

The UNITY of GOD

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 5

التوحيد

Objectives >>>

Students should:

Lesson 1

- Understand that we have an intuitive knowledge of God
- Understand the Cosmological argument for the existence of God in more detail
- Discuss some of the objections against the Cosmological argument, and the answers to these

Lesson 2

- Understand the teleological proof for the existence of God in more detail
- Understand some of the objections to the above proof, and the answer to these
- Discuss the consequences of belief in God, especially the importance of worship

Lesson 3

- Discuss the concept of the Unity of God, and proofs for this
- Discuss the different aspects of the Unity of God

Lesson 4

- Discuss the theory of evolution and whether it is compatible with Islamic teachings

Lesson 5

- Discuss the importance and benefits of gratefulness to Allah
- Understand the benefits of gratefulness to Allah
- Understand the meaning of apparent and hidden blessings

Lesson 1: The Existence of God

In this unit, we will discuss some of the proofs for the existence of God, as well as the important consequences that should follow from believing in God.

PROOFS OR REMINDERS?

We sometimes talk about proofs for the existence of God. However, there is a question of whether these are actually proofs or whether they are simply reminders? It seems that they are only reminders. This is because we all have an innate (something we are born with) knowledge of God. This knowledge is not acquired, like our knowledge that molecules expand when heated. Rather, it is something that we know with our hearts and is always there in our sub-conscious. The Holy Qur'an refers to this when it says:

قَالَتْ رَسُولُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“Their messengers said: Is there doubt about Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth?” (14:10)





Unfortunately, many humans do not realize that they have this knowledge, mainly because they have occupied themselves with other concerns. We all have material instincts (e.g. to live a comfortable life) and spiritual instincts (e.g. finding my purpose in life). Unfortunately, most people nurture their material instincts and ignore their spiritual instincts. The consequence of this is that people remain heedless of the innate spiritual knowledge that God endowed them with. The proofs that we will discuss here will hopefully serve a reminder that alerts us to this knowledge of God that we already have in our subconscious¹.

THE FISH THAT DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SEA



To better understand the point we discussed above, some scholars have given us the following parable. There was a very inquisitive sea fish who used to always hear about 'the sea'. However, it could never see it or find it, and so it became very much occupied with this. It went to ask all the wise fish in the area but none could give her an answer. One day, someone told her to go to a very wise fish all the way at the other end of the ocean. She travelled a very long way to meet this wise old fish, and when she got there, she finally asked: 'so where is the

sea?' The simple reply from the very wise old fish was: 'where is not the sea?'

THE KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This is one of the strongest proofs for the existence of God. It was developed by ancient Muslim philosophers, and has been used by Christian theologians in medieval times. Here, we will explain this proof, and then discuss some of the objections against it and how to answer these.

The argument is based on the observation that the parts of this universe are contingent, meaning they could have not existed or they may cease to exist. Contingency means that a thing depends on another thing for its existence. This is extended to argue that the universe in its totality is contingent. Since the universe is contingent and it is possible for the universe not to exist, it requires a cause to give it existence. This cause cannot itself be contingent for otherwise it too would need a cause to bring it into existence and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus contingent things are insufficient to account for the existence of contingent beings. This means there must be a Necessary Being whose non-existence is an impossibility.

This argument can be re-phrased in this way: "Why is there something rather than nothing? The sufficient reason [...] is found in a substance which [...] is a necessary being bearing the reason for its existence within itself."ⁱⁱ

Discussions Regarding Contingency

Is the universe contingent?

One objection brought forward by a modern philosopher named Bertrand Russellⁱⁱⁱ is this: the parts of the universe being contingent does not mean that the whole universe is contingent. His argument is based on the Fallacy of Composition, whereby we mistakenly conclude that since the parts of a whole have a certain property, the whole must have the property too. For example, if each drop in the ocean is small, then it would be fallacious to conclude that the whole ocean is small.

In answer to this we argue that sometimes the whole does have the same property as the parts depending on the nature of the property in question. The ocean, for

example, is fluid, because the drops that form to make it are fluid. The contingency of the universe is more like this second example, because if all the contingent things in this universe ceased to exist, then the universe itself would cease to exist. If it is possible for the universe to cease to exist, then it is contingent.

Discussions Regarding the Causal Principle

Does a Contingent being require a Cause?

An essential part of the argument from contingency is the principle that effects need causes. This has been termed the Causal Principle or the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). Without this principle, the universe would not be intelligible.

Some philosophers have questioned this principle by arguing that just because the Causal Principle makes the universe easier for us to understand, this does not mean that this is how the universe works. One of them states that we should simply “work with brute facts”^{iv}. What they mean by this is that we should note down the facts we see before us, without trying to learn any scientific principles or laws from them. For example, even if we were to see water boil at 100 degrees Celsius on hundreds of occasions in different circumstances, we should not try to derive any law from this. We must simply report what we see.

In answer to this: working with brute facts would undermine scientific endeavour altogether. In fact, it would make any investigation into the laws of the universe futile. We would not be able to come to any scientific laws at all. The best explanation then, if we want to understand the universe, is that the Causal Principle really is how the universe operates.

Another objection comes again from Bertrand Russell^v, who argues that the universe does not need an explanation- that the universe is “just there, and that's all”. The basis for this argument is that Russell believed that we cannot ask about or make a conclusion about something which we cannot experience with our material senses, and since we cannot experience what is beyond the universe, we cannot ask about its cause.

In answer to this one can argue that we do not need to experience every possible member of the class of contingent things to make a conclusion that a contingent thing requires a cause. If we experience that some

contingent things need a cause, then we can conclude that all contingent things, including the universe, need a cause. For example, to know that a ball dropped from the roof of the town hall on a Sunday by a schoolboy will fall to the ground, we do not need a sample that includes schoolboys dropping a ball on a Sunday at that location.

Objections to the Causal Principle from Quantum Physics

Challenges to the Causal Principle have in more recent times come from the field of quantum physics. While these objections are primarily aimed at the argument based on creation, which has a time-based component (the universe didn't exist then came to exist) they still apply to the argument from contingency because they question the Causal Principle itself.

