

## Panpsychism in Philosophy of Mind, Transcendent Philosophy and the Qur'an

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ABSTRACT:

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Panpsychism in philosophy of mind is the view that mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world. The view has a long and venerable history in philosophical traditions – both Eastern and Western – and has recently enjoyed a revival in analytic philosophy. Thus, in conjunction with the widely held assumption that fundamental things exist only at the micro-level, panpsychism entails that at least some kinds of micro-level entities have mentality, and that instances of those kinds are found in all things throughout the material universe.

We can see something like this in Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Philosophy. Mullā Ṣadrā claims that all things enjoy some kind of intelligence and understanding. On the other hand, many verses of the Holy Qur'an either explicitly or implicitly assert the presence of understanding and intelligence in all things. In this article, I will explain all three issues (Panpsychism, Mullā Ṣadrā's view, and relevant verses of the Holy Qur'an), then I will make it clear that Mullā Ṣadrā's view and Qur'anic statements are consistent with at least some versions of the Panpsychism.

KEYWORDS: Panpsychism, mentality, fundamental, Transcendent Philosophy, intelligence.

### *I. Introduction*

The world is awake. That can stand as a slogan for *panpsychism* (Seager 1991) and the result of some major ontological principles from the point of view of Mullā Ṣadrā (known as Transcendent Philosophy) as well as the explicitness of some verses of the Holy Qur'an.

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The panpsychism literally means that everything has a mind. However, in contemporary debates it is generally understood as the view that mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world. Thus, in conjunction with the widely held assumption that fundamental things exist only at the micro-level, panpsychism entails that at least some kinds of micro-level entities have mentality, and that instances of those kinds are found in all things throughout the material universe.<sup>1</sup>

But it should be kept in mind that, as Chalmers says,

“They are not committed to the thesis that the number two has a mind, or that the Eiffel tower has a mind, or that the city of Canberra has a mind .... Instead, we can understand panpsychism as the thesis that some fundamental physical entities have mental states. For example, if quarks or photons have mental states, that suffices for panpsychism to be true, even if rocks and numbers do not have mental states. ... The line here is blurry, but we can read the definition as requiring that all members of some fundamental physical types (all photons, for example) have mental states (Chalmers, 2016, 1).”

On the other hand, it seems that a large number of verses of the Holy Qur'an testify to the consciousness and awareness of all things in the universe. It means, however, that everything that is considered as a thing is aware including the elementary particles, and therefore shares this with the theory of panpsychism. But as mentioned above, it seems that the panpsychism has no obligation to the consciousness of complex objects such as mountains, trees and rocks, and hence seems as if contrary to the Qur'anic view which emphasizes the consciousness of complex objects such as mountains and firmament.

Just as you know, lack of commitment to existence of some things does not mean commitment to its non-existence. So, we can say that panpsychism is not inconsistent with the related verses of the Qur'an, in principle. In addition, you will see soon that some readings of panpsychism accept the emergence of consciousness in ordinary objects as well as in some fundamental physical entities.

Eventually, Mullā Ṣadrā, on the ground of the principles established by himself, urged that there is some kind of consciousness in all kinds of beings

1. Notice that, I take, in this article, having a mind or mentality as almost equivalent to being conscious, and that consciousness as a phenomenal (or, in some terms, qualia) versus functional one. So, this kind of minimal consciousness is not 'self-consciousness' or 'transcendental subjectivity', or awareness of the self as a subject, or awareness of one's own mental states, or the ability to conceptualize one's own mental states as such. Consciousness is simply sentience, or the way things are present (to the mind).

in the world. In this way, you can see that traditional Islamic philosophy and contemporary analytic philosophy and the Qur'an (the sacred religious text) are in the same direction. And this is what I will try to explain in this article.

Finally, I would like to remind you again that my aim in this article is only to show that the issue of the universal consciousness of beings, mentioned in various ways in the Holy Qur'an, is philosophically defensible (especially in contemporary philosophy) and therefore, it is also acceptable from a non-confessional point of view. Thus, here I will suffice with a brief report of the two philosophical views related to this discussion (panpsychism and Mullā Ṣadrā's view) without treating the reasons for the pros and cons. I will also speak of variant perspectives on the panpsychism as far as my purpose in this article requires.

