Halaqa: Wednesday, February 12, 2014

Topic: What responds to our prayers?

What is the relationship between the one who prays and the One who responds?

When a child takes an action (moving towards a toy, pressing buttons on an instrument, etc), what responds to it?

* The musical instrument/machine?
	+ Can’t be. The machine is inanimate and has no will of its own.
* The program in the instrument/machine?
	+ The program itself is unconscious so it cannot consciously respond to the child
* It has to be the programmer of the instrument
	+ The programmer must have spent time understanding the needs of children and accordingly designed the toy to respond to those desires.
	+ There has to be a conscious will which responds to the child.

The instrument corresponds to the physical world (the universe)

* We are always in communication with things in the world
* Both physically and with respect to our human qualities
	+ Physically: When we are hungry (a physical need), we reach for food.
		- My rationality makes obvious to me that the food cannot create itself.
		- The apple we grab has no conscious or power to create itself with such perfection that it is able to satisfy the hunger within me AND also provide me enjoyment with every bite.
		- The apple tree from which the apple came, is similarly as unconscious and powerless as the apple.
		- I am convincingly led to confirm that the Creator of the tree, deliberately created it with apples that would exactly serve the desires created within me.
			* The apple is a response to my prayer (desire) for something that would satisfy my hunger
			* This prayer could only be the response of my Creator.

What is responding?

* Most of us tend to say that nature/Laws of the universe are responding to us
* But think about it: Can the program (laws) respond to us?
	+ Can the program/nature know us?
	+ We are in reality, communicating with the ‘programmer’ NOT the program

Similarly, when we turn the tables around, we realize that the desires within the child, too, have been created.

Who is asking/wanting the machine to make sounds?

* Can the child create his own want?
* The programmer of the child’s instincts/desires is asking
* The baby does not have an independent existence from the universe
* The child’s asking is itself programmed by the programmer

We have to be cognizant of the fact that the program we interact with on a daily basis is MADE – it is a means for us to know the programmer. The program itself has no independent, conscious will.

* The programmer has programmed it according to what he knows about me
* The program is unconscious but is employed to communicate with me as per the programmer’s will

Don’t get confused with the order of the universe AND the order-er

* Order is unconscious and has no choice. It cannot recognize me or know my desires.
* Rather, the orderer is consciously preparing everything for me so that I can communicate with Him through the order.

When we visit the orchard and attempt to pluck fruits of the tree, there is communication taking place. Think about it:

* Can the plant itself respond to my desire for fruits?
	+ Does the plant have the capacity to know how much I enjoy grapes OR that I am craving something juicy?
	+ It would be silly to think so.
* Rather, I convincingly realize that it is the one who created the plant who is responding to my desire for fruits.

The desire within me for fruits has been created.

* Introspection makes clear to me that I have no power to will anything into existence
* The feelings, desires, thoughts, within me are ALL created
* I have been given the desire for fruits.

An analogy:

GRAPES

* Characteristics: Juicy, sweet, refreshing, satiating
	+ All these characteristics that a grape possesses could not have been created by the grape itself
	+ The grape has no conscious will to create any of it
	+ Whoever created it, has done so for a purpose.

ME

* I find myself with a desire delicious tasting fruits
* I realize that I like the juiciness in grapes and the slightly tart flavor
	+ I have no power to create any of the desires within myself
	+ I can only experience the desires
	+ My desires are given to me AND I have also been given the ability to know that the flavor of grapes will quell my desires.

My desires and the qualities in the grape are in synchrony and in essence are communicating with one another. The creator of both must necessarily be the same.

MY DESIRES (physical and non-physical)

GRAPES

HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS; The distinguishing factor between me and the rest of creation.

My desires are created by a Creator since I realize that I cannot create anything.

The grapes and all its qualities are created by a Creator since the grapes have no ability to do so.

CREATOR

The Creator is the One who is answering my desire for grapes.

Similarly, the Creator is the One who is making me desire certain things.

* I realize that both the grapes and my desires do not originate within themselves
* The only way I can meaningfully understand the existence of my desires and of the grapes, is by acknowledging that both have been created by a Creator
	+ **My desires direct me to the Creator of myself and the grapes**

My desire is in essence a call to prayer!

We need to revise our concept of prayer!

* It is not just when we stand on a prayer mat
* Rather, our every desire is a prayer
* We have to expand our concept of religion so that we are aware that we are praying all the time
	+ Religion is not just about “rituals”
	+ It includes our each and every action that we perform throughout the day and night

Physical desires: In relation to our physical body needs (hunger, warmth, rest, etc)

Non-physical desires: In relation to our intellectual, emotional, spiritual needs.

As humans, we are not just physical bodies roaming the earth. We have a spiritual aspect to our creation, which needs its fulfillment too.

The physical aspect of my existence will disappear after I die but my non-physical aspect is eternal.

We tend to separate our physical existence from our non-physical existence BUT in reality, they are one.

* When we eat, it is not just our physical stomach that needs nourishment
	+ OUR human qualities (the feelings that yearn for security) also desires nourishment
	+ The only way the human qualities can get nourishment is if we are aware of the Eternal Creator.

Since desire necessitates communication, we cannot only communicate with creation because we understand that we have a non-physical existence too.

A child excitedly eats grapes.

* What is exciting the child?
* The grapes OR the creator of the grapes?

When a mother nurses her child, who is responding to the child’s needs?

* The mother herself OR the One who creates the milk and the compassion in the mother?

Who responds to our prayers (when we put our hands up and ask for something)?