One argument is that on the quantum level, the connection between cause and effect is loosened. The claim is that electrons that can pass out of existence at one point and come back into existence elsewhere. Their intermediate existence cannot be determined, nor can any cause for the electrons coming into existence at one point as opposed to another. The claim then is that the Causal Principle is limited in its application at this level.

In response to this objection.

- not all physicists agree that subatomic events are uncaused. Indeed most of the available interpretations of the mathematical formulations of Quantum Mechanics are fully deterministic (meaning they are based a determined relationship between cause and effect)^{vi}.
- Some necessary conditions are still required for a quantum event, even if the causal conditions are not sufficient to determine the event. While we may not know how these electrons move in this way, the rest of the experiment is still firmly founded on causal conditions. When we compare this to the question of the creation of the universe, we see that there were no prior necessary conditions at all: simply nothing existed. Therefore, the comparison between quantum events and the creation of the universe is not correct^{vii}.

- It has not been proven whether we do not the causes for certain subatomic events simply because we have not reached a sufficient understanding of them, or because there really is no cause-effect relationship. Until this is determined, it cannot be argued that the causal principle, and therefore the cosmological argument, is invalid. In other words, the scientists conducting the experiments where the electrons move in this way, will continue to seek a cause for this movement, albeit a different type of cause to the ones we understand currently in physics.
- There is a difference between predictability and causality. It is true that we cannot precisely predict individual subatomic events. However, is this inability due to the absence of causal conditions, or a result of the presence of the observer effecting the relationship? Any attempt to precisely measure these events alters their status, and so we have no way of knowing what is happening without introducing observers into the situation. This observer intervention may be the reason we cannot understand the causality within subatomic events.

Discussions regarding the Necessary Being

Having dealt with the objections about contingency and the Causal Principle, we move on to discuss the type of cause that the Cosmological Argument from Contingency proposes. The existence of a Necessary Being, who is non-contingent, lies at the heart of the cosmological argument.

Is an Infinite Set of Contingent Causes Possible?

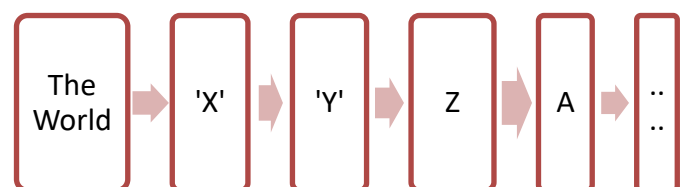
One possible alternative for a Necessary Being that can be imagined is that there is an infinite series of causes, all of which are part of the universe, and are thus contingent. This would negate the need for a Necessary Being beyond the contingent universe.

Such a set of causes remains contingent, and still requires a cause to bring it out of possibility and into existence. In other words, these causes are all still effects, requiring a cause to bring them about. An infinite regress of causes is like having an infinite number of zeroes, no matter how many zeroes there are, they have no value unless a real number is added to them.

Some philosophers present a similar, but slightly nuanced argument. David Hume, for example, argues that if each part of the universe can explain another, then there is no need to explain the universe. He states: "Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable should you afterwards ask me what was the cause of the whole twenty."

This argument can be answered in this way: an explanation of the parts gives only a partial explanation for the whole. It does not for example explain why these parts exist and not others, why they exist in the first place rather than not exist, and why they are arranged in the manner in which they are. The example he uses is that a chicken can explain an egg, and an egg explain a chicken, but an infinite chicken/egg sequence cannot explain the existence of any given chicken or egg.

The Big Bang Theory is a theory which posits a contingent cause for the contingent universe. As such, it poses the same objections to the Cosmological Argument outlined above, and is also open to the same rebuttals. By arguing that the cause of the universe is something material, it opens itself to the problem of an infinite regress of contingent causes.



Is a Causal Loop Possible?

Another possible alternative for the existence of a Necessary Being is that the universe is the cause for itself. Another form of this argument is that one part of the universe caused another part. It may be argued that the Big Bang Theory is one such type of an argument.

This argument leads to a contradiction. If something were to create itself, then it must have existed before its own existence, and this is impossible. It would also mean that something is a cause and effect at the same time, which is also impossible. It is like saying that the signature of

director A is required for director B to sign a document, while the signature of director B is required for director A to sign the document. This document would clearly never be signed.

Answering why the Necessary Being needs no cause

One of the most famous objections against the Cosmological Argument is Russell's^{viii} question of: 'who created God?' This question seeks a cause for the First Cause or Necessary Being. If everything in the universe requires a cause, and we posit that this cause is God, then why does God not need a cause?

This question is fallacious. The Cosmological Argument does not state that everything requires a cause to bring it into existence. Rather, it argues that contingent beings require a cause. The Necessary Being by definition is not contingent and not in need of a cause. Therefore, the question cannot apply to the Necessary Being. It is not the existence of a thing *per se* that requires it to have a cause, but rather its contingency.

Identity of the First Cause

Having established the need for a Necessary Being, there is also discussion regarding the identity of the Necessary Being. If we accept the existence of such a being, it does not necessarily identify the Necessary Being as a theistic god, with characteristics such as Will or Intention, Omniscience, Benevolence and Omnipotence.

Some philosophers discuss this question by putting forward the idea of a 'personal explanation'. They argue that things need either a 'natural explanation' or a 'personal explanation'. Since there are no precedent events to the 'event' of creation, and no natural laws before the point of singularity, we cannot provide a natural explanation for the universe. The alternative is a personal explanation, that is, the universe was caused by the "intentional action of an intelligent, supernatural agent."^{ix}

This question can also be examined by looking further into the concept of a Necessary Being. When it comes to contingent beings, positive properties such as knowledge and power may or may not apply to the contingent subject. This is because the contingent subject requires a reason for these properties to apply to it. However, when it comes to the Necessary Being, there is no need for an external cause, and so any positive quality which can be

imagined for that being necessarily applies to that being. This does not apply to negative qualities (ignorance, impotence) because these are in reality non-beings or negations of real qualities. Thus, the very nature of the Necessary Being requires that this being has any positive property (Will, Intention, Knowledge) which can be imagined in relation to it.