## 2. *A brief Overview of Panpsychism*

There is no denying that panpsychism is intuitively implausible or contrary to intuition, hence being frequently subject to derision by philosophers and being labeled 'absurd' (Searle 2013) and 'ludicrous' (McGinn 1999, 97). Even sympathizers have qualms. Thomas Nagel worries that panpsychism carries the taint of 'the faintly sickening odor of something put together in the metaphysical laboratory' (1986, 49). So why have some of these people accepted such a view and tried to argue in its favor? One of the most important reasons is the failure or even disappointment of finding any adequate solution to the hard problem of consciousness.

The core of the problem is the apparent mismatch between the nature of the physical world as we understand our fundamental theories to have revealed and the subjective, 'what it is like' aspect of minimal conscious experience. It feels like something to be awake and this just seems utterly foreign to how we regard or how we *ought* to regard the material world. The explanatory gap is exactly the problem of how a world which is supposed to be completely described at the fundamental level by a science which has no place or need for subjectivity nonetheless somehow includes the subjective aspect of the world we call 'consciousness.'

One can highlight several prominent philosophers of mind to illustrate why we have tied ourselves in knots over such problem: William Seager has claimed that we have no idea whatsoever *how* consciousness 'emerges' from matter (1991, 195). Jaegwon Kim has held that we have reached a 'dead end' regarding the mind-body problem (1993, 367). Colin McGinn has alleged that we will *never* be able to understand the emergence of consciousness from

the brain (1991, 1–2, 7). John Searle has suggested that most of mainstream philosophy of mind is ‘obviously false’ (1992, 3). And Galen Strawson has maintained that only a ‘revolutionary’ new way of thinking will enable us to respond adequately to the mind-body problem (1994, 92, 99).

The inability of various mind-body theories to solve this problem left great philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers with the only solution to say that consciousness is fundamental and ubiquitous. Otherwise stated, lacking an explanation of consciousness in physical terms and lacking any conception of material reality beyond the structural, the panpsychist steps into the opening and suggests that perhaps the fundamental reality of the physical world itself partakes of some aspect of subjective consciousness. Again, this does mean merely that minimal, unsophisticated and unreflective consciousness is much more common than its opposite. All the panpsychist needs to posit is that some form of subjectivity, some kind of primitive feeling, is at the foundation of the physical world.

Panpsychism promises to integrate our scientific and ‘personal’ view of the world and do so in a way that respects both the completeness of the physical picture of the causal structure of the world it investigates and the role of consciousness itself. The price one has to pay is admission of subjectivity into the foundation of the world as one of its fundamental features.

### 2.1. *The View in History of Philosophy*

As mentioned above, the view has a long and venerable history in philosophical traditions, so that it was sometimes emphasized that ‘it is an ancient concept, dating back to the earliest days of both Eastern and Western civilizations’ and urged that ‘until the past hundred years or so, panpsychism was a respected and widely held viewpoint. In many cases it was regarded as obvious and in no need of defense’ (Skrbina 2017, 2). Then he offers a long list of philosophers – from the past to the present – and claims that all of them have more or less embraced panpsychism.

Certainly, Plato is one of the most famous and important ancient philosophers, as Alfred North Whitehead writes, ‘The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato’ (Whitehead 1978, 39). Thus, it can be said that Plato is perhaps the first famous figure in the history of philosophy to be considered a *panpsychist*.

