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| **Date** | Wednesday April 6, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Me and the Other – Overcoming Loneliness |
| **Part** | 4 |

How can I relate myself to the existent things, both animate and inanimate beings, around me? How do I see that I am not alone in this universe? The ubiquitous solution society offers is to join a certain group, keep oneself busy with external activities. It is a temporary solution and not the real solution. This external communication may distract me for sometime but does not address my core problem at hand.

For example when I am with a friend, I may share some internal feelings to a certain extent. However I am not really sharing my world that is within me. I have my own world and this other person has his/her own world as well. Sharing my world, what I have in me, is difficult. How can I solve my problems without having recourse to external factors? Can I solve it from within myself? How do I free myself from the pressures of loneliness and feel that I am always with everything around me?

The teachings of the Quran present us with a view that the world is not what it seems: everything in the creation is conscious. I would question: Really? I have to confirm this for myself.

* Is that rock conscious?
* Is the tree conscious?
* Is the air conscious?

The things don’t have to speak verbally to me in order to establish communication rather it is **through their qualities that they communicate.** There is constant communication that is observed whether I perceive it as positive or negative. For example when I see a baby smiling, I get very pleased. Similarly if I see something unpleasant, perhaps a bad smell which I don't like, I am still communicating. Regardless of how I perceive something, I am equally communicating with the things in the universe.

Communication does not necessitate a physical connection, i.e. I should not need a physical bodily connection to be in communication with something. When I shake the hand of a person, it is a sort of connection but it is not just the bodily hands connecting, there is a non-physical (spiritual) connection as well. I need to understand that I am not just a physical body. My body communicates with me as well, consciously conveying the qualities of its Creator. For example when I see the sunrise/sunset, I really enjoy the display. The sun is communicating with me if I am conscious. I get excited to see it which is my response, communicating with the marvelous demonstration.

The teaching of the Quran is that **every single thing glorifies its Creator**: announces the utmost qualities of their Creator. We have studied before that from our observations in the universe, we come to this conclusion that there must be a Conscious Will behind what we see and experience. We have to ask, ***are these things really communicating the qualities of their Creator?*** For example a painting communicates the qualities of the artist in the art. Similarly communication between me and the author happens when I read an ancient book whose author is no longer alive.

A book is constantly emitting meaning but unless the receiver is consciously there to get the meaning by reading the book, the meaning is not seen or experienced by that person. Although, the meaning is always there I have to be receptive in order to get the meaning.

**I may read the book and benefit from it but never question how am I understanding it, how do I get the meaning of what it says.** We usually never question this phenomenon. I may be having a conversation with friends and never question how this communication is happening, how do we understand one another. Do the airwaves make us understand each other? I don’t see the airwaves possessing that quality.

We hear the news from the Quran that these meanings are transferred to us by conscious beings. Sunlight comes to me, how does it come? How is light transferred? Photons, as scientists say? What are photons actually? I should understand that there must be a means of transportation of the meaning to me, message carriers which the Quran refers to as "angels".

It may seem difficult to digest because we may think inanimate beings are here doing nothing. We don't really understand how the animate beings such as animals and plants exist here in this world. For example, my eyes are not the source of power of sight. My human quality within me makes use of the eyes (a tool) and sees, i.e. my being experiences the power of sight. If my spirit is removed, would the eyes have any function of sight operating in them?

* Who is communicating through our organs?
The eye is not the source of our power of sight. Rather, my human quality/ life's essence uses the eye and other organs as a tool to communicate.

**We are not used to seeing the world as continuously transmitting messages to us**. Don’t I get excited when meeting friends or having a delicious meal? I do, I am using my given tools to communicate with the things. I use my brain, ears, tongue, nose, skin, eyes, etc which are tools which I use to communicate with things.

* When I express happiness, dissatisfaction, excitement, etc, I am being made to experience these feelings as a result of a communication that takes place within my humanity and my Creator.

The physical matter itself is not able to communicate with me but the meaning that is contained or loaded in it is what is transferred to me as the message. The material thing itself does not come to me but the meaning is what comes to me. The things in the universe are full of meaning just like a book has meaning. Thus, an atom is loaded with meaning when I consciously communicate with it.

The Quran introduces us to an interesting world view that we are not accustomed to. **The universe is a piece of art**. It broadcasts the qualities of the artist to me through this art. When we see a bird flying, displaying the art, there is no physical connection between me and the bird. I feel excited and pleased by the art when I am conscious of it.

Let’s study the verse:



*Those things that carry the Throne of God and those around it exalt with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], "Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire (40:7)*

Those things that carry the Throne of God are things that carry the **qualities of God** similar to how a painting carries the qualities of the painter. We usually don't think that we are communicating with the artist through the art.

