

Near-Death Experiences and Other Curiosities

How Should a Muslim Make Sense of Phenomena?



It All Began with a Question

One morning, as I was browsing through YouTube, a video popped up on my feed whose title inevitably stirred that “dark” curiosity within me – the kind that the human *nafs* sometimes seems to be almost “magically” drawn towards:

“Being Inbred Was Normal Until My Teacher Pulled Me Aside”

Before long, I was listening to a woman who seemed entirely unremarkable in every way – calm, thoughtful, in other words, completely “normal”. She explained that she was the offspring of a relationship between a brother and his sister. For the longest time, she had never considered this to be strange or unusual; quite the opposite, in fact. As a young girl in elementary school, she even thought it was “kinda cool” and would casually mention it when meeting new people. It was only when she entered secondary school that one of her teachers pointed out to her that this probably wasn't something she should share so freely.

It wasn't a sense of sensationalism or feeling somewhat superior that struck me here. Rather, it was the unsettling realisation of how *ordinary* everything seemed. There was no scandal, no visible sign of being “different” – nothing in her appearance or manners that even slightly suggested that something was “not right”. It was just a human being with a story, albeit a very strange one. And this, more than anything else, was what sparked the question slowly taking shape within me:

How would I approach such a person in a context of Da'wah? What would I say to her if she responded: “Islam, fair enough, but technically, I shouldn't even exist. God never intended for someone like me to be here, did He?”

And suddenly, one question led to another. What about children born out of wedlock? What about those conceived through sexual violence? Allah surely didn't want any of that – *or did He?*

It soon became clear to me that these questions all touched on something quite different from your typical philosophical discussion surrounding the “Problem of

Evil”, for instance, the question of why a child might be born with a serious illness. This was something far more fundamental: the very circumstances of a person’s coming into existence, i. e. the conditions under which they enter the world in the first place. And, ultimately, the question of how this “starting point” is to be understood, both metaphysically as well as morally.

In fact, my thoughts took me back to an earlier line of thought that had occupied my mind years ago, when I found myself reflecting on the story of the Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) and, in particular, on the role of Suleikha. Doesn’t even the antagonist in a person’s life have a role to play? A place within a greater Divine Plan?

Before I knew it, I had arrived at a question humanity has wrestled with for as long as we can remember: the relationship between Human Free Will (*qada’*) and Divine Decree (*qadr*).

But the longer I sat with it, the more I realized that this question, too, pointed to something far greater than a single theological debate. It is about those deeply personal moments in a Muslim’s life when we encounter something – just anything – that hits the lens through which we see the world like a tiny pebble. Suddenly, the familiar glasses seem to have a hairline crack. You may not be able to identify the “flaw” rationally or explain it in purely logical terms. And yet, somewhere deep inside, something suddenly “feels off”, unsettling, perhaps even contradictory. For a brief moment, the way you have always made sense of the world seems distorted:

Near-death experiences.

Accounts of supposed “past lives”.

Telepathy and telekinesis.

Genetic engineering and artificial intelligence.

Unexplained tragedies that seem utterly meaningless.

People of other faiths who appear genuinely sincere and deeply fulfilled.

People who break out in tears as they express their gratitude towards God, yet live a life that could hardly be further away from Islam.

What do we make of all of this?

Some of these thoughts we merely notice. They brush past us for a moment, and then they are gone. They remain unexplained – or not “sufficiently” explained –, but they do not unsettle us.

Others, however, linger. They eat at us. They keep coming back. And if we never learn how to put them in their proper place, they can slowly turn into doubt – not out of disobedience, but out of an honest intellectual restlessness.

That is precisely where this whitepaper sets in: at the point where questions start to arise, but have not yet been put into words in the mind of a Muslim – long before they develop into an actual crisis of faith. We want to address them at the root and “nip them in the bud” so to speak, before they even have the chance to take hold on us.

As you have come to expect from our whitepapers, the aim is not to provide an exhaustive explanation of each of these “phenomena,” as we call them. This whitepaper will neither resolve every metaphysical tension nor definitively answer every existential question.

Instead, as always, we want to offer some sort of guidance: an epistemological framework for making sense of these things, something to hold on to in case such questions arise – and they surely will.

Without giving away the conclusion yet, I sincerely hope this whitepaper will take the reader to a realization that I myself arrived at through my very own struggle with these questions, and one that has since become deeply rooted within me:

Islam offers **the** most coherent, logical, and intellectually and spiritually fulfilling explanation of the human condition and the world we live in. And the linguistic miracle of the Qur'an proves that Islam is true.

Islam is our anchor.

How Does That Make Sense?

Maybe you know this: you're scrolling through social media, swiping away one video after another, until suddenly something catches your eye. A man in a wheelchair, his entire body paralyzed. His head is tilted back, his face completely expressionless. And then he begins talking – even though his lips don't move.

He explains that he recently had a small implant placed in his brain; a chip that picks up signals from “his thoughts”, allowing him to communicate with his wife and children again.

Then follows a cut to the next scene. You see him sitting in front of a big monitor, still completely motionless. Yet the cursor is moving across the screen – quickly, deliberately. It circles, clicks, and navigates, driven purely by “what he visualizes in his mind.”

A question quietly begins to take shape in your head... but before you grasp it, something pulls you back:

“See you tomorrow! I'm taking off early today.”