I followed Daniel Dombrowski (2019) in this claim, ‘there is ... evidence in favor of the claim that the ... panpsychist option may be the best clue we have to understanding Plato’s overall view ... In Plato’s dialogues we learn

that soul is the universal cause (*aitias tou holou – Epinomis* 988d), that it is (metaphysically rather than chronologically) prior to body (*presbyteras e somatos – Laws* 892a), that bodies are derived from soul (*soma de deuteronte kai hysteron – Laws* 896c), that we receive our being from soul (*Laws* 959a), and that soul is the primary source of all things (*psyche genesis hapanton einaiprotos – Laws* 899c). So, although Plato could not fully understand the full significance of panpsychism in that he lived over two thousand years before the discovery of cells and other microscopic centers of power, it would be a mistake to think that he was totally ignorant of such significance by defending dualism *simpliciter*' (Also see *Philebus* 28d, 29a-31b; and *Timaeus* 30b-c, 31a, 40b-e, 69c-70e, 77b).

Other philosophers on Skrbina list include: Spinoza, Leibniz, Arthur Schopenhauer, Gustav Fechner, Hermann Lotze, William Clifford, Samuel Butler, Ernst Mach, Haeckel, Morton Prince, Josiah Royce, C. S. Peirce, William James. And, of course, among the philosophers of the last century are Thomas Nagle and David Chalmers.

## 2.2. *An Initial Distinction: Panexperientialism and Pancognitivism*

At the first consideration we can distinguish between two important characteristics of human minds – *thought* and *consciousness*. According to the definition of consciousness that is dominant in contemporary analytic philosophy, something is conscious just in case there is something that it's like to be it; that is, if it has some kind of experience, no matter how basic. Humans have incredibly rich and complex experience, horses less so, mice less so again.

Standardly, the *panexperientialist* holds that this diminishing of the complexity of experience continues down through plants, and through to the basic constituents of reality, perhaps electrons and quarks. If the notion of 'having experience' is flexible enough, then the view that an electron has experience – of some extremely basic kind – would seem to be coherent. Thus, *Panexperientialism* is the view that *conscious experience* is fundamental and ubiquitous.

Thought, in contrast, is a much more sophisticated phenomenon. The traditional view in analytic philosophy is that thoughts are mental states that can be modeled as psychological attitudes towards specific propositions. Believing that "Tehran is the capital of Iran," hoping that "war is over," fearing that "there will be another financial crisis" are some examples of thought. Although many doubt the possibility of ascribing it to non-human animals, never-mind fundamental particles, pancognitivist claims that thought is fundamental and ubiquitous. That's why Panpsychism is

often caricatured as the view that electrons have hopes and dreams, or that quarks suffer from existential angst. However, whilst there have been some defenders of pancognitivism in history, it is panexperientialist forms of panpsychism that are taken seriously in contemporary analytic philosophy. So, it is not a miserable if I consider panpsychism and Panexperientialism as one and the same thing hereinafter (Goff, Seager & Sean, 2017).

### 3. *Mullā Ṣadrā's View*

Mullā Ṣadrā, based on the principles he explained and defended in his philosophy, insisted that a kind of consciousness is present in all beings in the world. In the first place, he argues that since 'existence' is *principal* for all things, so it exists in all things, and consequently *existential attributes* exist in all things.

By existential attributes he means attributes such as knowledge, power, volition and life, as opposed to attributes such as ignorance and inability and death. He claims that after thinking about this second group, you can clearly see that these show things that do not really exist. Take 'ignorance,' for example. What does this word really mean? Does it indicate the existence of an attribute in man (or other objects) or does it indicate that there is no such thing as knowledge in man? Obviously, 'ignorance' is nothing but lack of knowledge, rather than having the attribute of ignorance. For a person to be ignorant, he does not have to do anything special (such as going somewhere to be taught ignorance), but it is enough that he makes no effort to acquire knowledge. This is unlike the first group.

In the second stage, he goes on to argue that since existence is not only principal but also graded – that is, it exists in all beings at a different level and with different grading – so existential attributes in objects also have degrees.

Mullā Ṣadrā writes,

“Just as the Existence is a unique fact which flows in all beings in a different and gradation way as perfection and/or imperfection, so the true attributes of Existence, namely, knowledge, power, volition and life, as *who firm in knowledge* know, flow in all things, just like the flow of being itself. So, all beings, even inanimate objects, are alive, praising God, testifying to the existence of their Lord, and knowing their creator (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 6:117).”

