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Secret of Life

Arsalan Malik
Ashhar Saeed

Abstract

Religious dogmas, philosophers and scientist have explained the concept of life which is a paradigm that still needs more elaboration. Life is intimately connected and associated with the evolution of this universe, earth and ultimately the man as its best manifestation. Islam as the final version of revealed religion has most clear and convincing concepts about this scenario. Besides providing clear concept of origin of life it rather gives its own view of life in a more comprehensive way.

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Introduction

What is a **Life**, a word so common we listen and use? As a simple word possibly we think that we equally understand it. But just like other such simple words it becomes a real issue the moment you start thinking. What life means to someone may not be acceptable to you or it may not even satisfy you. We have looked this concept in its historic perspective and tried to conclude where it seems more rational.

The purpose of this report is to discuss the concept of **Life** in Islam, in comparison with different thinkers. It gives a brief overview of steps involved in the creation and evolution of **Life** on earth. In this regard different views are given. Then it proceeds to the complex creation such as human beings. It also discusses whether **Soul** and **Life** are one and the same entities. It also elaborates living and non-living as absolute terms and their interrelation. What are the forces behind every physical event that occurs etc.

Let us start with some views from different religious groups.

Islam

The meaning of life according to Islam is to attain a relationship with God. To pray to God, worship God, believe in God, and have Faith in God when we are in full doubt. Following God in a positive manner to attain a relationship with Him can fulfill the 'purpose' of life.

Christianity

Christians believe that the meaning of life is relating to and getting to know God in an intimate way. This meaning is experienced and achieved through prayers, worship, and service to others. Christians should also follow and obey the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God, in order to achieve the 'purpose' of life.

Buddhism

Buddhism followers believe that human are born to suffer and only those who achieve enlightenment will not go through the process of reincarnation.

Judaism

The meaning of life to Judaism followers is to work hard to improve themselves to become worthy of receiving God's rewards. God wants to give, so He created man to receive. They are created in his image, and therefore like to give. God has therefore created a world for them to receive benefit while earning it. Those rewards those that are too great to give in this world without making God obvious and apparent (which would take away the ability to do bad, and ruin any reward for choosing good) God saves for the person to give to him during his reincarnation in the next world.

The First Creation

Lets begin with the First Creation of the universe and evolution to present Earth. These events took place in three steps:

Step 1: Creation of Alim-e-Amr

"Wahi-e-Aasmani" declares the utterance "Kun" as a reason for the beginning and invention of the Universe. As said by the Holy Quran:

"The Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He need only to say 'Kun', and it is". (2:117)

These instructions take the shape of "Physical Laws of the Nature". In the case of plants Biological Laws added to them. Further in the case of animals Instincts are added and Rules of Logic added to them to make a human being. All of the above is "Wahi-e-Rabani". As long as the system kept on going on these laws no 'Kun' is required but when God, against the laws of cause and effect, wants to assert His free will and providence, He would use the word "Kun".

In this world of "Nur" self-conscious angels and souls of all the human beings were created from "Nur". These souls were in sleep state and all of them admitted God as their Creator.

"Am I not your Lord—They said Yes we do testify". (7:172)

It should be cleared that in this world of Nur, there was no concept of serial time and space, and hence these angels and souls are over and above space and time laws. It should also be cleared that here 'Nur', 'Amr" and 'Wahi' means one and the same thing, as seen through the following verse;

"And thus We have sent you Ruh (Soul) from Our Amr (Command). You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Faith? But We have made it a Nur wherewith We guide whosoever of Our slaves We will. And verily, you are indeed guiding to the Straight Path". (42:52)

Step 2: From Alim-e-Amr to Alim-e-Khalk

This is the first step of creation of matter. It started with Big Bang, some 15-20 Billion years ago, in which time, space and matter was created in world of Nur. Initially matter was in the form of 'Nar', which under gravity formed stars and galaxies. Jinn were also created from this smokeless 'Nar' who also have self-conscious and free will. It appears that there is probably some relation between Nur and Nar. Possibly a similar relation exist between Jinn and Angles, and due to very same relationship Ezazil jinn exchanged ideas with elite angels.

Step 3: Creation of Earth

From the dust created in Big-Bang stars were created. When stars exploded as super-nova the matter once again scattered in the form of dust in the galactic world. Then it was recollected together in the form of planets. One of the planets created is Earth. The atmosphere of Earth at

that time contained hydrogen and oxygen, beside other gases, which latter became the origin of water on earth-crust. The whole scenario is explained in Holy Quran.

"Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?" (21:30)

"He it is Who made the Heavens and the Earth in six days and His throne was on water..."(11:7)

Hence at that stage only water was a dominant factor on Earth out of which biological activity was started.

Evolution of Life on Earth

There is a misperception that Charles Darwin originated theory of evolution and his wrong hypothesis of spontaneous emergence of life through chemical reactions generated a serious controversy among people. It is generally held that Evolution and Darwinism is one and the same thing. In fact Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (1273 A.D) presented the idea of evolution of life on Earth in his writings. Even before him men like Allama Jahiz (225 AH) and Allama Ibn- e-Maskwiya (421 AH) put forward some sketchy ideas about evolution of life. Following poem is written by Jalal-ud-Din Rumi and is translated by Sir Muhammad Iqbal.

The Eternal Life

First man appeared in the class of Inorganic things;
Next he passed there from into that of plants;
For years he lived as one of the plants,
Remembering nought of his inorganic state so different:
And when he passed from the vegetative to animal state,
He had no remembrance of his state as a plant,
Especially at the time of spring and sweet flowers,
Like the inclination of infants towards their mothers,
which know not the cause of their inclination to the breast;
Again the Great Creator as you know,
Drew man out of the animal into the human stage,
Thus man passed from one order of nature to another,
Till he became wise and knowing and strong as he is now.
Of his first soul he has now no remembrance,
And he will be changed again from his present state.

This idea of evolution advanced by Maulana Rumi can be summarized in three steps:

1. Physical and Chemical Evolution
2. Biological Evolution
3. Ideological Evolution

This evolution started from inorganic compounds to organic compounds leading to the creation of plants. Animals appeared much at a later stage. Journey to the present human beings accomplished in millions of years. Maulana Rumi tried to link up evolution with spiritual life and ultimately with God. God assigns some laws to every creature, which becomes *takdeer* of that creature as well preserved in the Book of Decree.

Creation of Human Being—At Microscopic Level

In the Holy Quran, the development from embryo to human being is narrated as:

"We did create man from an essence of clay: then placed him, a life—germ, in a safe enclosure (the womb). The germ We made a clot of blood, and the clot a lump of flesh. This We fashioned into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced it as another creation. Blessed be Allah, the noblest of creators!" (23: 12—14)

The point *"then produced it as another creation"* is important to note. It means before this stage the human being was just like other animals. He is made khalifa after the soul is breathed into his body. It must be noted here that soul is not life.

Soul is not Life

Soul and life are two different entities. Life is due to bio-chemical combination of atoms. It must be noted here that everything has life, the degree of which is manifested by their knowledge of environment, dynamism and free will. This will be further clarified in Quranic view of life. Soul is unique to human beings only. It gives them character and personality; the ability to choose between good and bad; consciousness and inspiration. You can develop your material body and life through proper exercise and food, but your soul requires different type of treatment. During your existence in this world you can develop your soul or stunt it. What exactly is soul? It is very well stated in the Holy Quran that our knowledge of soul will always remain incomplete.

"They ask thee of the soul say, the soul is an order of my Lord, you have been given but a little knowledge of this." (17: 85)

Answer to the question "what is living and what is not?" depends how we define life? This has been a great puzzle for mankind since the dawn of civilization. This is the most crucial issue concerning the destiny of the human beings in current life as well as before this life and life hereafter. Let us open the last Divine Book, and witness some of the realities about Life.

Quranic Concept of Life

Scientific view is "essence of living organisms in their beautiful organization in time and space, their energy giving reaction and their ability of the ordered repetitive reproduction". But on the other side of the picture, the concept of life as seen through the Holy Quran is much more basic and clearer. We find in the Quran that the essence of life is the obedience and the response to the Will of God. In our terminology it is denote by the "Laws of Nature". Thus, life can be defined as "Ability of things to follow the laws of nature". This definition implies that every thing in the universe is living. Difference is being only in the degree of their life. This degree will be explained later.

Following are some of the fundamental realities of nature as seen from the Holy Quran and are basis of above hypothesis.

Recognition of the Creator

The very fundamental characteristics of every thing are that they recognize the will of God and obey His commands. The following revelation describes this truth about the essence of life.

"And unto Allah prostrates what so ever is in the heaven and the Earth willingly or unwillingly"(13: 15)

"Has thou not seen Unto Allah pays adoration whatsoever is in the Earth, and the Sun, and the Moon and the stars, and the hills, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of the mankind" (22: 18)

The above verses prove that every thing in this universe recognizes God the supreme creator, and adores Him. This is in their inbuilt instinct, it may be a small quark, or a complex creature, and all things obey the laws framed by Him. The only exception can be among mankind, who for a limited time span on Earth are bestowed with free will, to believe or not. The following verse further clarifies these common characteristics of things;

" The seven heavens and the Earth, and all that is therein, praises Him, and there is not a thing but celebrates His praises, yet you understand not their praise, Lo! He is ever Clement and Forgiving" (17: 44)

The above verse signifies that irrespective of their nature, every thing is conscious of God's glory and existence.