You look up. It's Achim, your colleague – you've just had lunch together.

Achim is kind. Helpful. One of those people who is simply there when you need them.

You exchange a few words about the day before he grabs for his bag.

“I've gotta go now. There's a service at church today.”

He pauses for a second, as if carefully weighing what he's gonna say next.

“You know... before Jesus, my life was really empty.”

He smiles, gives a short nod, and walks away.

And as you watch him leave, it's there again – that kind of question you still don't even have the words for.

As we go about our daily lives, we encounter moments like these all the time – things we see, hear, or experience that, for a brief second, don't quite seem to fit into the picture we hold of the world as, mind you, *devout* Muslims. Why do I emphasize it like this? Because this isn't about scenarios where someone has accidentally (or intentionally) put on a lens other than Islam, naturally causing them to confuse or misinterpret things. We've already addressed this topic in our whitepaper "Islam Doesn't Need No Add-On"¹.

Rather, we are talking about situations where our understanding of concepts like consciousness, purpose, justice, or closeness to God briefly stumbles. Moments in which we observe something we cannot deny, yet cannot immediately make sense of.

These are questions that arise almost naturally as we move through this world, encountering all different kinds of people and walking through different walks of life.

Yet, not everyone approaches these questions in the same way. While most people find peace in simple, clear answers, there are those who stray from this "natural state" – those who tend to overcomplicate things unnecessarily. Often, it's a subtle intellectual pride that lies beneath this: the feeling that straightforward answers are simply "not enough", driving one to dissect every detail.

That might sound harsh at first, but that is precisely the point: Allah has placed a clear boundary upon the human intellect (more on this later), so who are we to believe we could somehow "bypass" it? He established this out of sheer mercy and for our own protection, for anyone who blindly chases after every conceivable question risks getting lost in endless loops of thought. And that is exactly what takes us away from the natural state of the *fitrah* – a deep intuition implanted within us by Allah that reaches far beyond (or deep into) the intellect itself.

¹ <https://ouforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Islam-does-not-need-no-add-on.pdf>

To be completely honest, as I reflected on the example of the woman from the introduction myself, it felt like a total “mental workout”. My head was spinning for hours and hours, easily for 7 up to 8 hours, alternating between intense focus and passive processing. It felt genuinely exhausting, SubhanAllah!

But in the process, I realized this: questions like these don't necessarily disappear just because you spend more time dwelling on them. More often than not, what you really need is a solid anchor – a point of return for whenever you feel “mentally lost”.

And it is for this reason that I wrote this whitepaper: for all those persistent question marks that just won't leave you alone. Sometimes it's out of genuine curiosity; other times, Shaytan is simply messing with you.

Either way, what follows is a straightforward framework for dealing with these moments of unease – a mental anchor you can return to whenever one of these questions crosses your mind, inshaAllah.

All You Need to Know

Recently, in one of my classes, we covered the topic “Proofs That the Qur’an Is from God.” While I was already familiar with many of the usual arguments, such as the linguistic miracle of the Qur’an or its prophecies, my teacher brought up a completely different line of reasoning, one that I had never heard expressed in this way before. Among other things, he spoke about the criticism raised by some orientalists who claim that the Qur’an is a “disjointed, chaotic book without any common thread whatsoever”, essentially a “confused jumble.” In fact, one orientalist even took it upon himself not only to translate the Qur’an, but to rearrange its structure entirely. And to be completely honest: when you read the Qur’an for the very first time, it’s easy to get the impression that the author is constantly jumping back and forth between topics.

But aside from the fact that most of this structure is based on absolutely fantastic, mind-boggling chiastic structures (this book feels like a single chiastic structure within a chiastic structure within another chiastic structure, a literal “inception” of chiastic structures, SubhanAllah!), my teacher pointed out that the Qur’an doesn’t even follow the linear, Greek logic of a textbook that exhaustively “ticks off” one topic after another, chapter by chapter. Instead, it operates on a “Semitic” logic, typical of languages like Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. This means that the Qur’an is not organized by topic, but rather around recurring themes – its central themes and core messages recur time and time again.

One of the divine wisdoms behind this is that Allah knows most people will not read the Qur’an cover to cover on a regular basis. More often than not, you might only get through two or three pages a day, and that is precisely why its central messages keep coming up again and again – as a reminder, affirmation, and encouragement. In other words: the core messages of the Qur’an are not placed within a single, isolated chapter, but they are woven throughout the entire book. That way, even after reading just a few pages, you walk away with guidance and direction for the day. You could literally close the Qur’an at almost any point and you would already have taken away the essentials – everything Allah wants you to know.

So before I address some more specific points related to the actual topic of this white paper, I would like to follow the Qur'an's own approach and start off with what truly matters – with those fundamental truths that Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala emphasizes time and time again in the Qur'an, so that you, as a reader, may internalize them deeply:

1. The human being comes from Allah and has a clear, objective meaning in life, which is to worship Him alone.
2. Worshipping the creation alongside Allah is a grave injustice that has severe – indeed, the most catastrophic! – consequences.
3. This world is a testing ground, not our one true home.
4. Every human being is currently on their way back to Allah, where we will be ultimately questioned for our deeds.
5. In the end, there are only two final destinations: eternal Paradise or eternal Hellfire.