In order to understand Mullā Ṣadrā's theory, we need to become more familiar with the two main concepts in his view, the principality of existence and the gradation of existence.



By the principality of existence, he means that – comparing with quiddities – it is existence (*wujūd*) which bestows reality upon things and that the quiddities (*māhiyyāt*) are literally nothing in themselves and are abstracted by the mind from the limitations of a particular act of being. Roughly speaking, by principality of existence we mean to say that a horse exists, following common sense, we think that the horse is a reality to which existence is added. In reality, however, what we are perceiving is a particular act of existence which through the very fact that it is manifested is limited to a particular form which we perceive as a horse. For those who have realized the truth, the fact that a horse exists becomes transformed into the reality that the act of being has manifested itself in a particular form which we call horse.

Reality is then nothing other than existence which is at once 'one and graded,' existentiating the reality of all things. Existence is not only one but also graded. And it is not only graded but also principial or that which bestowed reality upon all quiddities, which in themselves possess no reality at all (Nasr & Leaman, 1996, 648).

In light of his first principle, Mullā Ṣadrā can say that the existence is a unique fact which flows in all beings and concludes that the true attributes of existence flow in all things, just like the flow of being itself. And in the light of the second, he says that existence flows in all beings in a different and graded manner as perfection and/or imperfection and concludes that because the existence of some objects is extremely weak these attributes do not manifest themselves.

Existence (*wujūd*) is in its varying degrees the same as knowledge, ability, will and other existential attributes, but existence in some things is extremely weak and these attributes do not appear from these because of their limitations and their mixing with flags and darkness, and to that, God indicated by saying *And there is not a thing that does not glorify Him with praise, but you do not understand* (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 6:139-140).<sup>1</sup>

In view of all the above, it is obvious that Mullā Ṣadrā is not only a proponent of panpsychism, but also it is a natural consequence of his philosophical principles. But, which of these two approaches in panpsychism, namely panexperientialism and pancognitivism, can be attributed to Mullā Ṣadrā? It can be argued that Mullā Ṣadrā's words suggest that he took both approaches, since he claims that everything has conscious experience even at the fundamental level of matter and at the same time everything can think even at that level.

1. ان الوجود على تفاوت درجاته عين العلم و القدرة والارادة و سائر الصفات الوجوديه لكن الوجود في بعض الاشياء في غاية الضعف لا يظهر منه هذه الصفات لغايه قصورها و مخالطتها بالاعلام والظلمات والى ذلك اشار بقوله «و ان من شىء الا يسبح بحمده ولكن لاتفقهون»

Here I do not have the opportunity to discuss in detail Mullā Ṣadrā's view, and especially his view of panpsychism, so I will end this discussion here and look for panpsychism in the Holy Qur'an.

#### 4. Holy Qur'an and Panpsychism

It can be reasonably claimed that many verses of the Qur'an explicitly or implicitly confirm the existence of understanding in everything. At the first glance, the verses related to this subject can be classified into five groups:

##### I. Verses indicating that some parts of body will testify on the Day of Judgment.

This group of verses explicitly demonstrate the testimony of some parts of the human body on the Day of Judgment. But they implicitly say that these parts of the human body were already aware of what they had witnessed, since it is essential that every witness who really witnesses an event is aware of that event and keeps it in its memory. Thus, it can be concluded that this group of verses affirms the existence of consciousness at least in some seemingly unconscious objects, that is, some parts of the human body.

1. «يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ»

*On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet testify against them as to what they used to do (Q.24:24).*<sup>1</sup>

2. «الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ»

*This day We seal up their mouths, and their hands speak out to Us and their feet bear witness as to what they used to earn (Q.36:65).*

3. «حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا جُلُودُهُمْ لَمْ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ أَنْ

يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ»

*Till, when they reach it, their ears and their eyes and their skins testify against them as to what they used to do. And they say unto their skins, "Why testify ye against us?" They say, "Allah hath given us speech Who giveth speech to all things, and Who created you at the first, and unto Whom ye are returned." Ye did not hide yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should testify against you, but ye deemed that Allah knew not much of what ye did (Q.41:20-22).*

