

The Object of Man's Creation

According to the Quranic concept of creation, the philosophy of the creation of just the inanimate universe would have served little purpose other than being, God forbid, a futile act on the part of the Creator. Who would know and who would share the knowledge with the Creator of the existence of things? It would have been tantamount to the creation of nothing less. The purpose of creation was to create a consciousness and ultimately to improve, widen and enhance the quality of that consciousness to the purpose of creation.

This is not a simple objective and needs a separate full discussion, which would be beyond the scope of today's address. The relevant part, to put it simply, is that the ultimate purpose of creation was to create a conscious being of the highest order who would not only voluntarily submit to the most consummate beauty of God as reflected in His creation directly, but would also lead fellow creation of the highest order (i.e. mankind) to this ultimate goal of creation, or at least, make it possible for those among them who desire to follow Him.

Hypothetically, remove the ultimate object of creation for a while, and suddenly the entire *raison d'être* for the creation and maintenance of this universe would collapse. In its simplified example, the reason for the planting of a seedling and nurturing, irrigating, pruning and maintenance of a fruit tree is the fruit itself. If there was to be no fruit, there would be no tree. All the effort in planting, nursing and maintaining the fruit tree without the concept of a fruit as the end product would be totally vain and meaningless. As such, the entire fruit tree, inclusive of its roots, stalk, stem, twigs, leaves and buds virtually remain obliged to the fruit. Though preceding in time, all parts of the tree remain obliged to their ultimate purpose. It is the beneficence of the purpose, which creates the instrument of creation itself.

In light of this relationship between the supreme object of creation and the rest of the universe, when one studies the teachings of Islam, one would be surprised to realise that Islam encompasses not only the relationship between man and God and God and man, but also man's relationship with the animal kingdom and the inanimate world around him.

All that exists becomes sacred not because of its superiority to man but because it is created specifically by the Lord of creation for man, directly or indirectly. Nothing in the universe remains meaningless any longer or remote and disconnected. Even the remotest stars acquire a meaning and a place in the scheme of human creation. This is what is repeatedly discussed in the Holy Quran from different angles of which the following are a few examples:

We call to witness the sun and its growing brightness, and the moon when it follows it, and the day when it reveals its glory, and the night when it draws a veil over it, and the heaven and the purpose of its making, and the earth and the purpose of its spreading out, and the soul and its perfect proportioning and He revealed to it the right and wrong of everything, he indeed prospers who purifies it, and he is ruined who corrupts it. [Ch. 91: Al-Shams: 2–11]

He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all of it is from Him. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect. [Ch. 45: Al-Jathiyah: 14]

He has constrained to your service the night and the day and the sun and the moon and the stars too have been constrained to your service by His command. Surely in all this there are signs for a people who make use of their understanding. [Ch. 16: Al-Nahl: 13]

Have you not seen that Allah has constrained to your service whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and poured out His favours to you, visible and hidden? Yet there are some among men who dispute concerning Allah, without knowledge or guidance, or the authority of an illuminating Book. [Ch. 31: Luqman: 21]

Surely, We have created man in the best mould. [Ch. 95: Al-Tin: 5]

Many other verses and even small chapters of the Holy Quran are devoted entirely to this subject explaining that man is a microuniverse, which has received influence from all forms of creation. Even the remotest star has contributed to this micro-universe of man.

But this relationship is not that of a servant to his master but that of the master to his servant. The masters do not bow and prostrate before those who serve them. Man, therefore, emerges as the master of the whole universe and the servant of only the One Who is the Lord and Creator of the universe.

How different is this philosophy from that of many other religions which teach not only idol worship but also nature worship in so many forms. In their philosophies, the moon, star(s), the sun, oceans, trees, rain, lightning, thunderstorms or even animals such as cows, snakes, or birds, all appear in a way superior to man. Man is taught to worship them as gods by virtue of their superiority of some sort over man. In short, man is placed at the lowest order of things and is made subservient to everything, which was only created to serve him.

In the Islamic understanding of the scheme of things man is the master, in a manner of speaking, of all creation. Man, therefore, stands under the greatest obligation to the Creator because it is he who has benefited most from the creation of God, Who has constrained everything to the service of man.

In other words, man is emancipated from all bondage by accepting just one bondage—that of his Creator. Man is the personification and symbol of the conscience and the consciousness of the entire universe. When he bows and prostrates before his Creator, in him bows and prostrates the whole cosmos. When he returns to the Creator the entire universe returns, in a manner of speaking, to the Creator.

This ultimate realisation and the shaping of one's life to this goal is, according to Islam, the ultimate peace.

A phrase in the Holy Quran, oft-repeated by Muslims, encompasses this philosophy in a few words:

We belong to Allah and to Him must we ultimately return. [Ch. 2: Al-Baqarah: 157]

Few understand that here the meaning of return is not physical but spiritual. It is not just a statement of fact but a reminder of the purpose of man's creation. Just as a salmon cannot find peace until it returns to the place of its origin—its spawning ground, the human heart cannot find peace without spiritually returning to its source of creation. This is the meaning of the verse:

Those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah because it is only in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find peace. [Ch. 13: Al-R'ad: 29]

Source: Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rah)