women awoke. The mother said gently, "Is that you, darling?" And the daughter answered gently, "Yes, dear."!

Sleepwalking is a phenomenon of combined sleep and wakefulness. It is classified as a sleep disorder belonging to the parasomnia family. Although sleepwalkers are asleep, their eyes are open whilst walking around and they may even talk though they typically don't make sense to the observer.

The question here is how do we know that we are not sleepwalkers and that we will wake up one day perhaps upon our death?!

It is narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S):

"Mankind is asleep and only when they die, they'll wake up."[2](#)

Similarly, Rumi in the first story of his Mathnawi with reference to people's worldly activities says:

*Their peace and their war (turn) on a phantasy,
and their pride and their shame spring from a phantasy.*[3](#)

Should we take all these literatures literally or they are metaphoric?

How can we really prove we are not sleepwalkers in our so-called life?

Most of us will say that our senses are telling us we are awake, but as I'll explain further how we can trust our sense while knowing often our senses fool us with what we refer to as 'illusions'?! So, perhaps our so-called wakefulness is yet another example of illusion!

When dreaming you are convinced that it is real. You eat, walk, talk and do whatever you would do in 'real life' assuming them all to be real. Thus, you rejoice over a happy dream and lament on a sad or scary dream. Then why not the whole life being just a dream, including your reading of this text?!

Let me explain myself with a personal experience. Some years ago, I left my hometown Isfahan to live in Sydney where I'm still living. As I had missed my parents and relatives, it happened that I would often dream of being with them. I would wake up realizing that it was all a dream. Once when I was dreaming, I said to myself I know it's a dream again. To make sure I am not dreaming, I splashed some water on my face. I washed it thoroughly and made sure this time I'm conscious and awake. "It is real this time" I said to myself.

Guess what? Yes, when all of the sudden I woke up, I realized, this was yet another dream!

As my purpose in this chapter is to make you aware of how important the question of existence is, allow me to brief you on the historical background to this question.

Ancient Sophism

Sophism⁴ means a spacious and fallacious argument for deceiving someone, it is a clever deceit.

As far as western philosophy is concerned, sophism is perhaps the most ancient Greek belief. Sophism was born in ancient Greece over 2400 years ago. Sophists believed that nothing exists, and if anything does exist it is inapprehensible by man and we have no access to know about it, and even if it were apprehensible it would be incommunicable and as such we can not define or describe it to others.

These roving teachers of rhetoric were seriously wounded by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle's crushing criticism. In fact, philosophy and logic were founded as a response to sophism.

Hard Skepticism

After the demise of Aristotle, Skepticism was founded by a Greek philosopher called Pyrrho. He taught that every object of human knowledge involves uncertainty. Thus, he argued that it is impossible ever to arrive at the knowledge of truth.

It is related that he acted on his own principles to such an extreme that his friends were obliged to accompany him wherever he went, so he might not be run over by carriages or fall from a cliff.

According to Hard Skepticism, things are only known to us by how they appear, and their inner substance remains unknown. The diversity of opinion among the wise, as well as the vulgar, proves this. Therefore, we ought never to make any positive statements on any subject.

Pyrrhonists suggest that we should never say “it is so”, rather we should say “it seems so”, or “it appears so to me”.

Illusion & Delusion

Both illusion and delusion are against reality, with the difference that illusion is something that is caused by outside influence, but delusion is caused by one's feelings. A mirage for example is an optical illusion, whereas schizophrenia is a delusion. All false beliefs are examples of delusions.

Examples of Illusion & Delusion

They sometimes supported their opinion by numerous examples of various optical illusions such as: mirage, looming, seeing sparkling stars around when you all of a sudden stand up from a sitting position, as well as other types of illusions of length, shape, touch, temperature, etc. on the one hand, and the numbers of false reasoning and arguments on the other. The only conclusion we can arrive at is that all so-called human opinions are delusions caused by illusions. The followings are just some examples of many false reasoning:

1)

Water is fluid (flowing).

Ice is from water.

☒ *Ice is fluid!*

The conclusion is invalid, though the premises are valid.

2)

That dog is a father.

That dog is his.

That dog is his father!

The conclusion is again obviously invalid, in spite of validity of the premises.

3)

An Aussie says:

“All Aussies are liars!”

Is he telling the truth or is it false?

4)

All dogs are mammals.

All cats are mammals.

All dogs are cats!

I may end this chapter with the first part of the simile of the cave presented by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato.

Please read the simile carefully– and if necessary, more than once, try to imagine yourself as one of the prisoners and then see how you could assure yourself that the world you are living in is not a mere illusion. Make sure you have thought enough about the issues raised in this chapter before we solve the puzzle in the coming chapters.

The Simile Of The Cave

‘I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or ignorance of our human conditions somewhat as follows. Imagine an underground chamber, like a cave with an entrance open to the daylight and running a long way underground. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Behind them and above them a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen on puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show the puppets’.

‘I see.’

‘Imagine further that there are men carrying all sorts of gear along behind the curtain-wall, including figures of men and animals made of wood and stone and other materials, and that some of these men,

as is natural, are talking and some not.'

'An odd picture and an odd sort of prisoner.'

'They are drawn from life,' I replied. 'For, tell me, do you think our prisoners could see anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them?'

'How could they see anything else if they were prevented from moving their heads all their lives?'

'And would they see anything more of the objects carried along the road?'

'Of course not.'

'Then if they were able to talk to each other, would they not assume that the shadows they saw were real things?'

'Inevitably.'

'And if the wall of their prison opposite them reflected sound, don't you think that they would suppose, whenever one of the passers-by on the road spoke, that the voice belonged to the shadow passing before them?'

'They would be bound to think so.'

'And so, they would believe that the shadows of the objects we mentioned were in all respects real?'

'Yes, inevitably.'

'Then think what would naturally happen to them if they were released from their bonds and cured of their delusions. Suppose one of them were let loose, and suddenly compelled to stand up and turn his head and look and walk towards the fire, all these actions would be painful and he would be too puzzled to see properly the objects of which he used to see the shadows. So if he was told that what he used to see was mere illusion and that he was now nearer reality and seeing more correctly, because he was turned towards objects that were more real, and if on top of that he were compelled to say what each of the passing objects was when it was pointed out to him, don't you think he would be at a loss, and think that what he used to see was more real than the objects now being pointed out to him?'

'Much more real.'

'And if he were made to look directly at the light of the fire, it would hurt his eyes and he would turn back and take refuge in the things which he could see, which he would think really far clearer than the things being shown him.'

'Yes.'

'And if,' I went on, 'he were forcibly dragged up the steep and rocky ascent and not let go till he had been dragged out into the sunlight, the process would be a painful one, to which he would much object, and when he emerged into the light his eyes would be so overwhelmed by the brightness of it that he wouldn't be able to see a single one of the things he was now told were real.'

Certainly not at first,' he agreed.'

'Because he would need to grow accustomed to the light before he could see things in the world outside the cave. First, he would find it easiest to look at shadows, next at the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the objects themselves. After that he would find it easier to observe the heavenly bodies and the sky at night than by day, and to look at the light of the moon and stars, rather than at the sun and its light.'

'Of course.'

'The thing he would be able to do last would be to look directly at the sun and observe its nature without using reflections in water or any other medium, but just as it is.'

'That must come last.'

'Later on, he would come to the conclusion that it is the sun that produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world and is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see.'

'That is the conclusion which he would obviously reach.'

'And when he thought of his first home and what passed for wisdom there, and of his fellow-prisoners, don't you think he would congratulate himself on his good fortune and be sorry for them?'

'Very much so.'

'There was probably a certain amount of honour and glory to be won among the prisoners, and prizes for keen-sightedness for anyone who could remember the order of sequence among the passing shadows and so be best able to predict their future appearances. Will our released prisoner hanker after these prizes or envy this power or honour? Won't he be more likely to feel, as Homer says, that he would far rather be "a serf in the house of a landless man", or indeed anything else in the world, than live and think as they do?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'he would prefer anything to a life like theirs.'

'Then what do you think would happen,' I asked, 'if he went back to sit in his old seat in the cave? Wouldn't his eyes be blinded by the darkness, because he had come in suddenly out of the daylight?'

‘Certainly.’

‘And if he had to discriminate between the shadows, in competition with the other prisoners, while he was still blinded and before his eyes got used to the darkness – a process that might take some time – wouldn’t he be likely to make a fool of himself? And they would say that his visit to the upper world had ruined his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting. And if anyone tried to release them and lead them up, they would kill him if they could lay hands on him.’

‘They certainly would.’

‘Now, my dear Glaucon⁵,’ I went on, ‘this simile must be connected, throughout, with what preceded it.

¹. Mishkat ul-Anwar, p. 544. Bihar al-Anwar; chap. 71, p. 352.

². Warram, Tanbihul-Khawater, vol. 1 p. 150

³. Nickolson, Vol.1, V.71

⁴. Obviously we should not mixed up 'Sophism' with 'Sufism' which is an Englized Arabic term and refers to a mystical system of the Sufis (literally those who wear woolen garments).

⁵. Plato’s older brother.

Chapter 2: Living Awake

Further into the Night

To create Light!

In the previous chapter I played a devil’s advocate by presenting a very skeptical sophist approach. We even ended up doubting our own real existence and assumed our life is but a long dream!

In this chapter I endeavour to prove that your reading of this text is not a dream! I am real and you are really reading something in a real external world. From this chapter onward, we establish a framework for what we can know beyond a shadow of any doubt.

The history of science has shown many scholars who came across ‘the dreaming argument’, but only those with methodological skepticism discovered the truth and certainty.

1. Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali (also known as Algazel in the west); the most famous Iranian Muslim Sufi of the mid 11th and the early 12th century C.E. is a Muslim example of this intellectual journey in search for truth. He was honored by his appointment as a Professor at the **Nizamiyah University** of Baghdad, which was recognized as one of the most reputable institutions of learning in the golden era of Muslim history.

After a few years, however, at the age of 53 he gave up his academic pursuits and worldly interests in

search for truth. This was a process of his mystical transformation and occupied about 10 years of his life.

In his book *“The Rescuer from Delusion”* (Al-Monqeth Menal-Dhalal) which is his account of his spiritual journey in search for truth, he states that his journey began with doubting all his sensible and rational knowledge.

He writes: “I could not convince myself that the whole life in this world is not a mere dream. Is it not that the Prophet (of Islam) has said: *“People are asleep, they wake up only when they die.”*? Therefore, what would guarantee that we are not sleepwalkers!

The dreaming argument so much puzzled al-Ghazali that he was bedridden for two months and, according to his autobiography, after three days of seclusion (*I'tekaaf*) in the minaret of Damascus Mosque, his heart was illuminated by a divine light beyond any rationality.^{[1](#)}

2. René Descartes

René Descartes was a French philosopher and mathematician of the 17th century. He is sometimes called the father of modern philosophy. Descartes is the most famous western philosopher who was also tussled with ‘the dreaming argument’.

In his ‘Meditations on First philosophy’ Descartes began an intellectual journey. In his quest for truth he determined to hold nothing true until he had established grounds for believing it to be true. Descartes reviewed all his knowledge from sensible and perceptible to rational and traditional sciences. The ‘dreaming argument’ and skeptical view on existence led him to invalidate all his knowledge.

Descartes’ knowledge platforms from sensible to rational collapsed and he was left in suspense in the ocean of doubts and uncertainty. As he was sinking in his whirlpool of doubt, he realized that whatever he doubts, he cannot doubt his doubt. He said to himself: “I doubt myself, my senses, my mind, the world around me and even God, but I cannot doubt that I doubt.”

“I Think, Therefore I Am!”

He immediately concluded that if I doubt, therefore must be (to be able to doubt).

From this single sure fact which was expressed by him in the famous words Cogito, ergo sum, “I think, therefore I am”, he managed to build his certainty.

Here is Descartes’s argument in a logical order:

I certainly doubt.

Doubting is a thinking function.

Therefore, I am a thinking thing.

If it's true that I think, it must be also true that I exist.

I certainly think, therefore, I certainly exist.

Avicenna V's Descartes

Descartes's famous saying is one of the most famous philosophical statements in western philosophy, although both Muslim and western philosophers have challenged his argument. In the following, I only raise and address the most famous rebuttal against him presented by Avicenna.

Abu 'Ali al-Husain Ibn 'Abd-Allah Ibn Hasan Ibn 'Ali Ibn Sina, (which was Europeanized into Avicenna), the genius Iranian Muslim philosopher, mathematician and physician of the late 10th and early 11th Century C.E. has discovered the fallacy of Descartes' famous words of "I think, therefore I am", more than six centuries before the birth of Descartes.

In the third section of his book "Hints & Notices" (*Al-Esharat Wa Tanbeehat*) he argues:

"If anyone claims that 'he thinks therefore he exists', he has fallen into a vicious circle. Because, he is trying to prove his own existence by the means of his own thought. In other words, to accept that you think or you doubt, you already need to have accepted 'you' exist, which is exactly the actual claim."

Therefore, the expression of '*I think, therefore I am*' is not the first platform of knowledge.

The fallacy of Descartes' so-called single sure fact can be discovered by the means of propositional logic utilizing the truth-table method.

The meaning of Descartes' statement in a logical structure is:

All those who think exist.

I think.

I exist.

The fallacy of his theorem is that before admitting his thinking, he needs to admit the existence and accuracy of the self-evident arguments of formal logic.

According to the above rebuttal, Descartes' analogy leads to a number of philosophical flaws as follows:

- My existence stems from my thoughts! [False]
- My thoughts exist prior to my existence! [False]

- If that is the case, then my thoughts are independent from my existence. For a priori existent does not depend in its existence on a posterior existent. [False]
- This is an obvious flaw, for unless you exist, your thinking cannot exist.
- I exist in my thoughts, which means again there is no external world beyond my thoughts!
- Therefore, Descartes' analogy is self-destructive and leads again to the dreaming argument!

Refuting The Rebut

Refuting The Rebut²

The above rebut is based on the assumption that Descartes assumed his thinking exists prior to his own existence, whereas what he actually means is 'if a being thinks, then he must already exist.' Therefore, by his proposition 'I think therefore I exist', he actually means its inverse proposition which is 'my thinking must be based on my prior existence'. This is similar to proving the existence of the Creator by His creation. Obviously, unless there is a creator there cannot be a creation, so how can we prove the existence of the Creator by His creation! This type of argument is called in logic 'demonstration through effect' and is very commonly used in science. For example, a fever indicates there is an infection in the body.

In other words, if you find Descartes' argument convincing, good enough but if you are not convinced with this his argument that's even better! Why? Because that proves you are a 'persuading being' which means you cannot be nothing! Because you are thinking and no matter what you think about, the one who thinks is a thinking '**being**' or as Descartes argument implies 'unless you exist you could not think'.

Further into the Light

Besides Descartes' argument there are many other ways to refute the dreaming argument. Follow me to take you further into the light of reality.

A Self-Destructive Argument

The skeptical argument aims at disproving our existence. They don't realize that their argument is self-destructive. In order for the skeptic view to have any share of truth, there has to be a real world, but they deny any real world. So, we simply ask a skeptic; 'Do you really exist'? Surely, a skeptic's answer is negative. Then if you don't exist, then neither does your skeptical view! **Problem solved!**

The same argument could be posed against 'the dreaming argument'. In order for you to dream you must be an existing being to fall asleep and then dream.

If V's If

There is another fallacy in sophists argument. Sophists have no proof against the existence of reality. They only cast doubt and accuse you that you can't be sure that you exist. Well, you can also in return cast a doubt on their doubt and rebut their 'if' by an opposite 'if'.

They argue that 'you don't know IF you are dreaming'. In return you also argue that 'you don't know IF you are not dreaming'. In a battle between the two 'ifs', the burden of proof rests on the one whose claim stands against common-sense, i.e. skeptics. There is no way a skeptic can prove we are dreaming. All they could do is to doubt it.

Skeptical View Is Fallacious

Let's put the skeptical view in a logical scale to examine the validity of their argument. Their claim is there is no such thing as an objective reality. Their only reason is some distortions of the senses known as illusions.

In a logical sense this means: Some As equal Bs. Therefore, all As equal Bs!

You can now easily see the fallacy of their argument. Just because our brain sometimes misinterprets sensory stimulation, it does not conclude that it always does the same. Besides, even illusions indicate that there is an external world beyond us although our brain has misinterpreted it.

Dreams And Illusions Are Indirect Proofs For A Real Life

Skeptics refer to dreams and illusions to doubt the real existence, whereas they are actually among the proofs for the existence of a real world!

Dreams: the fact that you know you had a dream shows that you have already experienced the real world which, in comparison, you named the one opposite to a 'dreaming world'!

Illusions: Similarly, the fact that we know that there are many optical as well as other types of illusions is enough to prove that there must be a real sight that in comparison, we conclude to be illusions.

Indeed, without having any instinctive and real measurement, how would it be possible for us to distinguish truth from falsehood?!

Have you ever seen anyone forging a \$15 note?! Simply because there is none in reality to counterfeit from. Hence, contrary to sophists' fallacy, we may say all dreams and illusions are indirect proofs of the real world around us.

The fact that we make mistakes in some of our thinking or sighting does not denounce the validity of all our knowledge. In fact, the role of the various types of science from philosophy, logic to physical

sciences is to help us realise those mistakes.

Skeptics also argued that whatever you have accepted until now as mostly true has come to you through your senses. But occasionally you have found that your senses have deceived you, and hence it is unwise to completely trust those who have deceived us even once.

We simply refute their argument in that we don't completely trust our senses. In fact, we know when to trust and when not to.

For instance, we all know the physical explanation of why and how a mirage happens or why a stick looks broken in the water by an optical law of refraction.

SWS V's REM

Another fallacy in the skeptics' argument is the assumption of similarity between 'sleeping' and 'dreaming'.

According to sleep scientists, our brain generates two main types of sleep when we are asleep; Slow Wave Sleep (SWS), and Rapid Eye Movement (REM). About 80% of our sleeping is of the SWS type which is characterized by brain waves, relaxed muscles and slow deep breathing. This is our deep sleep during which we regenerate our energy.

The second part of our sleeping accounts for REM which is only 20% of our sleeping time during which the length of our dreams can vary from a few seconds to closer to an hour. So, we only dream during the REM. What about the remaining 80% of our sleeping time that goes without dreaming?!

Scientific Differences Between Awake And Asleep

There are numbers of differences between people who are awake and those asleep:

- Physical responses and sensitivity to pain: when you are asleep, your brain won't have any activity to detecting similar sounds. For example, your mum and sister are talking softly in your bedroom while you are asleep. You would only hear them if you were awake.
- Learning ability: When your physical senses are asleep, your learning ability reduces to nothing. You only learn when you are awake.
- Consciousness and unconsciousness: One of the major differences between our state of wakefulness and sleep is when asleep, we are in the state of unconsciousness. Thus, when you're awake, you know you're awake, but when you aren't, you don't know that you aren't.

Axiom (Self-Evident Knowledge)

An Axiom or a postulate in mathematics and logic is a statement that is taken to be true, to serve as a starting point for further reasoning. It literally means 'that which commends itself as evident'. Hence an axiom is a 'self-evident knowledge' upon which all other types of knowledge are built. For example, in mathematics, $2+3=3+2$ is an axiom which needs no proof. Similarly, the statement: 'if equals are added to equals, the wholes are equal', is an example of what is self-evident knowledge.

In order for us to truly answer the question of our existence or any other question about the existing world, we need to know the fundamental human source of knowledge.

All intellectual humans, eastern or western, contemporary or ancient, with the exception of sophists, agree that human knowledge is divided into two categories:

Self-Evident Knowledge: Axiom

Non-Self-Evident Knowledge: Theorem

Axiom or Self-evident knowledge is instilled in our nature and is something we are born with. It is a type of knowledge that all healthy humans enjoy and hence is called 'common-sense', meaning a sense that is common among all humans irrespectively. It is a type of knowledge that we accept as true without proof or reasoning. Further, the validity of any other knowledge is scaled by it and its validity does not require any proof, or else this would lead to a vicious circle or infinite series of evidence!

Even Descartes was actually rescued from the whirlpool of doubt by clinging onto his axiom. The examples of axiom are: "No sentence can be true or false at the same time." (the principle of contradiction); "If equals are added to equals, the sums are equal." "The whole is greater than any of its parts."

The most certain human knowledge is mathematics, and pure mathematics begins with axioms from which other theorems are driven. This process is necessary to avoid circularity, or an infinite regression in reasoning, and as such it is impossible to provide any proof for them.

Axiom is called 'self-evident truth' for it does not need any analysis, rather it is the bottom line and foundation for all types of human analysis and acquired knowledge. All what it needs is attention, mental health, and lack of fallacy.

Non-self-evident knowledge is a type of knowledge which needs thinking and reasoning, like algebraic equations and many other types of human knowledge.

Common sense is our starting point. The existence of the external world is self-evident and fits with our instinctive beliefs. Rejecting the external existence is inconsistency with our instinctive beliefs.

The axiom is like a computer ROM (Read Only Memory). In order for you to run your PC, your PC needs to have an operating system by which the computer can run. The operating system is what the manufacturer installs in your computer and you are advised not to delete it from your machine, or you cannot run any other application.

The self-evident knowledge, specially the '*impossibility of the conjunction of contradictories*' (the law of contradiction), is the very fundamental human platform for obtaining knowledge without which no human knowledge– even the sophists' claims– would be possible. I will provide you with more explanation in reply to the fallacies of the sophists and skeptics.

If you still find the above explanation a bit too obscure, let me put it like this:

Consider this theorem:

All Australians are mortal. We evaluate the truth of this sentence in the following manner:

1)

–All Humans are mortal.

–All Australians are humans.

All Australians are mortal.

The validity of the first premise is also known from another theorem above that which is:

2)

– All animals are mortal.

–All humans are animals.

All humans are mortal.

Similarly, the validity of the first theorem is also known from another theorem above that which is:

3)

All living creatures are mortal.

All animals are living creatures.

All animals are mortal.

The ladder of theorems will continue until you end up at a premise which is self-evident that you do not need any proof for it, or else it will be a vicious circle or infinite series of theorems both of which are

impossible.[3](#)

The Almighty God very often refers man to his gifted self-evident knowledge to prove God's existence to him. God invites us to the notion of belief in Him by simply posing rhetorical questions such as: "where they created by nothing? Or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth?"(The Holy Qur'an 52:35–36)

Similarly, when the idolaters asked Prophet Ibrahim (S) if he had broken their idols, he referred them to their common sense by saying: "Nay, this one; the biggest of them (idols) did it. Ask them if they can speak"! So simply he made them realize their false belief. Hence, they shamefully said:

"Indeed you know well that these idols speak not!"(Holy Quran, 21:62–64)

Instinct Knowledge Is What We Are Born With

When we study the biography of most skeptics or sophists, we find that none of them were actually born sophists– believing that nothing exists or if it exists it is not apprehensible, otherwise they wouldn't have sucked the milk from their mothers' breasts!

Have you ever heard or seen any sophist cry when its time to laugh, or uses his hand to watch something with, or hear a voice with his eyes?! Yes, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it is narrated that Pyrrho acted on his own principles to such an extent, that his friends were obliged to accompany him wherever he went, so he might not be run over by carriages or fall down from a cliff! Hence, sophism is madness!

Even if we accept the validity of the narration, on the principle of 'uncertainty', one could have asked Mr. Pyrrho what would guarantee that his friends would be able to save him? What would ascertain him that there is a real carriage to be run by?!

Thus, the fallacy of the sophists arguments is obvious and no doubt all the sophists are realists in their practical life. I would dare any sophist jump down from a cliff if there is no certainty or real life! At the end of the day its only a dream, there is no reality. Don't worry you won't die in real!

As soon as sophists express their opinion, they have unconsciously admitted that they have tongue to talk with, there is someone around them to talk to, and there is a means of communication. These obvious facts are against the so-called principles of the sophists.

Answers To The Logical Fallacies

Formal logic was founded by Aristotle to form a mathematical basis to discover the fallacy of the sophists' theorems. The fallacy of all the examples mentioned and many other such fallacies can be easily discovered by a logician.

In the following I will just show you the fallacy of the first example cited before and leave the rest to your interest in logic. But before that remember again, that the fact that you could instinctively tell that those theorems were false (though you couldn't explain it why) is another proof for instinct self-evident knowledge.

In the first example, a sophist fooled us by the means of a conjunction only. Let us revise the theorem again:

Water is fluid (flowing).

Ice is from water.

☞ *Ice is fluid!*

The fallacy of the theorem is easily discovered when the conjunction 'from' is highlighted in a different colour. Obviously, ice is not water to apply all the characteristics of water on it, rather it is from water.

Let me show you the fallacy of the theorem in a very clear mathematical way:

All A = B

Some C = A

All C = B

Now it's obvious that the theorem is a mere fallacy and there is not truth in it. As a matter of fact, if there were no reality and there was no self-evident knowledge within each and every human, do you think you would be able to unveil the falsehood?

People Are Asleep!

Finally, the meaning of the famous narration 'people are asleep they only wake up when they die' and subsequent to that, the Rumi's poems, are alien to the sceptical view of the world. 'Sleeping' in this narration is an expression for 'heedlessness from their real prosperity' due to their indulgence in corporeal affairs.

It is interesting to note that the above-mentioned narration is engraved on a gravestone of the late Annemarie Schimmel; the famous German orientalist who died in 2003 in Germany!

- [1.](#) By quoting the likes of al-Ghazali and Descartes I do not obviously mean that I condon all their thoughts and opinons.
- [2.](#) To rebut means to try to prove something isn't true, but to refute means to actually prove it isn't.
- [3.](#) Immanuel Kant: Prolegomena to Any future Metaphysics, Section 45

Chapter 3: Tools of Knowledge 1

*“And among His Signs is the creation
Of the heavens and the earth, and the
Difference of your languages and colours
Verily, in that are indeed Signs for men of
Sound knowledge.”
(The Holy Quran 30:22)*

Now that we acknowledged our existence as well as the world around us, the next step in quest for truth is to discover different types of human knowledge as the means between us– the knower– and the known objects. What happens during the process of learning? And what are the scopes of human knowledge?

The branch of philosophy that deals with the nature, source, limits, validity of knowledge and in short deals with ‘theories of knowledge’ is called Epistemology. So, get ready for some epistemological massage!

Significance Of Seeking Knowledge In Islam

Undoubtedly Islam has given great importance to the process of seeking knowledge. Islam began with ‘read’ (The Holy Qur’an 96: 1). God takes an oath by ‘pen’ and ‘all that is used for writing’ (68: 1). The Almighty God in almost every page of our scripture encourages people to learn, admires the learned people and promises them elevated status in this world and the next insofar as their knowledge is associated with faith.