1. Marmaduke Picktall's English translation of the verses of the Holy Qur'an has been adopted in this article (Ed).



**Exegesis.** These verses declare the testimony of the tongue and the limbs against the guilty man on the Day of Judgment. These organs will report what the sinner has done. This scene shows that a person's tongue and limbs were aware of what he/she had done in this world. Therefore, their testimony is valid on the Day of Judgment, otherwise, if the tongue and body in everyday life did not have the knowledge and ability to understand the actions of a guilty person, they would not be considered valid evidence. Note that in the third part of the verses He (God) also added eyes, ears and skin to the witnesses of the Day of Judgment. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the organs of the body can testify on that day and it can be said that according to the Holy Qur'an, (at least) all parts of the body are aware.

## II. Verses indicating that some inanimate objects are in awe of Allah.

This group of verses explicitly tells us that things like the earth, mountains, and stones are fearful of God and have a sense of fear besides the greatness of God. Further, it is impossible to have such a feeling without knowing God and His greatness. Therefore, these verses tell us about the awareness of some inanimate objects.

1. «وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَّتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لُمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ»

*And of His portents (is this) that thou seest the earth lowly, but when We send down water thereon, it thrilleth and groweth. Lo! He Who quickeneth it is verily the Quickener of the Dead. Lo! He is Able to do all things (Q.41:39).*

2. «لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ لَضَرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ»

*If We had caused this Qur'an to descend upon a mountain, thou (O Muhammad) verily hadst seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of Allah. Such similitudes coin We for mankind that haply they may reflect (Q.59:21).*

3. «ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنْ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ»

*Then after that your hearts hardened. They were as rocks, or even harder. For there are some rocks from which rivers gush out, and others that splinter and water come out from them, and others that sink in awe of Allah. Allah is not unaware of what you do (Q.2:74).*

**Exegesis.** The first verse (Q.41:39) indicates that the earth is in a mental state of fearing which requires consciousness.

Regarding the second verse (Q.59:21) a point which can undoubtedly be made here is that the Qur'an can only descend upon beings who are capable of understanding it and that the verse "If We had caused this Qur'an to descend upon a mountain" shows that descending of the Qur'an on the mountain is possible. Therefore, the result is that the mountain has the power to understand the Qur'an. In the following, this verse reminds us that because of the greatness of the Qur'an, if the Qur'an were revealed to the mountain, it would have collapsed. This point also tells us about the high degree of understanding of the mountains.

The third verse (Q.2:74) "and others [the rocks] that sink in awe of Allah" indicates that some of rocks fall down in fear of Allah. It thus indicates that the rocks are aware.

Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, one of the most important commentators on the Qur'an in recent times, who, in addition to his skill in interpreting the Qur'an, is a great and important philosopher explains this verse as follows,

Surely there are some of them (i.e., stones or rocks) which fall down for fear of Allah: We see how the rocks and stones fall down – big rocks on the summits of mountains crack up, and then an ordinary earthquake is enough to dislodge them causing an avalanche. Also, the cracks fill up with ice and snow during winter, then the warmth of spring melts the ice sending the streams down the valleys. This phenomenon is related to its natural causes, yet Allah says that the rocks fall down from fear of Allah. Why? Because all the natural causes ultimately return to the First Cause, that is, Allah. Rocks, when they fall down because of the natural causes, are in fact obeying the divine decree which put them under the influence of those secondary causes. It may, therefore, be said that they understand the command of their Lord – an understanding created in nature. They obey the decree of Allah inasmuch as they are thus molded by Him. Allah says, *"And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification"* (Q.17:44); *"all are obedient to Him"* (Q.2:116). Fear too is based on perception, as are glorifying and obeying. It may therefore be said that rocks fall down for fear of Allah. This verse falls into the category of verses like *"And the thunder declares His glory with His praise, and the angels too for awe of Him"* (Q.13:13); *"And whoever is in the heavens and the earth makes obeisance to Allah only, willingly and unwillingly, and their shadows too at morn*

and eve” (Q.13:15). Here the sound of thunder has been counted as the declaration of divine glory and the shadow is said to prostrate for Allah. There are many verses of the same style and all are based on the above-mentioned analysis.”(Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.1)

