Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on December 5, 2014
“Dawah with Insight – Part 2”

Part one dealt with the importance of gaining religious/revealed knowledge in order to be effective in dawah. Such knowledge if imparted for the purpose of reviving Islam will place one in the highest position in Paradise. Between them and the Prophets is only one level. According to the hadith, “Whoever is overtaken by death while seeking knowledge for the purpose of reviving Islam, there will be one level between him and the Prophets in Paradise.”

A couple of worldviews on opposite extremes were also shared, including the Naturalists’, which includes atheists among others and the Pantheists’ world view followed by Hindus among others. Finally, a synopsis of the Islamic worldview was presented.

Islam’s social order will not add up unless one understands the Islamic thought and worldview. In order to truly understand and appreciate the philosophy of Islam, one needs to look at the big picture. We need to investigate and ask the very basic, fundamental and philosophical questions: what is the reality of my existence and the world around me? Such profound discourse may very well help those who don’t have a clear conception of themselves and are lost in the many competing ideas, concepts and worldviews invented by people. It will help them gain self-confidence and live a more peaceful life as opposed to a very stressful and depressed life. Once one uncovers the truth and accepts it, the rest is simple. It is a matter of following a set of guidelines to ensure one’s happiness.

Our existence in the midst of this vast universe is not in vain. Every creation of God has a definite purpose. A Muslim who recently committed suicide wrote in his journal, ‘What is my master?’ Actually, Allah (SWT) encourages us to reflect on ourselves, “Do they not think (and reflect) about themselves? Allah created the heavens and the earth and what is between them with a (clear) purpose, and for an appointed time. Still, most people deny that they will meet their Lord” (al-Room, 30:8).

Indeed, people do investigate and try to find satisfactory answers to such simple questions regarding themselves and the world around them. Unfortunately, most of them do not reach the right conclusion. Real answers, however, depend on having access to the supernatural realm. Such knowledge can only be obtained from the right sources, i.e., divine revelation.

The philosophical questions postulated above deserve attention and are worth learning about. Once people know and are satisfied with the real answers, they will live purposely in this world while preparing themselves for their eternal abode.

Unraveling the Mystery of God’s Magnificent Creation

Shah Waliullah Dehlwi (Qutb-ud-Dīn Ahmad ibn ‘Abdul Rahīm), a theologian of the 18th century (1703 –1762 CE), expounds on Allah’s actions. He concludes that Allah’s basic actions are three. ‘Ibda’, Khalq and...
The first act may be called, ‘Ibda’; i.e. creating something from absolutely nothing, or ex nihilo. 
Ex nihilo is a Latin phrase that means “out of nothing.” This term is used in metaphysics, theology and philosophy and in conjunction with the concept of creation, creatio ex nihilo, means, “creation out of nothing.”

Allah’s first act is to bring into existence a creation out of nothingness and the basis of His creation is the command Be (Kun). “He is the Originator (Badi’) of the heavens and the earth, and when He decrees something, He only says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is” (al-Baqarah, 2:117). The process of creation in the world of command or, “‘alam al-‘amr” takes no time at all. In other words, things happen instantaneously.

The second act of Allah (SWT) is Khalq or Creation. This type of creation is to create something out of something. The Latin term is creatio ex materia, creation out of some pre-existent matter. For example, the Jinn were created out of fire or smoke and the humans were created from clay.

Unlike the “world of command” where time is of no essence, in the “world of creation” or the “world of matter,” (‘alam al-Khalq), time is always a factor in the process of creation. “Verily, Your Lord is God who created the heavens and earth in six days” (Yunus, 10:3). According to the Qur’an, each day with Allah (SWT) may correspond to either 1,000 or 50,000 years of our calculation or more. The word ‘day’ is normally used in the Qur’an to denote a fixed duration or lapsed time.

The third act of Allah (SWT) is Tadbir, controlling and directing or governing both worlds. “Verily, Your Lord is God who created the heavens and earth in six days then established Himself on the Throne, governing everything (Yudabbirul-amr)” (Yunus, 10:3).

The creatures that were created in “the world of command” require no time to move or travel. They are able to move in any direction and to any place instantaneously. Angels, who belong to the world of command, for instance, can travel from the seventh heaven to earth and vice versa with no speed at all. Similarly, all human spirits that were created in the world of command have the ability to travel instantaneously from the earth to heaven and vice versa.

This phenomenon is illustrated in the following ayah, “God takes the souls of the dead and of the living while they sleep. He then keeps the souls whose death He has ordained and sends back the others to an appointed time. Indeed in that are signs for those who reflect” (al-Zummar, 39:42).

This ayah clearly tells us that when we go to bed the spirits of humans make their journey to their place of origin instantly. Those whom Allah (SWT) has ordained death for will die in their sleep while the spirits of the rest whose time has not yet come will be sent back to the body instantly upon waking up. Our spirits consistently undergo this experience.

The Qur’an makes a clear distinction between the two worlds. “His is the creation and His is the command” (al-A’raf, 7:54). Both worlds, the world of command as well as the world of matter belong to Him.

The human spirits belong to the “world of command.” When the Prophet (SAW) was confronted with the question concerning the nature of the ruh (spirit), God would reveal, “Say, ‘the Spirit is from the command of my Lord, and (you cannot understand its nature, O people, since) you have been granted very little of (real) knowledge’” (al-Isra’, 17:85).