In our interaction with the world, for example upon seeing a bird in the park, we may say “oh, it is just a sparrow” since sparrows are commonly found. I need to awaken the sense of wonder and question. Is a sparrow less artful than a tree? How do I establish this relationship? *What am I communicating with, the physical thing or* ***the meaning it carries****?* These things are carrying the art which portray the qualities of “the Artist”. I need to consciously come to a conclusion that is satisfactory and gives me peace of mind.

* Example: Why do we like looking at squirrels? There is no material, physical connection. Materially, the squirrel and I are separate physical beings but there is a communication taking place, made possible by our Creator.
* A squirrel, a baby, a painting, etc, all equally display the artistic qualities of their Creator. When we choose one piece of art against another, what are we really comparing?

The verse states that: “those who believe also join in this praise done by angels”. *How is that?* For example when I read a book and understand something, I get excited with the meaning. That is my joining the praise of the qualities of the Lord. When we studied the opening chapter of the Quran (*Al –Fatiha*), we understood who “the believers” are. Those who confirm that “You alone do we worship and to You alone do we seek help.”

* 'We' is a representation of me and my perception of this universe.
* Each individual carries a unique perception of this universe.
* I am a part of this universe because all the meaning within my perception is a communication through the universe with its Creator. “We” means, together “me” and the rest of the universe “within me.”

Every individual holds their perception of the universe and that is how they live by. When I perceive that everything in the universe acknowledges/worships their Creator alone, their source of existence, I seek refuge with this source of existence. For example when I acknowledge the Source of the order in the universe and experience some sort of discomfort such as illness, I can ask the order giver, the Creator to put things back in order for me. By having this understanding, I join the praise of the angels glorifying the qualities of the Creator. **Whichever way I communicate with the universe is my perception, i.e. how “I” see the universe.**

All the meaning that I get from the universe is from within me. I am not purely body but also have a spirit which is how I perceive things in the universe. This means that I am a part of the universe, i.e. the universe is within me. How? All the meaning that I get from the universe is within me, my perception of the universe.

**With this world view of “the universe is within me”, I solve my problem of loneliness.** **Being lonely is an artificial perception and not real.** Is there no communication with me out there? Only when I open my receptors to the message will I see that I am not lonely but that there is meaning which is constantly continuously being broadcast in the universe.

* The universe is not static but dynamic.
* All the qualities are referred to as *Asma ul husna*, the beautiful names.

Does the artist of the universe leave things out there so that there is no communication? I don’t see that at all as everything is being sustained and working in perfect harmony. This means that they are all in constant communication. We also studied previously *Ayat ul Kursi* (The Throne) where we understood the quality of “Sustainer”.

*Hai:* God is alive which I can see by the dynamism of the universe where nothing is static.

*Qayyoom*: the Author of the universe is continuously communicating with me. All the beautiful names/qualities are being manifest in the universe. If I don't pay attention, don’t listen, don't smell, taste, use my tools then I will definitely feel lonely. Just like when my laptop is turned off, it is of no use. When I turn my senses/receptors on (i.e. turn the laptop on) will I get out of this loneliness. **All my problems can be solved by referring to existence.** Again if I consider my being as just biological consisting of only body, being a materialist, then I am bound to be lonely.

* I need to use my existence which has the quality to solve all the problems

Materialist understands: I am here; you are there, i.e. me and the other

Believer understands: I am here, **there is no other**.

Everything I perceive is within me. Everything in the universe communicates with me, bringing news about the Creator. The things are continuously exposing the qualities/beautiful names of their Creator to me. Everything in the universe becomes a speech of my Creator to me and I thus communicate with my Creator 🡪 I am with Him.

Thus when the universe extols their Lord’s limitless glory and those who believe also carry the throne of God would include me, when I am conscious, as carrying the throne of God, praising His qualities. Since the universe is in me, the way I perceive it, I also carry the throne of God.

A known *hadith* mentions that: The heart of a believer is the throne of God.

This saying of the Prophet (pbuh) can now be understood accordingly. My human spirit perceives the meaning and registers it in my being. Getting the meaning is thus within me. Just like a camera captures an image, I capture the meaning I perceive in the universe such that it becomes a part of me.

Similar to the Quranic teaching, the prophetic teachings are also metaphorical. What does “God is in your heart” mean? I perceive and register the qualities manifested in the universe. For example, the fruit is in front of me but the qualities manifested in the fruit such as the mercy, the generosity, the knowledge of my Creator are with me. Message carriers (angels) carry this meaning to me. When I am receptive to the meaning I can say that: “I am with my Creator”.

Continuing with the verse "…*Ask forgiveness for those who have believed*…" Why ask for forgiveness?