Out of His mercy, Allah has conveyed all these things to us. He has not left us to our own devices, but has informed us of everything we need to know for and about this life: where we come from, why we are here, where we are going, and how we can best prepare for what lies ahead.

However, this by no means implies that we shouldn't explore the world around us or ask any questions beyond that. On the contrary, it was precisely this understanding that inspired earlier generations of Muslims to pioneer breakthroughs across various sciences (#GoldenAgeOfIslam). They viewed exploring the creation as a way to recognize Allah's signs and bring about good in the world, i. e. preparing for their Akhirah. But as fascinating as all this knowledge may be and as much as it sparks our curiosity, human intellect naturally reaches its limits at some point, so it's no wonder that unsolved mysteries or unanswered questions remain. Yet, this should not trouble us in any way, because at the end of the day and in the grand scheme of things, they REALLY don't matter and are not something we will be held accountable for on the Day of Judgment.

All of this, however, presupposes one thing: that we are convinced that the Qur'an is indeed the Word of God and that the Prophet ﷺ was a true messenger (for which, by the way, there are solid and rational proofs that would go beyond the scope of this whitepaper, were one to list them here). For that is precisely what our

faith is based upon in the first place: the Qur'an *IS* the true message of Allah. Consequently, everything it informs us of is necessarily true. One does not need a new proof for every other statement that follows – that is simply a logical consequence.

And this brings us directly to the second crucial point: when we encounter unexpected observations or phenomena in our daily lives, the real challenge is rarely the phenomena itself, but how we interpret it. The moment we perceive something, our minds automatically rush to assign meaning to it. At times we construct these explanations ourselves, while in other instances we passively absorb the framing of others, who present these things to us wrapped inside a predefined worldview.

This is where we must learn to differentiate: am I merely observing something to begin with, or am I already interpreting it? For a phenomenon never speaks for itself. It is only we who assign meaning to it, and that framework of interpretation must be guided **by our reason**, not by our emotions. Because the truth is: no matter how intense, painful, or joyful a subjective experience may be, it cannot alter the objective reality of a fact. Even if ten people experience something as negative, that experience does not take away from its truth or makes it any “less right”. So we are called to actively counter our own nature in order to stay objective and not judge truth and falsehood based on the “feeling” a phenomenon evokes in us, i.e. our emotional response must always be governed by reason and Divine judgment.

This is precisely what Allah talks about in the Qur'an when He says, in essence, that a person does not attain true faith until he takes the Prophet ﷺ as a judge in all his disputes and subsequently feel no distress or resistance in his heart against the Prophet's judgement, but submit to it in full devotion (see Surah an-Nisa' 4:65). So when, for example, we encounter a phenomenon that triggers intense feelings within us – whether it be excitement, shock, anger, or confusion – that initial emotional response may indeed feel overwhelming. Yet at that very moment, the believer must pause for a second, restrain his or her emotions, and ask: Wait a minute – what do Allah and His Messenger actually have to say about this?

Because our intellect recognizes something very fundamental: two contradictory things cannot both be true at the same time. Therefore, when a phenomenon appears to suggest one thing while Islam teaches another, the fault does not lie with Islam. Rather, we must re-evaluate our interpretation of the phenomenon and identify where we went wrong in our reasoning.

And that's another crucial point here, too: there are often alternative, equally plausible explanations for phenomena that may have been omitted or overlooked. And since we view the world through a purely Islamic lens, it is clear that the Islamic answer, where one exists, always takes precedence. A prime example would be accounts of so-called "past lives" or near-death experiences that seem to validate a very specific religion or ideology. From an Islamic perspective, occurrences like this would suggest that the Shayateen are playing on us, trying to lead us astray. And while non-Muslims might simply call this a "cop-out", we say: Well, let's discuss, based on first principles, which explanation is more plausible and truly stands up to reality.

Moreover, certain phenomena exist in the first place because they have emerged as a logical consequence of a particular worldview. In other words, our social developments and problems do not simply come out of nowhere. They are often an expression of how a society defines the human being, life, morality, and ultimately reality itself. A current example of this is Palestine. What may appear to some people as pointless killing or a conflict without any cause immediately raises a different question for others: "Well – where is your God, if He really exists!?" As Muslims, however, we view the same reality through an entirely different lens. To begin with, we do not believe that suffering and death in this world are meaningless. This dunya is a testing ground, and our true home is the Hereafter anyway. And whoever is killed in the way of Allah may return to Him as a martyr. What, from within a particular worldview, may appear to be the ultimate refutation of religion, meaning, and justice thus becomes something entirely different from an Islamic perspective: a test, an opportunity to demonstrate patience and steadfastness, and, for those who die as martyrs, a transition into a reality far greater than anything we could ever imagine.

Islam, consequently, is our anchor. In the middle of an ocean full of competing worldviews, ideologies, and interpretations, it keeps grounding us in reality (quite literally!). It does not only remind us of what we truly need to know, but it also separates truth from falsehood and places things in their proper place.

So if you have taken away three things up to this point, you have already grasped the very heart of this whitepaper:

- Islam is the ultimate criterion by which we measure knowledge and truth.
- Phenomena must be interpreted through our reason, not by our emotions!
- There may always be overlooked alternative explanations for any phenomenon, and in the end, what Islam says always takes precedence.

Actually, you could stop reading right here. But as you may have already noticed in the introduction: I went down the rabbit hole that day... so let me share what I have found down there.