**III.** The verses in this category show that everything on earth and in heaven is obedient to God and prostrates to Him, as well as the earth and the heavens can cry, and that the heavens and the mountains refused to bear *al-amānah*.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that everything on the earth and in the heavens obeys and prostrates to God because of their understanding of God. In one of these verses, God states that neither the heavens nor the earth wept for the sinners who suffered. This means that heavens and the earth were able to recognize the torment that befell the sinners and they could weep, but they did not weep for the sinners. In another verse, God says that the heavens and mountains refused to bear the burden of the trust given to them. This means that the heavens and mountains both had the ability to understand that trust as well as the power to accept or reject it. That is, in addition to consciousness, they also have free will. Pay close attention to these verses:

1. «... بَلْ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّهُ قَانِتُونَ»

... But whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth is His. All are subservient unto Him (Q.2:116).

2. «أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ...»

Do you not see that whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth; and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains and the trees and the (moving) animals and many of the mankind prostrate themselves to Allah... (Q.22:18).

3. «فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْظَرِينَ»

And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they relieved (Q.44:29).

4. «إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا

الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا»

Truly, we did offer *al-amānah* to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of its results) (Q.33:72).

1. The trust, moral responsibility, honesty and all the duties ordained by Allah.

**Exegesis.** Because, as God has informed us in the first verse (Q.2:116), everything in the heavens and the earth, including inanimate objects, is obedient to God, and since they cannot obey Him without understanding His commands, so they are all free-willed creatures. Because when a person could say that he has obeyed someone's command which he could also disobey it, that is, he has the power to choose between obedience and sin. This means that he must have free will. 'Obedience' is an optional act and is only logical if it is done by an autonomous agent.

The second verse (Q.22:18) clearly states that everything in the world – whether living or inanimate – including the sun, moon, stars, mountains, trees, and animals, prostrates to God. And since the prostration of someone / something for someone / something else is impossible without understanding oneself (self-consciousness) and one's environment and without having any understanding of the object of worship. The verse thus implies that everything in the world has consciousness – at least in lowest level – (and even self-consciousness).

Undoubtedly, someone who can cry for something must be in possession of considerable knowledge and cognitive abilities. For example, he must be aware of the objects and events around him and be able to understand complex concepts such as profit and loss, obedience, sin and heavenly torment and the like. He must also have very complex cognitive abilities, such as perceiving joy and sorrow, and be able to display reactions such as laughter and crying. The third verse (Q.44:29) shows that heaven and earth, being in possession of the ability to cry have the required knowledge and cognitive abilities. Accordingly, the heavens and the earth are conscious.

According to the fourth verse (Q.33:72), He offered the heavens and the earth and the mountains to bear *al-amānah*, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. The divine purpose of *al-amānah* in this verse can be something like the trust, moral responsibility, honesty and all the divinely ordained duties. Whatever *al-amānah* is, it shows that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains are capable of understanding very complex issues that even humans may not be aware of (see the last part of the verse that says humans who carry *al-amānah* were very cruel to and ignorant of themselves). This is indeed a great degree of awareness.

#### IV. Verses that show that all beings obey and praise God.

1. «ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ»

*Then turned He to the heaven when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto the earth: Come both of you, willingly or loth. They said, "We come, obedient" (Q.41:11).*

2. «يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا»

*That day she (Earth) will relate her chronicles. Because thy Lord inspireth her (Q.99:4-5).*

3. «أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مِنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرِ صَافَّاتٍ كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ»

*Hast thou not seen that Allah, He it is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise, and the birds in their flight? Each [of them] has known his prayer and the praise; and Allah is Aware of what they do (Q.24:41).*

4. «وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُودَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ»

*...And we subdued the mountains and the birds to hymn (His) praise along with David. We were the doers (thereof) (Q.21:79).*

5. «وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَأَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ»

*And assuredly We gave David grace from Us, (saying): O ye mountains and birds, repeat his psalms of praise! And We made the iron supple unto him. (Q.34:10).*

**Exegesis.** The first verse (Q.41:11) clearly demonstrates that heaven and earth – after their being created – *agreed* to obey the command of God *willingly*, not with coercion or reluctance. As mentioned above, they *are* free-willed creatures.