Islam makes it a religious duty upon Muslims to seek knowledge, and regards a seeker of knowledge to be higher in status than one who has secluded himself for worshipping God.

Therefore, studying the tools and the types of knowledge available to us is also of great significance.

Categories Of Knowledge

Depending on our approach, we can find various types of human knowledge. In this study I only mention two categories of human knowledge:

First Category: Priori V Posteriori Knowledge

A priori literally means ‘from before’, or ‘from earlier’. For example, how do you know that a part is smaller than its total? Priori knowledge is what we referred to in the previous chapter as ‘self-evident

knowledge’ – a kind of knowledge that is axiomatic and hence accepted by all healthy humans as ‘common-sense’. This is a knowledge that we are born with and its our starting capital for learning.

Posteriori literally means ‘from what comes later’, or ‘from what comes after’. This is a knowledge obtained through reasoning. A great portion of human knowledge falls under the category of posteriori knowledge.

One of the main differences between priori knowledge and the posteriori is that unlike the posteriori, you do not require to provide any proof or evidence for the validity of priori knowledge. Priori knowledge is an obvious fact by any sound person admitting which requires no more than attention and comprehension.

Second Category: Knowledge By Presence V Knowledge By Concept

Another category of human knowledge is in relation to utilizing tools for learning.

Knowledge by presence is the knowledge of the knower about himself/herself directly through a kind of cognition without any external means. In this kind of knowledge, the knower and the known are identical, and the object is *present* to the subject. Example of knowledge by presence is your knowledge about yourself, your feelings, your emotions, things you like or dislike and so on and so forth.

Knowledge by concept or famously known as ‘acquired knowledge’ is knowledge obtained from external resources. For example, your knowledge about information in this chapter is acquired knowledge. Unlike the knowledge by presence, in acquired knowledge, the knower and the known are different and there is always a means in between which links the known to the knower. Most types of human knowledge are acquired knowledge and hence it needs more explanation.

Definition Of Knowledge

Imagine a picture of a natural scene. The size of the picture is 10 X 15 cm. In the picture you see a landscape that you know is about 5 square kilometers surrounded by tall and snowy mountains. A river with an approximate width of 50 meters is crossing the middle of the view. At the shore of the river from both sides you observe tall pine trees lined up. And I can continue describing the details of the picture.

Now, if your friend asks you if the picture you have at hand consists of all the length, width, the depth and all physical characteristics of that landscape, what would you answer?

“Obviously not”, you will reply with no hesitation. “They won’t fit in such a small paper... what is really on the paper is some colourful spots. Yet, it is the image of the landscape.”

The function of our mind is similar to a camera, or a mirror which reflects the image of an object known to us.

Although knowledge does not need any definition, it is sometimes defined as:

“*The presence of the image of an object in mind.*”[al-Modhaffar: Al-mantiq] Therefore, knowledge is the bridge of converting an external real object– as it is– to its true reflection in mind.

Differences Between Mind And Mirror

In spite of similarities between the function of a human mind and that of a mirror, there are at least five differences which characterize the function of mind:

Reflection of meaning: Mirror can reflect solely optical images. In other words, if a man is standing against a mirror, it will show his body shape, colour and size. The mirror under no circumstances reflects his knowledge, feeling, hate or love. By contrast, the mind can reflect not only the sensible objects but the emotions and feelings too.

No correction power: If a mirror is concave it magnifies the image and shows the object bigger than its real size, and smaller if it is convex. The mirror has no power of knowing its mistakes nor to correct them. Whereas, human mind can discover its illusions and it is also able to correct them explaining why and how the illusions and delusions may occur.⁴

Self-reflecting: no mirror in the world can reflect its own image to itself, whereas the mind is capable of reflecting other images as well as its own. In fact, its self-reflection is by far more accurate, a phenomenon we called earlier ‘knowledge by presence’.

Generalization: A mirror would only reflect the objects placed right against it. It has no power of reflecting any other objects around it. Whereas, human mind reflects the sighted objects and is also capable of generalizing them to numerous similar objects, applying the same rules equally to all of them. All scientific laws are obtained by this characteristic.

Multiplication: A mirror would only reflect the object in front of it. It cannot convert the reflected object to another mirror to reflect another object. By contrast, our mind is able to change a known object to another reflective object reflecting the reality of a third known object. This is called a ‘*Sign Knowledge*’, which will be explained later in this chapter.

Ignorance And Its Types

Before we proceed any further to discover the sources of human knowledge, let me share with you the meanings of ignorance and its two famous types.

Definition of Ignorance

Ignorance by definition is: ‘*lack of a knowledge for the one who is able to obtain that knowledge.*’

Thus, a piece of wood or rock is not ignorant as they are not entitled to obtain knowledge, lack of which

makes them ignorant. Similarly, we don't call angels 'pious' because piety is abstinence from sinning for the one who is able to sin yet voluntarily does not. The angels are infallible – meaning unable to sin.

Types of Ignorance

You may study 'ignorance' from different perspectives and as such there are different types. Ignorance in general is divided into two types:

Simple Ignorance: This means a type of ignorance where a person is aware of his ignorance.

Compound Ignorance: A compound ignorance is an ignorance that the ignorant is not aware of his ignorance, thus it is the combination of two levels of ignorance; 1. about the truth, and 2. about the fact that he does not know the truth. The example of compound ignorance is optical illusions such as mirage.

The famous saying of Socrates "*Wisest is he who knows what he does not know*" refers to the first type of ignorance.

Tools Of Acquiring Knowledge

1) Sense Experience

Nature is the first human source of knowledge and our five traditional external senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste— as well as thermoception (temperature differences) and possibly magnetoception (direction) are the tools of accessing this source.

From the time we are born, we hear sounds around us, we see objects, we touch, taste and smell things and through each we gain some kind of knowledge accordingly.

Sense experiences are common tools of knowledge between humans and animals, with the difference being in the level of perception between the two. For instance, the sense of smell in dogs and ants is stronger than humans, as the navigation of a bat is stronger than humans. Dogs see colours in gray only, etc.

Sense perception is the first tools of obtaining knowledge to the extent that it is said in Arabic:

مَنْ فَقَدَ حِسًّا فَقَدَ عِلْمًا.

"One who misses a sense misses the knowledge (of it)."¹

Validity Of Sense Experience

There are different opinions among philosophers from the ancient times to the present about the validity

of our sense perception.

Plato, for instance, did not give much credit to nature as a source of knowledge. His reason being that the relation between humankind and the nature is in partial and incomplete, and a partial knowledge cannot bring any knowledge. He claimed that 'what we know by reason alone is superior to what we are aware of through sense experience.' (*Republic 479e–484c*)

Descartes and Kant also hold the idea that sense perception is good for daily experiences, yet they are not reliable tools for obtaining knowledge.

[This is in spite of the fact that when one of Descartes' friend asked him about his physics books, he took him into the lower courtyard at the back of his house, and showed him a calf that he planned to dissect the next day!²]

In contrast, empiricists assert that human knowledge arises from what is provided to the mind by the senses or by introspective awareness through experience. Therefore, we have no source of knowledge for the concepts we use other than sense experience.

John Locke, the English philosopher of the 18th and 19th centuries was the first to give its systematic expression to empiricism followed by George Berkeley and David Hume.

According to empiricism, sense experience is the only tool to feed human minds with knowledge. Thus, we can only understand what we can physically perceive. Even when you imagine a mountain of gold, although such mountain doesn't exist in the external world, you could only imagine it because you have already seen a 'mountain' and 'gold'. Your mind then combines the two sense perceptions into one object calling it 'a mountain of gold'. The same applies to perceived phoenix etc.

Positivists, such as French mathematician and philosopher Auguste Comte of the 19th century, developed the idea of empiricists and based their philosophy on experience and empirical knowledge of natural phenomena, in which metaphysics and theology are regarded as inadequate and imperfect systems of knowledge.

During the early 20th century a group of philosophers who were concerned with developments in modern science rejected the traditional positivist ideas that held personal experience to be the basis of true knowledge and emphasized the importance of scientific verification.

In short, the main proof of empiricists is that without sense perception we would have no knowledge about the world.

Characteristics Of Sense Perception

Individualist: The first characteristic of a sense perception is that it will be obtained individually. For instance, a child gradually knows about her mother, then father then the sibling and so on. She has no

idea about the general concept of 'humankind'.

Appearance: sense perception also shares with us the appearance of the objects. For instance, your eyes can only bring knowledge about colours, shape and size of an object. It cannot show us the depth and the nature of the things.

Present: Sense perception belongs only to the present time. It cannot show us the past or the future. In other words, you cannot observe the events prior to your birth. (Note that the movie of a past event is not the event itself.)

Regional: Sense perception is also limited by place. Humans and animals can obtain sensational knowledge of the area which is within their physical sight or their hearing area. For instance, as long as the sense perception is concerned, we have no sensory knowledge about the surface of planet moon, for you have no personal sensory experience about it.

Comments On Empiricism

Although we agree that sense experience is the first and foremost elementary tool of knowledge common amongst humans and animals, we do not limit the tools of human knowledge to the senses for the following reasons:

Senses can only show us the objects, and the relation between them is known by the means of rational thinking. For instance, our eyes can see the key and the lock, but the relation between them is known by the rational law of causality. In other words, no scientific law could be possibly obtained without any rational analysis attached to its relevant sense experience.

Some empiricists such as David Hume denied the law of causality, as it cannot be explained under the theory of empiricism! He explained that the relation between the key and the lock by what he calls 'mere association' which makes us believe that the relation is permanent.

Suffices to see the fallacy of his argument that all human knowledge is based on the fact that 'if A therefore B' including Hume's hypothesis or else, he cannot suggest a certain idea either. (pay attention!)

Moreover, so many natural phenomena come in association with each other such as day and night, pen and pencil, book and library, yet we never relate them to each other as the cause and effect!

Sense experience cannot deny the impossibility of an impossible. For example, sense experience cannot deny the existence of a triangle with four angles! Simply, because the sense has no access to experience it.

Mathematics is the most certain science, yet it is not experimental. In fact, many of its concepts cannot be experienced by senses. For example, there is no circle in the real world where the distance between

its perimeter to the center is exactly the same from everywhere.

2) Rational Perception

In the light of the above explanation, it is obvious that reasoning and rational analysis is our second necessary tool for obtaining knowledge. In addition to that, there are certain types of knowledge such as geometry, which is considered ideal for all sciences and philosophy, yet there are certain geometrical rules that are universally agreed on their certainty by the means of reason alone.

This fact has obliged some philosophers such as Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant to form the doctrine of Rationalism which emphasizes the unique role of reason in obtaining knowledge, in contrast to empiricism, which emphasized on the role of sense perception.

We believe, reasoning is the higher tool of obtaining knowledge and it distinguishes the realm of humans from the kingdom of animals.

Nonetheless, we disagree that reasoning is the sole tool for obtaining knowledge. In fact, the main problem of empiricists as well as rationalists is that each one tries to generalize a tool beyond its own world. Empiricists are correct in that most of natural knowledge cannot be obtained without enjoying the sense experience. As it is impossible to explain to a born blind the difference between different colours. Thus, it amazes us to learn that Beethoven; one of the greatest musicians of all time, had lost the sense that he would have relied on the most; i.e. his sense of hearing. Notwithstanding that he was not born deaf and even so, his performance drastically dropped in his Ninth Symphony!

Therefore, there is no need for conflict between rationalism and empiricism. Both are relatively correct, each in their own areas. We can well be rationalists in mathematics for example, but empiricists in medicine.

The Holy Qur'an in numerous occasions refers mankind to physical objects including his own creation by God to discover the Creator. The followings are only a few examples:

“Do they not look at the camels, how they are created? And at the heaven, how it is raised? And at the mountains, how they are rooted and fixed firm? And the earth, how it is spread out?”(88: 17-20)

The Holy Qur'an consists of 114 Surah (Chapter). God in 104 Surahs speaks about geology!

Monotheism and Eschatology are the most important topics in the Qur'an. The Almighty God very often refers us to nature to prove both concepts.

At the same time, the Holy Qur'an repeatedly refers us to our intellect, praises those who ponder and reflect and reproaches those who do not use their faculty of mind.

The first and the foremost Chapter in our most important book of narrations, al-Kaafi, is about the significance of intellect to the extent that 'people of no rationality are regarded as faithless people'.

On a final note, the Holy Qur'an refers to the people of Hell as those who did not utilize their sense experience or rationality to belief in God:

"Had we but listened (used our sense of hearing), or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing Fire.!"(67: 10)

3) Sign

As mentioned earlier, one of the differences between mind and mirror is that unlike a mirror our mind has the ability for 'multiplication' to produce a type of knowledge we referred to as 'Sign or Indicative Knowledge'.

For example, you attend a lecture and feel very impressed by the information and analysis provided by the lecturer. The next day during your conversation with a friend you tell him about 'the learned' scholar. If he asks, 'how would you know about his knowledge?' You will reply: 'from his presentation and analogies'. That means his presentation indicated his knowledge or was a convincing sign for his knowledge.

Dinosaurs no longer exist, and you have never seen them. Yet you trust scientists' claim that those animals used to live on our planet some million years ago, because of the 'convincing signs'.

There are so many galaxies in the universe that we can't even count them. Yet, you trust astronomers and believe in their existence, because of 'convincing signs'. Your child medical examination shows her body temperature is above its normal range (37C). A high temperature indicates she has fever. Her fever indicates she has an infection. It is 100% correct for your GP to assert your baby has an infection although he has not seen the fever. Why? Because of 'convincing signs'

The Holy Qur'an refers to this tool as 'Ayah' (Sign) and regards every single creation of God a 'Sign' indicating and glorifying its Creator. Even the tongue of an atheist whilst speaking 'against the existence of God' is glorifying its Creator!

The Holy Qur'an uses the same term 'Ayah' (Sign) for 'miracle'. That means every creature is a miracle in its unique creation indicating its Creator. Thus, not only every sentence of the Qur'an but even every Word of it is called 'Ayah' (Sign). Not only every creation but also every single cell of it is a Sign and a miracle indicating their Creator.

The contemporary Iranian Muslim philosopher; Martyr Mutahhari is perhaps the first who has discovered this as a tool for human knowledge.

According to Mutahhari and other Muslim philosophers “epistemologically there is no difference between knowing about Napoleon Bonaparte and knowing God in that we people of 21st century have not eye witnessed any of them, yet it is correct to say I believe in both of them through indicating signs.”

Therefore, as we know about Napoleon by the means of some convincing historical signs affirming he was a French military leader in the earth 19th Century, similarly we know about the existence of God by the means of numerous convincing natural, rational and many other signs glorifying His existence.

In fact, a closer attention to the ‘tool of Sign’ indicates that most of human knowledge is obtained through this tool. Thus, to arrive at any information you must follow its signs. The entire creation is full of ‘signs’ that God has inscribed as numerous paths to find the Creator. It is just the matter of reading the inscription He has written for you.

Therefore, the one who is limiting his knowledge to whatever he may experience by his surgical knife has already closed his eyes to a great portion of human knowledge.

As much as ‘Sign Knowledge’ is very common and in most instances is regarded a convincing proof begetting ‘faith’, it has its disadvantages too. For example, in the above-mentioned examples, we assumed that fever is a definite symptom for ‘infection’, whereas we know that fever may have caused as a side effect of certain medications, or due to the use of illicit drugs and many other causes.

Also, a ‘sign knowledge’ is a knowledge through intermediaries which may or may not have mirrored the whole truth.

The good news is man can possibly obtain higher levels of knowledge; a knowledge without any intermediaries. Follow me in the next chapter to a very eye-opening discovery of human knowledge.

[1.](#) This expression will be also useful for the next chapter where we prove that those who miss purity of heart miss types of knowledge obtained by it.

[2.](#) Desmond M. Clarke, ‘Descartes: A Biography’, P.304

Chapter 4: Tools of Knowledge 2

“If each had a candle, their differences would disappear.”

Rumi

The Parable Of The Elephant In The Dark!

Rumi, the renown mystic of the 7th century AH (13th AD) has narrated an old Indian tale known as ‘the parable of the blind men and an elephant’. With a slight change in the narration, Rumi calls it ‘the

elephant in the dark'. According to Rumi's narration, a number of men who had never seen an elephant touched and felt the elephant in a dark room. As sight experience was not possible, they used their sense of touch instead. Each one touched different parts of the elephant and described his sense experience accordingly. The one who had touched its trunk believed that an elephant looks like a downpipe. The one who had touched its ears thought an elephant looks like a fan. The one who had touched the legs said it looks like a pillar...

Rumi uses this parable to show man's limited acquired knowledge. He then concluded: "If each had a candle their differences would disappear."¹

In this chapter we will learn about 'the candle of light' that the Creator has instilled within us. The challenge is however how to kindle² this candle.

Self-Purification

When you hear about purification, your initial thought may go to water purification, air purification and things like that. You may wonder what self-purification is all about? How are we supposed to purify ourselves? And how can self-purification grant us knowledge?!

Definition

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the human mind is like a mirror which, by reflecting objects, inform us about them. In spite of the differences between the mind and the mirror– as discussed in the previous chapter– there are some similarities between the two.

Of the similarities of mind and mirror is that the accuracy and the power of reflection of both of them can be affected by external and internal obstacles; thus, the dustier a mirror, the less reflective. Similarly, a human mind can be affected–whether totally or partially–by obstacles relevant to it. For instance, prejudice is a mind obstacle clouding the mind against a particular truth.

Rumi, in the First Book of Mathnavi gives an allegorical example about self-purification. He narrates a competition between some Chinese and Roman artists to create a masterpiece in painting. Two houses opposite to each other were given to them to paint. Chinese painters demanded a long list of materials but finally created a magnificent painting. Surprisingly, the Romans did not ask for any material, yet surprisingly they also created a masterpiece! All they did was to polish the walls of the house as much as they could. On the exhibition day the competing groups unveiled their masterpieces. Amazingly, whatever design could be seen in the Chinese house, the same, and even brighter could be observed in the Romans as well.

Rumi from this allegorical example concludes that the real house is the heart of a human and Romans are those who purify themselves and their souls.

Self-purification therefore means polishing the soul against any ‘dust’ and ‘rust’ as obstructive elements in search for truth. Thus, the Arabic term used in the Qur’an for a ‘disbeliever’ is ‘*Kafir*’ which literally means ‘the one who knowingly and deliberately conceals the truth’.

A knowledge gained through self-purification is not only well acknowledged in Islam, it is regarded as the most sublime human knowledge without which all sensory and rational perceptions are in vain.

It is an indisputable Islamic fact that as the Almighty God has granted us sense experiences to know the physical world, He has also bestowed upon us spiritual senses to discover the metaphysical world. It is narrated from Imam Sajjad (S): “Lo and behold! A slave of God is granted four eyes; two of which are to see and manage his worldly as well as hereafterly affairs, and the other two to manage his affairs of the hereafter. Then when God wills to prosper a slave, He will open the two eyes of his heart to vision the unseen and the affairs of his hereafter.”^{[3](#)}

As discussed in ‘practical mysticism’, certain types of human knowledge will be gained solely by the means of self-purification. It is narrated from the Holy Prophet (S):

«الْعِلْمُ نُورٌ يَقْذِفُهُ اللَّهُ فِي قَلْبِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ.» (مصباح الشريعة، ص 16)

“Knowledge is a light that Allah casts into the heart of whoever He wills.”^{[4](#)}

Therefore, the general rule of ‘whoever loses a sense loses its knowledge’ similarly applies to spiritual senses. Without self-purification knowledge of the unseen is not attainable. Purify your soul and the knowledge of the unseen reflects on it.^{[5](#)}

Spectrum Of Self-Purification

Although the primary levels of self-purification are necessary to obtain all types of knowledge, the main spectrum of self-purification which is meant in this context can be observed in three realms:

1) Intuition

Intuition is a form of knowledge or of cognition independent of experience or reason. Intuitive faculty is therefore generally regarded as instinctive knowledge that we are born with. The mathematical idea of an axiom (a self-evident proposition) as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as human instincts are the best examples of intuitive knowledge. Intuitive knowledge is common among all humans whether past or present. $2+2=4$ at the time of Socrates as it is today, and justice has been a virtue since the ancient time as it is today, unlike scientific laws which have been subject to change throughout human history.

Thus, from the ancient Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras to Spinoza, Kant and Henri Bergson,

intuition has been always regarded as the highest form of knowledge.

Bergson (1859–1941); a French philosopher and Nobel laureate, considered intuition the major source of morality and religion in *“The Two Sources of Morality and Religion”*. He also considered intuition the only means of knowledge.

Belief in God is instinctive and hence it is intuitive knowledge. Yet, like other examples of instinctive knowledge, it may be clouded by some obstacles. Particular incidents in life can stimulate the mind and bring this instinct to conscious as it happened to Pascal; the renowned French mathematician of the 17th century.

At the age of 31, just 8 years before his death, Blaise Pascal was driving a four-in-hand when the horses ran away; the two leaders dashed over the parapet of the bridge at Neuilly, and Pascal was saved only by the traces breaking. He considered this a special summon to abandon the world. He wrote an account of the accident on a small piece of parchment, which for the rest of his life he wore next to his heart, to perpetually remind him of his covenant. This accident turned the current of his thoughts to a religious life and a divine religion known to him. He later on posed an argument against atheists known in philosophy as ‘Pascal’s Wager’.

The Almighty God refers to such stimulants in life in the following:

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلْكِ دَعَا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

“And when they embark on a ship, they invoke Allah, making their Faith pure for Him only, but when He brings them safely to land, behold, they give a share of their worship to others.”(The Holy Qur’an, 29:65)

In order for you to have a clear understanding of your intuition, I need to take you on a short trip from the world of physical objects around you, to the kingdom of animals and finally embark on human instincts.

Nature

In the world around us there are numerous physical and chemical objects. Scientists distinguish them from each other by their physical and chemical properties. For instance, one of the chemical properties of Hydrogen gas is that it is highly flammable. Of the properties of water is that under standard atmospheric pressure its freezing point is 0° C (32° F) and its boiling point is 100° C (212° F). This character is essential to all water or Hydrogen gas in the world. In other words, it is in the nature of any water to boil at 100°C under the said conditions.

Kingdom of Animals

Instinct in zoology is an unlearned pattern of behaviour, enabling members of a species to respond approximately the same to a wide range of situations in nature, such as feeding, mating, and parenting.

Instinctive behaviour can be extremely complex, even in relatively simple animals. For example, the remarkable navigation and communicational skills possessed by honeybees. A worker may fly a quarter of a mile or more from the hive in search of flowers that are a good source for food. The sun usually serves as an indicator of direction, but the bee can navigate accurately, even in a moderate breeze, when the sun is hidden by a cloud. When it finds a good source of food, the bee has the capacity to calculate a true course back to the hive, allowing for wind and for apparent movement of the sun. Upon returning to the hive, it communicates the location of the food through a 'dance' that conveys information about distance and direction. Here are some of the amazing honeybee facts:

Honeybees must gather nectar from two million flowers to make about half a kilogram of honey.

One bee has to fly about 150,000 kilometers—(more than three times around the earth) to make half a kilogram of honey.

A honeybee visits 50 to 100 flowers during a collection trip!

Honeybees have been producing honey in the same way for the last 150 million years.

When a bee finds a good source of nectar, it flies back to the hive and shows its friends where the nectar source is by doing a dance which positions the flower in relation to the sun and hive. This is known as the 'waggle dance.'

The bees' buzz is the sound made by their wings which beat 11,400 times per minute.

This complex behaviour without the necessity of learning and the process of trial and error is called 'honeybees instinctive behaviour'. All animals by their very nature enjoy the same instinct.

Human Beings

As human beings, we enjoy some common instinctive patterns of behaviour with animals such as mating, feeding and parenting.

There is, however, another type of instinct which is beyond the scope of animal kingdom; I may call it *humane instincts*. Humane instincts, similar to that of the animals, are found in human's nature and all humans will find it naturally within themselves.

Types of Human Instincts

Human instincts are intrinsic human characters. In the following I shall mention some vivid examples of human instincts:

1.1: Knowledge-Lovers

The desire to learn and increase your knowledge is instinctive in humankind. From infancy this desire is observable. As a child physically grows up, the desire for new discoveries grows as well to the extent that a human baby becomes as curious as a scientist. This desire sometimes becomes intolerable when the child bombards the parents with numerous questions. This desire is called in cognitive psychology *'the sense of research'*.

Abu-Rayhan Biruni; was an Iranian polymath in the 5th century A.H. His last communication before his death is very interesting. When he was in his dying bed, he was visited by one of the jurists of his time known as Abul-Hasan Ali. Abul-Hasan narrated: "I visited Biruni in the last minutes of his life. He asked me to teach him a jurisprudential rule in inheritance! I surprisingly replied: Is this time for it?! The knowledge-lover with a breaking voice said: Yes, my dear friend. Isn't it better if you know this issue and then die?!" Abul-Hasan added: "I explained the issue and left. I had not left his house yet that I heard the cry of his family!"

It is also narrated that Pascal was so preoccupied with his mathematical calculations and the formation of relativity that he missed his wedding night!

History of science has reported numerous examples as above.

1.2: Virtue-Lovers

The second human instinct is moral values. Kant was filled with wonder and awe at this instinct in his saying: *"the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me..."*.

Man, by nature loves discipline, social cooperation, justice and so on and so forth. Consider the following phrase: *"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."*

These words of wisdom are quite universally mentioned in all major world religions. Such statements are needless of any experience or reason to be acknowledged. They are self-evident, as much as 'total is bigger than its part' is.

In fact, as some ethical philosophers, among them Spinoza, have expressed, a sense of moral values – at least on fundamental ethical codes is intuitive and immediate and hence they are universally accepted.

1.3: Beauty-Lovers

Man, by nature loves beauty. This is observed when he or she is dressed. Although the primary motive of clothing is protection, beautification has also a large role in it. When you look at a masterpiece of a natural landscape, your eyes naturally celebrate and your mind flourishes. The holy Prophet (S) is quoted to have said: “God is Beautiful and loves beauty.”⁶

Art is the product of this humane instinct.

1.4: Love-Lovers!

Perhaps the greatest and the most transcendental human instinct is the sense of **love**. Man, by nature needs to love and to be loved by others.

This natural desire appears in different stages of life in various forms. It begins with a platonic love as in between the child and the mother and manifests at later stages in romantic love. The desire for love will never be perpetually satisfied until and unless the lover discovers the real beloved Who is Eternal, who will never be missed.