The “Extras,” or: Possible Answers to the Very Questions You’ve Been Asking

The following points are all conclusions I arrived at during my own research, after the example of the woman from the introduction continued to linger in my mind. As mentioned earlier, this search ultimately led me to the question of *qadr* vs. *qada’*, and along the way, I came across a number of valuable insights that reach far beyond those two examples.

The points that are about follow are not arranged in any particular order. They do not necessarily build upon one another, and each can be read on its own. My hope is that they will not only strengthen one’s faith, but also provide a framework for thinking through almost any sincere question you may encounter throughout your life. That is why I have deliberately try to keep them as general as possible, while adding examples in some places to illustrate the kinds of questions to which each insight can be applied.

Allah Does Not Create a Scenario in Which His Names and Attributes Contradict

This principle may serve as a first filter for almost any question. If a conclusion would require Allah to act unjustly, unknowingly, or without wisdom – when He is *al-‘Adl* (the Just), *al-‘Alim* (the All-Knowing), and *al-Hakim* (the All-Wise) – then that conclusion simply **cannot** be correct.

The crucial mistake we often make in our reasoning is to measure God by human standards. We try to make sense of spiritual or metaphysical realities by drawing on mundane examples from our everyday lives. But no analogy from our limited human experience can ever fully capture the reality of Allah. The starting point of our understanding, therefore, has to be a certainty deeply rooted in the heart: that this life, no matter how complex or incomprehensible some things may be, is, in its

entirety, perfectly just for every single human being. For it would be fundamentally against the very nature of Allah for even one soul to be treated unjustly.

So when we encounter a phenomenon that appears paradoxical to us, perhaps the better thing to do is to turn the question around: What are some of the things Allah would never do, because doing them would totally contradict who He is?

Examples: The Trinity, Free Will vs. Divine Decree, Near-Death Experiences

You Are Only Seeing a Snapshot

What you are witnessing in this very moment is only a small chapter of a vast and unfolding journey. You never see the entire picture of a person or a situation – only a very tiny fragment of it. Simply recognizing this can completely shift your perspective. States are not permanent. Circumstances can change. And the final judgment of a person or a situation cannot be made from a single moment in time. There is another dimension to this as well: this world is a testing ground. What happens to us is not always a direct reflection of Allah's reward or punishment. Rather, it is part of a much larger reality; one whose full wisdom we may only come to understand in hindsight, and sometimes may never even comprehend at all.

Examples: The Problem of Evil, people of other faiths/walks of life who seem so convinced of their own religion/ideology, a seemingly "good life" despite being far away from the truth

Diseases of the Heart

There are many different dimensions to the human being and we often forget that our true essence is not simply what we can see. Beyond the physical body (*jism*), we also have a soul (*ruh*), a spiritual heart (*qalb*), an intellect (*'aql*), and an innate disposition (*fitrah*). Yet how these different dimensions interact with each other and ultimately shape a person's belief and who they are lies beyond what we can fully

grasp. We therefore cannot completely comprehend another person's inner state, nor the intellectual and spiritual forces that lie behind the way they think and act.

You can imagine it like this: If a tiny nanorobot were sent into a person's brain, it might be able to observe electrical signals, chemical processes, and neural activity. What it could never actually see, however, are thoughts, meanings, and convictions – in other words, the subjective inner world of the person themselves. In much the same way, we only ever see the “outer shell” of those around us. We observe actions and hear words, but we do not see the inner reality behind them. Our judgments, therefore, are inevitably based on only a limited aspect of reality.

This means that we should approach difficult questions holistically, including their psychological and spiritual dimensions, both when it comes to others as well as when it comes to ourselves. If a particular question refuses to leave us alone, perhaps the problem is not actually that our intellect has failed to find a “satisfying” answer. Perhaps it is a sign of hidden arrogance (*kibr*) that has quietly crept into our hearts, making us assume that we should be able to solve every mystery of this world, or perhaps even that we have a right to demand that every mystery may be solvable for us.

This is where it is worth taking a closer look at what we even mean by a “satisfying” answer. Why, exactly, does an answer fail to satisfy us? And who are WE, after all, to decide what should count as “satisfying”, let alone to assume that God somehow “owes” us an answer that meets our standards in the first place? You can perhaps already sense how presumptuous this attitude is, and how fundamentally at odds it is with the attitude of a Muslim.

This becomes particularly apparent in academic debates surrounding the existence of God. Debaters may approach the subject under the banner of “being neutral” and “sincere,” while hiding behind impressive terminology, wrapping God in grandiose and elaborate philosophical formulations, and treating Him like a dead object of study in a laboratory – while those same people go about their own everyday life quite comfortably without demanding an “acceptable” (or “satisfying”) proof for every single step they take. But the moment the subject becomes God and submission to Him, they suddenly barricade themselves behind sophisms, contrived arguments, and endless caveats.

Examples like these only help to illustrate why many scholars have also understood the intellect as a faculty or function of the spiritual heart. And now consider how often the Qur'an actually talks about the *qalbun salim*, the sound heart. It is only when the heart is sound that the intellect, too, can function as it should.

