Halaqa: Saturday, December 15 2012

Difference between existence and essence of an object.

* Many different ways of understanding the topic
* Existence of a thing is to be combined with the essence of a thing
* The locus of existence, however, needs to be defined carefully
  + An object might not have a physical outer existence like the unicorn, for example
  + But the unicorn exists in your mind
  + Imagination is a kind of existence
  + As long as you think of something, it exists, regardless of whether it is present in the physical outer universe or a figment of our imagination
* Source of the universe: We do not need/expect to see it physically but we can confirm the source’s existence because we perceive it in our minds

Existence needs to be universally accepted even if the essence of it might not be describable.

If I’m talking about A to B, I am referring to an object that does have an external existence

* Existence is sure as is the essence of the person

However, because people cannot experience the essence of God, they claim that you cannot experience the existence of God.

But by definition, God is not within the universe so that means I do not look for an experience of Him but rather confirm how I cannot deny His existence in everything.

His existence can either be contingent on other factors or be necessary for everything else

* If the carpet was not made, it would not have existed
  + Carpet is not necessary. It is dependant on being made
  + My existence is contingent on a source creating me
  + Everything in the universe, exists in contingent with everything else
  + Nothing in the universe can sustain its existence by itself
    - We cannot stop changing or stop ourselves from being affected by change
    - Hence my contingent existence NEEDS to have a source who is necessarily existent
    - This necessarily existent one is the creator.

**Any being that is subject to change, needs the ‘change-maker’.**

* I was a baby and then made to grow into a teenager and finally into a senior
* I am subject to continuous change
* I have a beginning and an end
* I am continuously changing at every moment

Our observation of change might not be that developed but everything is subject to continuous change and NOTHING can eliminate itself from being subject to this change.

We cannot separate the existence of an object from its qualities.

* A exists. But we cannot take A’s cells away and take about A’s existence
* A’s shape, smell, hair, heart beat are all aspects that make who A is
* We cannot extract the existence of a thing from its qualities
* A stone exists together with its qualities
* A’s existence is not only a product of his physical being. He is also comprised of his imagination and feelings ; they are not physical but have also been given existence by the necessarily existent one

Imagination, color, shape, feelings are all qualities

* We may not be able to give an external existence and shape to the feeling, these qualities EXIST
* We cannot make a synthetic statement about the existence of the absolutely, necessarily one
  + We cannot physically experience Him
  + But, we can experience His qualities

Everything that exists, are contingent and are in need of the necessarily self-sustaining One.

* I exist only because I have been given existence
* Apart from the content of this universe, someone is in control of this operation.
* Something in need of existence, cannot be independent because it needs to be given existence

Emotion, thinking all work as an entity BUT are all made by our creator

* They cannot exist by themselves nor are they creating themselves.
* ‘Existing by itself’ is a illogical explanation
  + How can a thing exist by itself?
  + The brain has been given existence with the qualities to experience life as it does
  + Science has been based on this illogical fallacy; We have to be aware of this

When we say there is no God but God, we are saying that nothing in this universe can be the source of existence of something else because it is in need of being made.

* This is the fundamental teaching of the Quran
* There is nothing in the universe which exists and its existence necessitates a creator
* Since the universe exists, it needs a source of existence
* And our of necessity, it must be necessarily existent
* We confirm the essence of our creator by EXPERIENCE
* In order to be able to experience something we have to bring it within our capacity of perception
* You cannot bring an infinite within any finite category
  + None of the numbers can experience the infinite
* If anything is contingent by nature, it cannot encompass the ‘necessity’ of its creation

In the Quran, Allah is described as the absolutely necessary one

* God is the creator and must be absolute
* His essence is beyond our perception
* But His existence can be perceived in the minds of human
* His existence is a logical conclusion

Do you believe in God? Yes

* I believe in the creator, in order to explain the existence of this universe. I’m logically bound/hardwired to this conclusion.
* We should not deny the reality

God’s qualities are being reflected in creation (illogical)

* I see that the qualities reflected in the created beings, point to the existent of a necessarily absolute source
  + Person X has a different shape from the sun. The source of the existence of shape of X needs a necessary being
  + By looking at X’s shape, I conclude that the source must be a shape-giver (quality)
  + The essence of the shape- giver is beyond my capacity

By definition, we cannot speculate on the name of God

* A necessary being exists and this necessary being is the source of the shape-giving (*mussawir)*
* When you look at person X, you can confirm that he exists but because his existence is contingent, you conclude that there must be an absolute source who created X
* I do not know His essence but I can know the essence of His creatorship

Unfortunately, most people start thinking of the essence of God rather than the existence of God.