The instinct of love is the same in all stages of life although it appears in different shapes. For example, our love when looking at a magnificent landscape, or love for our parents, or that strong love for our spouses are all, in essence, our instinctive quest for the real Beloved One. It only pulls us to different objects and beings with the assumption they are our ‘Lost Love’! Hence, that quest will not be fulfilled unless we find the ‘Real Perpetual Divine Love’.

Ibn Arabi (7th century A.H.); the most famous Muslim mystic, has nicely expressed this feeling by saying: “*No one ever loves anyone save his Creator; but He is sometimes hidden under the love of Zaynab, So‘ad, Hind, Laila, worldly pleasure, money and fame*”⁷.

2) Inspiration (Ilham)

Another spectrum of self-purification is inspiration. Inspiration is a good and Godly idea about something that you get suddenly.

Spectrum of Inspiration

2.1: Creativity

All discoveries and inventions are the result of humans’ creativity.

2.2: Sparkling Of A Sudden Brilliant Idea, Known As ‘Aha’!

This moment occurs when you go from being stuck on a problem to having the ability to come up with a

non-obvious and uncommon interpretation.

2.3: Wisdom

Wisdom can be placed within the spectrum of inspiration because, like conscience, it bears testimony to the moral constitution of society. By wisdom here, I meanwise human words, in that when you read them, you naturally agree with the sense behind it and that the speaker must be inspired. For instance, consider the following human words of wisdom:

“Hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel in which it is stored as well as destroy the object on which it is poured.”

“The road to success is always under construction.”

2.4: Moral Consciousness

There is a court of law within us. Thus, you feel content when for example sponsoring an orphan, but feel guilty if you ignore him! Why? Who has made this feeling in you?! The moral law within us is yet another sign indicating to our Creator.

2.5: True Dreams And Visions

We humans are comprised of both body and mind, or if you like, call it matter and essence. We have a shape from flesh and bone that encapsulates our purest self—the soul, which is our most authentic being. When you are asleep and your connection to your body reduces, you become more conscious of your soul especially when dreaming.

Another spectrum of inspiration is an experience of true dreams and visions, which are experienced by some people irrespective of their creed or colour. This is again observed by personal experiences. We often see things in dreams which are yet to happen and will happen in due course in the future, exactly as they were observed in the dream.

Similarly, you may dream of something happen to a person who lives elsewhere in the world, and realise later that at the time of your dream, the incident actually happened! Like my personal experience of dreaming that my teacher died while I was in Italy thousands of miles away from him and I had absolutely no idea about his health condition. Although ‘true dreams’ are not limited to Prophets, their dreams were usually vivid and did not require interpretation. It is narrated that ‘real dreams are one of the lowest levels of prophecy.’⁸

3) Revelation (Al-Wahy)

The most sublime facet of self-purification is ‘revelation’. ‘Revelation’ in Christianity is similar to ‘inspiration’ (Elham) in the Islamic terminology.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first or primary meaning of the term ‘revelation’ is ‘the disclosure or communication of knowledge to man by a divine or supernatural agency.’ It is therefore from the Latin revelation (uncovered, laying bare).

Revelation (al-Wahy) in its precise Islamic sense may be defined as ‘a divine infallible communication of absolute truth to selected humans known as ‘Messengers’ to observe the Truth as it is and to share it with people as they received it’. The Holy Qur’an is the pinnacle of all previous revelations. The status of a divine prophecy is by divine selection. Thus, one cannot become a prophet by mere self-purification, though Allah’s Messengers were undoubtedly the most purified human beings.

The reality of revelation is beyond the scope of human intellect who has never experienced it. Thus, divine revelation has always been and still is one of the most fundamental of all theological questions.

[1.](#) Mathnawi, Book 3, Section 49

[2.](#) To kindle a candle is a slow process, unlike ignite which is quick. Thus, soul illumination is usually a slow process even for the saints.

[3.](#) Al-Sadooq, al-Khesal, p.265

[4.](#) The Lantern of the Path, p. 16

[5.](#) For further discussion you may refer to ‘An Introduction to Islamic Mysticism’ by the author.

[6.](#) Kanzul-Ummal, Hadith No. 17166

[7.](#) Al-Fotuhatul-Makkiya, vol. 2 p.326

[8.](#) Al-Sadooq, Man La Yahdhuruhul-Faqih, vol. 2 p.585

Chapter 5: Plagues of Knowledge

*“Truth is a polished house,
Capricious is a raised dust,
When the dust is raised,
Even those endowed with eyesight cannot see.”*

(Saadi)

We learnt so far that in our search for truth, it is vital to utilize the tools of knowledge accordingly. If you are in search of an optical phenomenon, you are bound to use the power of your eyesight. Similarly, to solve a mathematical problem you are in need of your mental and rational tools. At the same time to discover the spiritual secrets of the world, self-purification is a very primary tool to use.

In other words, as there are different realms of knowledge from sensory to rational to spiritual, the relevant tools for each realm ought to be utilized accordingly.

There are, however, plagues, which may affect the accuracy and the precision of each tool that a searcher for knowledge, any knowledge, wishes to use. For instance, one who is colourblind is incapable

of recognizing different colours and distinguishing them from one another. Colour blindness, therefore, is a plague, which affects his access to the obvious knowledge of various colours.

Plagues Of Knowledge

Plague, in medicine, is an infectious disease caused by certain bacterium. Although by the Grace of God human plague is rare in most of today's world, this disease is still common in plants. It causes damages to the leaves and fruits of our trees.

I have borrowed the term here to refer to personality and cognitive disorders that damage or cloud a sound judgment, and instead dictate a false opinion. Without diagnosis and treatment of plagues affecting our mind we will surely go astray in our quest for truth. The following are some of the common plagues that may influence our knowledge.

Personal Interests

We sometimes say 'truth hurts', why? If man by nature is in search for truth, then why does it hurt?! What happens that sometimes truth tastes sweeter than honey and at other times it becomes as bitter as bitter melon? This happens when we centralize ourselves in our search for truth, so when it satisfies the self and meets our self-interests, we accept it as truth, or else we treat it as the bitterest falsehood that sometimes we'd rather die than face a truth.

An interest (in the case of 'self-interest') may be defined as a commitment, goal, or value held by an individual or an institution even if it were to be false.

If you revisit your situation rationally, you will admit that it is better to get hurt by a 'truth' than be comforted with a 'lie'. For, if the truth hurts you that means you have been living a lie. So, yes truth may initially hurt but it also heals when taken into heart and followed.

Therefore, the first and foremost plague affecting the discovery of truth is personal interests. A genuine researcher for truth must admit the truth whether it is in his favor or against him. The range of personal interests is so wide and varies from person to person including but not limited to commercial gains, position, family, tribe and nationality, religion and so on and so forth.

Sadly, in many instances, our judgement is influenced by our personal interests.

A conflict of interest in research exists when an individual or the company has interests in the outcomes of the research that may lead to a personal or company's advantage and that might therefore, in actuality, compromise the integrity of the research.

We live in the age of 'diet guidelines' which contain the list of 'good foods' and 'bad foods'. Amazingly, 'glass of wine' appears in the list of 'good foods' with the justification of 'moderate drinking'! Why?

Simply because much of academic studies are sponsored by major corporate companies including their interests in the result of those researches. Surely, they will never sponsor a research whose results will be in conflict with their interests. Surely, they will never sponsor a researcher whose findings show that it is grapes instead that are beneficial, not the alcohol! This research tastes very sour to them and hence no sponsor!

The same or even stronger argument can be raised about the tobacco industry. Indisputably, smoking kills more people annually than alcohol and illegal drugs combined. Then why don't the governments ban it?!

The answer is simple: Too many people 'like' it and therefore those sitting in the legislation house would lose their seats and governments lose billions in taxes otherwise! This is where the hypocrisy of democracy is unveiled!

Juha is a 'wise fool' of Arabic folklore. Once upon a time he borrowed a pot from one of his neighbours. Upon return he put a smaller pot inside it. When the neighbour asked about the smaller pot, Juha explained that 'his pot had given birth'! The neighbour accepted and kept the two pots.

Another day Juha again borrowed a pot, this time a larger pot. The neighbour happily lent him his largest pot in hope of gaining another one!

After a while the neighbour asked Juha if he wishes to return the pot? "Unfortunately, she had a maternal death", replied Juha. The neighbour while looking astonished said: Since when do pots die?! Juha calmly replied: "If they can give birth, they can surely die during pregnancy too."

Once the Police Commander of our local police station joined a celebration at our Islamic Centre. I asked him: "Given all the increasing alcohol-related crimes why can't the government just ban the transaction of alcoholic beverages inasmuch as narcotic drugs are banned?" You know what he said?!

"Drinking is part of our culture. I also drink, and the alcohol industry is a very profitable industry for Australia!"

The implied meaning of the commander's comment is the more people drink, the merrier the liquor industries and the wealthier the tax collectors!

The commander's comment reminded me of what the Almighty God states:

***"They follow a conjecture and that which they themselves desire."*(53:23)**

Saadi of Shiraz; the Iranian poet and mystic of the 13th century AD shows how personal interest clouds one's judgement in the following poem:

حقیقت سرائی است آراسته هوی و هوس گرد برخاسته

نیبئی که جائی که برخاست گرد نبیند نظر گرچه بیناست مرد

*“Truth is a polished house,
Capricious is a raised dust,*

*When the dust is raised,
Even those endowed with eyesight cannot see.”*

(Saadi)

The late Allamah al-Hilli, was a renown Shi’a jurist of the 14th century AD and the first scholar titled ‘Ayatullah.’ He wanted to conduct a research about the rules concerning the purification of water wells. To ensure his well at home does not cloud his jurisprudential judgement he first sealed the well. [1](#)

We sometimes meet people whose sole motive of denying religion is that they do not wish to give up their lifestyle. A Muslim lady who was not practicing Hijab was insisting that the law of female’s headscarf is not mentioned in the Qur’an. I asked her that if I had shown her would she start wearing it?! She kept insisting that she was sure it was never mentioned in the Qur’an. I said: “hypothetically speaking, would you truly practice it if at all it was mentioned in the Qur’an.” She said: “I’m sure it is not, but yes, if it were mentioned I would have practiced it.” Upon hearing her confession, I read the Arabic version of Verse 31 of Chapter 24 for her and convinced her that the law of headscarf is clearly mentioned in the Qur’an! Guess what she said in the end?!

“I knew I shouldn’t have accepted your challenge. You made me feel guilty now!”

Joe is one of my Australian friends. When I met him for the first time, he had a bundle of printed material against Islam. By the Grace of God, after about two years he confessed that ‘Mansour, if one day I want to choose a religion, that would be Islam, however I’m not prepared yet to give up my red wine on my dinner table!

How accurately the Holy Qur’an describes these people:

“Nay! (Man denies the Day of Judgment, so) he desires to continue committing sins. (Thus, he hypocritically) asks: When will be this Day of Resurrection?! (75:5-6)

Hans Christian Anderson, a Danish author of the 19th century, whose fairy tales have been translated into more than 100 languages, has well introduced the effect of this plague in his fairy tale *The Emperor’s New Clothes*’. In his tale he shows how two schemers could play with the intelligence of the Emperor and all his subjects, except for a young boy who lacks any personal interest and unveils the truth about the Emperor’s so-called *new clothes*!

Two weavers promised an emperor a new set of clothes that they said was invisible to those who were

unfit for their positions, stupid or incompetent—while in reality, they made no clothes at all, making everyone believe the clothes were invisible to them. When the emperor paraded before his subjects in his new ‘clothes’, no one dared to say that they did not see any suit of clothes on him for fear that they would be seen as stupid. Finally, a child cried out, “But he isn’t wearing anything at all.”

Pride

بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْمَوْعِظَةِ حِجَابٌ مِنَ الْعِزَّةِ

“There is only one veil between you and a sound piece of advice – your pride.”

(Imam Ali (‘a))[2](#)

Although it is quite healthy to keep our confidence and pride in a positive manner, it can however be an obstacle to our search for truth, particularly if it establishes a feeling or haughty attitude of superiority over others. A true searcher for knowledge should always be humble to ‘knowledge’ irrespective if it is consistent with his social, age, cultural and/or religious backgrounds or not. The Holy Qur’an with reference to this plague states:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا

“And they denied them (the divine signs) wrongfully and arrogantly.”(27: 14)

Compound Ignorance

As explained in the second chapter, there are two types of ignorance. The first is simple in which the person is aware of his ignorance, and the other is compound where a person assumes he knows while he does not.

I had just enrolled at the Islamic seminary of Qom in 1978 in the School of the late Ayatullah Golpayegani. One day he visited us and while quoting a narration that ‘a little knowledge is more dangerous (than no knowledge)’, he explained that ‘the incomplete of everything is better than nothing except for the incompleteness of knowledge. That is, it is better to be totally ignorant than having the incomplete knowledge of something, for the latter always assumes he knows whilst he does not. For instance, it is better to be quite healthy than no health at all, quite wealthy than in total poverty, but little knowledge results in compound ignorance. Ibn Sina also says:

”اياك و فِطَانَةُ بْتَرَاءِ

“Avoid incomplete cleverness.”

قال حمارُ الحكيم يوماً لو أنصفوني لكنتُ أركبُ

لأنني جاهلٌ بسيطٌ و صاحبي جاهلٌ مُركَّبٌ

The mule of a so called ‘philosopher’ said one day

If they were fair, I would be riding

For I am a simple ignorant (animal)

But my companion (i.e. the rider) is a compound ignorant³

Hypocrisy

As man grows up, he learns more to be able to be hypocritical and how to hide his real face from people. As such, hypocrisy is less observed among children. When a child is hungry at a party, he/she openly expresses his feeling of hunger.

Many may read books and the study of comparative religions and different schools of thoughts, but not all of them search for the sake of learning. People who have hidden agendas such as learning to misuse or to pretend that they are learned people to gain a position, are rather hypocrites and their sheer hypocrisy will prevent them from reaching the truth. This disease is observed among some of the Orientalists or writers of particular religious zealots when condemning another religion or sect.

A hypocrite is not in fact in quest of truth, he has already formed an opinion and is just attempting at proving his enemies wrong.

Hypocrisy is considered a severe mental disease in Islam. In more than 13 chapters of the Holy Quran this disease has been analyzed. Chapter 63 of the Holy Quran is dedicated to unveiling this disease, introducing the distorted personality of hypocrites.

Prejudice & Stubbornness

چون غرض آمد هنر پوشیده شد صد حجاب از دل به سوی دیده شد

“When spite arrives, art departs

One hundred veils travel from heart to eyes.”

–Rumi–

Prejudice is a very destructive force against discovering a truth. The central problem of prejudice rests on egotism, in the sense of selfishness, self-family, self-tribe, self-race and even self-religious zealots to condemn whatever and whoever is against the self. The life of selfish people rotates around the triangle of 'me, myself and I'. Usually prejudice is removed when you are more accurately informed.

Frederick Copleston in the preface of his 'A History of Philosophy' criticizes the authors of history for their biased approaches, yet agrees that it is quite impossible for an author not to influence his personal opinion. He assumes that his narration is free from any prejudice, yet it represents the Orthodox scholarly interpretation of history.

Prejudice can be toward a party, a group, an ethnic and patriot, which sum it all up as "personal interests".

A man asked Imam Ali ('a) to define Islam. The Imam replied: "I will give you such a precise definition that no one has ever given. Islam means submission to truth". Islam is therefore contrary to stubbornness and prejudice.

From the Islamic point of view, 'truth' for a Muslim is like a stolen property that he is searching for. For instance, if you have lost your wedding ring you don't mind who brings it to you; whether they are from the same party, religion, creed, colour, social status, friend or not. Such shall be truth for a Muslim.

Stubbornness is also a natural result of prejudice. Once a person forms prejudicial opinion, it makes him stubborn. Always, remember ignorance is not the absence of knowledge, it is the refusal to acquire it.

In your search for truth, promise yourself not to form any opinion beforehand about anything. Avoid any pre-judgment by insufficient knowledge, irrational feelings and inaccurate stereotypical approaches.

Blind Following

One of the very destructive plagues of knowledge is to blindly follow inherited opinions. Naturally, when an opinion is accepted for many years or centuries, people tend to take its truth for granted.

The general acceptance of the Ptolemaic system of the geocentric universe in which the earth was considered to be stationary and motionless at the centre of the universe, was taken for granted for more than 13 centuries until Copernicus, a Polish astronomer came up with his theory that the sun is at rest near the centre.

One of the major problems of the reformers with people of their age has always been their fear of any change to the inherited systems they have been practicing, whether it has been rational or not.

Another spectrum of blind following is to follow the majority because of their number. For a true researcher of knowledge, the number of people is not a determining factor; it is reasoning and sensibility,

which determines facts. Sadly, as the mass is easily manipulated, they are not usually with a truth. We live in the age of ‘majority rules’ when truth is decided by the vote of majority, where following ‘peer pressure’ and ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ is a social norm!

A genuine researcher, therefore, ought to be free from the kingdom of number.

It is very important that when you are in search of the truth, you are not intimidated or discouraged by currents against you. You stay loyal to truth and nothing but the truth; the whole truth.

Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) presents this fact in the following parable:

“If you have a walnut in your hand and people say you hold a pearl, it won’t benefit you, and if you have pearl in your hand but people say it is a walnut it doesn’t reduce its value.”⁴

Causes of Blind Following

Mental Immaturity

This is observed in people who are biologically grown but mentally are still in their childhood.

Captured By Famous Personalities

Just because a famous scholar or a scientist has expressed an opinion it does not make it necessarily valid. The validity of every claim must be scientifically examined. Karl Popper used to say: “Great men may make great mistakes.” Always keep in mind that human blunder is inevitable for fallible humans.

Ethnic Identity

Your ethnic identity attachment could lead to another element of blindness. The Holy Qur’an with reference to ignorant people who keep honouring their culture no matter how irrational it may be states:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

“When it is said to them: “Follow what Allah has sent down.” They say: “Nay! We shall follow what we found our fathers following.” (Would they do that!) Even though their fathers did not understand anything nor were they guided?” (2: 170)

Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) visited one of his companions. Considering his financial status, the holy Imam asked why he didn’t provide a more spacious house for his family?! The man replied: My ancestors used to live here, and I also wish to live in it and keep it as it was! The holy Imam with an opposing tone said: Even though your forefathers didn’t know better or couldn’t afford better?!

Love/Hate

Being blindly infatuated with someone can easily cloud our judgment. Imam Ali ('a) is quoted to have said:

مَنْ عَشِيقَ شَيْئًا أَغْشَى بَصَرَهُ وَ أَمْرَضَ قَلْبَهُ فَهُوَ يَنْظُرُ بِعَيْنٍ غَيْرِ صَحِيحَةٍ وَ يَسْمَعُ بِأُذُنٍ غَيْرِ سَمِيعَةٍ

“Whoever loves something, (his love) turns him blind and sickens his heart. Then his vision and hearing are impaired.”⁵.

Superficial Observation

Many ideas in a superficial and trivial look may seem wrong, but when you spend more time on them and have more in-depth study you may acknowledge them. The difference between a superficial look and the professional one is the difference between Newton's look at an apple tree and other people's view.

Political Influence

An Arabic expression says: “People are on the religion of their kings.” The motto of all politicians is what God quotes from Pharaoh:

“I show you only that which I see (as correct).”(The Holy Qur'an, 40:29)

They justify invading countries by ‘fake evidence’ that they ‘produce weapons of mass destruction’, or ‘harbour terrorists’, and if any individual dares questioning their integrity, he is a ‘risk to national security’ or a ‘hate preacher’!

The Almighty God reveals the confession of some of the hell-bound people:

“They said: Our Lord! Verily, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they misled us from the (Right) way.”(33:67)

During the civil war imposed on Imam Ali ('a), a man from Kufa rode his he-camel (Arabic: Jamal) to Syria. A Syrian stopped the Kufan and claimed that the camel was his. They raised the dispute to the court in which the judge was Muawiyah. Fifty Syrian witnesses falsely testified during the judicial proceeding that the she-camel (Arabic: Naqah) belonged to the Syrian man! The Kufan who was caught in a foreign land tried to prove their perjury. He said to the judge: “All the witnesses testified that the ‘she-camel’ is his, but my camel is male!” Muawiyah while refusing his appeal said to the Kufan: “Go back home and tell Ali Ibn Abi Talib that I will fight him with people who do not distinguish between male and female camels.”⁶

Propaganda

The propaganda agencies attempt to conduct psychological warfare against their enemies. Today the technological advancement of the mass media, especially those of the electronic media, expand the outlets available to propagandists.

The story of a man from Damascus who was brainwashed by the propaganda machines of Muawiyah and his insulting attitude towards Imam Al-Hasan ('a) is a famous historical example to show how propaganda can influence the masses.

Paul Joseph Goebbels was a German Nazi politician and one of Hitler's closest associates. The following statement is often attributed to him or to Hitler himself: "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."

The effect of propaganda is sometimes so strong as in the story of the fool who was disturbed by some naughty children. In order for him to get rid of the children he told them that someone was distributing free ice-cream on the other side of the city. When all of the children left towards the place he thought for a while and then immediately followed them. Someone asked him: "Why are you following them?" "Just in case it was true!!" he replied.

Indulging In Sins

The last but not the least plague of knowledge, any knowledge, is indulging in sin. Truth is pure and will not be achieved with impurity. Seeking pleasure contradicts and avoids discoveries in search for truth. The Almighty God with reference to this plague reveals:

بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ. يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ

"Nay! (Man denies the Judgment Day, so) he desires to continue committing sins. (Thus, he hypocritically) asks: When will be this Day of Resurrection?! (75:5-6)

The above plagues are often combined which obviously makes the cure less feasible. Imagine one who follows his whim and desire who is too proud to admit a truth, who is stubborn and under the influence of a massive propaganda machine against the truth! Sadly, with the rise of Islamophobia, finding such figures who are filled with a lot of hatred against Islam and Muslims is not difficult.

Two Tips For Researchers For Truth

Make No Assumptions

Assumption is the first obstacle in search for truth. Assumption means to take something for granted and to believe it to be true without proof. The treatment is to promise yourself to make no assumptions before looking at and examining the evidence.

Do Not Justify

By justification here I mean to try to find excuses to justify an irrational issue, due to your pre-assumption influence. A prime example of such justification is a Christian belief that you are absolved from all sins if and only if you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord, irrespective of your deeds! This false doctrine would justify committing sins as it has been.

- [1.](#) Mutahhari, Majmoo'e Athar, vol.26 p.65
- [2.](#) Behar, vol. 75 p.109
- [3.](#) Tafsir Roohul-Ma'ani, vol. 21 p.55
- [4.](#) Tawhaful-Uqool, p.386
- [5.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 109
- [6.](#) Mas'oodi, Moruju-Thahab, vol. 3 p.41

Chapter 6: Do Things Exist Only When Perceived?

Introduction

In the previous chapters we acknowledged that we are not sleepwalkers. We “think” and as such we must exist to be able to think. The next epistemological question is about our perception of the world beyond us. Our mind is the only means of knowing anything outside our mind i.e. ‘the external world’ including other people and ‘their minds’. The question is how can we be sure of the accuracy of what our minds narrate? Let me explain myself with a few examples:

1) Have you ever wondered why you have to put on warm clothes and boots in winter while animals walk and fly naked in the snow and ice?! To us it is freezing cold, but to cats and birds it is not. Is there anything as ‘cold’ or ‘hot’ weather, or is that what we perceive?!



2) Look at these two pictures. The first one is a human view of the scene, and the second is a cat's view. Trees and lawns are yellowish if you are a cat, but green if you are a healthy human. The question is what is the real colour, or is there any real colour at all?!

There is a famous expression in English that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. That means different people have different opinions about what or who is beautiful, as they have different opinions about different cuisines based upon their food tastes due to personal and cultural differences. A chicken curry may taste too spicy to eat by an Iranian, but not too spicy for an Indian!

This and many such differences have led some philosophers to believe that 'knowledge of anything outside one's own mind is unsure, as it might not exist outside the mind. The philosophical school of 'Solipsism' (literally 'self-alone') is the product of this method of thinking. Solipsism was grounds for 'relativism' which holds that 'truth and falsity, right and wrong, are products of different conventions and frameworks of assessment and hence are all equally and relatively correct/incorrect'.

Relativism is the most popular philosophical western doctrine in our time. Its defenders insist that it is the only ethical and epistemic stance worthy of the open-minded and the tolerant. Relativism has covered a wide spectrum from science to art, religion, politics and ethics. Perhaps one of the earliest references to solipsism and relativism is found in Hindu philosophy. We spoke about 'the parable of the elephant' in the fourth chapter according to the narration of Muslim mystics like Rumi. The following is the Buddhist narration of the story:

The Parable Of The Blindmen And The Elephant

A number of disciples went to Buddha and said, “Sir, there are living here in Savatthi¹ many wandering hermits and scholars who indulge in constant dispute, some saying that the world is infinite and eternal and others that it is finite and not eternal, some saying that the soul dies with the body and others say that it lives on forever, and so forth. What, Sir, would you say concerning them?”

Buddha answered, “Once upon a time there was a certain raja² who called to his servant and said, ‘Come, good fellow, go and gather together in one place six men of Savatthi who were born blind.., and show them an elephant.’ ‘Very good, sir, ‘replied the servant’, and he did as he was told. He said to the blind men assembled there, ‘Here is an elephant.’

The first blind man put out his hand and touched the side of the elephant. “How smooth! An elephant is like a wall.”

The second blind man put out his hand and touched the trunk of the elephant. “How round! An elephant is like a snake.”

The third blind man put out his hand and touched the tusk of the elephant. “How sharp! An elephant is like a spear.”

The fourth blind man put out his hand and touched the leg of the elephant. “How tall! An elephant is like a tree.”

The fifth blind man reached out his hand and touched the ear of the elephant. “How wide! An elephant is like a fan.”

The sixth blind man put out his hand and touched the tail of the elephant. “How thin! An elephant is like a rope.”

An argument ensued, each blind man thinking his own perception of the elephant was correct. The raja, awakened by the commotion, called out from the balcony. “The elephant is big, “he said. “Each man touched only one part. You must put all part together to find out what an elephant is like.”