Fear of Creator

Besides every thing praises God, they also have fear of God in their conscious mind, as an example, rocks also fear God, as evident from the following verse;

"And indeed there are rocks, which fall down for the fear of Allah..." (2: 74)

Obedience to the "Laws of Nature"

Another striking characteristic of every thing is their obedience of the laws created by God. The following verse shows that every thing has its own characteristic nature and a built-in guidance system;

"Our God is he who gave to each thing its form and nature and then gave it guidance" (20:50)

Working of every thing is also regulated by its pre-determined destiny, programmed in conscious of things, as evidence from verse;

"Every matter has its appointed time and course" (54:3)

From above discussion the following realities about the nature of the things are quite obvious.

- (a) All things have ability to recognize their Creator and thus praise Him and fear Him.
- (b) Within all things God has built the basic characteristics which guide them in their functions and give them conscious to recognize their surrounding environment. This very characteristic of every thing may be termed as their "Mind".
- (c) The obedience to the divine laws is very nature of every bit of the universe and they are conscious of it.

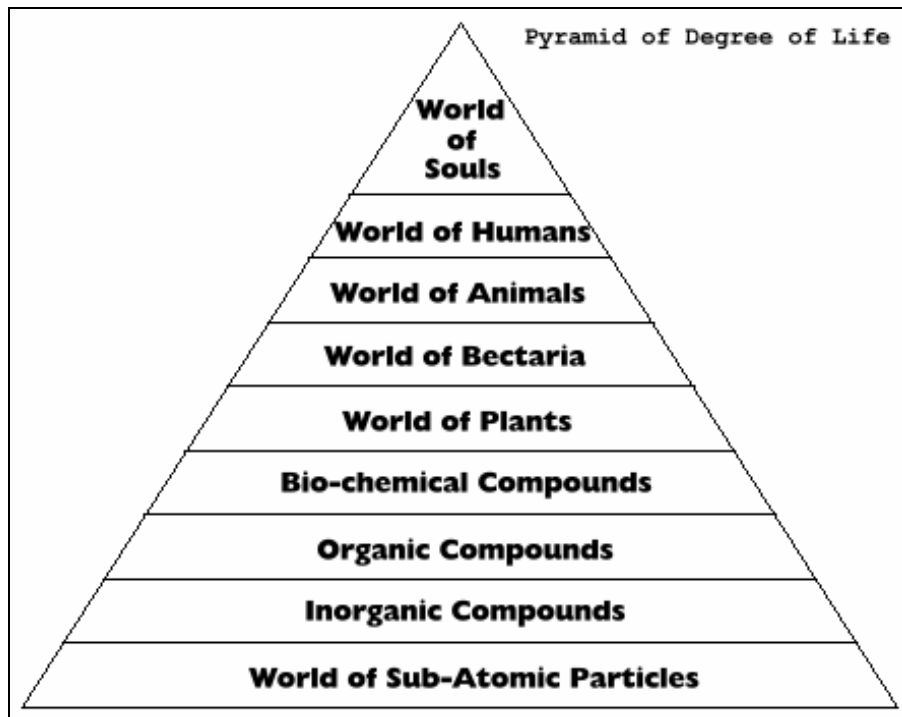
This has been confirmed by the series of scientific discoveries in the 20th century especially in the field of Quantum Mechanics.

The Fundamental Unit of Life

Let us now try to define the smallest possible unit of life. That will be a step forward to quantify the life itself. What we have discussed so far is that all living beings are combination of matter and life. In this respect life itself is an energy being carried by the material body, which give them consciousness. It may possible be due to some sort of transient energy which can co-exist with matter. One such type of creation is electron. Electrons at rest have definite mass and while in motion they are quanta of energy. Around the nucleus of an atom, electrons can be found in orbits according to their energy levels. If we give them energy they are able to define their next destination by their own. Hence, electrons can be considered as a carrier of life. In fact all the sub-atomic particles constituents fundamental unit of life.