Those who want to argue about God, try and do so from the sidelines of this difference. They confuse each other with the essence versus the existence of God.

If you imitate, it is not belief. Belief requires certainty.

Because of my temporal being, I conclude that nothing has infinite qualities or divine powers.

A person comes and says: The creator of this universe told me that this phrase, *‘la ilaha illAllah’*  needs to be delivered to you.

I need to confirm this phrase not imitate it.

Belief is confirming what the prophet tells you, not to imitate what he does.

Worshipping the necessarily existent ones means that I have to get in touch with the rest of the creation to recognize their source

* When you are offered a drink, you have to thank the source of existence of the tea
* In your thanking, differentiate between the source of the tea versus the delivery guy

Air is not the source of creation of life

* It does not have life itself and it is subject to continuous change
* That means it must be given existence by something else
* We should breathe air and say: Praise be to God who gave me life
  + This is worship

The form of worship not the essence of worship may be taught by the prophets.  
  
Alhamdolilah (Praise be to God)

* When and how to say it, were taught be God through the prophets
* But the essence of belief is a personal connection
* Outward form of religion, rituals, should not be confused with the essence of belief
  + All the rules of mathematics, are within you
  + You can be taught but you have to discover and confirm it yourself by proving the claims

When you say air does not understand or need your thanks, someone may extend this way of thought to say, “Then, does God, the self-sufficient One need your thinking?

* Religion means being consistent with yourself
  + Do not contradict yourself
  + When you conclude something, you have to be honest with it
  + At the same time, you have other qualities - enjoying, appreciation  - that are independent.
  + Worship means expressing your feelings
    - Upon receipt of air, you thank the giver of the air
    - Thank the rightful owner
    - Air molecules do not have life. Thank the one who is the source of existence of the life
    - We have to thank; worship.
    - It is my duty to worship. It has nothing to do with the necessarily existent one. My expression of gratitude is not for the creator but for myself.

My creator has created me with a free will, to choose and confirm or deny what is innate and instinctive to my being.

* I have to experience my own reality in this world
  + I find myself with eyes, to see
  + I find myself with ears, to hear
  + I find myself to have free will so I have to use it
    - If I ask why do I have free will, I am going into the field of questioning the eternal necessary existent being and asking him but it is not within my capacity to go out of this universe
    - I have to be realistic with myself
  + Everything is given to us in the form of trust
  + If I did not have my free choice, I would be a robot and would not discover the mysteries of the qualities of this world
  + I would not be able to relate myself to my creator
    - My very basic existence points to Him and the fact the He has created me
    - This conclusion is only possible due to the free choice I have been given
  + My creator has absolute source and absolute wisdom
  + Use your trust to relate yourself to your creator

From my own experience, I feel thankful for my free will because through free will, I can make choices and by making choices I am improving myself by knowing what is right and wrong. Through doing this, I know my creator better.

* Why do I feel that I have to be just, honest, merciful, kind, compassionate, etc
  + A way to experience and get to know your creator
  + Developing and progressing as a human being
  + We need to constantly improve ourselves
    - We should not have two days that are exactly the same
  + Through our free will, we add value (gain experience) or make mistakes (learn from it)

Anything that has free will, should seek to constantly improve itself

* For example, with animals, we always try and teach them new tricks

The one who has created me, has made me with a desire to constantly learn something new.

It is good that we have free will because it is only with free will that we can make progress.

* The option to make mistakes, however, is necessary because if there was no mistake, we would not know the truth
* "If there was no dark, we would not appreciate the existence of light" similarly if there was no "ignorance" there would be need to learn.