* **Your needs are a call to prayer**

Every moment we are praying

* We think we are using our own qualities to ask for things
* BUT in reality, who are we but nothing more than an act of creation
	+ Both us and all of creation are CREATED

The program in my body is unconscious – we function as we are made to function

* When we ask/want, it is my programmer who is putting me in that position
* BUT as a human, I have the free will to choose how I want to use the given programs
	+ Always remember that it is not ME who is operating
	+ There is a programmer behind everything

Animals have limited free will, plants even less and the rest of creation are in complete submission.

* “Everything obeys God and prostrates before God.
	+ We say that the sun is revolving BUT in reality, it is obeying the order of the maker.
	+ The stars, trees, moon are all put in order and are functioning according to the order (they are all in submission)

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**Sahih International:**And the stars and trees prostrate.



We think that the child is playing with the instrument BUT in reality we are ignorant of the reality!

* The child is programmed to play with the instrument
* In reality, the child is acting under the command of the programmer (it is praying)
	+ If we use our consciousness and acknowledge this reality, then our action of playing is **good** *(amal-us salih)*
	+ Belief conceptualizes the world around you

Both the seeker and the sought are coming from the same source

* Everything comes from God and returns to God
	+ *Innalillahi wa inna ilayhi rajeoon*

The number of our actions or bounties we receive is not important; the nature of the existence of the object is what REALLY matters

* Whether we have 2 fingers or 10 is not the point
* We have to be aware that the fingers are from the Creator.

Human beings are merely prisms.

* We should consciously observe the universe and reflect that which we observe back to the Creator
* How do we differ?
	+ In our free choice
	+ We can choose to ignore the purpose of the prism

We are bound to our free will

* We have to choose
* That is just how we have been made
* I have to live in the world as I am programmed
	+ I am free to receive the message from my programmer OR to deny it
	+ Even if my ‘conscious choice’ denies reality, my human body is prostrating to my Creator
		- **My preference is ‘wrong’ but my existence is right**

Nothing in the creation is evil

* But, my choice can be a wrong choice
* *When a wrong choice has been made, we can once again ‘freely’ ask for forgiveness for the choice made OR deny it?*

We have been given the free choice to confirm reality OR to deny it

Due to our cultural baggage, we tend to reduce religion to our weekly/daily rituals.

* In reality, the entire solar system and universe is prostrating before Lord
* Everything functions as an action of the programmer of the universe
	+ Where we differ is in our interpretation of these events

Belief necessarily must be based on our own observation of the universe

* Don’t get lost in imaginations and imitations
* Always speak from our practical lives
* Any other approach is falsifiable because it cannot be proven

 A Creator must have created everything in this world, as per my observation.

* All the messengers bring the same message
* We have to confirm the message brought by the Messengers and the Quran NOT imitate them

When people say that they are against religion, it is because we are calling them to blindly imitate scriptures and cultures.

* Religion will obviously be rejected because it makes no logical sense apart from the understanding that religion is a national sense of identity
	+ Pay attention to how religion is presented
	+ Don’t ‘sell’ religion; *bring evidence demonstrating that it is humanly acceptable and approvable*
		- We cannot present conclusions BUT rather present evidences and let people conclude for themselves
		- That is what our free choice is for
* Rather, we have to be calling people to the Oneness of creation and of its Creator (*Tawhid)*

There are 2 sides of prayer:

1. The responding source must be the originator of the Creator
2. The need (within us) is also programmed
* The desire for grapes has been given to us
* Language of the prophet: “I have been given the love of 3 things”/ “3 things have been made loveable to me.”
	+ The Prophet’s awareness of his reality that manifested in the way he spoke (he was aware that he belonged to someone else): “*I bear witness by the One in whose power is my being*”

We have to train ourselves to have conscious of our existence (existential consciousness)

Religion must be your *iqtisab* (your acquisition/conclusion)

When we realize that our previous choices were wrong, we ask for forgiveness, repent and move on

* How sincere your repentance is depends on you

We have to be comfortable to repent and take refuge with God

* I know that I will make the mistake tomorrow and I know that it will be wrong
* Be brave to confess
* We have to realize our weaknesses
* Don’t despair of God’s mercy; as soon as you accept His truth, your previous sins are obliterated.
	+ Often said: A revert’s past sins are obliterated as soon as s/he converts
	+ Reality: All our past sins are obliterated as long as we consciously acknowledge *la ilaha illAllah* at every moment.

Never appropriate the property of your Creator to yourself

* Be aware of God’s ownership in every moment
* As soon as you re-enter a state of consciousness about the ownership of God, seek forgiveness

With every day break, see how your Lord is entertaining you and enjoy it!

* If you reduce religion to rituals, you will see them as burdens
* But if we have consciousness that your entire existence belongs to God, your every action is a prayer
	+ Then when you stand for prayer, it is not a break from your daily activities but just you acknowledging your Lord in a different way.

Every moment you are witnessing your Creator

Prayer: **Seeking an answer/respond to one’s emotional(human) expectations**

When we are eating, we are seeking a respond to our physical needs.

But when it comes to our emotional (human) expectations, who can respond to our prayer?

- Nothing can respond to human prayers other than the Creator of the emotion

Human aspect (in contrast to our physical aspect) looks for eternity, thus, cannot be responded by anything within this universe, which itself is finite and transient

* We have to be conscious of acknowledging that everything is from our Lord and return it to Him.
	+ In doing so, we are fulfilling our human qualities.