Review Questions

- 1. Pick two of the objections against the Cosmological argument. Describe each one, and give an answer to it. Limit your answer to 400 words.**

Lesson 2: the Existence of God

In the previous lesson, we discussed one proof for the existence of God. In this lesson, we will discuss another proof for the existence of God, and engage in further discussions about our knowledge of God.

THE PROOF OF ORDER/DESIGN (TELEOLOGICAL PROOF)

There is a set of laws by which this universe functions, and the natural sciences such as physics and chemistry are based on this set of laws. This order can be observed on many levels of the universe. For example, on a universal level, if the earth were closer or further from the sun, it would be uninhabitable. Another example which ties in the molecular, organic and global levels is the following example of the properties of rainwater. Students can refer to the other textbooks in this series for further details of these examples. Here, we will discuss a very simple example presented by a philosopher named Paley^x. Paley looks at the example of light refraction in the eye. Rays of light passing from water into the eye, need to be refracted by a more convex surface than when passing from air into the eye. We see then that the eyes of fish, have rounder crystalline lenses in comparison to land animals.

I know no better method of introducing so large a subject, than that of comparing a single thing with a single thing; an eye, for example, with a telescope.* As far as the examination of the instrument goes, there is precisely the same proof that the eye was made for vision, as there is that the telescope was made for assisting it. They are made upon the same principles; both being adjusted to the laws by which the transmission and refraction of rays of light are regulated. I speak not of the origin of the laws themselves; but, such laws being fixed,* the construction, in both cases, is adapted to them. For instance; these laws require, in order to produce the same effect, that the rays of light, in passing from water into the eye, should be refracted by a more convex surface, than when it passes out of air into the eye. Accordingly we find, that the eye of a fish, in that part of it called the crystalline lense, is much rounder than the eye of terrestrial animals. What plainer manifestation of design can there be than this difference? What could a mathematical instrument-maker have done more, to shew his knowledge of his principle, his application of that knowledge, his suiting of his means to his end; I will not say to display the compass or excellency of his skill and art, for in these all comparison is indecorous, but to testify counsel, choice, consideration, purpose?

Now, when we see such marks of design in the universe, we think in the following way:

1. Many things in nature, like eyes, show the marks of design.
2. These things must either have been created by an intelligent designer or produced by random natural processes.
3. Random natural processes never, or almost never, produce things with the marks of design.

Conclusion: Things in nature that show the marks of design are very likely to have been created by an intelligent designer.

A WORLD OF CHANCE?

You may have noticed that the design argument does have an element of probability to it. It is conceivable, though highly unlikely, that things which do bear the marks of design could still have come about randomly. Atheists often use this potential probability to claim that the system of this universe, which is indescribably precise despite its often unfathomable complexity and diversity, could have come about by mere chance. They claim that the conditions that led to the environment we have now could have come together through a set of coincidences.

This objection is easily disproven through the concept of probability. An easy way to show this is as follows:

Suppose a word is to be created by chance. Let us calculate the probability of making a meaningful two letter word from the English alphabet. Given that the English alphabet consists of 26 letters, if the word 'IT' is to randomly be created, the probability would be $(1/26)^2$ or $1/676$. If now we wanted to create a three letter word, the probability would be $1/17576$ or $(1/26)^3$. Imagine then what the probability would be of creating a perfectly functioning universe, which consists not of three, but of an infinite amount of components. Also, for each component, we do not only have 26 choices, but again we have a number of choices beyond what we can imagine. It would be akin to the following equation:

$$(1/100,000) \times (1/100,000) \times (1/100,000) \times \dots \text{to infinity}$$

This probability would be so miniscule that it is effectively zero.

Therefore, this world could not have come about by chance, rather it must have had a Wise and Knowledgeable Designer, God.^{xi}

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

In these discussions, our final goal is not just knowledge of God, but belief, which is knowledge coupled with action. "Belief (īmān) means: acknowledgement of the heart, confession of the tongue, and action by the body."

Thus the one who knows but his heart does not acknowledge is not a believer, just like the one who knows he is wrong but doesn't acknowledge it. Similarly, the one who knows something but does not want to confess it, does not believe in it. Finally the one who knows something but does not act upon it deliberately does not have faith in it. Like a doctor who knows smoking kills but smokes nonetheless.

Therefore, now that we have hopefully come to know of the existence of God, we need to move from the stage of knowledge to the stage of belief, by making sure our actions match our knowledge. The major practical consequence of knowing about God is to worship Him.

WORSHIP: THE CONSEQUENCE OF BELIEF

All creatures of Allah submit to Allah, whether they choose to or not. Simply by existing we show our submission to Allah. However, the major consequence of belief in Allah is that we should submit to Allah willingly, and this submission with the intention to do so is called worship. Worship is our responsibility towards the Creator and Cherisher who we have been discussing so far in this lesson. In other words, we have proven that we are the creatures of God, and as His creatures, we must have some responsibilities towards Him.

Literally, worship means complete submission and humiliation before someone else. One who completely submits before another is called a slave ('Abd). Thus, worshipping Allah, the Exalted, is to show complete submission and humiliation before Him, and to confess that we are His slaves.

We often limit worship to rituals such as praying, fasting, performing ablutions and other similar acts. However, the scope of worship is far wider than this. Worship is anything that brings us closer to our Lord, the Exalted. He has of course instructed us on how to get closer to Him, and so whenever we follow His commands we are worshipping and whenever we do not we are not worshipping and not performing our duty as slaves.

THE SCOPE OF WORSHIP

To get some idea of the wide scope of worship, let us look at some example:

- Worship through rituals: such as prayer, fasting etc...
- Worship through contemplation: Imam al-'Askari (as) says:

“Worshipping is not only the great amount of prayers and fasts. Rather, it is a great amount of thinking about God’s affairs.”

- worship through imitation: if we imitate a person or listen to them, then we are worshipping them:

“Whoever listens to a speaker has indeed worshipped him. So if that speaker was speaking about God, he is worshipping God, and if the speaker speaks the language of Satan, then the listener is worshipping Satan.”