Quran says: Be a man of truth

* The Quran tells us to CONFIRM the truth
* To use our realities and experience it

We can hence understand that everything has a beautiful purpose in its existence and we have to try to use it in the right way.

People say that religion answers the question why while science answers the question how

* According to Dr Ali, this is the biggest mistake people have made
* Religion answers the question how (through our experience in this world), the question why (it is asking about the unknown which is pointless) is irrelevant

Be careful to make the distinction between right and right

* Reject injustice and be consistent within yourself (This is how we are, not why we are)
* Check with ourselves if we have the sense of confirming the truth?
* Yes we do. We understand that our existence can only be referred to the creator, i.e. God.
* In this universe, we can only experience the HOW of things (E.g. a cell is being given existence by its creator - constant sense of worship)

We should not be 'religious'. We should be worshippers of God

* Religiosity covers up the sense of worship in our daily lives
* Religiosity takes over the real practice of one's worship of God
* It makes things outward instead of truly establishing a god-consciousness
* Religiosity is a way of escaping from yourself because you are not truly utilizing your human qualities
* By just following rituals, you are escaping from the true idea of worship that is a constant awareness of God

If someone says:

I believe in God and hence I follow a religion (this person has established belief by concluding through experience)

* But this conclusion of reality is not a one-off deal. Instead it needs to be constantly experienced.
* We should constantly be experience the gifts that He has bestowed upon us
* The only way that we can be grateful for even a small cell in our body is to be aware that the cell is being created by All
* We should not only reduce religion to the outward form (it has a legitimate base) but let it penetrate into your whole life and all your actions/senses.
* I have to thank God who made me aware of my being; an endless way of worship. This includes going to the mosque and performing rituals.
* Unfortunately, what we've been doing is emphasize rituals and religious actions without establishing the sense of worship
* A sense of worship/belief is the source of religious life and action. A religious life does not give birth to belief.
* It is a matter of priority. Not an either/or case but it is about establishing a priority for the sense of worship by using our human qualities
* To do so, just be honest with yourself.

When you concentrate on what is happening in this world and what they refer to, the link is automatic.

* There is no need to separate religious life from your daily life
* Instead, if you are able to constantly be aware in all your actions, you are establishing a connection with the Creator automatically AND witnessing the qualities of the Creator in everything we see/touch/hear/eat/etc

It is mentioned in the Quran, that those people who go to convents and monasteries, they are good people but we have not prescribed them to go to convents

* Your religious life is within your daily life.
* Don't institutionalize religion otherwise you will be living life in a dichotomy
* When you are working, you think of work independently from religion
* When you go to a place of worship, you think of God independently from your daily life
* We need to learn to combine the two and see everything with a religious perspective

It is very common now for people to attribute the cause of things to themselves. We have to be honest and realize Allah’s will behind all actions.

If we do not make mistakes, we will never learn.

Why is an irrelevant question?

How is the important question – how we live in this world and observe how things are coming in existence

* We will not make logical categorical mistakes if we have trained ourselves in understanding the creator’s WILL in everything
* First we realize that the creator is providing us with the tea we drink. This will automatically be accompanied with a sense of gratitude to him.

First we remember the sacrifice our mothers made for us. When we think about it, we become grateful and express it in the form of a gift, smile, hug, etc. We should direct these emotions to Allah.

* Make your mind up, the emotions and actions will follow
* But you have to train yourself in this. Belief cannot be transferred across generations.
* Knowledge can be passed on but not belief
* We are responsible to make up our minds when we are adults

Every quality of a human being has an independent existence (thinking ability, brain, memory, etc)

* From your memory, you learn what happened in the past. You have to treat it as an independent existence
* You were given the memory to think about
* God created certain communities within certain conditions and I should analyze the information given to me
* We are no responsible for changing the past (because we are not living in that time) but we are responsible for learning the lessons.

Sociology: We are learning how other people thinking

* We should thank God for the information that He has transferred to you in analyzing humanity
* This should be the processes involved for all types of events (be it knowledge, imagination, actions, etc)
* Always place it within the realm of understanding that everything is created by Allah
* When someone says 2+2=5, you say it is wrong.
  + You should give ownership of that conclusion to Allah who taught you that it is wrong