Here I would like to draw the reader's attention to the interesting point that this verse seems to show that the heaven which is a set of celestial bodies and the earth which is composed of various elements and objects, each having an independent and unique existence so that (at least God) can address them and talk to them. And this can lead us to the idea that the set of some objects can have an identity independent of their members and can be considered as an individual or even a person.

The second verse (Q.99:4-5) shows that the earth is aware of what is happening to it and somehow preserves it (that is, it has a very strong memory so that can memorize events in detail until the Day of Judgment) and is just waiting for God to Command it to describe the events.

Notice this part of the third verse (Q.24:41): *Each [of them] has known his prayer and the praise* and see how God explicitly says that all beings in the heavens and the earth and even birds in flight pray and praise God and with full awareness know what to do and what to say.

The fourth and the fifth verses (21:79; 34:10) tell us that when the Prophet David prayed to God and praise him, the mountains and the birds sang with him and repeated his prayer.

#### V. God's Command to some inanimate beings.

1. «قِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ»

*And it was said, "O earth! Swallow thy water and, O sky! be cleared of clouds! And the water was made to subside (Q.11:44)."*

2. «قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ»

*We said, "O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham (Q.21:69)."*

**Exegesis.** The first verse (Q.11:44) tells us that God (in the event of the flood of Noah) commands the earth to swallow the water on the surface of the earth and commands the sky not to rain anymore and they obey, and in the second verse God says that He ordered fire to do something contrary to its nature, that is, not to burn, and it obeyed.

#### VI. Other cases.

1. «قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ»

*Till, when they reached the Valley of the Ants, an ant exclaimed, "O ants! Enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his armies crush you, unperceiving" (Q.27:18).*

**Exegesis.** This verse narrates the story of an ant who quite intelligently alerts his friends to a potential danger and advises them to return to their nests lest they be trampled by Solomon and his army.

2. «وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا ... تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا»

*And they say, "The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son ... Whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins (Q.19:88-90).*

**Exegesis.** This verse clearly shows that the heavens and the earth and the mountains are so distressed by the words and beliefs of the polytheists that they reach the point of explosion.

Finally, it should be noted that the verses categorized and described above in the five categories are not the only examples of the verses from which the consciousness of all things can be deduced. Therefore, with a little care and patience, it is possible to find many other verses in the Qur'an that refer to the same thing.



## 5. *Conclusions*

Accordingly, we may make the following conclusions:

1. It can be said with some degree of certainty that the Holy Qur'an demonstrates and emphasizes the existence of consciousness in all animate and inanimate things in the world.
2. Many philosophers, whether in the East or in the West, materialist or immaterial, theist or atheist, accept the existence of consciousness in all things in our world.
3. Therefore, what the Qur'an emphasizes – that is, the existence of consciousness in everything – is not an absurd notion but is accepted by many philosophers of the world.
4. From the previous point, it can also be concluded that we can somehow accept the literal meaning of the above-mentioned verses – that is, the existence of consciousness in everything – and therefore it is not necessary to show any other meaning other than the literal meaning of the verses (an approach adopted by some commentators).
5. Before we say that everything has consciousness, we must correctly define the meaning of being an object and determine what can be philosophically considered a *single* object. For example, the Qur'anic presupposition that mountains are conscious is that each mountain is a single object. But can it be claimed that 'the mountain is a single object?' Is it a logically sound argument? This is an open question that needs to be answered elsewhere.
6. Finally, if we can claim that the Holy Qur'an, in harmony with philosophers, accepts the existence of consciousness in all things, we cannot accept it as a scientific miracle of the Qur'an, since in addition to the fact that this issue was an accepted fact among thinkers at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, it is not agreed upon by all contemporary scholars.

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