- worship through self-discipline: in certain situations remaining silent is a type of worship and sometimes overcoming bad habits is a type of worship^{xii}

We should aim to make every action of ours an act of worship, firstly making sure it correlates with Allah’s commands and prohibitions, and secondly by making our intention in performing the action for the sake of God.

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON WORSHIP

WORSHIP: THE PATH TO THE FINAL PURPOSE

Worship is described in the Holy Qur’an as the Straight Path. It is the path which we must take in order to reach our ultimate purpose, which is proximity (closeness) to Allah, the Exalted. The final purpose of our life, our years, months, days and hours must be proximity to Allah, and this is only achieved through worship.

In the Qur’an, worship is directly correlated with proximity to Allah, and the people who are the very closest to Allah are given the title of ‘slave ('abd) of God’. This title is used several times as a medal of honour for the Prophets, including our Honoured Messenger.

Therefore, we should strive as much as we can to be true slaves of God, such that we reach the stage of not having any will besides His Will, do not think of anything but Him and do not act except to please Him.^{xiii}

BISHR: THE BAREFOOTED SLAVE

There was a wealthy man by the name of Bishr. He was not a religious man at all. He used to hold gatherings at his house where alcohol would be served and where there would be loud singing and dancing. One day, when one of these parties was going on, the female servant of Bishr went out on to the street to throw out the rubbish. As she was doing this, a man who was walking by asked her: ‘is your master a slave or a free man?’ She, surprised by the question said: ‘well, he is my master, so of course he is a free man’. The man said: ‘yes, for if he was a slave, he would fear his master’. When the servant went back into the house, Bishr asked her what that man had told her and she repeated his words to him. As soon as he heard this, Bishr realised that this was Imam Mūsā al-Kāḍim (as) and woke up to the wretched state of arrogance that he was in. He ran out of the house immediately and caught up to the Imam (as), and with tears in his eyes asked for repentance. Because he had

run out of the house so quickly, he had not put any shoes on and was barefooted (ḥāfi), and so he was called Bishr al-Ḥāfi. In fact, by some accounts, to show his humility and servitude to God, he refused to wear shoes on God's earth any longer. After this encounter, he became one of the most spiritual people of his time and is still famous for his spirituality.

WORSHIP AWARENESS

One of the habits of the true slaves of God is to try to make every single action, no matter how trivial, somehow an act of worship. Consider the following examples:

- You are hungry and want to eat. This is a permissible action (mubāḥ). However, you make sure that you sit and eat with your parents and spend time with them while you are having your meal. This has now become a highly rewarding act of worship.
- You need to use the bathroom. This is another permissible act. However, you follow the etiquette of the bathroom and recite the supplications recommended for the time of relieving oneself. This now becomes a recommended act of worship.
- You want to have fun and play sport. This is another permissible act. However, you invite your Muslim friends and the game becomes a bonding exercise between you. This has now become a highly recommended action because it is nurturing love between believers.

Review Tasks

1. Explain the proof of order/design in your words using 200 words.

2. How can you answer the question: could this ordered world have come about by chance?

3. Give three examples different to the above about how you can convert your everyday actions into acts of worship.

Lesson 3: the Unity of God

As Muslims, all of our beliefs and practices return to one root and that root is monotheism, or the belief in the Unity of God. Allah in mind. In this lesson, we will review those proofs for the Unity of God and look at them in a little more detail, as well as discussing the importance of remembrance again.

UNITY OF ESSENCE

You will remember that in our lesson on proving the existence of God, we said that God, by definition, is not a material being. He created this material universe and in order to create it He must be beyond it. This is why when Imam al-Redha (as) was asked about time and place in relation to God, he replied:

“Surely Allah, the Exalted, created time, whilst not Himself being within time, and created states, whilst not himself being in a state.”^{xiv}

كَيْفِ بِلَا الْكَيْفِ وَكَيْفَ ، أَيْنَ بِلَا الْأَيْنِ أَيْنَ وَتَعَالَى تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ
(١) الْحُسَيْنِ أَبُو فَقَالَ : « قُدْرَتِهِ عَلَى اعْتِمَادِهِ وَكَانَ ،

Similarly, when Imam al-Baqir (as) was asked: “when was God/when did God exist?” he answered:

“One can only ask ‘when’ about something which did not exist at some point. Surely, my Lord, the Exalted, was and has always been in existence...”^{xv}

جَعْفَرِ أَبِي إِلَى رَجُلٍ جَاءَ ، كَانَ؟ مَتَى رَبِّكَ عَنْ أَحْبَبْتَنِي : لَهُ قَالَ
إِنَّ ؛ كَانَ مَتَى : (٦) يَكُنْ لَمْ ءِ لِشَيْءٍ يَقُولُ إِنَّمَا ، وَتِلْكَ « كَانَ
يَكُنْ وَلَمْ كَيْفِ بِلَا (٧) حَيًّا يَزُولُ وَلَمْ كَانَ وَتَعَالَى تَبَارَكَ رَبِّي
: « لَهُ

This means that by definition, God is infinite, free from any limitation (Premise 1: God in an infinite Being)

We all know intuitively that there cannot be more than one infinite being. Infinity, by definition, leaves no room for more than one. We only need to contemplate on this for a second to understand it. (P2: There cannot be more than one Infinite Being). This leads us to the following argument:

God is an Infinite Being.

There cannot be more than one Infinite Being.

Therefore, there cannot be more than one God.

Another way to think of it is this: imagine two infinite beings ‘x’ and ‘y’. For ‘x’ to be different to ‘y’ it must have something that ‘y’ does not have. That means that ‘y’ lacks something (is limited) and is no longer infinite, and so we are left with only one infinite being ‘x’. If they are not different in any way, and both have all that the other has, then they are not different and are one and the same and again we are left with one infinite being.

As you can see, it is impossible to imagine more than one infinite being. Another point that needs to be made here is that when we say God is Infinite, we mean ‘absolute infinity’, something which cannot be comprehended by our intellect. We can only comprehend ‘relative infinity’, such as infinite numbers. This is not a true infinity because it is still related to material finite things. In contrast, Infinity in relation to God is absolute.