Examples: people of other faiths/walks of life who seem so convinced of their own religion/ideology, why some people reject the truth despite a high IQ or an apparently "sincere" search

You Can Only Know So Much

Although the points listed here are meant to stand independently, the next one ties in quite naturally with the previous one. Perhaps it is even the antidote to that little spark of *kibr* we may unknowingly carry within our hearts. And that's what it's about: the human being is inherently limited. We can see only a certain range of light and hear only a certain range of frequencies (and those are just a few examples!) The fact that countless things beyond that remain hidden to us – whether it's the fluorescent glow of pollen that only butterflies can see under UV light, or the deep song of whales that echoes silently through the oceans, inaudible to our ears – seems perfectly natural to us. None of us would even begin to question whether these things exist simply because our senses cannot perceive them directly (let alone get upset that we are "limited" that way). So why should our intellect be any different?

The fact that we cannot fully comprehend something does not mean that it doesn't exist, nor does it mean that there is no answer to it. We must never confuse the limits of our own understanding with the limits of reality itself.

This is also where we enter a dimension that could, in a broader sense, be described as "Islamic mysticism." But be careful: I am not talking about the dancing dervishes or anything else that is often associated with the word. What I mean is an inner attitude of knowing – a recognition of the existence of "divine mysteries" or "divine secrets". You acknowledge that there are things whose knowledge belongs only to Allah and you say, from the depths of your heart:

Allahu 'alam – Allah knows best. And no, this is not an intellectual cop-out or a convenient “God of the gaps” argument. It is simply the sober recognition that as human beings, we *are* limited. And honestly, there is wisdom and mercy in that limitation, too. Just imagine being able to perceive every speck of dust, consciously see every infrared and ultraviolet wavelength – how long would you even be able to handle such flood of information? In the same way, there may well be ideas capable of “overwhelming” our minds long before we could ever fully contain them.

Our problem, however, is that we tend to let certain questions completely consume us – to the point where our entire world seems to revolve around this one single mystery. But if we take a step back, we realize something important: an open question or an unresolved detail does not suddenly undermine our entire worldview. After all, we wrestle with unresolved questions in other areas – areas that have nothing to do with religion, by the way – every single day. Take, for example, the attempt in philosophy and science to explain consciousness purely in terms of material processes, commonly known as “The Hard Problem of Consciousness.” Scientists and Philosophers have encountered an enormous conceptual obstacle here. Yet they do not simply abandon their entire scientific worldview because they cannot fully explain it. There is something we can learn from that. We can acknowledge two facts or realities without immediately knowing exactly how they can be reconciled and fit together down to the very last detail. Some questions simply may not be meant to be fully resolved here and now. At best, they may be questions we can ask Allah on Yawm al-Qiyamah or the Prophets in Jannah, *if* we make it that far, inshaAllah (may Allah grant us that!).

Examples: Free Will vs. Divine Decree, The Problem of Evil, people of other faiths/walks of life who seem so convinced of their own religion/ideology, Near-Death Experiences

Many Questions Don't Make A Difference

Not every question carries the same weight in our lives. Some simply have no bearing on reality or on the way we go about our daily lives.

Take this: suppose you wake up tomorrow without having finally “cracked” the great mystery of Free Will and Divine Decree, or figured out the exact nature of near-death experiences. What, exactly, changes about your day? It doesn’t change the laws of physics that cause your alarm clock to crash to the floor because you accidentally knocked it off your nightstand while half-asleep. It doesn’t lower gas prices at the gas station, which – as you notice on your way to work – have skyrocketed yet again. And it also doesn’t relieve you of a single one of your daily responsibilities.

Making the answer to certain questions or the explanation of certain phenomena a kind of “condition” for your faith and its practice is a logical (and emotional!) fallacy. The world keeps turning, and your obligations as a Muslim remain exactly the same, even IF there are things you don’t understand.

Some Questions Do Not Even Make Sense

Sometimes questions arise in our own minds, or we allow ourselves to be unsettled by questions posed by others, only to realize upon closer examination that they do not actually make sense. The famous omnipotence paradox – “Can God create a stone so heavy that He Himself cannot lift it?” – is a classic example.

Such apparent contradictions are merely playing with the semantics of language. They arrange words in a way that may grammatically resemble a question or a statement, while the meaning itself contains a logical contradiction. It is the linguistic equivalent of the equation $1 + (-1) = 0$: in the end, the content simply cancels itself out. In reality, nothing has actually ever been asked or said at all.

The Islamic scholarly tradition has a clear position on this: God’s omnipotence extends to everything that is *logically possible*. A contradiction, therefore, is not A “thing” that His power could somehow fail to overcome; it is simply linguistic nonsense. So if a question makes no sense in and of itself, it also has no power to shake our faith.

However, there is often more behind such questions than a mere logical fallacy. They can reveal an attitude marked by a startling lack of reverence and a profound

estrangement from one's own *fitrah*. Hamza Tzortzis, popular Islamic speaker and author with a PhD in Philosophy, once captured this point with striking precision: some questions evoke almost a kind of “spiritual disgust”, because they run so completely against our natural human intuition that you are nothing but left wondering in disbelief: How does one even COME UP with such question?

In fact, this reminds me of a question I once heard, which went something along the lines of: Why should Allah deserve gratitude for blessings such as our ability to see or breathe when He was the One who gave us those needs in the first place? The logic of the questioner was supposedly this: it would be like locking someone in a dark room and then expecting them to be grateful when you finally let them back outside. Or like poisoning someone only to expect to be celebrated as a “great savior” when you later give them the antidote.