Historical Background

This ancient fable is the reflection of an ancient cognitive relativism by the ancient sophists, particularly Protagoras; a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, who began his work ‘**Truth**’ with the famous statement: “Man is the measure of all things–of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not.” <https://www.iep.utm.edu/protagor/> [9]

The above idea was reviewed by skeptics such as Pyrrho who held that every object of human

knowledge involves uncertainty. Thus, he argued, it is impossible ever to arrive at the knowledge of truth. He sometimes suggested that the examples of an object which looks beautiful in the eyes of one, and ugly in the eyes of another (such as the tale of Layli and Majnoon), big in the eyes of one and small for another, tastes sweet for one person and bitter for another.

Pyrrhonists, therefore, suggest that we should never say “it is so”, rather we should say “it seems so”, or “it appears so to me”.

George Berkeley; an eighteenth-century Irish philosopher and bishop of Cloyne, set a philosophical theory to answer skepticism, known as ‘immaterialism’ or ‘mental monism’ as it is referred to in our time.

This theory claims that everything around us is ultimately immaterial. In his most influential essay ‘*A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*’ in response to the question of “do things exist only when perceived?”, he holds that the observer does not conjure external objects into existence, however, the true ideas of them are caused in the human mind directly by God. This system made him the founder of the modern school of idealism and eventually eliminated any possibility of knowledge of an external material world and thus he was regarded a foolish man by his contemporaries.

Kant–Copernican Revolution: Mind Making Nature

Immanuel Kant is a German philosopher of the late eighteenth century considered one of the most influential philosophers in the history of western philosophy. Kant’s answer to the question is complicated, but his conclusion in ‘*The Critique of Pure Reason*’ (Translated by Werner Pluhar) is that we need to understand the proper function and domain of the various faculties that contribute to produce knowledge. We must recognize that we cannot know things as they are in themselves and that our knowledge is subject to the conditions of our experience.

The function of knowing according to Kant’s theory is like that of the digestive system in which the food we consume breaks down into smaller and simple molecules that can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Digestion involves a mechanical phase such as teeth function, as well as a chemical phase– the function of enzymes – and it is impossible for the food to be absorbed into the bloodstream as it is before swallowing.

Similarly, we cannot know things as they are in themselves and our knowledge is subject to the conditions of our experience. At the same time, Copernicus recognized that the movement of the stars cannot be explained by making them revolve around the observer, it is the observer that must be revolving. Analogously, Kant argued that we must reformulate the way we think about our relationship to objects. It is the mind itself which gives objects at least some of their characteristics because they must conform to its structure and conceptual capacities.

With Kant’s claim that the mind of a knower makes an active contribution to experience an object before

us, he formed his idea of what he calls '*transcendental idealism*'. Kant holds that we cannot have knowledge of the realm beyond the empirical. That means, transcendental knowledge about God, souls and so on, is ideal, not real, for minds like ours.

Post Modernism

The trend of skepticism from ancient time has renewed in the late twentieth century again by an application called 'Post Modernism or 'Deconstructionism'.

Post modernists such as Derrida, Heidegger and Feyerabend hold that *cultural biases have so seriously blinded us that we can never know the true nature of things*. Post-modernists hold this view for all areas of truth, including the rational, the religious and the moral. They argue that morality is not objective. Those who believe that cultural biases blind us are making a strong assertion about knowledge.

Post-modernists essentially believe that all claims to know objective truth are false because each of us is imprisoned in his own culture, incapable of seeing beyond the limits of his own biases. Therefore, truth is relative to culture and no objective standard exists.

Post modernism has penetrated into various faculties of knowledge from fine art to architecture, humanities, pure sciences and physics and even mathematics. For example, *Cubism* is a post-modernist approach in fine art in which a single viewpoint perspective is abandoned. The two drawings are examples of Cubist paintings. How many faces do you see?

Relativism In The View Of Muslim Thinkers

Muslim theologians are also divided into two groups; *all opinions are right (Mosawebeh)*, and *only one is right (Mokhatte')*. The first group believed that whatever deduction a jurist is led to is correct and is real even though it contradicts the deduction of another jurist, as the number of truths vary according to the number of deductions. For instance, if a jurist deduces that something is permissible, it is really permissible. In the same token if another jurist deduces impermissibility of the same issue it is also really impermissible. Thus, there is no reality beyond individuals' deductions.

The latter by contrast, hold that there is only one true answer to a particular jurisprudential question and the rest are utterly false, though the holders of false opinions may be excused if their valid methodology led to their opinion.

Definition Of Truth

Before investigating the accuracy of the idea of relativism, we ought to find the definition of 'truth' around which all the discussion rotates.

1) August Comte

August Comte has defined truth as: *"A thought that all people at one time agree upon."* According to this definition, the Ptolemaic system in which the earth was stationary was true, simply because it was nearly unanimously accepted by all people for centuries. Similarly, the Copernicus system is also true as it is accepted by all!

This relative definition for truth leads to a contradiction that an external phenomenon (galaxy system) is true in two opposite ways.

2) Pragmatism

Pragmatists like William James regard all theories as tentative hypotheses until they are practically found to be good and useful.

Suppose you are studying abroad, and it is the very stressful final examination season. At the same time unbeknown to you, your mother has passed away back home. You make a telephone call to your family for some emotional support for your studies.

To inform you of this sad news it may affect your exam results. According to the James definition of truth, the truth is that 'nothing has happened to your mother', for, this is a good and useful news that you need to hear!

This idea also leads to either relativism, as some of his critics asserted, or paves the way to pluralism which suggests that the world is far too complex for any philosophy to explain everything.

3) Truth Is The Personal Experience Of A Knower Of The External World

According to this theory, the truth for the colourblind is what he sees and for the one with normal eyesight is again what he observes. Obviously, this is again a relative approach.

4) Truth Is Whatever Is According To The Reality As It Is

According to this theory, the belief that 'the Earth is revolving around the sun' and that 'two plus two equals four' are true statements, not because people agreed upon them, or they are useful, or we assume so, but because this knowledge is according to reality as it is. Thus, the Ptolemaic system was false even though it was regarded as true for many centuries.

Issues Of Concern

There are four questions that need to be answered before discussing the validity of the idea of relativism:

1) Is there generally any truth, or are all human perceptions imaginary? The first two chapters dealt with this issue and we agreed against sophists.

2) What is the scale of distinguishing truth from falsehood?

After the axioms which need no scale except mental health and attention, logic is the main tool and the universal scale for distinguishing truth from falsehood.

3) Is it possible for one thing to be true and false under the same circumstances?

Logically, the answer is negative. For it would lead to the combination of contradiction, and its impossibility is self-evident as discussed earlier. I may however add a point that if it is correct that one thing can be true and false at the same time, this statement is also false!

The above statement is similar to the one where an Australian says: "All Aussies are liars"! This means that if he is telling the truth, it invalidates his statement. Such theorems are called in logic; *self-refuting*: 'theorems that if they are to be true, are false'

(قضایا يلزم من صدقها كذبها) .

4) Is it possible for the 'truth' to develop?

Our answer to this question is also negative. If it is true that 'two plus two equals four', it cannot be truer.

Q. We observe that scientists 'everyday' arrive at new discoveries about already existing facts by discovering new evidence. Does not this conclude that the truth is always developing? For instance, in the fable of the blind men and the elephant, each blind man had found part of the truth. Thus, if you add the experience of each blind man, the truth is developing.

A. If 'two plus two equals four' there is no more or less truth about it. Once something is found true, it is only true.

The reality of more findings about a fact is, however, the gradual development of our knowledge, not that the truth is developing. In other words, every new piece of discovery about a fact is in fact another truth in itself– should it be according to reality as it is.

In the parable of the elephant, none of the discoveries are true on its own, for an elephant is not like a fan, spear or snake.

Realism Vs Relativism

Based on the above explanation we can now unveil the fallacy of relativism.

According to relativism, as explained earlier, all that can be known of the external world is the ways in which ‘they appear to us by experience’, and since different people– due to different backgrounds– have various normal epistemic experiences, none is privileged over another, therefore they are all relatively true.

Imagine how cool it would be if a teacher would give the same mark to all answer sheets, as they are all relatively correct, and no student would be privileged over another!

We believe that one of the main problems of relativism is that it is **self-refuting**. If I assert that all judgements are only true relative to some non-privileged standpoints, the objection runs, I am implicitly claiming that this judgement–i.e. the thesis of relativism– is true in some non-relativistic sense. This means that the relativist must concede that from some points of view– which is as normal as relativism– relativism will appear false which concludes that relativism is both true and false!

As a matter of fact, relativism will not only lead to skepticism, but it will also end to sophism and finally to the pitfall of agnosticism.

Another problem of relativism is that all human endeavours in quest of truth and knowledge will be sacrificed before the thesis of relativism. For, whatever you perceive is ‘truth’, you need no further inquiry about the truth. This results in closing all scientific faculties and is the end of striving for knowledge! Be content with what you have perceived as whatever you realize is relatively true!

It is interesting to note that Plato in the dialogue of the *Theatetus*, argues against Protagoras’ sophist view (as quoted earlier) that “if what he says is correct then how was Protagoras so wise that he should consider himself worthy to teach others and for huge fees?! And how are we so ignorant that we should go to school to him, if each one of us is the measure of his own wisdom?”<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-theaetetus/#RefTheKnoPer160186> [10]

What Has Really Led The Philosophers To Relativism?

We propose one of the things which have really misled many philosophers to the pitfall of relativism is mixing up the two different human’s perceptions of knowledge.

Constructional Perception V Real Perception

According to the late Allamah Tabatabaei, a distinguished Muslim philosopher of our time, human knowledge is divided into two part: *Real perception* and *constructional perception* (*Edrakat E’tebari*).³

Real perception is our knowledge about an object that exists whether we perceive it or not. Like our knowledge about a tree, a building, or the sun in the sky.

Constructional perception is a type of knowledge that humans have constructed and agreed upon. Concepts such as tall or short, sweet or bitter, beautiful or ugly, ownership, language, money

transactions etc. are examples of constructional perceptions. These are relative concepts. For instance, our knowledge about the tree is a real knowledge, but whether it is tall or short is a relative concept.

Constructional perception is the function of two principles:

- 1) The principle of endeavour for life,
- 2) The principle of adaptation to environment.

Based on the above-named principles, humans living in the tropical regions look different to those in a cold region. The body of the first group is adapted to certain food, weather, clothing etc. and are considered norms to them, whereas for the latter it is not normal. Thus, Indians and Mexicans for example, are accustomed to spicy foods as part of their stable diet from a very young age.

Similarly, they may hold different inclinations and feelings towards certain things in a way different from others for the same principles.

The examples of different perceptions suggested by the relativists are all in the realm of constructional perception.

Characteristics Of Constructional Perception

- 1) Constructional perception is contractual to resolve human needs.
- 2) Constructional perception has no logical value.
- 3) Constructional perception is the function of man's natural needs.
- 4) Constructional perception can be developed or changed.
- 5) Constructional perception is relative and temporary.

Subjective Existence And Objective Existence

The second and perhaps the main problem of relativists lies under the lack of proper explanation for obtaining knowledge about the external world.

Khaje Nasir Toosi is perhaps the first Muslim philosopher who suggested that things have two types of existence; objective which is their real existence out of the mind of a knower, and subjective which is a mental existence of a known object in the mind of a knower.

When one perceives something, the real image of the known object prints in the mind of the knower. The printed one is the mental or subjective existence of the object, and the known object, is the objective existence of that object.

Proofs for Subjective Existence

- 1) Objects which have no existence or are impossible to exist can be imagined by the mind, such as 'a golden mountain' or 'two suns' or 'combination of contradiction'. Therefore, we perceive things which do not externally exist, resulting in another fact: 'There is another realm for objects i.e. the mind'.
- 2) We perceive 'humankind' which does not exist in the external world. What however exists are the examples and the samples of humans such as Tom, Dick and Harry.
- 3) We perceive the adjectives of things without perceiving their objects. For instance, we perceive 'whiteness' without imagining a piece of white paper, snow or the like.

Therefore, it is not true that things exist only when perceived. For, firstly, there are things that exist whether we perceive them or not; objects out of our mind and perception. And secondly, there are things that we perceive, yet they have no objective existence such as geometrical perception of a circle, or two suns in the sky, etc.

Discovery Of The Fallacy Of The Elephant

The fabulist of the Indian fable has assumed the men were blind. A thesis which is based on mere assumption and a parable remains no more than an assumption and a tale. Remember an assumption is not necessarily true. You cannot prove or disprove a philosophical argument by mere parables. Or, we may well change the example and conclude differently.

As mentioned in the previous chapter Rumi, narrates the fable in his Mathnavi with a slight change. In his narration, the men were not blind, rather the room was dark. Thus, he does not conclude relativism. He solves the problem by suggesting that if they held a candle their disputes would vanish. The candle according to Rumi is intuitive knowledge.

Discovery Of The Fallacy Of Man And Animals' Different Feelings And Visions

Science tells us that many mammals have extra fur and padding in their paws to help them from getting frostbite in the snow. Others which live in the cold areas are endowed with a built-in heating system like some Canadian geese.

As for different food tastes, food experts assert that spicy food lovers are not born with it. They have been eating them from a very young age and hence are desensitized to the heat.

Similarly, the difference in grasping different ranges of colours is related to special light catching cells called 'cones' that respond to colour. Most animals like dogs and cats have fewer cones than humans, and hence their colour vision is not as rich or intense as ours. On the other hand, there are animals like bees and butterflies that their colour vision is sharper than us. They can see ranges of colours that we

cannot.

Therefore, temperature does exist in the external world, as does colour although different species sense it differently according to their makeup.

- [1.](#) An ancient city where Buddha had spent the last 20 years of his life.
- [2.](#) An Indian king of prince.
- [3.](#) Majmoo'e Rasael, 'A Discourse on Constructional Perception', p. 340

Image:



Chapter 7: God's Eye Point of View!

Who Goes To Heaven Dad?

Leo was the Member of Parliament in my area in Sydney . One day we had a friendly chat and he told me how stunned he was when his 10 year old daughter asked him; “Dad! Who goes to heaven?”

After a long pause I said: “what I'm sure about my sweet heart is that the politicians are the last to go to heaven, but as a Christian, I suppose, those who have faith in Jesus would go to heaven.”

I was more puzzled when she asked me: “Dad! If you were not born Christian, would you give the same answer?”

“Well, maybe not”, I answered while lifting up my shoulder. She again continued: “Dad! Since God owns the heaven and the hell, we need to know God's point of view, but how?”

Religious Pluralism

The Oxford dictionary defines pluralism as ‘the principle that different groups can live together in peace in one society.’ Pluralism also refers to the acceptance of many groups in society, or many schools of thought in an intellectual or cultural discipline. In philosophy however, it means that reality is composed of many parts and that no single explanation or view of reality can account for all aspects of life (*Encarta*).

The definition of pluralism becomes more ambiguous when the term is used to express ‘religious pluralism’, because, in this sense, religious pluralism depends, in part at least, upon what is meant by ‘religious’.

If ‘religious’ is identified with Abrahamic religions or a belief in God, then our conception of religious pluralism includes only those individuals and communities that fit under the umbrella of Judaism, Christianity and/or Islam, or Theism.

If, on the other hand, what is ‘religious’ is identified with the human quest for meaning, purpose, and identity, then our understanding of religious pluralism includes all such quests, whether traditionally religious or not.

The Central Core Of Religious Pluralism

The most widely recognised meaning of religious pluralism is the recognition of all different, even seemingly contradictive, religious experiences. In other words, according to ‘religious pluralism’, religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc, are, although different, all true and their followers are all on Right Paths.

They all believe in ‘an absolute transcendence’, even though they share different experiences in obtaining that goal. According to this meaning of religious pluralism, everyone should be content with any philosophy that he holds, whether he believes in God or not, or one God or many Gods, whether what he believes in is an absolute transcendence or not. Regardless of what one believes, he is on the right path and he has a share of the truth.

Fundamentals Of Religious Pluralism

1. Differentiating between the pearl and the shell of the religions
2. Language–Game Theory

3. Different Perspectives of one Object
4. Limits of Knowledge
5. Universal Mercy

Major Problems Of Pluralism

1. Self-refuting
2. The claim is more general than the proof

Problems That Lead To Religious Pluralism

1. Different schools of thought
2. Judgment between truth and falsehood

Peaceful co-existence

Chapter 8: Religious Pluralism

Islamic Perspective

Argument

Mankind without religion is a pretty sorry lot. It has never been able to survive without faith. Yet, surprisingly agreement is never reached on such vital subject. Thus, they have their own zealots who attack the religions of others, the result of which is intolerance and contention.

Intergroup relations, especially when religion is also involved, are full of conflict and suffering. Martyrology feeds the myths, and prejudice adds bitterness to the legend. Political expediency and biased scholarship invest the legend with the status of history.

To this end, men have been suffering throughout the history from lack of toleration others' beliefs. With the cry *Deus vult!* ¹ (God wills it) Rivers of blood have flowed as a result of religious intolerance. Crusades, Roman Inquisitions and Holy Offices established by the papacy in the Middle Ages, charged with seeking out, trying, and sentencing persons of heresy, ² brutal massacres and inhumane torture of Spanish people, and Albigensians of southern France, leave the man of our age with no doubt that intolerance is very destructive activity.

Thus, in order for us all to survive on this planet it is important that we respect the religious beliefs of others and learn how to exercise a peaceful religious coexistence under the principle of 'the right to believe as one chooses'.

The present paper is a brief study of the religious coexistence from the Islamic point of view. From the inadequate material at my disposal, it is not easy to fully construct the issue as it supposes to be. Nevertheless, there is enough ground in Islam to call for *peaceful coexistence*.

Characteristically, Islam is usually classified as violent, intolerant, oppressive and obscurantist and opposed to enlightenment.

My objective in this paper is to clarify one of the dimensions of this biased opinion. I will, with the help of God, demonstrate the way Islam treats the *peaceful coexistence*. Does Islam respect and tolerate religions other than itself, and do their followers have the right to express and practice their own faiths in an Islamic state?

In a multicultural society where different cultures and religions are practised, should Muslims, from the Islamic perspective, integrate with, or segregate from, other parts of the society?

This study is also essentially based on the following material:

1. The Holy Quran, as the main source in Islam.
2. The Tradition of the Prophet of Islam (S) and his pure progeny ('a), as the role models of Islam.
3. At the end, however, I have suggested some further resources for in-depth study.

Islam And Religious Coexistence

Although the idea of religious liberty and tolerance is a new issue in the West initiated with philosophers of 18 century like John Locke and M. Voltaire [3](#), it has been always a simple fact for Muslims, clearly declared in their religion.

A glance at the Islamic literature fully supports the idea of religious coexistence. Islam not only respects other divine religions and acknowledges their rights, but also prohibits any forms of contempt to them. Any Islamic state is also obliged by Shariah to provide welfare and support to the followers of other divine religions equal to the Muslims.

Islamic Principles To Achieve Religious Coexistence

In order to establish a peaceful religious coexistence in society Islam has suggested four principles:

1. No Compulsion In Religion

No doubt, there are different factors involved in making people's opinions and faiths. The physical structure and the organic compounds, time, place, diet, education and so many other factors have inevitable effects on people's faiths. Thus, the healthy way to change their opinion is to encounter them from their origins. Utilising force and compulsion not only cannot change the heart of people, but it may in many instances increase hatred and animosity.

To this end, the Holy Quran clearly denounces the use of the force in terms of religion. It is ultimately the right of people to choose any religion they are happy with, and the duty of the Prophets is not more than educating people and reminding them of the right path. They have never been authorised to force people to the Truth.

The following Ayat are the examples of many:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands clear from error.”(2:256)

“If it had been the Lord's Will, all who are on earth would have believed. Will you then compel mankind against their will to believe?!”(10:99)

“Say, the Truth is from your Lord, let him who will believe, and let him who will reject.”(18:29)

“And you are not the one to overawe them. Therefore, remind with this Quran those who reverence My warnings.”(50:45)

“You shall remind, for you are the reminder. You are not one to manage (men's) affairs”(88:21-22)

“Enlightenments have come to you from your Lord. As for those who can see, they do so for their own good, and those who turn blind, do so to their own detriment. I am not your guardian .”(6: 104)

“If they reject you, then say my work to me and yours to you. You are free from the responsibility of what I do and I for what you do.”(10:41)

“The sole duty of the messenger is to deliver the message, and Allah knows everything you declare and everything you conceal.”(5:99)

“If they argue with you, then say I have simply submitted myself to God; I and those who follow me. And you shall proclaim to those who received the scripture as well as those who did not, ‘would you submit’? If they submit then they have been guided, but if they turn away, your sole mission is to deliver this message. God is Seer of all people.”(3:20)

“You shall obey God and you shall obey the messenger, and beware if you turn away , then know

that the sole duty of our messenger is to deliver the message efficiently. “(5:92)

The above Ayat utterly denounce the practice of inquisition and pressuring the followers of other religions in order to change their beliefs. Nevertheless, preaching and enlightening people is permitted and is the duty of the messengers in a logical manner.

2. Logical Debate And Discussion

Islam whilst respecting other religions and beliefs, may disagree with some of their teachings, finding them illogical, and hence invites their adherents to open discussion and debate in a peaceful and logical manner far from any type of fanaticism and prejudice.

The following Ayat are the examples of this approach:

“And dispute you not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation) unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong. But say, we believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you, our God and your God is One, and it is to Him we submit.”(29:46)

“Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.”(16: 125)

“So announce the good news to My servants, those who listen to the word and follow the best of it. Those are the ones whom Allah has guided and those are the ones endued with understanding. “(39: 17–18)

“Say produce your proof if you are truthful.”(2: 111, 21:24, 16:64)

3. Divine Religions, Grades Of One School

Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a great deal in common. They are all based on monotheism and are committed to increase justice in the world, and the accountability before God. Their historic roots go back to Prophet Abraham and, as such, they are often described as ‘Abrahamic Faith’. They are also the basis of great world civilisations.

Therefore, despite the followers of other religions who consider themselves the chosen nation and the only saved ones, Islam considers all of the divine religions, different grades of the one school. From the Islamic point of view each new divine religion has been the upgraded version of the previous one, prescribed to complete its teachings.

All of the Prophets are the teachers of one school, teaching different grades according to the requirements of the people of their age, and hence if hypothetically all of them descend to earth they were to live together peacefully and each will acknowledge his successor and the one who has come

after him.

An old debate has gone around between the followers of different religions as to who will go to hell and who to heaven. The followers of each religion, with no hesitation claim the eternal life in heaven for themselves, and see hell as the place of all who oppose them. Islam, despite this fanaticism, suggests a very liberal idea. The following Ayat are vividly revealing this idea.

“They say: become Jews or Christians if you would be guided. Say, nay! (I would rather) the religion of Abraham, the True, and he joined no gods with Allah. Say we believe in God, and in what was sent down to us, and in what was sent down to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Patriarchs; and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and all the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them. To Him alone we are submitters.”(2: 135–136)

“The Religion before Allah is Submission to His Will. Nor did the people of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other.”(3: 19)

“And they say: none shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. Those are their (vain) desires. Say produce your proof if you are truthful. Yes, whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord, on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”(2: 111–112)

“Those who believe (in Islam) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures) and the Christians and the Sabians ⁴, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”⁵ (2:62)

4. The Principle Of Righteousness And Justice

The last suggestion prescribed by Islam, to achieve a *peaceful coexistence* among people of different cultures and religions, is that Islam has always advocated for the principle of justice and righteousness within humankind. Muslims are encouraged to deal kindly and justly with all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike with the exception of those who are fighting Muslims. The Holy Quran revealing the above fact utters:

“Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for your faith, nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them, for Allah loves those who are just.”(60:8)

Religious Coexistence And The Prophetic Traditions

Following the Words of God, the Prophet of Islam (S) has emphasised on the issue of religious coexistence with the followers of different divine religions. The following are some examples of the Prophetic treatment with them.

1. "Whoever annoys a Dhimmii then I am his enemy and whoever I am his enemy I will be his enemy in hereafter."
2. "Whoever Muslim launches a charge against a chaste Dhimmi he will be punished in hereafter with a lash of fire."
3. "Whoever Muslim acts unjustly with a *confederate* or diminishes his right or over burden him or takes away something from him out of his desire, then I will be his enemy in hereafter."
4. Imam Ali ('a), the Caliph of Muslims after the Prophet, in his Document of Instruction written to his Governor in Egypt where around 15 million Christians were living, writes: "... *Accustom your heart to mercy for the subjects, and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like a greedy beast who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation.*"[6](#)

Historical Cases

1. The Time Of The Prophet Muhammad (S)

a. ***The Treaty of Sinai:*** In the year 2 A.H. the Prophet of Islam (S) signed a treaty with the Christians of Sinai Land which was written by Imam Ali. A part of that treaty reads: "*I (Prophet Muhammad) promise that I will not change their priests and monks nor do I expel them from their worshipping places. I do not prohibit their pilgrims from their travels, nor do I destroy their churches. I do not convert any churches to mosques and whichever Muslim does so has violated God's covenant... Muslims should not force them to anything. They must be kind to them and respect them all... Should their churches require any repair, Muslims should help them as much as they can and they should allow Christians practise their rituals...*"[7](#)

b. ***The Treaty of Najran:*** Najran was a village in the border of Yemen . The following treaty was signed between the Prophet and the Christians of Najran in the year 9 A.H. in a situation that Muslims with no doubt had an upper hand over the Christians, and yet the Prophet did not take advantage of their miserable situation.

A part of the treaty reads: "*No priest or monk should be expelled from his church or its surroundings. No Muslim has the right to humiliate them. Our army shall not occupy their lands...*"[8](#)

It is interesting to note that according to the authority of Halabi when the delegate of the Christians of Najran came to Madina to negotiate the treaty it was the time of their prayer. They asked the Prophet of Islam if they could pray beforehand. The Prophet gave them the permission to pray in the Mosque, where they all prayed in the Mosque facing the east. [9](#)

Despite the sabotage and the mischief that many of the People of the Book were engaged in against

Muslims in the beginning of Islam, the Prophet of Islam never deprive them of his blessing and merciful attitude. He attended their parties; escorted their dead; visited their sick, and borrowed from them and loaned to them. The Following story is an example of many:

c. **Respecting a dead Jew:** It is quoted from the authority of Jabir Ibn Abdullah that: A Jewish funeral was passing where we and the Prophet were sitting. The Prophet in respect of the dead body stood up. We surprisingly asked: O Messenger of Allah! Isn't he a Jew?! The prophet replied: 'Was he not a soul?!