UNITY OF THE CREATOR

We learnt in our previous lesson that this entire world depends on a Creator, who is beyond this material world and its limitations. In other words, He is infinite. And since we just proved that an infinite being can only be one, then the creator, who must be infinite, can only be one. Therefore, not only is it that we have one creator, it is in fact impossible to imagine having more than one creator.

UNITY OF LORDSHIP

The above proofs prove the Unity of the Essence of God, as well as the Unity of God as the Creator. In other words, God, in His Essence is One, and that He is the One Creator. However, as Muslims, we also believe in the Unity of Lordship.

We believe that not only did Allah, the Exalted, create this world, but that He is also its Cherisher (*Rabb*), the one who manages it day by day and moment by moment. He is the Sustainer, the Giver, the Withholder, the the Bestower, the Helper, the Answerer of Prayers, the Giver of Life and the One who causes Death. This type of management is called *rubūbiyah*. As Muslims, we believe that there is only one Lord, and that is Allah, the Exalted, who as we discussed above is also One in His Essence and is the One Creator.

PROVING THE UNITY OF LORDSHIP

Let us review the proof for the unity of Lordship and look at them in more detail. One proof is that the world around us functions harmoniously and has a system that unifies the entire creation. From a tiny atomic level to the level of super-galaxies, there is a common thread that runs through the entire universe and that unifies it under one system. This leads us to the belief that there is one Lord who manages this world in its entirety.

This proof is referred to in the Qur'an, which asks to consider the possibility of more than one Lord. It then tells that if there were more than one lord, the world would be destroyed, because there would no longer be one system and a unifying factor in creation. Rather, there would be chaos and conflict in the world and it would eventually be destroyed as the two or more systems would clash with one another.

While this proof may seem simplistic, there is a more subtle element to it. The world we live is a world of connections and intertwined systems. In fact, the world functions through these systems. An example to help understand this is the human brain. When we 'think' or try to solve a problem, we do this using the connections already established in our brain through neurons. We do not necessarily create something new, but rather work through the neural connections already in our brain. Similarly, when an event occurs in this world, it occurs through systems which are already in place. This means that the Being who manages this world, who sets the chains of cause and effect in order, must be the same Being who created the world. We can summarise this argument in the following form:

P1: Events in this world happen through systems which are already in place.

P2: These systems were put in place by the Creator of the world

Conclusion: the Lord/*Rabb* must also be the Creator,

We can then put forward the following argument:

P1: the Lord/*Rabb* must also be the Creator (As above)

P2: the Creator is One (as proven already)

Conclusion: the Lord is One.

A COUNSEL OF LORDS?

One famous objection here is this: why can there not be a counsel of lords who, because they are wise, join together to make one system and one set of decisions? In this way, they could manage the world without any chaos and the world would not perish.

The first answer to this is that, as we discussed above, Lordship necessitates having been the Creator and we have already proven that the creator is one. Therefore, it is impossible to imagine more than one Lord.

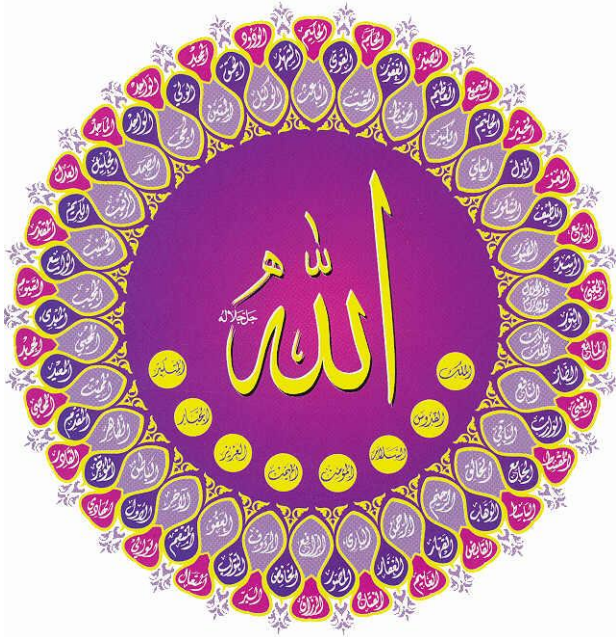
The second answer related to our discussion on the infinite nature of God, which leaves room only for one God.

UNITY OF WORSHIP

Having established the above facts, it becomes obvious that there is only One God to worship, Allah, as He is our Creator and Lord. This is another essential aspect of our belief.

The polytheists at the time of Prophet Muḥammad (saw), as well as many people from different faiths, believe in the Unity of the Creator without believing in the Unity of Lordship and the Unity of Worship. They believe that God created this world alone, but that He then deputed some independent power to other creatures. For example, they believed in gods for rain, gods for fertility, gods for thunder and so on. Others worshipped people and animals based on the same false belief. They believed these creatures somehow had independent power to influence the world.

This is polytheism (*shirk*) and is the greatest of all sins. As Muslims, we believe that no other creature has independent power besides God, and that we worship none besides Allah, our Lord and Creator.



- Allah is the One who makes the final judgment, so we should only care about what He thinks of us
- Allah is Eternal while all else perishes, so we should only fear Him
- Allah is the absolute source of all goodness, so we should not worry about where our sustenance will come from
- We all eventually return to Allah, so again, we should only worry about His Pleasure and not the pleasure of anyone else
- Allah answers the prayers of those who are in difficult situations, so we should not give up when facing hardships in the path of Allah
- the importance of submission to Allah

Review Questions

1. Explain why there cannot be a counsel of Lords managing the world we live in.
2. Explain why God is One in His Essence.
3. Can you think of any other proofs for the Unity of God as the Creator?