But if you see life and God's blessings as a form of coercion or blackmail, then your entire existence ceases to look like a gift and becomes nothing more than a problem to be refuted. Thought experiments like these show what happens when the intellect operates without the spiritual heart: you construct twisted analogies, completely losing touch with reality, and leave your inner world just cold, dark, and empty.

Examples: The Trinity (particularly the “argument” that if God can do anything, He must therefore be able to become human, and that by denying this, one would be limiting God), the question “Who, then, created God?”, Infinite Regress

There Is a “Hierarchy of Questions”

Many of the things that unsettle us in the first place come from asking a question at the wrong level. Trying to work out complex theological details before we have even established the foundations is like trying to build a house on quicksand.

Some questions only become meaningful once a more fundamental certainty is already in place. You wouldn't expect the final answer to a mathematical problem to explain the basic rules of arithmetic, would you? It works exactly the other way

around: only *once* you understood the foundations, the more complex result actually makes sense.

This is also one of the central criticisms theists raise against atheism: taken to its ultimate logical conclusion, it inevitably leads to nihilism – a world in which nothing ultimately has an objective meaning or any deeper significance. Atheists, in turn, accuse us believers of convincing themselves that God exists simply because it somehow makes them feel better or gives them some kind of emotional support. But that is exactly *not* how it works.

We begin much earlier and at a much more fundamental level: with the question of whether God exists, whether revelation is necessary, and whether the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a true prophet. Only once that foundation is firmly established can everything else be properly understood and placed into context.

The Purpose of the “Knowledge Gaps”

Amid all these questions, we may have completely overlooked one: Why does Allah allow these uncertainties and these seemingly spiritual points of friction to exist in the first place?

The answer lies in the bigger picture of our entire existence. This world is not a place of “final answers”, it is a testing ground. We were placed on this earth as successors or stewards, entrusted with a temporary test in which we are called to prove ourselves. And a test loses its very purpose if all the answers and solutions are already known.

The fact that some questions remain unsolvable from our perspective simply reminds us of our own limitations (see again point 4) “You Can Only Know So Much”). Allah is *al-Hakim* and *al-‘Alim*, the All-Wise and the All-Knowing, while we possess only fragments of knowledge. Or, to put it another way: Allah sees the whole picture; we, on the other hand, only see a pixel. Acknowledging this is not something to be ashamed of. On the contrary, it can cultivate a profound and, in a sense, even healing humility.

The purpose behind unexplained phenomena is thus a deeply practical one: they serve as a test for our faith. It is only when we are confronted with things that put both our hearts and our minds to the test that the true quality of our iman shines through. This uncertainty is not meant to paralyze us. It is meant to deepen our worship and draw us toward the level of *ihسان* – to worship Allah as though we could see Him. And this is precisely what distinguishes us from the angels anyway. They have no choice but to obey Allah unconditionally. Human beings, by contrast, choose to trust their Creator and believe in the Unseen (just think about how the 2nd chapter in the Qur'an starts!) despite the confusion and distractions of this worldly life, and despite the pull of their own egos. That is where the true value of our worship lies.

Nothing illustrates this more beautifully than the story of Musa and al-Khidr in the Qur'an. Musa, one of Allah's greatest prophets, encounters a man who has been given knowledge from Allah that Musa himself does not have. They make an agreement: Musa may accompany him and learn from him, under the condition that he remains patient and asks no questions until al-Khidr explains things himself. But al-Khidr's actions are completely incomprehensible to Musa and at times even appear unjust. Driven by his natural sense of justice – and by his emotions (remember the section "All You Need to Know"!) – Musa breaks their agreement and repeatedly questions what he is witnessing. At first glance, one might think that Musa failed his test because he could not keep his promise and eventually lost his patience. But the story teaches us a much more fundamental lesson: Musa did sincerely try to exercise patience and humility, but eventually the uncertainty became unbearable to him. **And yet** he was not denied the knowledge of what lay behind it all. In the end, al-Khidr explained the why of his actions, and suddenly, everything made sense.

And that is precisely the point: If you sincerely strive for humility and continue to hold on to Allah despite your confusion, the wisdom behind the mysteries of life may be revealed to you at a later point in time – whether it be in this life or, at the very latest, in the Hereafter, inshaAllah.

The Three Levels of Certainty

Many of us confuse ignorance with a lack of conviction. We assume that if we do not know the details of a phenomenon, we cannot, or perhaps are not allowed to be certain about the matter itself. In Islam, however, the distinction is not so much between knowledge and ignorance, but between different levels of certainty (*yaqin*):

- ***‘ilm al-yaqin (The Certainty of Knowledge)***: Intellectual certainty based on sound reasoning and knowledge, for example, when you see smoke in the distance. You know with certainty that there is a fire, even though you cannot see the fire itself.
- ***‘ayn al-yaqin (The Certainty of Seeing)***: Certainty gained through direct visual observation, for example, when you climb over the top of a hill and see the flames with your own eyes.
- ***haqq al-yaqin (Absolute Certainty)***: The certainty of direct experience, for example, when you actually feel the heat of the fire against your skin.