[10](#)

2. After The Prophet Muhammad

a. **People of the Book are included in the Social Security:** As it mentioned in the Islamic jurisprudence, it is the duty of the Islamic State to cover the basic expenditure of retired citizens irrespective of their cultures and faiths. Muslim jurists from the first century of Islam have opened a particular chapter in which they have approved that non-Muslims should enjoy equal right for Social Security, and it is the duty of the State to cover their basic expenditures from the Public Treasury if they are old or unable to work. The following story is one of their proofs:

Imam Ali ('a) was passing by a road. He saw an old beggar asking people for help. He asked his companions who the man was? "He is a Christian", replied the companions. Imam Ali while he looking upset said: ' You used him as much as he could work for you, and now that he is old and unable, have left him behind! Make sure you provide him a reasonable life from the treasury.' [11](#)

b. **Justice for All:** As mentioned earlier in this paper, Islam is the religion of justice. According to the Holy Quran, the provision of social justice is one of the major purposes of the dispatch of the Prophets to humanity¹². The following story reveals the spirit of social justice in an Islamic society.

"Imam Ali, the Caliph of Muslims, was sitting at the Mosque of Kofa. Abdullah Ibn Qofl a Jewish man from the tribe of Tamim passed by holding an armour at hand. Imam Ali recognising the armour said to him where he had taken the armour from, for it had already been stolen from the treasury. The Jewish man, trusting Islamic justice agreed to follow the Imam to court. Shorayh, the judge of the court was the delegate of Imam Ali. Yet, the Imam asked the judge to ignore the background of both of the parties and issue a just verdict. Utilising the Islamic judicial methodology the Jewish man won the case against the Caliph of the Muslims and the man was not found guilty. Nevertheless, as soon as he left the court, his conscious smote him, and he was impressed by the Islamic justice. He then turned back to the court and confessed that he had found the armour somewhere on the way and was happy now to return it to the treasury. Upon his confession Imam Ali gave him a gift and the man converted to Islam."¹³

c. **Don't forget your neighbor:** One of the servants of Ibn Abbas, the companion of the Prophet, narrates: "One day we slaughter a sheep at home. Ibn Abbas told me to leave a share for our neighbor who happened to be a Jew. He repeated his statement several times until I asked him why he was so

much concerned about that Jewish neighbor. He replied: The Prophet of Islam advised us so much about our neighbor that I'm afraid he may have a share in my inheritance.”

d. ***A grant Muslim clergy poetry eulogises a non Muslim clergy:*** Sayyed Radi, the collector of Nahjul-Balagha and one of the greatest Muslim clergies of the fourth century of Islam wrote an elegy in memory of Abu Ishaq Assabi, one of his contemporary clergyman who was a Sabian. After being criticised by some narrow-minded Muslims, his answer was I eulogised his knowledge. [14](#)

Georgi Zaydan after quoting several stories as above concludes: “Muslims of early Islam after conquering a new land, would not interfere in the internal affairs of the inhabitants of that place. Christians were all free to practice their own culture and rituals.

They even did not interfere with papal edicts of Constantine regarding Christians of Damascus ... Muslim Caliphs would never force any non-Muslim to convert to Islam. They were even participating in some of their religious celebrations such as Christmas and Palm Sunday. If a school or hospital was built by the Islamic State Muslims and non Muslims would enjoy those facilities equally.” [15](#)

Further Readings

1. Setton , K. M. ‘A History of the Crusades’ 5 vols.
2. James A. Brundage, ‘The Crusades: A documentary Survey’.
3. Walsh, William, ‘Characters of the Inquisition’.
4. Peter Edward M, ‘Inquisition’. An examination of the European inquisition and its influence on the modern political arena.
5. Louis Cheikho, ‘ Christian Ministers & Secreteries in Islam (622–1517)’
6. Z. Korbani, ‘Islam & Human Rights’.
7. Ann Elizabeth, ‘Islam & Human Rights’
8. Barakat Ahmad, ‘Muhammad & the Jews’
9. Ahmad Thomson, ‘Blood on the Cross (Islam in Spain)’
10. Munawar A. Anees, ‘Christian–Muslim Relations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.

[1.](#) The slogan of Christians who launched the First Crusade against Muslims by the order of Pope Urban II in 1095.

[2.](#) Any religious doctrine opposed to the dogma of a particular church, especially a doctrine held by a person professing faith in the teachings of that church. The term originally meant a belief that one arrived at by oneself (Greek haireisis, “choosing for oneself”) and is used to denote sectarianism in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul. Soon after Christianity became established as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century, heresy and heterodoxy

became equivalent to treason.

[3.](#) The flavour of Voltaire's activities could be summarised in the phrase he often used: *écrasons l'infâme* ("let us crush the infamous one"). With this phrase, he referred to any form of religion that persecutes non adherents or that constitutes fanaticism.

[4.](#) Although the interpreters of the Holy Qur'an hold different opinion as who are the Sabians, it seems they are the followers of one of the previous divine religions, being the followers of Noah, Abraham or Christians of St. John.

[5.](#) This Aya has revealed a very controversial issue among Muslim theologians, and I have dealt with it, in a different paper.

[6.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Letter 53

[7.](#) Gorgi Zaydan, the History of Arab and Islamic Civilisation, vol. 4 p.120

[8.](#) Al-Baladeri, Fotoohul-Boldan p.65

[9.](#) Al-Halabi, Assyrah Vol.3 p.239

[10.](#) Al-Bokhari, Assahih

[11.](#) Al-Aameli, Wasaelul-Shi'a, vol.11 p.49

[12.](#) See the Holy Qur'an 57:25

[13.](#) Al-Kolayni, Al-Kafi, vol.7, pp. 385,386

[14.](#) Gorgi Zaydan

[15.](#) Ibid, Vol.4, pp128,129

Chapter 9: The Blueprint of Life

Evolution Or/And Creation

Throughout history, philosophers, religious thinkers and scientists have attempted to explain the history and variety of life on Earth. During the rise of modern science in Western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, a predominant view held among Christians was that God created every organism on Earth more or less as it now exists.

But in that time the study of fossils and natural history, a modern evolutionary theory began to take shape. Early evolutionary theories proposed that all of life on Earth evolved gradually from simple organisms. Today this has become the cornerstone of modern biology.

Since ancient time man has been trying to develop explanations for the origins of life. Different cultures have attempted this in different ways. These are some of the mysterious questions that have been asked:

- 1) Does life exist elsewhere in the universe?
- 2) Is earth the only planet where life has developed?
- 3) Is the present human evolved from the Chimpanzee?

Evolution; The Cornerstone Of Modern Biology

Today, evolution is recognized as the cornerstone of modern biology. Usually every student who chooses a unit in biology at high school is taught about the theory of evolution. It is also assumed that evolution is in conflict with believing in God as a creator.

The objective of this chapter is to unmask this myth and to show to you that:

- 1) Evolution is nothing more than a theory not a scientific fact.
- 2) It stands in no conflict with the Islamic conception of creation.

Historical Background

The Greek philosopher Anaximander, who lived in the 500s BC, is generally credited as the earliest evolutionist. He believed that humans evolved from fishlike aquatic beings that left the water once they had developed sufficiently to survive on land.

Nonetheless, the modern concept of evolution is credited to Darwin and Wallace; the British scientists of 19 th century. Charles Darwin by publishing his book ' On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection' on November 24, 1859, set off a storm of controversy. According to Darwin:

“All living organisms, from microscopic bacteria to plants, insects, birds, and mammals, share a common ancestor”.

The animal most closely related to humans, for example, is the chimpanzee. The common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees is believed to have lived approximately 6 million to 7 million years ago. On the other hand an ancestor common to humans and reptiles lived some 300 million years ago.

Fossil records suggest that the modern groups of vertebrates appeared in the following order:

Jawless fish: 500 million years ago

Bony fish: 400 million years ago

Amphibians: 360 million years ago

Reptiles: 300 million years ago

Birds: 190 million years ago

Mammals: 150 million years ago

(Ref: “Biology”pp275. Kate Mudie & Judith Brotherton)

The Roots Of The Theory Of Evolution

1. Paleontology (the study of fossils)

Fossils are ant preserved remains or traces of past life found in rocks of different ages. Biologists by measuring radioactivity in the rocks in which a fossil is embedded, can determine the age of that fossil.

2. Distribution of Species

Scientists also learn about evolution by studying how different species of plants and animals are geographically distributed in nature, and how they relate to their environment and to each other. Darwin visited New South Wales, staying in Sydney in 1836 and took examples of plants and animals to compare how they are related to animals and plants in the rest of the world.

3. Anatomical Similarities

4. Molecular Similarities

That almost all living organisms have DNA.

5. Direct Observation

Insects have short life spans and therefore enable the biologists to observe their reproduction in the laboratory. Fruit flies are the example of such observation for evolutionary process.

6. Determining Life's Origins

In 1953 two American chemists Miller and Urey attempted to produce the atmosphere of primitive Earth nearly 4 billion years previously. With the mixture of hydrogen, methane, ammonia and water vapour they managed to produce amino acids, which are the basic components for life.

Comments On The Roots Of The Theory Of Evolution

1. Similarities between species do not necessarily prove they are evolved from each other. It rather suggests their unique Source of Creation as well as their unique design in the cosmos. After visiting Australia, Darwin writes the following in his diary:

“Earlier in the evening I had been lying on a sunny bank reflecting on the strange character of the Animals in this country as compared to the rest of the World.”

A Disbeliever in everything beyond his own reason, might exclaim, ‘*Surely two distinct creators must have been at work; their object however has been the same and certainly in each case the end is*

complete.”^{[1](#)}

2. ‘ Darwin 's Black Box'. ‘Darwin’s Black Box’ is the name of a book written by Michael J. Behe, a biochemist at Lehigh University in the USA . Black box refers to a device that functions but whose inner workings are a mystery. This book is a biochemical challenge to evolution. In his book, Behe argues that the idea of Darwinism is being pushed to its limits by discoveries in biochemistry.

Behe asserts that research has shown that life is based on machines, and machines on molecules. He claims that molecule machines cannot be explained by random mutation or natural selection. Thus, he says, in ancient times, all biology was a black box; that is none of the workings of life were known. Later on, scientific experimentation and observation led to greater understanding. But this greater understanding led to even more black boxes on a smaller scale.

“The Question of how life works still remains– it is the ultimate black box.”

3. ‘ Not By Chance’

‘Not By Chance’ is the name of a book written by Dr. Lee Spetner in which he shatters the modern theory of evolution. Unlike Darwin, neo–Darwinism claims that evolution works by accumulating random mutations. For example, according to a neo–Darwinist called Stebbins, it is estimated that to get to a new species would take about 500 steps (point mutations).

Dr. Spetner shattering this theory, calculates the probability of this and concludes that it is impossible for a new species to ever originate in this way for the available time (of the Earth) is not enough to produce new species. He further adds that the only way to explain evolution without a trial or error process, is magic ‘set up’ of the genome, or as theists say ‘designing’.

4. Conflict with the second law of thermodynamics

The second law is a straightforward law of physics with the consequence that, in a closed system, one cannot finish any real physical process with as much useful energy as you had to start with — some is always wasted. This means that a perpetual motion machine is an impossibility.

Life is organization. From prokaryotic cells, eukaryotic cells, tissues, and organs, to plants and animals, families, communities, ecosystems, and living planets, life is organization, at every scale. The evolution of life is the increase of biological organization, if it is anything.

Clearly, if life originates and makes evolutionary progress without any *external organizing input* , then something has organized itself. This is in conflict with the second law of thermodynamics.

There is a well documented, well illustrated on line article about two types of entropy ^{[2](#)}and their relation with evolution. The article is ‘The Second Law of Thermodynamics’ by Brig Klyce and can be found online at: <http://www.panspermia.org/seconlaw.htm> [11]

Conclusions To Be Drawn From This Discussion

1. Evolution is not a scientific law as it is taught to us at school.
2. Evolution, even as a theory, is another proof for the existence of a unique Designer and Creator of the universe.
3. There is no evidence that life has developed, or even could have developed, by a purely natural process. Even Miller and Urey could never produce a living organism.
4. The question of the origin of life is still an ultimate 'black box ' for contemporary scientists.

[1.](#) Ibid, p. 176

[2.](#) A quantity expressing how much of a system's thermal energy is unavailable for conversion into mechanical work.

Chapter 10: Dad! But...Who Made God?!

Bertrand Arthur William Russell; the British philosopher and mathematician of the 20th century (died in 1970) with his emphasis on logical analysis influenced the course of 20th century philosophy.

He is a well-known in the West for his anti-religious attempts. His work 'What I believe' which was published in 1925 barred him from teaching at the College of the City of New York, for his attacks on religion.

In his lecture 'Why I Am Not a Christian' delivered at the Battersea Town Hall in London in 1927, he argues the existence of God by refuting the argument of the First Cause as presented by Christian theologians.

This chapter aims at addressing his argument and unveiling the fallacy of it. I will also elaborate on the misleading theological roots to his misconceptions of God.

Part of his lecture on 'Why I Am Not a Christian' reads:

"Perhaps the simplest and easiest to understand is the argument of the First Cause. It is maintained that everything we see in this world has a cause, and as you go back in the chain of Causes further and further you must come to a First Cause, and to that First Cause you give the name of God. That argument, I suppose, does not carry very much weight nowadays, because, in the first place, cause is not quite what it used to be.

The philosophers and the men of science have got going on cause, and it has not anything like the vitality that it used to have; but apart from that, you can see that the argument that there must be a First

Cause is one that cannot have any validity.

I may say that when I was a young man, and was debating these questions very seriously in my mind, I for a long time accepted the argument of the First Cause, until one day, at the age of eighteen, I read John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, and I there found this sentence: "My father taught me that the question, Who made me? cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question, Who made God?"

That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think, the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument. It is exactly of the same nature as the Hindu's view, that the world rested upon an elephant, and the elephant rested upon a tortoise; and when they said, "How about the tortoise?" the Indian said, "Suppose we change the subject."

The argument is really no better than that. There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why it should not have always existed. There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination. Therefore, perhaps, I need not waste any more time upon the argument about the First Cause".

The main elements of Russell's arguments rest under the following questions:

1. If everything has a cause, then why not God?
2. Has the world always existed or not?

My aim in this chapter is to show that it is not true that everything has a cause, and also the timely eternity of the world does not make it needless to God.

Who Has Made God?!

There are three different approaches to this question.

1. Questioning is an innovation (Just have faith)

The first attitude towards such very basic religious questions is to blame, stop, prevent and condemn the questioner. This attitude is observed by mainstream Christians when they are asked about issues such as Trinity, as well as Traditional Muslim scholars.

Malik Ibn Anas one of the four jurisprudential leaders of the Traditional Muslims was asked once about the meaning of the Aya 5 in Chapter 20 of the Holy Quran which says:

“The Most Gracious (Allah) rose over the Throne .”(20:5)

He became so upset that had never been seen like that. The questioner with a face down full of regrets had sweats on his head. Malik then said: *“All what we know is that He rose over His Throne, but HOW it is unknown and the question is an innovation .”*

I remember when I was eighteen I developed some doubts and questions about the existence of God. Eventually, I put my questions in writing and send them to one of the Islamic institutions that I was aware of.

Unfortunately, to my extreme surprise the sole answer I received was that apparently I had been captured by Satan and need to seek refuge with God by reciting some of the Chapters of the Quran!

Well, perhaps the only benefit of that style of answer for me was to make me more enthusiastic to discover the Truth by myself and made me determine to begin my spiritual journey.

Needless to say that I found later on that the above attitude has no confirmation in the Quran nor in the lifestyle of the Prophet of Islam and his twelve successors. They have always been addressing all questions in the best manner without condemning or labeling the questioners with heresy or innovation.

2. Denial

The second attitude is to deny the existence of God as Russell and many others perhaps do when they fail to find any answer for the question.

As a matter of fact, the first and the second group have a similar problem in that they have both failed to find any answer for the question. The difference however between them is that the first group have just censored their minds and convinced themselves that they should have just faith in it. You tell them how can you prove it. They tell you we can't for it is beyond logic! And then you are speechless.

3. Answer

I believe the above question is one of the very basic questions about the existence of God and if this does not have any answer, then no religious issue shall be analysed logically.

The Fallacy Of The Question

As a matter of fact, there is a fallacy in the question as presented by Russell. It is very disappointing to see a thinker such as Russell misinterpret the argument of the First Cause and assumes that the Creator of the world is part of the world, even though the first part!

I may however justify the fallacy of Russell's argument by the misrepresentation of many Christian theologians from whom Russell is quoting.

The concept of God for a typical Christian from childhood is a humane concept. The Old Testament teaches that God has created man of His own image and the central doctrine of Christianity, which suggest that Jesus Christ is incarnate son of God and is believed to be embodiment of God in human form.

Such wrong concepts of God are, I believe, one of the major reasons for declination of religion in the West and the prevalence of atheism.

Let us remember that Russell's title of lecture was 'Why I Am Not a Christian', not why he does not believe in God.

Every Possible Being Needs A Cause

All what we perceive in this world enjoy inevitably the following characteristics.

1. **Limitation:** all the objects around us from a tiny atom to the giant galaxies have occupied a limited space. They may vary in size and volume but they are all in common is the fact that they all have a limit. In other words they all belong to a specific time and place.

2. **Change:** Einstein's theories implied that the universe was not static, but dynamic. Everything in this world is subject to change and transformation and alteration. No condition is permanent in this world. Nothing in this world remains unchanged.

They are either growing, moving and developing up or declining, perishing and decaying. Once upon a time, you are young, energetic and flourishing and after a while your health declines until you lose your energy and become so weak as your infancy period. *"And he whom We grant long life, we reverse him in creation (with weakness after strength)"*

3. **Dependence:** Another universal characteristic of the living things in this world is that they are all dependant and conditional to others. In other words, everything in this world does exist if and only if one or many other things already exist.

Thus, the existence of things in this world is 'IF existing'. There is nothing in this world that exist unconditional and irrespectively. You only exist if you had parents and if there is oxygen for you to breath and if and if.

4. **Need:** when everything in this world is conditional in their existence, they are also in need of other elements. Every object in this world is needy to numerous other objects to exist. There is nothing in this world that is needless of others. We are all needy and indigent. Our existence is fully covered by the universal cloak of poverty no matter how rich we assume we may be.

5. **Relativity:** All the sensational objects in this world are relative whether in their degrees of existence,

their size, ability, power, beauty, age etc. When we say for instance that 'the Sun is large'. This is true only in comparison to planets like earth or mars, not if compared to super giant stars with diameters that are more than 400 times that of the Sun.

The true concept of the argument of the First Cause is that all the living things in this world with their characteristics of being finite and limited in their extent, changeable, dependant, needy and relative need in their existence something which is unlimited, doesn't change, is independent, needless and absolute.

This Being is not part of this world or else would suffer from the same characteristics. At the same time, objects with the above-named characteristics cannot exist by themselves. As numerous zeros do not make any number.

In conclusion, the fallacy of Russell's argument is what he maintained that '*If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause* .' The answer is that everything in this material world has a cause. Therefore, his main mistake is that he assumed God exist along with other things in this world, and because of that assumption maintain to refute Him as the First Cause.

Does The World Have Any Beginning?!

In spite of different theories about the beginning of the universe, still science has no confirmation about the matter.

On the one hand we read from Albert Einstein in his theory of General Relativity which is considered the most accurately tested theory known to science, that the universe is expanding away from a point and if so then it had a beginning at that point. If the universe had a beginning then it must have a Beginner.

Dr. Wendy L. Freedman in his article '**The Expansion Rate and Size of the Universe**' published in *Scientific American* July 2001 edition :

"At present, several lines of evidence point toward a high expansion rate, implying that the universe is relatively young, perhaps only 10 billion years old. The evidence also suggests that the expansion of the universe may continue indefinitely. Still, many astronomers and cosmologists do not yet consider the evidence definitive. We actively debate the merits of our techniques".

On the other hand, according to Carl Sagan in his introduction to Stephen Hawking's best sell; 'A Brief History of Time', the book represents an effort to posit 'a universe with no edge in space, no beginning or end in time, and nothing for a Creator to do'.

One should however, bear in mind that all of these are just proposals.

The number of stars visible to the naked eye from earth has been estimated total 8000; 4000 for each hemisphere. The astronomers have calculated that the stars in the Milky Way number in the hundred of

billions. The Milky Way in turn is also one of several hundred million such galaxies. Astronomers estimated that there are about 50 billion galaxies in the universe.

The question of why the universe exists remains the ultimate mystery. Professor Derek Parfit, a contemporary philosopher and a senior lecturer at New York University, declares that "No question is more sublime than why there is a Universe: why there is anything rather than nothing."

Derek Parfit, "Why Anything? Why This?" *London Review of Books* 20/2 (January 22, 1998), p.24.

Does The World Need A Creator Because It Is Timely Finite?

Russell in his refute of the first Cause has also assumed that the reason because of which this world needs a Creator is that it is timely finite and a beginning for its existence. Part of his lecture reads:

'There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination.'

Similarly Hawking also states: "The universe would not be created, not be destroyed; it would simply be. What place, then for a Creator?" (A Brief History of Time)

If the Big Bang theory is such a good theory, why doesn't it explain the origin of life?

Because it isn't designed to do so, nor will it ever be, at least not in the way you want it to. You are asking too much of a single physical theory, and perhaps not realizing that no single theory can ever explain ALL aspects of reality at any arbitrary scale.

Big Bang theory will help us answer the BIG questions of the general conditions of matter, space and time. It will, hopefully, tell us why certain physical constants are as they are, and how galaxies were formed.

It will not be able to tell us how individual stars and planets formed because that is covered by a second rank of physical theories which only depend on very local physics at a scale millions of times smaller than a galaxy in size.

Big Bang will tell us why certain 'life' issues were settled by nature the way they were such as the initial hydrogen to helium abundance ration, and the age of the universe being comfortably longer than it takes for chemistry to create living systems.

But the details of how these chemistries led to life...and particular sentient life...are not covered by the physics of Big Bang theory because the timescales and length scales that are relevant to life are trillions upon trillions of times smaller than the scales covered by Big Bang theory.

Historical Background

There are so many literature and ongoing debates amongst Christian theologians tackling such naturalistic assumption that the universe has always existed.

Christian as well as Muslim theologians believed that the world is timely finite and limited and in this way they proved the existence of God. In other words, they assumed the sole reason they can prove the existence of God is if the universe has beginning and then it needs a Beginner. According to theologians the reason of being in need of a cause is that something was not and then it is.

Muslim philosophers by contrast, proved that the reason because of which a being needs a cause is not that it is timely limited. According to Muslim philosophers the reason for the Creator is possibility of being and essential need.

This is considered of the causes of the glories of Islamic philosophy. Muslim philosophers believe that the discussion about whether all things must have a beginning or not is an imaginary discussion. The outstanding contemporary Muslim philosopher Professor Al-Tabataba'i in his '**The Fundamentals of Philosophy & the Methods of Realism**' states:

"Our mind is used to timely events and hence, imagines a hollow space and an unlimited time for the beginning of the world, then imagines a being like an infant in the cradle of space which is handed over to the nurse of the time who was ready in advance to develop it."

Therefore, Russell is correct in that the idea that things must have a beginning is due to the poverty of our imagination as the late Al-Tabataba'i also stated, but he is wrong in concluding that this would make the world needless to any Creator. For according to Muslim philosopher all beings are divided into two: possible beings and Necessary Being. Possible being is in need of Necessary being for its being.

Chapter 11: The Fingerprints of God

'We certainly show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the Truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a Witness over all things?' [1](#)

Introduction

We go about our daily lives understanding almost nothing of the world around us. We give little thought to the machinery that generates the sunlight that makes life possible for us. The gravity that glues us to an Earth that would otherwise send us spinning off into space, or to the atoms of which we are made and on whose stability we fundamentally depend.

Maybe except in our childhood, few of us get a chance to wonder why nature is the way it is. We have taken everything in this world so much for granted that do not realize what would happen to all our daily activities if life on this melting planet was otherwise.

The purpose of this chapter is to share with you the testimony of all living things including every single cell in your body that there is an Omni-intelligent Creator who has designed them and there is no room for chance or dice playing in the story of creation.

If you have ever been wondering where can you find God, this chapter is a must for you to read. Nevertheless, all I can do is to show you the Signs for His presence and His fingerprint on every being including yourself.

His Fingerprint On Atom

Atom is the smallest physical building block of nature. In ancient Greek philosophy the word "atom" was used to describe the smallest bit of matter that could be conceived of. This "fundamental particle", to use the present-day term for this concept, was thought of as indestructible; in fact, the Greek word for atom (atoms) means "not divisible".

All atoms of any given element behave in the same way chemically. Thus, from a chemical viewpoint, the atom is the smallest entity to be considered.

The lightest of all atoms, hydrogen, has a diameter of approximately 10^{-8} cm and a mass of about 1.7×10^{-24} g. An atom is so small that a single drop of water contains more than a thousand billion billions atoms. Since atoms are hundreds of times smaller than the wavelength of visible light, they could not even be revealed by any optical microscope, no matter how powerful.

Each atom has two particles; proton with a positive charge and neutron which is an uncharged particle. The number of proton and neutron in every atom is exactly the same. The mass of a proton is 1.6726×10^{-27} kg, or approximately 1,836 times that of an electron. In a simple language a proton weigh nearly one million billion of a gram and still an electron is 1836 times lighter than proton!

The structure of an atom is explained in quantum physics in that electrons move in definite orbits at a considerable distance from the nucleus with the speed of 3000 kilometers per second. This means in every second an electron moves two million times around itself.

Having considered all sophisticated and superlative structural design of an atom, is not just the matter of a common sense to acknowledge the intelligence of its Designer? And if every atom is to be considered a word of God and a fingerprint of His creation, imagine how many uncountable signs is already out for you to know Him.

Let us now recite together:

“And if all the trees on the earth were pens and the sea were ink (wherewith to write), with seven seas behind it to add to its supply, still the Words of God would not be exhausted. Verily, God is All-Might, All-Wise.”(3:127)

His Fingerprint On Insects

Perhaps with the exception of mainly bees and earthworms our usual response to insects is to ignore or to annihilate them. Most people, if they could, would deny insects’ planetary citizenship.

Yet, in the final analysis, life on earth would be impossible without insects; they are essential links in the ecological chain.

Nearly out of 11 million species of life on earth, one million species are the insects and there are still more to be discovered. Some insects are so small that can easily go through the whole of a needle.

In spite of their extreme variety in their superficial appearance, there are many common characteristics in their anatomy, reproductive systems, social structure, etc.

For instance, the eyes of all insects are compound with many facets. In the case of a housefly for example this is as many as 4000 facets.

The ways insects communicate are amazingly different. Some by increasing and decreasing of the light such as flies, or by the means of smelling such as ants, or waggle-dance as in bees.