UNITY IN PRACTICE

Many of us may know the story of Prophet Mūsā (as) and the sorcerers. After seeing the signs of God, the magicians prostrated and submitted to Allah, the Exalted. Almost immediately, the Pharaoh threatened them with tying them to a tree and severing their arms and legs. We would think that a group of people who had only submitted such a short time ago might now weaken or lose this submission in the face of such a threat. However, these are the responses they give to the Pharaoh’s chilling threats:

“They said: We do not prefer you to what has come to us of clear arguments and to He Who made us, therefore decide what you are going to decide; you can only decide about this world's life. Surely we believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and the magic to which you compelled us; and Allah is better and more abiding”

(20:72-73)

“They said: Surely to our Lord shall we go back. And you do not take revenge on us except because we have believed in the communications of our Lord when they came to us! Our Lord: Pour out upon us patience and cause us to die in submission.” (A’raf, 7:125-126)

In their response, the sorcerers point out the following aspects of belief in the Unity of Lordship in such few words:

- Allah is our Creator and so He has a greater right upon us than anyone else

Lesson 4: The Theory of Evolution

The theory of evolution has often been cited as a major discrepancy between religion and science. The proponents of the theory of evolution use it to argue against the existence of a Creator or God, while those who believe in God often dismiss the theory of evolution in its entirety. In this lesson, we will introduce the theory of evolution, and consider whether it is compatible with Islamic teachings or not.^{xvi}

WHAT IS THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION?

The generic meaning of the word evolution is ‘change over time’ and can be applied in a biological context as well as other contexts. Sometimes, societies can evolve to change their culture and thinking or ideas can evolve upon new knowledge and discoveries. In this lesson we shall focus on the biological meaning of evolution.

Biological evolution is a theory that proposes that changes occur in the inherited characteristics of species over several generations. Basically, it tries to explain change in the characteristics of living organisms over successive generations. One of the most commonly claimed examples of evolution is the following:

*Many times a species is forced to make changes as a direct result of human progress. Such is the case with the peppered moth (*Biston betularia*). Up until the Industrial Revolution, these moths were typically whitish in color with black spots, although they were found in a variety of shades. As the Industrial Revolution reached its peak, the air in London became full of soot, and the once-white trees and buildings that moths used for camouflage became stained black. The birds began to eat more of the lighter-colored moths because they were more easily spotted than the darker ones. Over the course of a few months, dark moths started appearing in the area and lighter moths became scarce. Once the Industrial Revolution peak passed, lighter moths made a comeback.*

The theory of evolution is based on claimed evidence from fossils and other circumstantial evidence (genetics, anatomy, embryology etc.). It tries to explain that there are systems within nature that allow species to develop changes in order to survive.

It also tries to explain the cause for the variety of creatures that we see in the world around us today. Another part of this theory is that all creatures on Earth descended from one universal ancestor- that is, all animals, planets and other forms of life had one common source in one ancestor.

Upon the observation of the similarities within animals and plants, some humans long ago suggested that certain groups of animals came from a single ancestor^{xvii}. It was not until 1859 that the theory of evolution was formulated in a more systematic scientific manner by Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace suggesting that new species emerge by the process of natural selection (survival of the fittest) and that no trait (characteristic) in any living being could have arisen simply by chance^{xviii}.

At that time, very little, if anything was known about genetics and DNA and therefore the original idea has over many years been changed and continues to ‘evolve’ in light of new information and discoveries. The best definition of evolution is therefore, a change in the inherited characteristics of an organism over successive generations^{xix}.

There are numerous lines of evidence that supports the idea that creatures can transform and ‘evolve’, aside from the fossil evidence that suggests the existence of some ‘transitional species’^{xx}. Today with the advent of modern technology, especially the discovery and analysis of DNA and proteins in living organisms suggest that indeed all living organisms share certain characteristics. For instance, some proteins are shared by most living things from simple fruit flies to humans without any alteration or change^{xxi}.

On the other hand, although evolution can be witnessed over the short term in species that have a short life span (such as bacteria and fruit flies) it is impossible to observe the process of evolution for any other creatures and that is why even in science, it still remains a ‘theory’.

DOES EVOLUTION CONFLICT WITH THE CONCEPT OF GOD?

From the basic scientific definition of evolution, it certainly does not. It is merely a tool used by scientists to attempt to explain natural phenomena just as they have used theories to explain how the rain falls or how memory is stored in the brain. We should therefore be very careful

not to exaggerate the concept of evolution or dismiss aspects of it which may be true and which do not clash with Islamic beliefs.

EVOLUTION: AN EXQUISITE METHOD OF CREATION

Evolution, in its basic sense, may be another sign of the Wisdom of Allah (SWT). Just because a creature evolves in order to thrive in its environment, this does not mean it was not created by God. Rather, it is another sign that it was created by a Wise Being who bestowed it the ability to evolve.

Allah (SWT) asks us on many occasions in the Qur'an to ponder and to think over His creation, surely He could have created the potential for evolution so that we could understand how it worked and be in awe of it?

EVOLUTION: AN EXPLANATION OF THE LAW OF CAUSE AN EFFECT

The theory of evolution attempts to explain the great variety among the wonderful creatures we see around us. As it is a mere theory, it can only speculate on the origins of life and therefore the final cause still remains Allah (SWT).

EVOLUTION: PROOF OF A UNIQUE CREATOR

The fact that all creatures in some way follow the **same** system of creation indicates that there must be one unique system created by one unique creator! The entire system so intricately and exquisitely designed with each creature following some form of divine instruction sheet in its development and evolution. This single theory permeates all of biological thinking today it is through this that biology makes sense.

UNACCEPTABLE PARTS OF EVOLUTION

There are however aspects of the theory of evolution which definitely clash with Islamic beliefs. There are two main points in this regard:

- Most of the proponents of the theory of evolution consider it somehow a substitute for God. They deny the need for a Creator, because they see this theory and the process of natural selection and other processes to be the reason behind the origin of life,

the development of life, and the diversity we see in the world. This, of course, is definitely unacceptable in Islam.

What may be true is that, as mentioned above, God created a world which was designed to evolve. This evolution was a system created and invented by God, and not something that came about by chance or from 'nature' itself.