The problem with many of the phenomena we encounter today is that we desperately seek *‘ayn al-yaqin* (visual proof) or even *haqq al-yaqin* (personal experience) in order to feel confident in our faith. Yet Allah has already given us *‘ilm al-yaqin*: intellectual and rational certainty grounded in the Qur’an, as a perfectly sufficient foundation for our faith. Someone who has understood (and truly internalized!) that the Qur’an is from Allah doesn’t need no lab reports about the Hereafter in order to sleep peacefully at night.

That doesn’t mean there is anything wrong with asking Allah for a higher level of certainty in order to strengthen one’s faith. We see this clearly in the story of Ibrahim. Yet there is an important distinction here: when Ibrahim (a.s.) asked Allah to show him how He brings the dead back to life (see Qur’an 2:260), he was not trying to convince himself that Allah was capable of doing so. Allah’s absolute power was already an unshakable certainty for him (*‘ilm al-yaqin*). He was simply asking for a higher degree of certainty so that his faith might grow even further.

Examples: Free Will vs. Divine Decree, Near-Death Experiences, DMT Experiences

We Cannot (and Should Not!) Rationalize Everything

We have a tendency today to immediately dissect everything through the lens of our current understanding and force it into a rational framework. If something doesn't make sense to us right away, we are quick to dismiss it as "illogical". But in doing so, we make a fundamental error in reasoning: we treat human reason as though it were an infallible, timeless constant. In reality, the way we understand what is "rational" is remarkably fluid. It is shaped by our own life experience, the limits of our technology, and the particular age we happen to live in. What seems unimaginable to us is often not a logical contradiction at all – we simply lack the frame of reference needed to understand it.

Islamic history has a good example of this: There was a group of thinkers who rejected the idea that, on the Day of Judgment, there would be a literal "book of deeds" that would be weighed. Their reasoning was essentially this: How could a book even possibly contain every single second, every word, and every action of a human being? It would have to be absolutely immense and impossible to handle! And when the Qur'an then described this book as being placed around a person's neck, their conclusion was clear: This just has to be a metaphor. Their sense of what was rational simply could not accommodate the reality being described.

Now let's fast-forward to the 21st century: Today, almost all of us own a small USB flash drive, barely larger than a thumb. On this small device, we can easily store several terabytes of data. That's enough not only to record an entire human life in text, but also to store vast amounts of audio and video of the lives of hundreds of people. You could attach such a device to a thin chain around your neck and barely notice its weight.

Suddenly, the idea of a "book" containing a record of all of our deeds and hanging around our necks no longer sounds inherently irrational. For we don't even have an idea what the "material" of such a book in the Hereafter might look like. But modern technology has proved to us something important: the basic concept itself is not beyond the realm of possibility. So those earlier thinkers were not necessarily running into a contradiction in revelation; they were running into the limits of what they *could* imagine within the technological framework of their own time.

Interestingly, non-Muslims working in the empirical sciences often display precisely this kind of humility without thinking twice about it. In modern quantum physics, for example, they observe phenomena such as the double-slit experiment or superposition, in which a single particle can be in two different places at the same time! This completely contradicts the laws of classical physics as we know them from our macroscopic world. Yet scientists do not simply dismiss such phenomena as “illogical.” They recognize that reality doesn’t have to conform to our everyday intuitions and we may observe something to be real without having a complete picture of how it works (just yet). As Muslims, the equivalent attitude is simply: *Allahu ‘alam*.

But why, then, do we struggle to show the same intellectual humility towards certain phenomena? It is problematic enough that, shaped by our hyper-rational and materialistic world, we have become accustomed to treating such questions primarily as abstract philosophical puzzles. Earlier, we touched on the purpose behind the gaps in our knowledge (see point 8), but that is only half the story. When Allah and His Messenger ﷺ tell us about certain realities beyond our immediate perception, they are not doing so to entangle us in endless academic debates. They are giving us knowledge that is meant to liberate us. The entire discussion around Free Will vs. Divine Decree is perhaps the clearest example.

This subject is meant to free us from the shackles of this world – from the false assumption that worldly powers, obstacles, or circumstances even possess the slightest independent, inherent power of their own. From a metaphysical perspective, all of these are merely means through which Allah manifests His power and will.

Once you’ve really internalized this, the paralyzing fear of worldly circumstances begins to lose its grip. The uncertainty of the future is no longer experienced simply as a threat, but as a space filled with possibility: you do your absolute best, give everything you got, and then trust that whatever Allah ultimately decrees is what is best for you. It was precisely this deeply rooted certainty that once gave the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ the courage to go out and change the world from virtually nothing.

Some things, then, are not intellectual puzzles that we are meant to agonize over. They can be keys to our inner freedom. So when we come across questions or phenomena that lie beyond the scope of our own understanding, we must not rush to label them as “illogical” or treat them as a threat to our faith. Instead, we need the humility to recognize something much deeper: it is not revelation that is irrational or contradictory, but our present horizon is simply too small. Islam does not ask us for blind faith or irrationality. But it does warn us against the arrogance of making our present understanding of rationality the ultimate measure of all of creation.

There Is No Flawless “Plan B”

At the end of all our intellectual debates about certain questions and phenomena, we have to face an uncomfortable yet liberating truth: there is no alternative worldview that answers ***ALL*** of our questions.