In order for the honeybees to manufacture a kilogram of honey, every worker bee needs to ingest the nectar of the flowers 65000 times and convert it to honey in special sacs in their oesophagi and the total colony of the bees fly over 45 to 64 million flowers to complete the production of a kilogram of honey.

Really, how would a worker bee distinguish poisonous flowers from the sweet ones?

How this factory of honey manufacturing has been made within this tiny insect?

Let us recite together:

“And your Lord revealed to the bee...”(16:68)

Many chapters of the Quran have the names of animals and insects such as ‘bee’ (chapter 16), ant (chapter 27), spider (29).

His Fingerprint On Earth

“And in the earth are Signs for those who have faith with certainty.”(51:20)

Earth is the third planet from the Sun. It is like an elliptical spaceship which weigh 6.6000 million billion

tones.

The Earth has 8 different movements. In common with the entire solar system, the Earth is moving through space at the rate of approximately 72000 km/h. The Earth and its satellite, the moon, also move together in an elliptical orbit about the Sun with an approximate speed of 940,000 km over one solar year of nearly 365 days making seasons.

It also travels along it at a velocity of about 106,000 km/h. The core temperature of the Earth is up to 195000 degrees which is 35 times more than the surface of the Sun.

Atmosphere

The Earth is protected by a mixture of gases that has a gravitational field which is strong enough to prevent the gases of the Earth from escaping on the one hand, and to prevent the harmful rays of the Sun as well as many celestial meteors hitting the Earth on the other hand.

Everyday 20 million meteors with the speed of about 50 km/s are shot towards the Earth and its only due to the atmosphere of the Earth that we even do not realize their exposure and destruction. Do you know one of those 20 million meteors is enough to destroy life on earth?

Let us then recite together:

“And We have made the heaven (above the Earth) a roof, safe and well-guarded. Yet, they turn away from its Signs.”(21:32)

Do you know if the diameter and circumference of the Earth were a little bit more or less, it affects its gravity and life is destroyed on earth?

Have you ever imagined if the distance of the Earth from the Sun were a little bit more or less than it is, the Earth would be either too hot live and all the water would have been evaporated, or too cold and frozen and again no life would be possible?

Can you really say that all these are so accurately designed just by chance? Or:

“And there is a measure with Him of everything”(13:8)

Water

Water is the major constituent of living matter. From 50 to 90 percent of the weight of living matter is water. Blood in animals and sap in plants consist largely of water and serve to transport food and remove waste material.

Ocean covers about three-quarters of the Earth's surface. Nonetheless, it is not drinkable. So how can all living organisms benefit from it?

“God is He Who sends the winds, so that they raise clouds, and spread them along the sky as He wills, and then break them into fragments, until you see rain drops come forth from their midst.”(30:48)

When rivers of water flow towards the ocean they carry the minerals with them to make the ground suitable for farming on the one hand, and keep the ocean salty to avoid the stink. However, since such salty water is not suitable for drinking, it has to be refined.

Unlike other liquids, water has unusual physical and chemical properties. It is one of very few naturally occurring liquids with evaporation properties. Evaporation system purifies the water from all the minerals like a huge refinery and drop from the clouds.

Do you not see the intelligence behind all these natural processes?!

Imagine if the raindrops were not in their ordinary diameter sizes, and would have poured like a river, do you think still they would be useful?! Which wisdom and intelligence had made the water cycling system in the present manner?!

His Fingerprint On Sun

The Sun is the star that by the gravitational effects of its mass, dominates the solar system, the planetary system that includes the Earth. The Sun has a diameter of 1,390,000 km. The total mass of Sun is 200 billion billion tones. The Sun is 10 million times bigger than the Earth.

Sun: The Main Supporter Of Life On Earth

The Sun furnishes directly or indirectly all of the energy supporting life on Earth. Some of its very obvious benefits are:

- 1) The Sun is made up primarily of hydrogen. Every second it generates more than 657 million tons of hydrogen, which by the radiation of its electromagnetic energy supports life on Earth. This is because all foods and fuels are derived ultimately from plants that are using the energy of sunlight.
- 2) All planets in the solar system are moving on their orbits around the Sun due to the gravitational effects of the Sun, or else, they would destroy immediately.
- 3) If there were no energy released from the Sun, the Earth would have been an uninhabitable frozen planet.
- 4) Without the energy of the sunlight, no plants would photosynthesize, and no evaporation for raining would occur.

And the list is much longer than our patience.

Scientists believe the Sun has been generating such a vast energy for about 4.5 billion years and can continue for another 4.5 billion years! On the other hand, as I mentioned it generates 657 million tons of hydrogen every second!

Could you calculate how much energy it has generated so far?!

Where all this energy is coming from?

Let us recite together:

“And there is not a thing, but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down except in a known measure.”(15:21)

“And of His Signs are the night and the day, and the Sun and the Moon.”(41:27)

His Fingerprint On Heavens

Let us now turn our gaze towards the starry sky above us. Do we know what is really out there? Can we find the fingerprints of God there too?

Here we are on the planet Earth that is one of the planets of the solar system. The solar system is located in the Milky Way galaxy; the large disc-shaped galaxy.

The diameter of the disc is about 100,000 light years. (unit of length used in astronomy to measure vast distances. It is equal to the distance that light travels in a mean solar or astronomical year. At the rate of approximately 300,000 km/s, a light year is approximately equal to 9,461,000,000,000 km)

The number of stars visible to the naked eye from Earth has been estimated to total 8,000, of which 4,000 are in the northern hemisphere of the sky and 4,000 in the southern hemisphere. At any one time during the night in either hemisphere, only about 2,000 stars are visible. The others are obscured by atmospheric haze, especially near the horizon, and by faint sky light.

Astronomers have calculated that the stars in the Milky Way, the galaxy to which the Sun belongs, number in the hundreds of billions.. The individual stars visible in the sky are simply those that lie closest to the solar system in the Milky Way. Andromeda is the companion galaxy to our Milky Way. Every group of galaxies makes a cluster of galaxies.

Our galaxy is one of a small group of about 20 galaxies that astronomers call the Local Group. The Milky Way and the Andromeda Galaxy are the two largest members, each with 100 to 200 billion stars.

The Milky Way and Andromeda are only two of several hundred million such galaxies visible through large modern telescopes. The largest known galaxy has about 13 times as many stars as the Milky Way.

There is a cluster which consists of about 300 galaxies amidst Great Bear moving away in an opposite direction to Milky Way with the speed of 750 miles per second.

There is also an amazing galaxy which its speed is one third of the light speed. This means, its light visible to our eyes today has left the galaxy more than 4000 million years ago, and by the time we see it, it has already moved 6500 million light years away from its previous location!

The most massive galaxy that was discovered only a year ago by NASA has something like 4 trillion solar masses. This is only our universe and still what we don't know is by far greater!

Astronomers today are suspecting parallel universes, which are yet to be detectable from within our universe!

Could there be other universes outside of our own?

Dr. Sten Odenwald (Hughes STX) for the NASA writes in response to the above question:

"If our universe is infinite, then you can still have an infinite number of other separate universes outside it because so far as humans understand infinity, it can accommodate an infinite number of infinite things.

If the universe is finite...like a ball...then you can think of a bunch of coconuts floating in an infinite ocean, and again you end up with the possibility of having an infinite number of finite universes embedded in some vaster kind of space.

Yes there could be other universes out there, but they would be unobservable no matter how old our universe became...even infinitely old!! So, such universes have no meaning to science because there is no experiment we can perform to detect them."

<http://image.gsfc.nasa.gov/poetry/ask/ask/a11215.html> [12]

"Are you more difficult to create or is the heaven that He constructed?"(79:27)

"This is the creation of Allah, so show Me that which those besides Him have created."(31:11)

Expanding Universe

Since 1929 the astronomer Edwin P. Hubble provided the first evidence that the entire universe is expanding. Later on the general theory of relativity confirmed the expansion of the universe in just the way Hubble observed.

'Scientific American' in its current issue (July 2001) printed an article about the measurement of the expansion rate and the size of the universe.

Don't you still see the fingerprint of the Creator?!

“With power did We construct the heaven. Verily, We are expanding the vastness of space thereof.”(51:47)

Prominent Scientists Find The Fingerprints Of God

شهد الله انه لا اله الا هو و الملائكه و اولوالعلم قائما بالقسط

1) Dr. Ross sees the imprint of the Creator's hand in the Universe:

“Wherever we look....we see evidence of God's design... (When) we examine the cosmos on its largest scale or its tiniest, His handiwork is evident...God's fingerprints are visible.”[2](#)

(Dr. Hugh N. Ross graduated from UBC with a B.Sc. in Physics. Subsequently he earned M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in Astronomy from the University of Toronto .)

2) Professor Jay Roth of the University of Connecticut , says:

“There is so much in the physical nature of the universe we inhabit, the exact balances of everything needed to support life, the piling of coincidence on coincidence, everyone of which is vitally necessary for the development of a stable star with a planet that can support life. These physical properties of the universe lead me to favor a Designer or Creator ...”[3](#)

3) Einstein famous saying: “God does not play dice”.

"Coughlin (of the Los Angeles tabloid Illustrated Daily News, in hot pursuit of asking Einstein a provocative, headline-inducing question) found the right moment while tailing the car that was speeding the couple (the Einstein) north on the coast road to Pasadena . It had stopped to let Einstein stroll over to a small headland known as Sunset Cliffs, where he stood gazing at the sea and sky.

Seizing the moment, Coughlin leaped from his car, the question on his lips, followed by Spang, his camera at the ready. "Doctor", Coughlin said, "is there a God?" Einstein stared at the water's edge some twenty feet below, then turned to his questioner.

Coughlin later wrote: "There were tears in his eyes, and he was sniffing. Spang shot the picture as Einstein was hustled away before he could answer me. "Well," I said, "the way he reacted, he believes in God. Did you ever see such an emotional face?"[4](#)

4) Stephen Hawking expresses the view:

“It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way; except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us. "

5) Paul Davies states it:

"The impression of design is overwhelming. "

6) In 1997 the leading science journal *Nature* published a survey of religious belief among scientists in the United States. The authors found that nearly 40 percent of the 1000 scientists surveyed said they believed in a personal God– 'a God in intellectual and affective communication with humankind, i.e. a God to whom one may pray in expectation of receiving an answer.'⁵.

Why Some Scientists Do Not Believe In God?

A survey was published in 'Nature' in 1998 entitled 'Leading Scientists Still Reject God'. That survey revealed that of the 'elite' biologists of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States , approximately 95 percent were men or women who did not believe in a personal God! ⁶Why would this be?

There are many factors involved. I shall in this brief mention only two out of many:

- 1) God is not observed in my lab! Popular scientific dogma holds that if something can't be proven scientifically, i.e.; by observation and experimentation, it really doesn't exist.
- 2) god of Christianity does not exist. In many instances when a western scientist rejects the existence of God, as a matter of fact, he or she is rejecting the Christin concept of god in terms of resurrection of Jesus and being son of god or god and things like that which is of course nothing more than a myth, and has nothing to do with the true concept of a unique God who is the Creator of all including prophet Jesus. Hence, according to Christians all Jewish people and Muslims are atheists for they do not believe in Jesus as God!

References For Further Study

- 1) The Living Universe: Scientific Evidence of God's Design, Dr. Nigel Tomes
- 2) The Creator and the Cosmos: How the greatest scientific discoveries of the century reveal God: Dr. Hugh Ross
- 3) The God Factor: 50 scientists explain why they believe in God. Edited by Dr. John F. Ashton. First published in Australia in 2001
- 4) Mysteries & Marvels of Nature: Jennifer Owen
- 5) <http://www.nature.com> [13]
- 6) <http://www.sciam.com> [14]

7) <http://www.nasa.gov> [15]

8) <http://www.encyclopedia.com> [16]

1. Refer to Ayah 42:53
2. The Creator and the Cosmos , p. 146
3. Cosmos, Bios, Theos , p. 198
4. Einstein: A Life, Denis Brian, Page 206.
5. Nature, vol. 386, 1997, pp. 435–36
6. Nature, vol. 394, 1998, p.313

Chapter 12: Einstein's Paradox

God's Omniscience And Man's Freedom

Introduction

Many people when they fail in their lives, they relate it to their destiny. They don't want to admit they made a mistake and hence, they failed in their exams, or marriage, business, etc. The concept of determinism or free will plays a central role in our thinking about the world particularly in our apportioning praise and blame.

Quantum theory explains in principle how to calculate what will happen in any experiment involving physical or biological systems, and how to understand how our world works.

We can, for instance, determine the exact time of the solar eclipse on 4 December 2002 in which 72% of the Sun will be covered and is visible in Australia. This foreknowledge lead us to the fact that determinism rules in the physical world.

The question that this article is dealing with is 'can we predetermine the human behaviour' and if his behaviour is foreknown whether by other humans or a divine knowledge, how can we hold him responsible for his/her action?

Nothing has been more terrible for humans throughout the history than admitting that his destiny is predetermined and he has no choice in it. Freedom has been and will be always the most pleasant word for mankind. Hence, nothing can disturb his mind that knowing that all his actions are subdued by a superpower.

This is the secret why the issue of determinism versus free will has been always and issue of concerns for philosophers and thinkers throughout the history.

Albert Einstein (1879–1955) is perhaps the best well-known scientist of the 20th century. His theory of ‘General Relativity’; the most accurately tested theory known to science, lead him to acknowledge that God brought the universe into existence and that He is Intelligent. Yet, he was still puzzled with the paradox that “if God is Omniscient then how is it possible to hold man responsible for his deeds?!”

When the rabbis and persists came to congratulate him on his discovery of God, he said to them:

“If this being is Omnipotent then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also His work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an almighty Being?

In giving out punishment and rewards He would to a certain extent be passing judgment on Himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to Him?”

Unfortunately, none of the clergy Einstein encountered ever gave him a satisfactory answer to his objection. Typically, they responded by saying that God has not yet revealed the answer. They encouraged him to endure patiently and blindly trust the All-Knowing One.

Being puzzled with this question, Einstein, like many other powerful intellects through the centuries, ruled out the existence of God, despite believing in a Creator.

The aim of this chapter is to suggest an answer to this on going debate about one of the most fundamental questions of human nature in a unique style presented by prominent Muslim philosophers.

Definition

The question is whether man’s behaviour, thinking, and feeling are driven by something called free will, or everything is predestined and determined. In other words, is the human behaviour like other objects and events in the world determined under certain cause/s and once the cause/s being given, the event follows invariably, or human behaviour is exempted from this law for human mind has the power or ability to choose a course of action or make a decision without being subject to restraints imposed by antecedent causes, by necessity, or by divine predetermination.

On the one hand, we feel so strongly that we have behavioural choice. On the other hand, modern biology describes humans as mechanisms that follow all of the same deterministic rules as other objects in the universe. How can reconcile our feeling of Free Will with the idea that we are mechanical components of a mechanical universe?

Is none of us really responsible for his/her action? Is freedom to choose an illusion, a myth?

Scope

The validity of either of free will and determinism play a vital role for people and scientists in all different

walks of life; from an average man on the street to psychology, sociology, ethics, religion, law and philosophy.

Psychology

There is a clear dilemma in explaining human behaviour through psychological principles. On the one, hand if psychology is a science of behaviour, then there should be laws allowing the prediction of behaviour, just as there are gravitational laws to predict the behaviour of a falling object. On the other hand, objects have been raised by individuals who believe that humans control their own behaviours and possess free will.

The behaviourists, for instance, are the most obvious proponents of determinism, dating back to Jon B. Watson who made one of the most deterministic assertions ever: *“Give me a dozen healthy infants... and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take anyone at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chief, and yes, even beggar man and thief.”*

Other psychologists like William James, who was interested in religion and believed in free will, was reluctant to abandon the concept that behaviours were not free. At one point, he suggested that mind and body operated in tandem, whereas on another occasion he concluded that they interacted. Clearly, James struggled with the issue, and like others was unable to resolve it.

Ethics

The validity of free will has also been a subject of considerable debating among ethical philosophers. It would appear that a system of ethics must imply free will, for the denial of the ability to choose a course of action would seem to negate the possibility of moral judgment.

A person without moral judgment is not responsible for his or her actions. In an attempt to resolve this problem, ethical philosophers have taken a great variety of position, ranging from absolute determinism to absolute libertarianism.

Law

Determinism has its impact on the court cases as well. The most famous American trial lawyer of the 20th century, Clarence Darrow, was engaged to defend the murderers who had confessed. With the following speech he convinced every jury that his clients were not morally responsible for their actions and hence they don’t deserve the death penalty.

☞ *Every one knows that the heavenly bodies move in certain paths in relation to each other with seeming consistency and regularity which we call (physical) law. ... No one attributes freewill or motive to the material world. Is the conduct of man or the other animals any more subject to whim or choice than the*

action of the planets? ...

We know that man's every act is induced by motives that led or urged him here or there; that the sequence of cause and effect runs through the whole universe, and is nowhere more compelling than with man."

☞ *"(Man's) legs are levers with which he walks. His back is a lever, by which he is able to lift things, through the contraction of the muscles. His arms are levers which he uses in all the activities of life. There is nothing about him that anybody can find ... which isn't mechanical."*

☞ *"The principal thing to remember is that we are all the products of heredity and environment; that we have little or no control, as individuals, over ourselves, and that criminals are like the rest of us in that regard."*

Prof. Norman Swartz: Free will and Determinism:

<http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/swartz/freewill1.htm> [17]

The belief that man's feelings, thoughts and behaviours are all forced on him by one or more determinants has changed the concept of crimes and bad behaviour to be seen as a symptom of illness which requires treatment not punishment. Thus, prisons and jails must be abolished and locked hospital wards substituted for them as needed.

Fallacy Of Darrow's Argument

If Leopold and Loeb were not morally responsible for their behavior, it was because of what others had done to them. But these others, in turn, were not morally responsible for what they had done, since they were the product of what had earlier been done to them.

And so on, and so on. The argument works like a line of dominos, it is – in effect – the domino theory of moral non-responsibility. If someone is to be regarded as not morally responsible for what he does because he is the product of someone else's actions, then, ultimately, no one is responsible for anything he/she does.

It is interesting to note that one of Darrow's biographers reports that although Darrow constantly insisted that his clients did not deserve blame, he himself was a very vain, prideful, man who thought that he, himself, deserved high praise. That biographer comments that Darrow never quite saw, or admitted, this inconsistency in his own views!

Religion

1) Christianity

Determinism in Christianity starts with the story of creation of Adam and Eve as described in the book of Genesis:

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat [1](#)

Thus, from the biblical point of view from the time the Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden. God said, "Adam!" Adam said, "Eve." And, Eve said, "The serpent."! Thus began the pattern of blaming others.

Determinism is important in Christian theology. One of the basic tenets of traditional Christian theology is that god is Omniscient and Omnipotent, and that every human action is foreordained by God. This doctrine seemingly precludes the existence of human free will.

Because morality, duty, and the avoidance of sin are also basic elements in Christian teaching, how, it is asked, can people be morally responsible once predestination is accepted? Many attempts have been made by theologians to explain this paradox. Saint Augustine (350–430), the great Father and Doctor of the Church, firmly believed in predestination, holding that only those elected by God would attain salvation; no one however knows who is among the elect, and therefore all should lead God-fearing, religious lives.

The celebrated French bishop and pulpit orator; Jacques Bossuet (1627–1704) offered another approach, which became widely held; he stated that free will and divine foreknowledge are certain truths that must be accepted even though they are not logically connected. (Extracted from Encyclopedia of Encarta)

2) Islam

Mainly two doctrines; Ash'ari and Mo'tazeli. The mainstream of Sunni Muslim follow the Ash'ari school of thought which is more on determinism. Mo'tazelists in turn believe in absolute free will.

Abu-Ishaq Esfaryeni (who believed in free will) met Qadhi Abdul-jabbar (who believed in determinism) and told him: "Glory to He who is free from committing a sin". Meaning as a determinist you hold god responsible for all the sins.

Qadhi turned around and told him with no hesitation: "Glory to he who nothing happens in his kingdom but what He Wills."!

Philosophical Justification

If all people have is an illusion of behavioral choice, if people are just machines behaving in the only way they can, then what about personal responsibility? How can we hold people responsible for and punish them for their behaviors if they have no choice in how they behave?

Prof. Daniel Dennett (lecturer at Tufts University in the USA) in his book 'Elbow Room' gives a two part answer to this question. First, we hold people responsible for their actions because we know from historical experience that this is an effective means to make people behave in a socially acceptable way.

Second, holding people responsible only works when combined with the fact that people can be informed of the fact that they are being held responsible and respond to this state of affairs by controlling their behavior so as to avoid punishment. People who break the rules set by society and get punished may be behaving in the only way they can, but if we did not hold them accountable for their actions, people would behave even worse than they do with the threat of punishment.

This is a totally utilitarian approach to the issue of responsibility.

Paradoxes Of Freedom In A Logical Argument

There Is No Moral Responsibility

Premise 1: Every action is either **caused** or **uncaused** (i.e. a random occurrence).

Premise 2: If an action is caused (recall Darrow), then that action was not chosen freely and the person who performed that action is not morally responsible for what he/she has done.

Premise 3: If an action is uncaused (i.e. is a random occurrence), then the person who performed that action is not morally responsible for what he/she has done.

Thus, we are not morally responsible for what we do!

Norman Swartz

The reality is that modern philosophy has failed to suggest any convincing answer to the paradox and at the end, they have reached the same conclusion as the average man on the street if not worse than that, as some like Dennett suggest at the end that we have no real behavioral choices, but we continue to behave as if we do! Or to say: God has not revealed it to us yet. Grin and bare it until I solve the paradox for you.

The common mistake of thinkers in the paradox of free will and determinism is that the assumed free will is equal to chaos and if free will accepted then people become totally unpredictable and chaos reigns. And also if the action is caused then the action was not chosen freely. Thus, Swartz put the 2nd premise

of the argument in the paradox of freedom.

As I will explain further in this chapter, we agree with the law of cause and effect and that every action is caused, and that the person is also responsible for his/her action without any contradiction involved. For his freedom of will is one of the factors as well.

Epistemic Determinism (The Problem Of Foreknowledge)

The following is the standard argument for epistemic determinism. It alleges to show that foreknowledge is incompatible with free will.

1) Secular version:

☞ *If x knows that you are going to do (some action) A, then you must do A.*

☞ *But if you must do A, then you have no choice in the matter.*

☞ *Thus if x knows (beforehand) what you are going to do, then you have no free choice.*

foreknowledge is incompatible with free will.

2) Theist version:

- God is Omniscient.

- If God is Omniscient, then I must choose what God knows I am going to choose.

Thus: I'm not truly choosing.

Conclusion

- If I'm not choosing, then I'm not morally responsible for my deeds.

- Believing in Omniscient God leads to the *deterrence theory of punishment and praise*.

Discovering the Fallacy

1. Knowledge about the past:

'Imam Ali ('a) was murdered by Ibn Moljam.'

Today I ask: Who killed Imam Ali ('a)?

Mr. A: Shemer

Mr. B: Ma'moon

Ms. K: Ibn Moljam

Ms. D: Wahshi

Did Ms. K's asserting a truth today somehow or other 'FORCE' Ibn Moljam to kill Imam Ali?!

Obviously not.

2. Knowledge about the future:

'Imam Ali ('a) was murdered by Ibn Moljam.'

In the year 10 AH I ask: Who will kill Imam Ali?

Mr. J : Shemer

Mr. M: Ibn Moljam

Ms. C: Ma'moon

Ms. D: Jo'deh

Will Mr. M's asserting a truth in the year 10 AH somehow or other 'FORCE' Ibn Moljam to kill Imam Ali?!

Obviously not.

3. Natural Laws:

'There will be a lunar eclipse on 30 December 2001.'

Today (10 August 2001) I ask:

"When will be the next lunar eclipse in Australia?"

Mr. A: Oct. 12

Mr. B: Dec. 30

Mr. C: Dec. 25

Mr. D: Nov. 1

Will Mr. B's asserting a truth today about the lunar eclipse somehow or other 'FORCE' the eclipse to occur?!

Obviously not.

Descriptive Laws & Prescriptive Laws

- Natural Laws are Descriptive.
- Moral & Religious Laws are Prescriptive.

Fallacy Discovered

(It must be that) if X knows that I'm going to do A, then I must to A.

Answer:

- It is not true that if X knows that I'm going to do A, then I must do A.
- I will do A whether X knows about it or not.
- X's knowledge is not the cause of my doing A.

Conclusion

- Foreknowledge no more 'forces' the future to be a certain way, than true reports in history books 'force' the past to have been a certain way.
- Free will is compatible with believing in Omniscient God.
- Man is determined to have free will and hence, responsible for his/her deeds.

Compatibility Of Determinism & Free Will

Points:

- 1) The law of cause and effect is a universal law both in the physical world and in human behaviour. Denying this law is equal to chaos and accident, which results in no law and reality in the world.
- 2) Man has a behavioral choice and every healthy person feels this naturally. Hence, even Darrow expects a high praise. Whereas, if his clients were not to be blamed due to deterministic factors, he is not to be praised for the same reason!
- 3) There is no correlation between the law of cause and effect and man's determinism, rather if there is no law of cause and effect man cannot have any freedom of choice. On the other hand, there is no correlation between chaos and man's freedom of choice. If there is no cause for human behaviours, then it random occurs which means the human himself also has no control or power over his actions. Then, where is his freedom of choice?

Free Will & Determinism in the Quran

- Satan; the founder of Determinism: 7:16
- Determinism; the excuse of infidels: 6:148
- A myth called 'Predestination' 8:53
- Man's free will: A Quranic Principle: 18:29
- A Myth called: Societal Determinism:
 - The magicians of Pharaoh: 20:70–72
 - The wife of Pharaoh: 66: 11
 - The son of Noah: 11: 46

If predestination, then...

- Why do we sometimes regret the past?
- Why do we blame the evil-doers?
- Why do we praise the righteous ones?
- Why do we educate our children?
- Why do we strive for moral values?
- Why do we repent?
- Why do we judge the criminals?
- Why do we punish the criminals?
- Why do we protest to transgressors?
- Why do we feel sorrow or happy about the past?

For Further Study

- Man & Destiny: The late Ayatollah Motahari
- Talab Wa Eradeh: The late Imam Khomeini
- Elbow Room: Dr. Daniel C. Dennett

- Free Will and Determinism: Dr. Norman Swartz
- The Foundations of Morality (Chapter 27) : Henry Hazlitt

[1.](#) Genesis 3:9–13

Chapter 13: Monotheism, the Common Word

Unity of God is the common word of all prophets. It is the essential part of all the divine religions. But why there is only One God? Why can't be a company of gods creating and governing the universe?!