- The issue of *human* evolution is another major point of disagreement. The theory of evolution indicates that humans simply evolved from more primitive creatures (e.g. apes), while religious texts clearly indicate that God created humans directly as humans. Although there are some parts of the Holy Qur'an which may be interpreted to indicate that human evolution may have occurred, the general message of the Holy Qur'an is that God created humans directly. Therefore, when it comes to this aspect of evolution, it is most likely that Islamic teachings indicate that humans did not evolve from other creatures. In addition, the major difference between humans and apes is the unique intelligence that humans have. It is very difficult to explain this through evolution, and thus it can only satisfactorily be explained through the intervention of a Wise Creator.^{xxii}

CONCLUSION

Allah (SWT) in His infinite wisdom has created an incredibly intricate natural world that scientists are still learning about. The study and analysis of this natural world is a form of worship. Imam al-Şādiq (a.s) said:

"It is better to learn a branch of science than perform a thousand units of recommended prayers..."^{xxiii}

Indeed it is our duty as Muslims to study science and contribute to scientific development. If this is done with a clear intention, it may reveal more of the exquisite beauty Allah (SWT) has placed in His creation.

When it comes to the theory of evolution specifically, there are a number of points we need to review and highlight:

- Many aspects of the theory of evolution are compatible with the existence of a Wise Creator and thus if proven do not need to be rejected by those who believe in God

- The theory of evolution, and the process of natural selection and other similar processes, have not been scientifically proven till today.
- The existence of a Wise Creator is a logically undeniable fact, and thus the aspects of the theory of evolution which contradict this are definitely rejected by reason and by Islam
- It is most likely according to the teachings of Islam that humans were directly created by God and did not evolve from other creatures.

Review Questions

1. What is evolution?
2. How can evolution support the existence of a Unique creator?
3. Can the theory of evolution negate the existence of God? If so How?

Lesson 5: Gratefulness

The world around us is full of blessings that Allah (SWT) has provided to us. The entire system of creation has been designed to make human life possible and comfortable. For this, we naturally feel grateful towards Allah (SWT). There are different ways to express gratitude towards Allah (SWT) including through speech and action. When we thank Allah for the blessings, He gifts us with more blessings as a result of our gratitude towards Him.

In this lesson, we will discover that everything that happens is a blessing from Allah and we will focus on ways of expressing true gratitude for these blessings.

APPARENT BLESSINGS FROM ALLAH

Allah, the Loving and Compassionate Creator, is always protecting and nourishing His creation. Many of His blessings are apparent and others are hidden. As humans, we tend to take Allah's apparent blessings for granted. Let us look at one example of this from the Qur'an:

“...if Allah was to make the night continuous until the Day of Resurrection, who is the god besides Allah who can bring you light?... If Allah was to make the day continuous until the Day of Resurrection, who is the god besides Allah who can bring you night for you to rest in?...” (28:71-72)

In order to understand the meaning of this ayah, we need to understand the benefits of the night and day to us and to all living things. Imagine if each 24-hr period consisted of only night... it would be difficult to see all the time, we would not be able to keep count of time, we would have less energy, would not know when to rest and we would not get the benefits of sunlight. The benefits of sunlight include giving colour to all things, positive effects on our mood and many physical health effects. Sunlight is also essential for the growth and function of plants (such as photosynthesis) and in turn, plants play an important part in our lives. Sunlight is also important for other things that we take for granted, such as producing rain (for the evaporation of water from the earth to produce clouds), drying up the earth otherwise it would always be muddy and swampy (which could spread diseases and infections) and so on. Then we need to look at the other side, imagine if it was always day time ... too much sunlight can also be harmful such as causing certain cancers, drying up

the water sources, burning trees, overheating the atmosphere and not allowing us time to rest. Allah (SWT) has kept the balance between the two for us so that we get the benefits of both the day and night in a perfect proportion.

Allah the All-Mighty wants us to ponder on such blessings so that we acknowledge that their source is His Beauty.

CONTEMPLATION AND REFLECTION

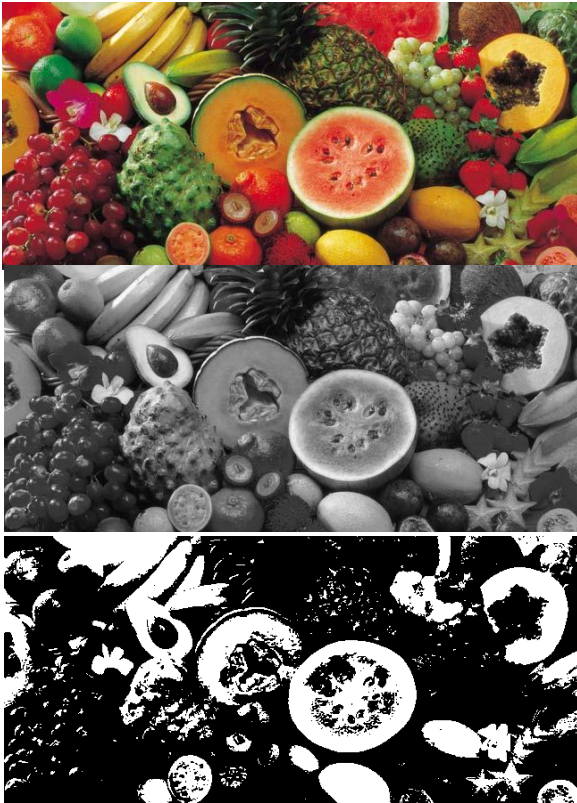
When we want to know the value of something (which is shown through the above *āyāt* of the Quran) we need to imagine life without having that specific blessing; only then do we realise the importance of that blessing. For example, imagine if the world did not have the wonderful variety of colours, smells and sensations that it does? How would our life be? If we do not benefit directly or physically from certain things, we benefit psychologically. Take a look at the following pictures. How do you feel when you look at them?



All the beautiful scenery around us, from the flowers to the green valleys, the birds, animals, moon, sunset, and sunrise all have a relaxing effect on us and give us a feeling of comfort and peace. Furthermore the various colours and shades play important roles in affecting our minds

and actions as they stimulate our sensory pathways in different ways. The colours of blue and green have a calming and relaxing effect on us. Red can cause one to feel angry, or to other people it can be a fascinating colour which has positive effects. Always being in a dull atmosphere can cause depression whereas being in a colourful environment can make us happier and more motivated. There are billions of different shades of colours in the universe, which Allah (SWT) has enabled us to perceive through the tiny pupil of the eye. This is made available to us at birth. Have a look at the following photos, then compare them to their grey and black and white equivalents:





HIDDEN BLESSINGS

Allah is always attending our needs and interests and due to His absolute knowledge, Love and Justice, He grants only what is best for us. Even the things which may appear ‘bad’ to us are actually good. In fact, they are the best things that could have happened to us. They all happen for a reason, that reason being to aid us in our journey through life. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said that Allah revealed to the Prophet (saw):

"I have not done anything for a believer to please him or hurt him unless it was good for him." ^{xxiv}

In order to explain this, Allah (SWT) uses the example of Prophet Moses and Khiḍr in the Quran. In this story, which most of you know, Khiḍr does things which seem strange. Prophet Moses is distressed by these actions. However, when Khiḍr explains the wisdom behind the actions and why he was commanded by God to enact them, Prophet Moses saw the great benefits from each action.