Degrees of Life

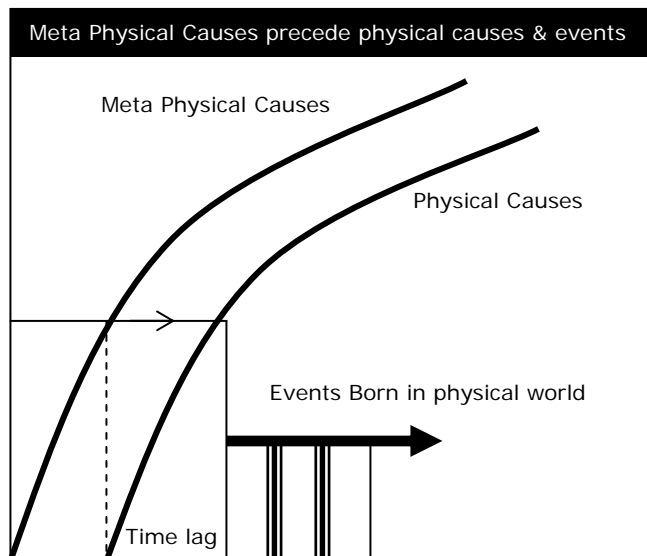
The above hypothesis that the sub-atomic particles are the fundamental unit of life can explain the basis of a life but it is clear that no combination of 'dead' sub-atomic particles could have created life by themselves. In this concept, different manifestations of life at various levels of development are actually outcome of different combination of atoms. Thus, the state of living and the state of so-called non-living is only relative to each other. Consider a branch on a tree, now from branch's point of view there is no concept of tree, and hence branch has every right to declare that there is no tree. The same is true for every entity in the universe. In fact all the entities in the universe are just a mere image, and there is nothing out there but God Almighty. The following pyramid shows the increasing degree of life from sub-atomic particles to the world of souls.



The Mind of Matter and Control over Events

Now we come to another basic question, what forces are behind the matter to obey the rules of nature? Does matter at very elementary level knows what to do under the given conditions? The answer is yes. For example two hydrogen atoms always combine with one oxygen atom under certain conditions. This means that matter at all levels defiantly has a "Mind" of its own. This hypothesis of "Mind of Matter" leads one to the trinity of "Space-Time & Matter" as regulating mechanism in universe. To understand this let us realize that nothing is possible without the input

of space and time. An event will take place only if time to happen and space to contain is given. Thus, space and time gives a platform for event to happen, but what controls the various forces leading to the occurrence of that event is the "Mind" of the matter which knows the divine laws of nature. We may say that mind guides the things to their natural behaviour together with interaction of space-time the events occur. Events thus first of all take shape in the Mind of things and there from they transformed into physical forms. A superior Mind can guide inferior Mind. Human beings who have the most developed Mind have the potential to guide all other entities. Thus predominance of Mind over matter explains; why meta-physical causes should precede physical cause; and how the physical misfortunes and catastrophes that befall individuals, societies and nations, are triggered by their moral degradation and wicked deeds?



The interaction of space-time and mind is going on since the creation. In absolute terms, these are the characteristics of God;

"He is the first and the last (time). He is the outermost and the innermost (space) and He knows everything absolutely (mind)."(57:3)

The above verse implies that God is the super set of space-time and mind. This is referred as "Mind of God", which controls each and every event in the Universe. It also implies that God is the only absolute entity.

Concluding Remarks

Life in its complete form existed even before creation of this universe, then it took another form, the materialistic form after Big Bang marks the start of time and space. This universe was created with a purpose. Manifestation of life started on Earth as unicellular creature. After a complex evolutionary process multi-cellular organisms such as human beings were formed. Human beings have a special place in this universe, because they are the supreme of the creations, and they are blessed with soul, a mysterious crown which distinguishes them from all other creations. Life is a relative term and in its widest application the entire universe has its own Life.

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Glossary

Allah	God
Alim-e-Amr	World of Command of God
Alim-e-Khalk	World of Creation of time, space and matter
Book of Decree	A well preserved Tablet containing decree of all creations
Ezazil	A Jinn, now known as Satan or Iblis
First Creation	According to many religious beliefs, the present universe will come to an end, and there will be another creation. Hence the creation of present universe is some times referred to as First Creation
Kun	The 'utterance' required by God, to generate super natural events against pre-defined 'Laws of Nature'
Nar	Smokeless fire
Nur	A 'shinning light', also an attribute of God
Organic compounds	Compounds containing of Carbon as an essential constituent
Super-Nova	A catastrophic stellar explosion of a massive star
Takdeer	The pre-determined laws for every entity in the universe
Wahi-e-Aasmani	A reference towards God Almighty
Wahi-e-Rabani	A reference towards God Almighty