You will also learn that the Christian doctrine of Trinity is incompatible with Monotheism.

This chapter aims at introducing the most fundamental aspect of all divine religions, a foundation on which all other religious issues stands; a touchstone by which everything else must be attested.

As a matter of fact, believing in God, requires His unity. In other words, if there is a Creator and Sustainer for the universe, He must be One and only One. Thus, even those who supposedly believe in more than one god, they attempt to unify them to one godhead, and hence plurality of god has no logic.

Proofs Of Unity Of God

1) Infinite Being

This proof is suggested by Mulla Sadra. The similar concept of it is also suggested by **Aquinas, St Thomas** (1225–1274), the Angelic Doctor and the Prince of Scholastics Italian philosopher and theologian.

Premise 1: God is necessary infinite.

Premise 2: There is no plurality in an infinite being.

Thus: There is no possible plurality in godhead.

God is necessarily infinite. If several were to exist, none of them would be really infinite, for, it is impossible to have more than one infinite being. The reason being, each should have some perfection not possessed by the others. In other words, there must be an end for the existence of one of them, so that there would be a room for the other to exist, which results in finite of them.

For instance, if A & B were to own a farm, then each one must own only a limited piece of land. But if A or B owns a farm which covers the entire Earth, then there is no room for the other to own anything.

God is necessarily infinite Being, which means His existence is limitless and hence no room for any other to exist.

Therefore, the essence of Godhead necessitates His Unity. The Holy Quran, referring to this proof, states:

“Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him” (3: 18)

“He is the First and the Last, the Appearance, and the Hidden ” (57:3)

Why God Is Necessarily Infinite?

At least for the following three reasons, we understand that God is infinite.

- 1) Finite means limitation and limitation mean god is limited in existence, knowledge, power, etc. A limited god like other limited and finite creatures is just like other creatures and need to depend in his existence, knowledge and power to an unlimited being.
- 2) Existence is the opposite of non–existence. A being which is necessarily Existent, has no possibility of non–existence.
- 3) The chains of causes and effects in this world must reach the first Cause whose existence is necessarily and independent from others.

2) Universal Unity

Premise 1: The universe is harmonic.

Premise 2: Any harmonic universe needs one conductor.

The Unified Universe Has One Creator

The universe as it initially appeared to us, is the combination of billions of different objects; from a tiny cell to the super–giant galaxies. Nonetheless, in spite of this plurality, a closer look suggests that there is a universal unification linking and joining all seemingly separate parts of the universe together and the more the secrets of nature discovered the more this unity is realized.

The most acknowledged theory for the beginning of the universe is the big Bang theory proposing that the universe was created in a gigantic explosion and that the various elements observed today were produced within the first few minutes after the big bang hydrogen and helium would have been the primary products of the big bang. At 1 microsecond after the Big Bang, protons and neutrons dissolve into individual quarks, so the universe was a 'gas' consisting of quarks.

Astronomers assert today that the entire universe we can see is made from matter of the kind we find

near us, and in about the same abundances of the elements everywhere.

As mentioned in the chapter 'Finger prints of God' all galaxies gravitationally interacting and orbiting about 'a common centre'.

For this reason, a natural law governing an atom is also governing the entire universe. The same gravitational law governing the fall of an object here on earth governs all the celestial bodies in the sky.

Thus, Newton by observation of the fall of an apple in his orchard discovered the gravitation and conceived that the same force governed the motion of the Moon and the apple and hence gravitation is universal. Similarly, Newton's laws of motion or optics apply to the earthly objects as much as the celestial ones.

There are millions of animal species on earth, yet despite this plurality their structure is quite unified.

The law of cause and effect is also another universal law in the nature, whether man has discovered all the causes of an effect or not, philosophically there is a cause/causes for every effect.

Therefore, the operation of the nature is like a harmonic symphony, which demonstrates the great harmony of creation. Every creature is like a musical pulse, which is made up of the sum of many pure sine-wave tones, playing harmonically in the orchestra of the universe. This universal orchestra proves that there is only one conductor directing the orchestra in performance.

If there were more than one God, disharmony would prevail.

Q. Why can't be the company of gods who are wisely governing the universe?

If there is more than one god for the universe, either they are all the same in everything or totally different, or there are some similarity and some differences amongst them.

Plurality of gods mean that they are not totally same, for, if they were the same in all aspects then there would be one not more than one. On the other hand, plurality means there are differences, and if there are differences there must be disharmony and chaos in the universe.

For instance, God is Omni-wise, and there cannot be two or more omni-wise, because plurality requires that they are not the same in their wisdom, which means one is wiser than the other and the one who is less wise lacks some wisdom and lack of wisdom is insufficiency whereas there cannot be any insufficiency in God.

3) Mathematical Distinction

If there were to be two necessary beings, there must be at least one distinction factor between them so that one possesses something that the other lacks. That distinction however must be also a necessary

being, or else the two necessary beings cannot be necessary in their essence. Thus two imagine two necessary being we need another necessary differentiating being, which results in three necessary beings.

Similarly as they are all necessary beings, there must be a different between them or else they are the same. In order to differentiate between the three necessary beings we need at least two other necessary differentiating beings, which result in five necessary beings.

Again to differentiate between five necessary beings, we need at least three necessary differentiating beings to differentiate between the five necessary beings, which results in eight necessary beings and the calculating goes on infinitely which results in infinite necessary beings!

4) Unique Invitation

God is the source of perfection and blessings. It is not possible for such Perfect Being to deprive others of that perfection and blessing. Thus, if there were more than one God, he would have introduced himself through his messengers or other ways, whereas, all the prophets and messengers have invited to One Unique God, therefore there is no any other god than Him.

Trinity

Although all divine religions advocate to the 'unity of God' Judaism, Christianity and Islam as the main living divine religions are more known for the concept of monotheism. Thus, they are sometimes classified as Abrahamic Religions for their monotheistic concept.

Among the followers of all the divine religions, however, the mainstream church formulated in the 4th century the doctrine of Trinity. The classical Western formula of Trinity is: "three persons in one substance (*homoousios*) not a similar substance (*homoiousios*). By three persons they mean: 'god, the father, god the son, and god; the holy spirit. According to this doctrine, God incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ.

The term Trinity is not used in the Bible and Nazorean Jewish Christians, who were in the time of Jesus looked upon him not as God but as a prophet and anointed Messiah. Historically the mysterious term 'Trinity' was first used in the 2nd century, by the Latin theologian Tertullian, but the concept was developed in the course of the debates on the nature of Christ between Arius and Athanasius in the 4th century.

In the words of the Athanasian Creed 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.'

Since When Jesus Became God?!

In the first century, after the disappearance of Jesus, those who followed him continued to affirm the Divine Unity. This is illustrated by the fact that the Shepherd of Hermas, written in about 90 A.D. was regarded as a book of Revelation. The first commandment was believing in One God.

According to Theodore Zahn, the article of faith up until about 250 A.D was, "I believe in God, the Almighty" ¹ Between 180 and 210 A.D. the word 'Father' was added before the 'Almighty'. This was bitterly contested by a number of the leaders of the church. Bishop Victor and Bishop Zephyrius are on record as condemning this movement.

As the teaching of Jesus was spread, it came into contact with other cultures and into conflict with those in authority. In Greece, especially, it became metamorphosed, both by its being expressed in a new language for the first time, and by its realignment with the ideas and philosophy of that culture.

It was the many-gods viewpoint of the Greeks, which largely contributed to the formulation of this doctrine of the Trinity together with the gradual elevation of Jesus by some, notably Paul of Tarsus, from a prophet to God.

It was only in 325 A.D. that the doctrine of the Trinity was declared to be the orthodox Christian belief. Even then, some of those who signed the creed did not believe in it.

That historic decision was more based on a political expediency shown mainly by the part played by Constantine, the pagan emperor of Rome, who presided over the council of Nicea, than on the faculty of Scriptures.

As a result, Rome replaced Jerusalem as the centre of Pauline Christianity.

The doctrine of Trinity since the time of Constantine became officially accepted as the basis of Christianity in Europe. But as it soon caused much confusion among people many were told to believe it without trying to understand it.

Yet, broadly speaking, these schools of thought developed regarding trinity to be explained.

The first is associated with St Augustine, who lived in the 4th century and was of the view that the doctrine could not be proved but could be illustrated. St Victor, who lived in the 12th century, is associated with the second school, who believed that the doctrine could both be demonstrated and illustrated. And the 14th century saw the growth of the 3rd school, which believed that the doctrine of Trinity could be neither illustrated nor proved, but should be blindly accepted and believed.

The author of the fourth Gospel was the first to identify Jesus with the Logos or Word who became flesh for the salvation of mankind. In early Christianity he was also regarded as the 'image of God', not the eternal God himself.

The Council Of Nicea

In early decades of the 4th century two opposing views, the view held by the Presbyter Arius that stated Christ was similar in substance (*homoiousios*) with the Father, whereas the Bishop Athanasius held the view that Christ was the same substance (*homoousios*) of the Father.

Arius argued that Jesus was the firstborn of the Father, was created by the Father and thus was a creature, although the first and highest creature. Arius logically deduced that if the Son was begotten by the Father, there must have been a time when the Son did not exist, that is, before his creation by the Father. The Son therefore, had a beginning.

The debate was brought to the attention of Constantine the Great, emperor of Rome that the controversy might threaten the unity of his empire. In order for Constantine to settle the dispute concerning the nature of Jesus Christ he summoned an ecumenical council at Nicaea; an ancient city now Iznik, in Turkey in 325 AD. Of the 1800 bishops in the Roman Empire, 318 attended the council.

The Great emperor attended the Council and allowed various debaters to speak by turns. After an intense controversy a confession of faith was drawn up at the order of Constantine and was signed by all the bishops affirming that Jesus Christ was 'Very God of Very God' and 'of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made.'

And all the papers of the Arius' book were burned. All those who refused to sign the creed were threatened by the Emperor with banishment. Naturally, all signed. However, some of them regretted what they had done at the council and wrote a letter to the Emperor stating: "We committed an impious act, O prince, by subscribing to a blasphemy from fear of you."²

It is indeed sad that the creed of faith professed by millions of Christians since the 4th century was born amidst this sorry scene and was at one time considered blasphemous.

The earliest draft of the creed known to us today, and the one that was agreed upon at the council is:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things, visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father; he is begotten, that is to say, he is of the substance of God, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten and not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things, both in heaven and on earth, were made.

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and took our nature, and became man; he suffered and rose again the third day; he ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Ghost.

The holy catholic and apostolical church condemns all those who say that there was a period in which the Son of God did not exist; that before he was begotten, he had no existence; that he was called out of

nothing into being; that he is of a different substance from the Father; and that he is susceptible of variation or of change.

(<http://www.essene.com/Church/Conspiracy/CouncilOfNicea.html#> [18] The Council of Nicea)

Do Christians Really Believe Jesus Is God?

Yes, apart from the above-mentioned Nicean creed which clearly states the Deity of Jesus, Christian Doxology is also another proof of that. Doxology means praising God in glory. Christians they say it not only to God, the father, but to Jesus as well. [3](#)

A Mystery Called Trinity

An eminent scholar of Christian history admits that the present-day Christianity is a 'mask' on the face of Jesus. Muslims believe in Jesus without the mask. This in a nutshell, has been the point of difference between Islam and the church for the last 1400 years. Even before the advent of Islam, the Arians, the Paulicians, and the Goths, to mention only a few accepted Jesus, but rejected the 'mask'.

The Christina faith contains mysteries and Christian theologians admit that the doctrine of Trinity is one of them, and hence cannot be logically explained. Thus, the sole so called proof for so-called the Blessed Trinity is the Bible mainly the Gospel of John not even the synoptic. They also attempt in explaining the Trinity in terms of analogies involving clover leaves, the appearance of water as ice, liquid and steam.

Trinity Vs Unity

If you have a Christian background, I suggest you free yourself from the Councils and Creeds as well as the fear of being labeled a "heretic" by friends and relatives, and then you will find in the following passages the chance to confirm what you always suspected, the chance to replace nonsense with sense, the chance to replace trinity with Monotheism.

1) Monotheism, The Chief Commandment

The Ten Commandments is spinal core and the common word of all divine religions, which presents the main articles of faith. Although the details of some of the Commandments are not exactly the same in the Old Testament, New Testament and the Holy Quran, yet at least the very First Commandment, which deals with the unity of God, is the same in all of them. The following is the quotation from all the tree scriptures:

a. **The Old Testament:** *"You shall have no other gods before My face. You shall make for yourself no idol in the likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the*

earth.”⁴

b. **New Testament:** When one of the scribes asked Jesus “which *is the chief commandment of all*” Jesus answered: “The *chief one is, ‘Hear O Israel : The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind, and with your whole strength .’*”⁵

c. **The Holy Quran:** “Say (*O Muhammad*): *Come I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from: Join not anything as equal with Him*”.⁶

Therefore, believing in One God is according to the words of Jesus (‘a) the chief of the Ten Commandments and obviously when he said: “OUR God is one Lord” he included himself. How is it then possible for him to be of ‘the same substance of God’ and ‘very God of very God’? It is not the most impious act and accusation to Prophet Jesus? Thus, Trinity is very unscriptural.

2) Trinity Was Blasphemy For The Early Christians

3) Trinity Is Plurality Of Gods!

Christians admit the very differences between the persons of Trinity, which leaves no shadow of doubt that they are neither equal to each other nor are they to be identified with one another. The Father begets and is not begotten; the son is begotten and not a father.

If the three are one, why Christians consider it a sin of heresy to replace the order of the three; meaning by reversing the formula: ‘In the name of the holy spirit, and of the son , and of the father’?! For if they are absolutely equal and coeval, then order of precedence need not be so scrupulously observed.

4) Trinity Is Illogical

Common sense and logic is the universal means of exchange of opinions amongst humans. Through the means of logic one even from a different religious or cultural denomination can convey his opinion and make others understand it.

Christians say on the one hand that ‘there is only one God’, and on the other hand declare: ‘ Yet in the one name there are three eternal persons.’ The only conclusion is that they have a mathematical problem that even Einstein could not solve. Because we learned at school that one person plus another person plus another person are equal to three persons, and they can never be one person.

In other words, one cannot be equal to three, because one is the third of the three. In the same way, one is not equal to a third. And vice versa, three are not equal to one.

Those who maintain the unity of God is the trinity of persons tell us that ‘each person is omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal and perfect God; yet there are not three omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal and

perfect god, but one omnipotent ... God!

We all– Muslims and Christians– believe that God is Omnipresent, that He fills and encompasses every space and particle. Is it conceivable that all the three persons of the Deity at the same time and separately encompass the universe, or is it only one of them at the time? To say 'the Deity does this' would be no answer at all. For Deity is not God, but the state of being god, and therefore a quality.

Despite all the attempts offered by Christian theologians in explaining the doctrine of Trinity, nothing more than some biblical proofs or analogies have been ever offered. Even the most prominent Christian theologians admit that Trinity is another name for mystery. Thus, on which basis do Christians expect non–Christians to believe it? Isn't this the God of Bible who says: *"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord"*. [7](#)

Does Trinity Have A Biblical Proof?

No doubt, the term Trinity is never mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Rather Prophet Jesus like other Prophets called for One God.

When Jesus (‘a) said: *"... Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one God"*. [8](#) He included himself as a loyal subject of his Lord God.

When Jesus said: *"I am ascending to my Father and your father, and to my God and your God"* [9](#) he puts himself and people in the same category before God. Thus, if Jesus was the son of God, so were all those of his community.

But even a man of average intelligence will conclude from the above passage that he means he is ascending to God of all around him including himself, and by Father he either means Adam, as his father and their father, or God but not in a literal meaning, rather as an expression of kindness and mercy of Him. Whatever meaning, however, one suggests, it includes his community as well.

Who Did Jesus Worship?

In the year ... a debate took place between Imam Al–Ridha (‘a), the 8th Imam of Ahlul–Bayt, and Al–Jatheliq the Christian archbishop at the royal court of Ma'moon. A part of the debate reads:

- Imam Al–Ridha (‘a): "It is very unfortunate that your Jesus did not pray or fast?"
- Al–Jaetheliq: "This is not true. As a matter of fact, he was praying all nights and fasting all days".
- Imam Al–Ridha (‘a): "Then, who was he praying to? Himself?! Does God pray and fast?!"

All Gods Died!

The author of Al–Manar in his interpretation of the Quran, quotes the story of three new converts to

Christianity. After having studied under a priest for a while, the teacher brought them to one of his Sunday services. The father then asked them to explain to the crowd the meaning of the blessed Trinity! The following is the answer offered by each one of them:

A: "Father taught us that there is a god in the heaven, and another one on earth and the third one came to the second in the shape of a pigeon."

Father whilst being upset with his non-sense explanation, asked him to sit down.

B: "Well! I think the father taught us that there were three gods. One of them was crucified and hence we are left with two only."

The father loosing his temper and hope in them, turned to the third student whom he trusted his intelligence and asked him to explain the Trinity.

C: "The blessed Trinity means: God the Father, and God the Son, and god the Holy Spirit are three in one substance. And God the Son was crucified which means all were crucified and we ended up with no god!"

- [1.](#) Articles of the apostolic Creed, Theodore Zahn pp.33–37 from Jesus, Prophet of Islam p.9
- [2.](#) Ian Wilson, Jesus the Evidence. P. 168
- [3.](#) See: II Timothy 4: 18, Revelations 1:6
- [4.](#) Exodus 20:3–5
- [5.](#) Mark 12:29–30
- [6.](#) 6: 151
- [7.](#) Isaiah 1: 18
- [8.](#) Mk 12:29
- [9.](#) Jn 20: 17

Chapter 14: The Alphabets of Religion

Heart asked: I desire a divine insight

Teach me if you have access to it

I said: 'A', he said don't say anymore

It's enough if there is anyone at home

اول الدين معرفته

Monotheism and believing in one God is the foundation of all divine religions. Monotheism is the alphabet of religion by which all religious terms will be written and the accuracy of which will be

measured. Failure to learn the alphabet of religion the student in religion may misread and misinterpret all other religious terms and doctrines the result of which may not be far from polytheism or even atheism.

If on the other hand, monotheism is understood correctly, all other religious beliefs can be understood correctly. Monotheism is not a merely subjective and theoretical principle with no effect on practicality of our lives. It is rather well mirrored on the way we live. Thus, grasping the true concept of monotheism has a direct impact on all walks of life.

For instance, A monotheist, does not but his trust save in God. He does not compromise or attempt to please humans to achieve his goals. A monotheist will never quit in his live no matter how striking the situation will be. A monotheist will never loose his hope in Almighty God, and hence, despair and hopelessness do not exist in his life dictionary. He is always enthusiastic, energetic and optimistic about the future.

A monotheist knows whom and how much he should praise and respect. He will not fall into the pitiful of exaggerating the status of humans to believe in their deity, nor will he ignore their high status of nearness to God.

Exaggerating about the prophets and believing in their deity and divinity is due to the lack of true understanding of monotheism.

In Islam the first and the last lesson is about monotheism. Monotheism is the essence and the extract of Islam. It is the spirit of all Islamic teachings. Monotheism is the unique and the chief message of all prophets. It is the most profound and deeply rooted religious principle. All religious teachings and education should start with monotheism and to it.

If Islamic teachings are beans of pearls, monotheism is the chain, which connects them all together, makes a beautiful necklace. And if religion is a tree, monotheism is the root an the trunk of the tree.

The Head Of Knowledge

One of the companions of the Prophet of Islam (S) asked him what was the head of knowledge? The Prophet replied:

“Knowing God as you are supposed to know Him. That to know Him with none similar to Him; that He is One God; the Creator, Omnipotent, the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden, none is comparable to Him or like unto Him. This is knowing God as He deserved to be known.”^{[1](#)}

Teaching Monotheism During The War

During the battle of Camel (...) a man from the army of Imam Ali ('a) asked him about the meaning of 'Unity of God'. The army protesting him said: "You fool! Don't you see his striking situation, couldn't you ask him a better time?!"

To their surprise, Imam Ali ('a) said to the army: "Let *him talk! What the man is asking is what we want from these people.*" and then he explained to him the true meaning of monotheism.[2](#)

Aspects Of Monotheism

Monotheism can be understood in four aspects:

- 1) Unity of God in His Essence
- 2) Unity of God in His Divine Attributes
- 3) Unity of God in His Action
- 4) Unity of God in worshipping Him

1) Unity Of God In His Essence

Unity of God in his Essence means knowing Him as One and a Unique God.

The first thing we need to know about God is the true concept of his Unity. When we say God is One, what do we really mean by that? Is it that God is One as the Sun in the solar system is one? Does it mean that He is the first as in natural number '1' in mathematics? Or the unity of God has much more profound meaning.

Numeral Unity Or Unique Unity (Al-Wahdatul-Adadiya Or Al-Wahdataul-Ahadiya)

Having lived in the world of numbers many people may image the unity of God in a numerical unity which means God is number 1.

Numerical unity means something is 'one' although it is logically possible to imagine the second for it. For instance, moon is the one and only satellite of planet Earth, however it is possible to imagine more than one satellite for it, as Mars has two satellites.

If a being is in such a way that we cannot even possibly imagine another one like unto it, this is called 'Unique Unity (Al-wahdatul-Ahadiya). As discussed in the previous chapter, God is infinite and as such there is no room even to imagine any other god in it. (Pay attention)

For instance, astronomers up until now disagree about the limits of universe whether it is infinite or finite.

Some astrophysicists suggest that the universe is infinite while others propose its limitation. If we agree that the universe is infinite then we cannot even imagine another physical universe, for whatever you imagine will be within our infinite universe.

The concept of Unique Unity of God is one of the most purely Islamic contributions about the true concept of God which was never discussed among other philosophers or theologians.

The Most Perfect Description Of Unity Of God

Chapter 112 of the Holy Quran which is the Chapter of Purity in Monotheism describes the unity of God in the most perfect way:

“Say: *He is Allah; the Unique (Ahad) .. and there is none coequal to Him* ”

Imam Ali (‘a) in introducing this Unity of God in Nahjul-Balagha says:

“He is One but not by the first in counting”^{[3](#)}

The Imam also in response to the man who had asked him about the concept of unity of God during the battle of Camel told him:

“O Bedouin! When we say God is One could have one of the four meanings, two of them are impossible about God and the other two are correct. The ones which are not possible are:

– To say God is One and you mean numeral unity. This is not true because when something doesn't have second, does not enter in numbers. Thus God considers those who said ‘God is one of the three’ polytheists. Similarly, if you say God is One and mean One in His kind, is incorrect, for it means you have imagined another one like unto Him.

– But to say God is One in that there is none like or coequal unto Him is correct, as it is correct to say God is Unique in His Essence in that there cannot be another one be it in our imagination, mind, or outside. Such is our Lord God”^{[4](#)}

‘I’ or ‘WE’

If there is only One God, why God in the Quran in many instances refers to Himself utilizing the plural pronoun?

Eternity (Al-Azaliyyat)

Another concept about Monotheism in His Essence that we need to be familiar with is about the true meaning of His Eternity. What do we mean by saying that God is Eternal or perpetual? When we say someone or something is eternal it normally means that it exists at all times without change; thus ‘the eternal city’ was an appellation of Rome. Is it the same when we say God is Eternal? Nay.

The Eternity of God does not only mean that His existence is timeless and He is perpetual. No doubt, He always existed and will always exist. But this meaning of eternity would limit God in time, whilst He is the Creator of Time and Place. In other words, eternity in the sense of being timeless, means we have already assumed the span of the time and then imagine a being living in it from the beginning of time to the end of it.

The eternity of God, therefore, is not a timely eternity. He is eternal in that His existence proceeds time as He is the Creator of time. Thus, He is the First in the same way that He is the Last, for we cannot imagine any beginning or end for Him. This is the meaning of

“He is the First and He is the Last”(57:3)

The Evident And The Hidden

Another Attribute of God in His Essence is His two Attributes of the Evident (Al-dhaher) and the Hidden (Al-baaten).

The meaning of these two seemingly contradictory attributes is that God in his Essence is so Evident and Clear to all and the same time His Essence is so hidden from our physical sensations.

Let me explain this a little bit further. Everything has two types of existence. One its existence as it is, and the other, its existence as it appears to us. The existence of other things to us depends on our system of conception and situation under which we know about them. Our system of conception is limited to understanding things which are limited, have shape, colour, and sound, can be found in a specific time or place, etc.

God as He is Eternal and Infinite, is not limited to place or time and hence is hidden from our senses. Nevertheless, He is Evident in His own existence. In other words, He is Evident due to His Perfect Existence of being Eternal and for the same reason is Hidden from our sense due to their limits.

يا من هو اختفي لفرط نوره الظاهر الباطن في ظهوره

حجاب روي تو هم روي توست در هر حال نهان ز چشم جهاني ز بس كه پيدا ئي

2) Unity Of God In His Attributes

Unity of God in His Attributes mean as He is Unique in His Essence, He is Unique in His Attributes and with His Attributes. Unity of God in Essence meant the negation of any partner or one like unto Him for Him, and the Unity of God in His Attributes means denial of any plurality or combination or mixture in Him. In other words, His Attributes are not separate from His Essence.

For instance, when you are born you lacked knowledge, power and many other abilities that you gradually gained them later in your life, as you may gradually loose them again. Thus, the attributes of power and knowledge etc. are not essential with your being; one day you gain them and the other day you loose them.

Unity of God in His Attributes means that the Knowledge of God is the same as His Power and the same as His Existence and all other Attributes and they are the same as His Essence.

Proofs For The Unity Of God In His Attributes

I can suggest two proofs for that:

1) Premise 1: Separation of Essence and Attributes requires limitation.

Premise 2: God is Unlimited.

Conclusion: There is no separation between His Essence and His Attributes.

2) Premise 1: Addition of Attributes to the Essence requires combination.

Premise 2: Combination is impossible in God.

Conclusion: God's Attributes is the same as His Essence.

Imam Ali (‘a) in explaining the above fact says in his first sermon of Nahjul-Balagha: *“And the perfect purity is to deny Him attributes (Which are separate from His Essence), because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attributes. Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognizes His like, and who recognizes His like regards Him two ...”*

The Attribute Of Knowledge

God is Omniscient which means He is all knowledgeable. Knowledge of God is one of the most important Divine Attributes. Nothing in this existing universe is out of His Divine Knowledge. Every drop rain, every leaf of a tree, every seed under the ground, every living organism deep inside the oceans or billions of light years in the universe, are all present before Him.