Similarly, we go through different struggles and hardships in our lives which may appear ‘bad’ or unjust. However, we need to look at these hardships as blessings from Allah as they serve a purpose in our lives.

Consider this: Your family planned a trip to go overseas. On your way to the airport you had a car accident and



lost your car and also could not go on your trip anymore. This initially seems ‘unfair’. However, a few days later a war breaks out in the country you wanted to visit and only then do you realise that the car accident was good for you because if you were to go to that country you may have lost your life.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s) said:

"... If God makes a believer rich, it is good for him. If God sends a calamity down upon him, it is good for him. If God makes him the owner of whatever lies between the East and the West, it is good for him. Even if he is torn into pieces, it is good for him. There is good in any of God's decrees for a believer." ^{xxv}

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

There are different ways in which we can thank Allah for all the blessings He gives us:

1) Acknowledging that all blessings are from Allah. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said:

"He whom Allah favours with a blessing and who then acknowledges it with his heart has verily conveyed (true) thanks for it." ^{xxvi}

2) Thanking Allah with words. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said:

"..The Ultimate expression of gratitude is saying ‘Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds.’" ^{xxvii}

(الحمد لله رب العالمين)

3) Thanking Allah through actions: When we receive a gift from someone, we appreciate it and want to show our appreciation and gratitude to that person; firstly we acknowledge the person who gave us the gift, then we utter words of thanks, and finally we want to do something in return for that person to show our appreciation. At the same time, we also

value the gift by using it correctly so that it does not get damaged in any way. Likewise we need to show our appreciation to Allah for the gifts He has given us. This is done by caring for these blessings and using them correctly. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

“Thanking for blessings is abstaining from the forbidden”^{xxviii}

For example, the appreciation for the gift of the eyes is that we do not look at forbidden (harām) things, the appreciation for the gift of the ears is that we do not listen to prohibited things, gratitude for having a tongue is using it to say only good things, and so on.



In addition to this, being grateful to the creatures of Allah is a good way of showing gratefulness to Allah (SWT). So when someone shows kindness towards us, it is the kindness of Allah being shown through that person. So if we want to thank Allah, we also have to thank that person. Imam Zaynul ‘Ābidīn (a.s.) said:

“Allah will ask one of His servants on the Day of Resurrection, Did you thank so-and-so?, and the servant will reply, ‘No, but I thanked You instead, O Lord.’ Allah will reply, ‘You have not thanked Me as long as you have not thanked him.’”^{xxix}

ⁱ Haydari, Lesson in Islamic Theology, a series of lectures on the book ‘Kashful Murad’

ⁱⁱ (Leibniz, 1714, p.15)

ⁱⁱⁱ Russell, B 1964, “*Debate on the Existence of God*,” in John Hick (ed.), *The Existence of God*, New York: Macmillan.

^{iv} Pruss, A 2006, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Reassessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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^{vi} Craig, W & Smith, Q 1993, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, New York: Oxford University Press.

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^{ix} (Swinburne, 1979, p. 20)

^x <https://www3.nd.edu/~jspeaks/courses/2009-10/10100/LECTURES/6-design.pdf>

^{xi} eHAWZA, Semester 1, Course 3, Lecture 3, Proving the Existence of God

^{xii} Mizanul Hikmah, p. 688-689

Homework

1. **Think of some of the apparent blessings of Allah and then imagine them being different or non-existent, for example: imagine you had 3 fingers on each hand instead of 5, would you be able to function as you do now? Reflect on such examples and list five other blessings of Allah and their benefits.**

References:

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Beharul Anwār, vol 61 page 129

Holy Qur’an, English translation by Hilali & Khan

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Imam Khomeini, Forty Hadiths: Twelfth Hadith (Contemplation), Thirty-sixth Hadith (The Attributes of God).

The Scale of Wisdom, chapters 271, 324

eHawza, semester 1, course 3, lecture 4

www.evidencesofcreation.com/

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Holy Qur’an, English translation by Hilali & Khan

^{xiii} eHAWZA, Semester 2, Course 1, Lecture 28, Worship: the Path towards a Meaningful Life

^{xiv} Al-Kafi, v. 1, hadith no. 239

^{xv} Al-Kafi, v. 1, hadith no. 240

^{xvi} Teachers are advised to read the references and prepare for this lesson carefully before delivering it as it can be misleading if not delivered correctly.

^{xvii} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution>

^{xviii} Burkhardt, F.; Smith, S., eds. (1991). *The correspondence of Charles Darwin* 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1858–1859.

^{xix} <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evosite/evo101/Intro.shtml>

^{xx} <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/what-evidence-supports-the-theory-of-evolution.html>

^{xxi} HOX genes are an example

^{xxii} <http://www.al-islam.org/man-and-universe-ayatullah-murtada-mutahhari/chapter-29-evolution-and-change-history>

^{xxiii} Mishkātul Anwār Fi Ghurairil Akhbār, narration 703

^{xxiv} (Mishkātul Anwār Fi Ghurairil Akhbār, narration 105)

^{xxv} (Mishkātul Anwār Fi Ghurairil Akhbār, narration 1765)

^{xxvi} (The Scale of Wisdom, pg 585)

^{xxvii} (Mishkātul Anwār Fi Ghurairil Akhbār, point 122)

^{xxviii} (Mishkātul Anwār Fi Ghurairil Akhbār, point 122)

^{xxix} (The Scale of Wisdom, pg 585)