When I do not perceive the world correctly such as when I think that I am lonely, the message from my Creator is sent to correct my perception. The message is continuously being broadcast for me to receive. Only when I am receptive to the message will I be able to come to the realization that I am not lonely. The broadcast of messages to correct my misinterpretation of the universe is “asking for forgiveness”. The messages are sent for me to put me on the right track of perception. Again, the universe is continuously attempting to correct my perception by continuous broadcasting of messages. When I correct my perception, I am forgiven. 🡪 It is all within me.

The believers also emit corrective messages. For example when I misinterpret something, a sincerely believing friend would correct my perception, which is asking for forgiveness.

* The universe, angels and believers all correct my perception by constantly emitting messages
* The messages tell me there is no other
* I cannot alienate myself from the universe; everything is my friend/helper/angels bringing news of the qualities of the Creator.
* All the qualities of the Artist I see in the universe are described in the Quran as His beautiful names. They are all good for me.

*Qahhar* – The Destroyer: is that a beautiful name? Absolutely, it is good for me. The name of Punisher is equally good for me. How do we understand the goodness here?

For example the president signs a law that all thieves will be put in jail for 10 years. If I am not a thief, I am satisfied with the law, it does not bother me. The law is a great message for me as it helps me not be a thief. Similar to a danger sign at the door of electrical systems where authorized personnel with proper attire can enter otherwise there is a risk of electrocution. I am glad that there is this danger sign as it saves me from being electrocuted. All the verses on punishment and fire are beautiful when taken from this sense.

Another example is when there is a big hole on the road where I am driving but no sign that mentions it. I would be furious why didn’t the authorities post a danger sign mentioning the hole, wouldn’t I? I need that sign as it guides me to be safe. That is how the language of the Quran is keeping us from destroying our humanity. I am in need of this guidance. I would further add that there is mercy in those verses so that I do not destroy my existence.

The mercy of my Creator extends to forgiveness when I sincerely admit to my mistake and correct it. How can I make sure of that?

The Creator's quality of forgiving is within me. When someone repents sincerely to me, I forgive. Thus the One who gave me this sense of forgiving must be the All Forgiving One. By giving me this sense, I get introduced to the quality of “Forgiver” of my Creator. That is how He introduces Himself to me.

Sinning is not the point as we have studied before but the consequence of sinning. Seeking sincere forgiveness is the path to correct myself. **Seeking forgiveness is human as it perfects my being.** Once we look at matters from an existential view, it goes into the heart of the matter, the root. This is how we are able to address all sorts of problems we face.

* The purpose of existence is correcting my mistakes
* Don’t be afraid of mistakes, seek forgiveness
* Our responsibility is to consciously correct ourselves so that we may draw closer to the Creator through His manifested qualities.
* The universe constantly brings us corrective messages so that we may correct our false views.
* There is nothing in this universe that carries eternal happiness. Everything is but a message bearer of the Eternal One.
* If I disconnect myself from the Creator despite being surrounded by His messages, I find myself in the burning fire of loneliness.

Continuing with the verse about mercy and knowledge being encompassed – When I have my receptors functioning, I can understand that it is so. The universe, angels and believers are continuously bringing me the message about the qualities of the Artist.

“*Forgive those who repent and protect them from the punishment of hellfire*”. Hellfire is for my misconceptions about the universe. The message is always there. I am engulfed with angels helping me correct myself and get back on the right track. I should open up my receptors, establish communication, listen to the message, stop contradicting myself and thus get out of this fire.

In summary, thinking that the universe and myself consists of material being only would be a reduction to the meaning I ascribe to existence. The universe is constantly broadcasting meaning to conscious human beings. That is, the message bearers are always at work manifesting the qualities of their Maker to me. If I am not conscious, then I do not get the meaning from creation. In other words, I have not opened myself to interacting with creation. Similar to having the radio off and choosing not to listen to it is my present condition in relation to act of creation. Radio frequency or airwaves just like the universe is always in full transmission. Our responsibility is to ensure that our transmission/communication is switched on. Otherwise, we risk losing the opportunity to consciously connect ourselves meaningfully. If we switch our communication channel on, there is no loneliness to be felt.

Everything is 'one' for the believer because in all acts of Creation, communication brings news of the One Creator. He speaks to me through all of creation - there is no 'other'. Each and every single person/being's existence is a touch point of communication from my Creator. Without communicating through the universe, we cannot communicate with the Creator. The heart of the believers carries the throne of God, just as the Angels. Only when I connect with the Creator do I become a believer in that moment. In that moment, too, I have registered the qualities of the Creator as witnessed in creation, all of which forms part of my perception. The believers ask for forgiveness. When I have a misconception of the universe, it is a result of my MISTAKE. The universe constantly emits the right message and is reminding me how to make it right. Similarly, the believers are those who are always reminding others to ask forgiveness because they consciously communicate the Creator's qualities.