His knowledge about billions years ago is the same as billions years to come. As a matter of fact, there is no past, present or future for Him.

Whether you whisper a word or utter it or even hide it in your mind, it's all the same for Him and He knows about it. He even knows about your thoughts, before you are conscious about them. Your intentions are at His presence as much as your action is.

Although this fact, is mentioned in many parts of the Holy Quran, perhaps one of the best examples of it is in Chapter 67: 14 which says: *“Does not the One Who Created know?!”*

Proofs Of His Knowledge

- 1) The Creator knows about His creatures
- 2) Infinite God is everywhere

The Impacts Of Knowledge Of God In Our Life

- 1) Under Absolute Surveillance

– Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) said to Ishaq Bin Ammar: *“Fear God as if you see Him, for if you don't see Him, indeed He sees you.”* [5](#)

– He also said: *“He who believes God sees and watches him and knows what he acts upon good or bad, and avoids the vicious deeds, then he is amongst those who feared the status of God and disobeyed his whim.”* [6](#)

When Zolaykha by forced took Yousif to her bedroom, being ashamed of her idol she covered the idol with a cloth. Yousif said to her: *“You are ashamed of your idol which does not hear or see, and expect me not to be ashamed of my God Who hear and sees?!”*

- 2) God is with me

You never feel alone in your difficulties of life. You believe no matter how striking the situation may be, God who is Omnipotent and Merciful knows about you and your difficulties and hence will not leave you alone if you seek His assistance.

[1.](#) Behar Al-Anwar, vol.3 p. 14

[2.](#) Ibid, p.206

[3.](#) Nahjul balagah Sermon: 152

[4.](#) Ibid

[5.](#) Al-kafee 2:67

[6.](#) Ibid, p.70

Chapter 15: The Paradox of “I or WE”

Unity of God is the cornerstone of Islam. Yet, we come across many Ayat in the Holy Quran, which refers to Godhead with a plural pronoun. Consider the following Ayat:

1) Creation

“We have created”: 22 times

“And indeed, We created man from dried clay of altered mud”(15: 26)

***“And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them except with truth”.
(15:85)***

“Or did We create the angels female while they were witnesses?!”(37: 150)

“Is it ye who create it, or are We the Creators?!”(56:59)

(Yusuf Ali translation)

2) Who Answers The Call?

“We answered his invocation”. (21:76–90) (4 Times)

3) Who Sends The Revelation?

“We send”: 31 times (و نزلناه انزلنا، انزلناه، نزلنا)

Verily, We have sent it (the Holy Quran) down in the night of Al-Qadr”. (97: 1)

4) Who Save(s)?

“We save”: more than 30 times و انجينا – و نجينا

“And We saved those who believed and used to fear Allah”(41: 18)

5) Who Chooses?

“Truly, We chose him in this world”(2: 130)

6) Whom Shall We Worship?

“Our worshippers” 12 times

“...and of Us (Alone) they were the worshippers”. (21:73)

To Find the Answer

Chapter 16: Who does it? God Or Me!

Monotheism In The Work Of Allah

The third aspect of monotheism is monotheism in the work of God. Unity of the work of God means to recognize that the world with all its systems, ways, causes and effects is the work of Allah alone and is originated from His will. Nothing in the world is self-existing including any action or work. There is no movement, effect or force, but does lead to Him the Almighty. If fire burns, if water grows the vegetable, its all because God has empowered them through certain laws in the nature. Hence, they are all in constant need of Allah in their existence as well as their functionality.

Q. Does this mean when the fire burns it is not really the fire which burns, its rather God? Doesn't this lead to the denotation of the law of cause and effect?

How can one believe in unity of God in action and at the same time believe in the law of cause and effect?

When prophet Ibrahim as Quran is quoting says:

“And when I am ill, it is He who heals me.”¹

Is it Allah who heals or it is the medicine?

¹. Refer to ayah 26:80

Chapter 17: God, & the Problem of Evil

Sydney, 26 Dec. 2001

Homes burned to the ground and hundreds of people were evacuated as firefighters spent Christmas Day battling 70 fires blazing across NSW and the ACT.

Fanned by winds of up to 90km/h, fires spread across the state from Ballina in the north, to the lower Blue Mountains, Glenmore Park in Sydney's west, Helensburgh in the south and Huskisson on the south coast.

The Daily Telegraph 26 Dec. 2001

India, Nov. 10, 1999

India cyclone death toll estimated at 10,000; epidemic feared

Francis said more than 10 million were estimated to have lost their homes, livestock or livelihood. Many people were dying of starvation apart from gastroenteritis, he said. CNN 10 Nov '99

Istanbul, Turkey, Aug. 20, 1999

“Two devastating earthquakes hit Turkey within the space of less than three months during 1999. The first – with its epicentre at Izmit in Turkey’s heavily populated northwest – struck at 0302 hours local time on 17 August. It left some 17,000 people dead and thousands more homeless. The second struck just 100km away on 12 November, killing hundreds more.

Voices of Trapped People Still Heard; Death Toll Tops 10,000;

Police Detain Three Contractors

Workers load the bodies of earthquake victims on a container truck after pulling them from beneath the rubble in Sakarya , Turkey . With so many corpses not yet buried, officials fear an epidemic of disease may follow Tuesday's earthquake. U.N. officials were quoted as saying as many as 35,000 were still buried beneath rubble, but Turkish officials refused to confirm that figure. There were, no doubt, thousands still buried.”

ABCNEWS

Every now and then we come across striking news as above. The initial reaction of many of us is that we immediately sit up on our comfortable lounges in front of the TV ask: How could this happen? What kind of world is this? And finally: How could a Benevolent and Almighty God possibly allow such evil to occur?

You may be in a position to counsel people through their pain and grief, but you don't really confront the question until you are caught in tragic circumstances. It is then and only then that many questions will challenge your mind and test your faith. This chapter aims at helping you finding the roots of the problem and how to stand up to it creatively.

From the time that mankind began their life on earth; they have been the victims of many natural disasters, such as fatal bacteria and viruses, earthquake, flood, tornado, lightning, fire, draught. This bitter experience, for many, has made a considerable sense of the topsy-turvy nature of the world with a conclusion that our world does not seem to present a single, uniform goodness, under the guidance of a good God, but rather a distressing mixture of good and evil with no one apparently in final control.

Historical Background

The problem of evil and insufficiencies in the world is one of the most ancient philosophical problems

that man has faced.

In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus believed by ancient Greeks to be the dwelling place of mischievous bunch of gods. They are forever plotting against each other and each other's devotees.

Historically, man has been offering animals or even human sacrifices to please gods of storm, flood, etc. Each god would have also his or her preferences in sacrifice.

For example, Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning, has a taste for cock, sheep, crab, and turtle sacrifices. Some natural disasters still carry their mythical names. The name hurricane comes from the mighty storm god Hurikan. Volcano also has its name from Vulcan, the god of fire in Roman mythology.

In Christian theology evil act began right from the creation of Adam and Eve when Adam disobeyed God and the original sin was committed.

God And The Problem Of Evil

Atheist philosophers are usually agnostic in that they claim there is no ample proof for the existence of God without any claim of proof for the non-existence of God.

In a debate between Bertrand Russell and father F. Copleston which was broadcast in 1948 on BBC, Copleston asked Russell: “*Would you say that the non-existence of God can be proven?*” Russell answers: “*No, I should not say that. My position is agnostic.*”^{[1](#)}

As a challenge to theism, however, the problem of evil has been posed in the form of one of the following dilemmas:

1) Proving The Non-Existence Of God

The topsy-turvy nature of the world as we experience it, is inconsistent with the existence of God. In order for God to exist, there must be a perfectly good world and if there is an evil in the world, which obviously is, it proves that there is no deity and final control over the world.

2) Proving The Duality Of Deity

Another dilemma that the problem of evil poses is a dualist approach to the universe. Dualism suggests that there are two major forces in the world. One is the creator of all that is good and the other is the creator of evil.

In the history of development of religion there has been some religions classified as forms of religious dualism. Manichæism for instance is a religion founded by the Persian Mani in the latter half of the third century and Zoroastrianism are regarded classic examples of dualism.

3) Limiting Divine Attributes

A very famous challenge to theism is that the existence of evil limits at least one of the three divine attributes of God. God is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Most Merciful and Benevolent. The argument as propounded by the Scottish philosopher; David Hume (1711–1776) is:

“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent.

Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent.

Is He both able and willing? Whence there is evil?”²

In other words:

- 1) either God is able to abolish all evil and He wills to do so,
- 2) or He wills but is unable to do so,
- 3) or He is able but doesn't want to,
- 4) or He doesn't want and is unable to abolish the evil.

The first hypothesis is against our findings and the rest result in limiting God's attributes.

This challenge suggests that unless one of the divine attributes is limited the problem of evil cannot be solved³. Theists however disagree on limiting God's attributes, and hence they need to find a solution for Hume's argument.

4) Insufficiency of Wisdom

Finally that last but not the least challenge for theism posed by the problem of evil is that existence of evil proves that there is no sufficient wisdom governing the world. They argue as to why the wise God has not created the world in a way that no evil exists or is empowered? Why one has to be born blind, another deaf and the third disabled? Insufficiency is not consistent with wisdom.

Definition

In order for us to look for a solution for the problem of evil, we ought to firstly find out what the evil is all about. We usually label something evil when we assume it's the cause of a harm any harm to us. Thus, **Evil** is that which is morally bad or wrong, or that which causes harm, pain, or misery. An earthquake is regarded an evil due to its devastating harms and pain to humankind, so is a bloody war and a fatal bacteria.

Initial Evil & Real Evil

Many things may also initially appear evil and bad to us but a closer and more precise look suggests that they are very useful and good. Similarly, we may consider certain things good for us in the beginning, but after a professional consultation we conclude that it is evil and hence must be avoided.

Imagine a very tempting food when you are ill in comparison to a bitter medication with a disgusting taste. Initially, your temptation desirous towards the food, and refrains from taking the medicine, in spite of the fact that the first is really harmful and hence evil for your body and the latter is good.

Therefore, we need to be very careful of which basis are we attributing an action or an event to be good or evil. Is it solely due to it's seemingly harm or benefit to me? Is it because it appears to be good or evil to me? Is it only harmful to me or to every body? Have I thoroughly examined all different impacts of it and then concluded that it's evil?

Therefore, in the realm of humankind, the real good is what eventually beneficial for mankind, and bad is what eventually harmful. Thus, if there be a volcano or earthquake or lightning with absolutely no harms to humans, is not regarded as evil.

Similarly, if there were no difference physically or mentally between a disabled child and an able one, and they were both regarded normal, there would be no pain and hence no evil would be concluded.

Types Of Evil

Another key point to arrive at the best answer for the problem of evil is to identify and distinguish between different types of evil.

Leibniz (1646–1716) the German philosopher and mathematician in his famous book '*Essays in Theodicy* [4](#) *on the Goodness of God*' has divided the examples of evil into three categories:

1. Metaphysical Evil

This is an evil, which has prevailed the present world. This is due to the limitation possessed by the world, which makes it by nature unable to be possibly any better.

2. Physical Evil

Which includes all physical phenomena that causes harm to man, from bacteria, viruses to natural disasters like earthquake, volcano, and hurricane.

3. Moral Evil

All pain and suffering caused by man's misuse of the gift of free will, such as all criminal acts.

Out of all the three different types of evil, what has been really the major concern of the theologians, are the last two. Also, as the third type of evil is more of a moral discussion, is beyond the scope of this chapter. Thus, I shall be dealing mainly with what is called natural evil that is by and large has no human cause behind it.

Suggested Answers

As old as the problem of evil is, there has been, and is a considerable diversity of opinions suggested about it. The following the major ones.

Christian Responses

According to John Hick; the contemporary theologian, there are three main Christian responses to the problem of evil: "The Augustinian response, hinging upon the concept of the fall of man from an original state of righteousness; the Irenaean response hinging upon the idea of the gradual creation of a perfect humanity through life in a highly imperfect world; and the response of modern process theology, hinging upon the idea of a God who is not all-powerful and not in fact able to prevent the evils arising either in human beings or in the processes of nature."⁵

The main traditional Christian response to the problem of evil was first formulated by St. Augustine (354–430) and has constituted the majority report of the Christian mind through the centuries, although it has been much criticized in recent times.

According to Augustine, evil always consists of the malfunctioning of something that is in itself good. He gives the example of blindness that is the lack of the proper functioning of the eye.

As for moral sins, he argues that the fall of angelic and human beings were the origin of moral evil and sin. And natural evils are the punishment of human sins. Thus, according to Augustine, "*All evil is either sin or the punishment for sin.*"

As for physical evils, we know now that they existed long before human beings came upon the scene. Today signs of arthritis have been found in the bones of some prehistoric animals; that is hundred of millions of years before Homo sapiens emerged.

In short, Augustinian response, represents the Christian and Hebrew traditional philosophy according to which man has himself brought about the evil from which he suffers by transgressing the law of God, to which obedience to which his happiness depended.

The second Christian response is that of Saint Irenaeus.

The third response is a modern development in which a number of Christian theologians have adopted known as process theodicy.

Process theodicy holds that God cannot be unlimited in power but interacts with the process of the universe, which God has not created but is nevertheless able to influence.

A systematic version of this theology is offered by a leading contemporary Christian theologian David Ray Griffin's publication: **God, Power and Evil: A Process Theodicy**: "*God does not refrain from*

controlling the creatures simply because it is better for God to use persuasion, but because it is necessarily the case that God cannot completely control the creatures .”⁶

According to Process Theodicy God is a part –though a uniquely basic part– of the universe itself, unable to either barrier its fundamental structure or to intervene directly in its evil, since it is not within God's power to prevent it. According to this, all evils are just part of the actual process of the universe.

Obviously this is a free ticket to ancient Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism of dualism, which is far from the God of the Bible let alone the Quran. Process' God is not worthy of worship and praise since he is not an omnipotent deity.

¹. Why I am not a Christian, p. 144

². Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, 1779

³. One of the most famous novels on the subject of God and evil is “When bad things happen to good people”(3) by Rabbi Harold Kushner. His son's long illness inspired him to write a book on the subject to help many who have been in the similar predicament as his. Yet, in spite of confirming that God is indeed all-good, he fails to affirm that God is also all-powerful

⁴. Theodicy (justice of God) is a technical term formulated by Leibniz for attempts to solve the theological problem of evil.

⁵. Philosophy of Religion, p.41

⁶. p.276

Chapter 18: God, and the Solution of Evil

In the previous chapter we discussed the problem of evil as the most fundamental and ultimate problem that has been challenging the philosophers specially the theists.

In summery, failure to solve the paradox of God and the problem of evil and lead some to 1) believing in non-existence of God, or 2) believing in dualism, or 3) limiting God's attributes.

In principle, we believe there is only one God who is the creator of all, who is infinite and hence Omnipotent, Omniscient and Benevolent or most Merciful.

The above statement will be understood only when the reality of evil is comprehended.

Evil Is Nonbeing

This answer was the doctrine of the Roman philosopher Plotinus (AD 205–270) and finds adherents among Christian philosophers from Scholastics to several modern philosophers of note, Leibniz, for example.

The main stream Muslim philosophers from Farabi (c.873–950) and Avicenna (980–1037) to Molla Sadra have also adopted this doctrine to denote the concept of dualism.

This answer suggests that the analysis of evil shows that there are chiefly two types of evil. One which is

nonbeing, and the other one which although is being but because they lead to nonbeing are regarded evil. Thus, evil tends to make that which ceases to be.

This obviously does not mean that what which is known to us as evil does not exist. No doubt, blindness, earthquake, disease and the like do exist. All what we know as evil are either in fact lack of something or the cause of lack of something, or else they are not evil. Let me explain this a little bit further.

When we say something is bad or evil, what we really mean is that the thing in question lacks something, is somehow incomplete. But to say that something is lacking in some respect is not to assign any positive or real quality to it.

Ignorance' is lack of knowledge, poverty' is lack of wealth and death' is lack of life. Evil, then, considered in itself, is mere nonbeing, the deprivation of reality, whereas being and perfection are synonymous. Insofar as anything is real, it is perfect and good.

Similarly, if certain bacteria or earthquake or cyclone is bad, is primarily because they cause death or lose in any way which falls into the first category of nonbeing. Imagine a volcano with no harm, a spider with no poisonous sting, an earthquake with no destructive effect, would they still be bad? Obviously not.

You may agree with me that even a volcano would appear a fantastic firework. Thus, when you are sitting safe and sound in your lounge room watching a movie on twister it is rather awesome.

This answer aims at denoting the false doctrine of dualism, which would regard two influencing factors for the events; God for the good events and Devil for the evil ones. According to this analysis of evil, there will be no question of who created evil'? For evil is directly or indirectly nonbeing and nonbeing does not need any creator.

Relatively Evil

All attributes related to objects are either real or relative. An attribute is real when an object enjoys it irrespective of any other factor. Life for instance is the real attribute of living organism. Insofar as there is an organism it enjoys the attribute of life irrespective of any other factor or object. One apple is one whether there is any other apple or not. Thus, life and number are the real attributes of the objects.

The relative attribute is when we compare tow or more than two objects and conclude an attribute. An object is small or big, short or tall, heavy or light in comparison to others. For instance, if your brother is 22 tall and you are 33 you are taller than him.

But you are short if you compare your height with Michael Jordan who is 66! The amazing biggest ant is thousand of times smaller than the smallest elephant.

Under the shadow of the above explanation we can suggest that the second type of evil like earthquake

and bacteria, which were the cause to nonbeing although they are not themselves nonbeings, but they are relatively bad. The fatal sting of a snake is bad for us, but it is defensive means of survival for itself.

Major pests such as Australian locusts when attacks human agriculture is evil and calamity for humans, and spreading of poison bait is evil and disaster for the pests. An erupting volcano and an earthquake that demand thousands of human life are considered by humans' natural disasters, but to a geologist or seismologist they are natural phenomena.

Without active volcanoes erupting and emitting gases, molten rocks and lavas there would be no life on earth. Earthquake can release energy thousands of times greater than the world's first atomic bomb. If this energy is not released, there will be no life on earth. In addition volcanoes produce landform and generously bring to surface all the hidden treasury of the earth.

Thus, nothing is evil for itself or else it wouldn't exist. The reality of every being is also its being for itself and its own purpose of life. As humans we call things evil when they are in conflict with our immediate interests.

This reminds us of what Voltaire says: *Evil signifies that which displeases us.*¹ We should, however, bear in mind that we are not the only creatures on earth nor the only one for whom this universe is created. As humans we are free in selection of the terms, but cannot imply our terminology to denote the existence of God or limit His attributes.

There will remain one question that couldn't God have arranged things so that no one ever suffered? Couldn't God made human beings immune to all disease? Couldn't God made the earth that no fatal earthquake or volcanoes needed?

There are several answers to these questions. If you read the rest of the article, you should be able to find satisfactory answers to them all.

Evil Disappears In The Gestalt Outlook

Gestalt is a school in psychology that deals mainly with the processes of perception. Gestalt is a physical, biological, psychological, or symbolic configuration or pattern of elements so unified as a whole that its properties cannot be derived from a simple summation of its parts. In Psychology it mainly deals with thinking, memory, and the nature of aesthetics.

One of the principles of cosmology is the correlation and harmony of all seemingly separate elements of the universe. The universe, therefore, should be observed as a Gestalt to see its correct image.

Philosophers from the ancient time to the present time by and large agree that the entire universe is a unified organism adding to it or omitting any part from it, disturbs the structure and the harmony of the universe.

Those who claim there could be a better world if God was really Benevolent and Omnipotent are suffering a very limited viewpoint and are not looking at the entire structure of the universe.

Let me help you with the aid of some analogies:

Remember da Vinci's Mona Lisa; one of the most celebrated portraits ever printed. Cut it into a jigsaw puzzle, and every piece, perhaps, will show nothing but a chaotic mixture of clashing colours.

But once all the pieces are fitted together, we see not only that the whole is beautiful but that each ugly piece makes its indispensable contribution to that beauty. May it not be the same with the universe?!

جهان چون چشم و خط و خال و ابروست که هر چیزی بجای خویش نیکوست

The universe is like eye, line, spot and eyebrow

That everything is beautiful in its due place

Another example is the simile of elephant in a dark room that Rumi mentions in his Mathnawi.

So, just as a work of art, which as a whole possesses high aesthetic value, contain elements that considered in themselves lack aesthetic value, or even possess disvalue, so also the universe, which as a whole is the best possible contain elements which considered in isolation evil. Thus, the world as it is— is the best possible world in which every element is as it could be.

Moses in response to Pharaoh when asked him to describe his Lord to him referring to this fact said:

Our Lord is He who gave to everything its creation and then guided. (20:50)

The term 'its creation' means nothing in this universe could be any different then what it is. Everything is so perfect in the way it is, if looked collectively. Imam Ali ('a) says: *Behold! This world would not be established unless in the way that God has made it with all its blessings and calamities and rewards in hereafter, or whatever He may wish that you do not know. Thus, should you any part of it confuse you, blame your ignorance*².

Mulla Sadra has dedicated a chapter in his 'Asfar' under the heading *Chapter 7: What the general public consider evil in this world, is in the will of God for the benefit of creatures*.³ He then gives the example of death' as the most vivid example of evil and in a philosophical analysis suggests that death is not evil in any sense.

The story of Moses and the knowledgeable devotee of God' (Khidr) mentioned in chapter 18 of the Quran is the best example to express the limitation of human knowledge and the fact that as such he tends to assume things are evil, so far as he cannot with his very limited knowledge— see any good in them.

Therefore, things appear to us as evil because our viewpoint is limited; whereas God who sees the whole of things entire, sees that the whole is perfect and harmonious. Thus, what ever– due to partial look– seems evil is universally good.

There are certain things that if observed or considered individually seems evil as it may harm an individual, but when looked wholly is very useful and hence good. An earthquake may demand the life of some thousands of people, but save the entire life on earth.

Evil; A Platform To Perfection

The purpose of life is considered one of the puzzles of life. I shall discuss the issue in a separate chapter in the future. In short, from the Islamic point of view, man is created to perfect themselves and to reach the nearness of the Most Perfect; the Almighty.

The purpose of life is not to enjoy a hedonistic lifestyle. Man is on a road towards God and his duty is to endeavour to that perfection.

From a religious perspective, this world is the ladder of elevation and perfection. Our perfection in many instances is in the light of difficulties. Moral attitudes and virtues such as generosity, patience, sacrifice; scientific discoveries and innovations are indebted to calamities, which are supposedly evil. Without disease there would be no medicine and medical discoveries.

Suppose that, contrary to fact, this world were a paradise from which all possibility of pain and suffering were excluded. The consequences would be very far-reaching.

For example, no one could ever injure anyone else; the murderer's knife would turn to paper or the bullets to thin air; the bank safe, robbed of a million dollars would miraculously become filled with another million dollars, human beings would be immune to all disease; men would be given flying wings, no unavoidable diminution of power in the aged, no birth deformation, no madness, no accidents, no natural disasters, playing child falling from a height would float unharmed to the ground; the reckless driver would never meet with disaster.

Then there would be no sciences, for there would be no enduring world structure to investigate.

In such a hedonistic world generosity, kindness, courage, compassion and charity and in short no moral and ethical values and virtues would exist anymore and hence it might well be the worst of all possible worlds. Thus, what we name as evil is in fact contributing to the world's perfection in such a way that without it, the world would not be the best possible.

Human history is rich with the examples of many people with disability whose achievements are far higher than many supposedly healthy ones.

Jim Abbot won Olympic gold in 1988 and been a Letterman. He is the only player in major league baseball who was born with one hand. (He didn't have right hand)

Prof. Stephen Hawking the most eminent physicist and astrophysicist of our time. His book 'A brief history of time' was the best seller for months. When he was 21 he was diagnosed with ALS. This disease affects walking, speaking, swallowing and even breathing.

Today he is confined to a wheelchair, cannot move much at all, has trouble holding his head up and cannot speak. Yet, disagree to be name disabled. He believes he was put in a challenge and has learned how to learn the challenge.

Beethoven, who is generally considered one of the greatest composers in the Western tradition, was deaf and could not hear his own symphony.

Thus, many apparent evils are in reality blessings.

And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you may like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know. (2:216)

According to the Quran the ease and success are gained though difficulties.

Verily, along with every hardship is relief (94:5)

I suppose the best expression of (seemingly) evil which gives birth to good, and (seemingly good) which gives birth to evil is expressed by the Prophet of Islam (S): *There is no evil which results in Paradise, and there is no good that which brings about hell.* [4](#)

Evil In The Quran

The term evil– for displeasing events and losses– is used in the Quran more than 30 times.

Evil as well as good is sometimes serving the purpose of a trial for the sake of perfection.

And We shall make a trial of you with evil and with good and to Us you will be returned. (21:35)

This trial is explained further in chapter 17:

And when We bestow Our Grace on man, he turns away and becomes arrogant. And when evil touches him, he is in great despair. (17:83)

Evil is also regarded in the Quran a punishment of sinful acts. Many nations according to the Quran have been destroyed by natural disasters due to their impious acts.

So We took retribution from them. We drowned them in the sea, because they belied Our Signs

and were heedless about them. (7:136)

This, of course, does not imply that all who drown are receiving their punishment. The Prophet of Islam (S) once asked his companion about the meaning of martyrdom. They said that it is he who is killed in the warfare. The Prophet said: Then, who few the martyrs would be. He then counted those who innocently drown, or died when a building collapsed on them as martyr.

According to Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) the compensation that a blind or deaf if practices patience– receive in hereafter is so abundant: *Then there is so much reward for those who became the victim of some calamities after their death– if they had been patient– that had after their death they been given the opportunity to return to this world to experience those calamities, they would have chosen to return to gain more reward.*⁵

It is also quoted from Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) for the reward of fever: *Indeed, when a believer is affected by fever, his/her sins drop like the leaves of a tree. Then if he/she moans in bed, his/her moaning is glorification of God and his/her cry unification of God and his/her turnover in bed gains him/her the reward of the one who fights with sword for the sake of God.*

Points to be added:

- 1) Are they natural disasters or natural phenomena?
- 2) If they are natural phenomena then they do not contradict the proof of order.

- ¹. Candide, ch. 30
- ². Nahjul-Balaghah, Sermon 31
- ³. Al-Asfarul-Arba'eh, vol. 7, p.61
- ⁴. Al-Tawhid, p.74
- ⁵. Remember the story of Abu-Baseer.

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