Science and technology have undoubtedly assisted man unravel many mysteries of our world, the universe and living creatures. As a matter of fact, modern physics has elucidated the beginning of this material universe; the starting point of the creation of this world of matter, with The Big Bang Theory. Modern physics confirms the Qur’anic revelation that was communicated to the masses centuries before the dawn of science and modern physics, “Do not those who reject the truth (atheists among others) see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation) and that We ripped them apart? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (al-Anbiya’, 21:30).
Notwithstanding this, it would be impossible for scientists to penetrate the supernatural domain and unravel the mysteries of the world of command (unless God so wills). The true knowledge of the supernatural realm and unseen realities can only be conveyed to us through Prophets of God who undergo supernatural experiences i.e. the agency of divine revelation. Scientific tools cannot and will not reach the world of spirits. Therefore, scientism cannot lead humanity to appreciate its divine purpose and awareness of the Creator in creation alone.

The real creation started with the command of Allah (SWT), “Be, Kun” in the world of command. It is by this command the human spirits of past, present and future have all come into existence simultaneously. According to a hadith of the Prophet (SAW) narrated by Aisha (RAA), they were assembled like conscripted soldiers. This is referring to the beginning of creation in the realm of the unseen before the creation of Adam.

While assembled before their Lord, Allah (SWT) took a firm covenant from all the spirits. “And (mention O Prophet), when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them testify against themselves, (He said,) ‘Am I not your Lord?’ and they replied, ‘Indeed, we bear witness.’ Lest you should say on the Day of Judgment: ‘We were not aware of this’” (al-A’raf, 7:172).

The ayah describes the event of the great heavenly covenant which the Creator, Allah (SWT), made with all His created spiritual beings before they took on the human form. The covenant is commonly known as the covenant of Alast. All spirits in one chorus responded in the affirmative that Allah (SWT) is their Lord and Master which implies that He alone is to be worshipped and obeyed and that the spirits are conscious beings with free will.

All spirits were then put on hold or to sleep. The Qur’an calls this (the first) death. “Blessed be He in whose hand is the dominion (of the heavens and earth); who has power over all things; who created death and life that He may test you (to see) who among you is best in conduct. And He is the Almighty, the Forgiving” (al-Mulk, 67:1,2). In addition to learning about the first death, the ayah exposes the intent of Allah (SWT). On the basis of our own free will, He waits to see who among His servants will fulfill the promise and honor the pledge made to Him.

The spirits then begin their journey by leaving the “world of spirits” in the “world of the unseen” to join its assigned body in the “world of matter” for a specified time before returning back to its very origin. The Qur’an confirms these two cycles of death and consequently two cycles of life. The first cycle of life is the life we experience in this world from the moment of our conception in the wombs of our mothers until our departure from this mortal world marking the second death. The second cycle of everlasting and eternal life starts at time of resurrection.

“How could you refuse (to acknowledge) God, when you were dead and He gave you life? Then He will cause you to die and then will bring you again to life, and then you will return to Him” (al-Baqarah, 2:28). Those who are bent on rejecting God and thereby breaching their covenant with Him in this world will come to realize the fatal mistake they made. On the grand day of accountability, they will recognize the truth and say, “Our Lord, You have given us death twice and revived us twice, is there any way out?” (Ghafir, 40:11)

Death in Islam is viewed as a transition from one world to another world. The first transition was from the world of command to the world of matter while the second transition is from the world of matter back to the world of command or the hereafter.

The majority of scholars hold the view that the human soul is a composite of a spirit and a body. The Qur’an is quite clear on this reality. Prior to the creation of Adam (AS), Allah (SWT) informed the angels of His plan. “And (mention) when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am about to create a mortal (bashar) out of dried clay and dark mud. So when I evolve him to perfection and blow My spirit into him (Adam), then fall down in prostration before him’” (al-Hijr, 15:28,29). All angels fell before Adam out of obedience to God and reverence and respect for Adam, “And the angels - all of them - fell down in prostration” (al-Hijr, 15:30).
According to the Qur’an, Adam went through six distinct stages before he matured and was ready to receive the spirit from Allah (SWT). The six stages are: water (21:30), dirt or dust (30:20), clay (23:12), sticky clay (37:11), dried clay and dark mud (15:28) and finally baked clay (55:14).

This is the creation of the human body of Adam which consists of pre-existent materials. Upon completion of the creation of Adam, Allah (SWT) blew into Him from His own Spirit. Therefore, the human soul is a composite of the body which is created from the crust of the earth, and the spirit that was created in the world of command. The body and the spirit are two independent conscious beings. One belongs to a higher form of creation, the spiritual realm; while the other belongs to a lower form of creation, the world of matter. “We created man in the finest state. Then We returned him (to the) lowest (of the) low” (al-Teen, 95:4,5).

It is that divine spark, the spirit which Allah (SWT) attributes to Himself, that makes humans superior and above all of God’s creation, including angels. It is this divine spark that is the most important distinguishing factor surrounding the nature of man. In essence, we are spiritual beings living a human experience, in pursuit of spirituality.