When we reach the limits of our rational understanding as Muslims, we sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that Islam is asking something unreasonable of us, while other worldviews – be it materialism, atheism, or other philosophical schools of thought – somehow manage to explain everything without leaving anything unresolved. Nothing could be further away from the truth.

The history of human thought makes this clear: wherever you turn, whatever school of thought you choose, you will encounter unanswered questions, problems, contradictions, and gaps in our knowledge. Doubt, then, is not something that suddenly begins at the threshold of religion. It is simply one of the natural boundaries of the human mind.

The reality is that no human-made framework or parable can ever fully capture or reflect the dimensions of Divine Reality. So if you turn away from revelation simply because the mechanics of a particular phenomenon remain unclear to you, you have not actually solved a single problem. You have not escaped into clarity – you have simply exchanged one set of unanswered questions for another, often far greater ones. So in the end, the question is quite simply this: Where else are you going to go?

Conclusion: I Know That I Know *Something*

Anyone who's read this whitepaper carefully all the way to this point, I hope you have come to realise the need for some sort of intellectual humility and understood that we must be humble (and courageous!) enough to bow before the more complex questions of this world and simply say: I don't know.

Yet this admission must never give way to a stance in which we take the position of a Socrates, whose famous statement, "I know that I know *nothing*," is often celebrated in the West as some sort of pinnacle of wisdom. There is certainly a place for this idea in Islam, too – even to the extent that some of the earlier scholars used to say that the statement "I don't know" constitutes half of all knowledge. But this is not about doubt or uncertainty. It is about restraining one's ego, recognizing our humility before an endless ocean of knowledge, and, above all, protecting the religion from false information out of reverence for Allah and of having to answer before Him for saying what is untrue.

Imam Malik understood this well. When the great scholar and founder of the Maliki school of thought was asked about complex theological or legal matters, he was famously known to answer, in many cases, with a simple and honest: "I don't know". His response was not a sign of weakness, but the result of a deep foundation of faith, for someone who has absolute certainty of the truth of Allah and the Day of Judgement has nothing to "prove", either to themselves or to anyone else. Precisely because of that certainty, they can – and should – afford to leave some questions unanswered in order to protect the integrity of the religion.

As Muslims, we do have this exact foundation. For us, absolute certainty is something we can achieve and the Qur'an calls us to seek it in numerous places, while at the same time giving our intellect a protective framework. The pure philosopher or modern skeptic, by contrast, often has no such framework. In his world, every answer can – and should – lead to another question, and every certainty to another uncertainty. The questioning never stops; everything remains provisional, relative, and open to debate. Those who adopt this kind of stance

often fail to realize that they are repeating the oldest pattern of creation itself, for the very first act of disobedience was precisely this: Shaytan used the intellect Allah had given him to rationally question a clear command from Allah – SubhanAllah!

And if we are being completely honest: I would rather go back and stand before Allah as an “ignorant peasant” with a pure and simple faith in their heart inshaAllah, than as a “free spirit without limits” who has perhaps quite literally thought himself into ruin. Because this is precisely how many of our brothers and sisters today lose their faith through the path of supposed “intellectual freedom” and, before they even know it, find themselves in New Age spirituality, agnosticism, atheism, reformist Islam, perennialism – the list goes on. Suddenly, the hijab is no longer an obligation; everything is supposedly just culture or a man-made construct by some evil men (aka the scholars and “patriarchs”), and apparently there is no such thing as an objective, clearly defined Islam anyway.

In contrast, the better and more beautiful way to deal with our ignorance of certain phenomena is to surrender unconditionally to the Planner rather than desperately trying to decipher the plan. True intellectual humility means pausing before those things that lie beyond our control and understanding, accepting our limitations, and surrendering ourselves completely to Allah’s Will and Judgment. From this grows an unshakable contentment: the ability to accept Allah’s decisions as they are, convinced that things could not have turned out better.

To truly internalize this, I want to leave you with an example that captures the idea beautifully: Imagine life as a vast book containing thousands upon thousands of pages. As human beings living in this dunya, perhaps we are currently somewhere around page 2,500. We know neither the “introduction” in all its detail nor the final ending. But instead of becoming frustrated and closing the book, or imagining that we could somehow write the story even slightly better ourselves, we are completely at peace with not knowing some of the pages that came before, those in between, or those that come after – and with the fact that we do not need to know them at all. Why? Because we have complete trust in the Author of the book, Alhamdulillah!

This attitude is neither naive, nor does it make us indifferent or apathetic, nor does it border on some kind of “intellectual surrender,” as some atheists or hyper-skeptics might put it. Rather, it is the root of an unshakable psychological strength and a form of mental protection that no atheist could ever possess. While an atheistic worldview leaves a human being exposed to the uncontrollable variables of this life – where every misfortune, every tragedy, and every death is nothing more than the meaningless rearrangement of atoms – the Muslim goes through life full of confidence and zeal, knowing that nothing happens without the Wisdom and Will of the Creator. Knowing that Allah’s attributes are in perfect harmony and working together without contradiction transforms every crisis into an opportunity for surrender and every doubt into an opportunity to break free from the uncertainties of this world.

After all, it is precisely this attitude that keeps us from falling into fear, despair, or endless overthinking in the face of all that we do not understand, and instead leads us to channel our energy into what we *can* actually control: our intentions and our actions on the few pages of this book of life that have been placed in our hands.

As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: “Wondrous is the affair of a believer, as there is good for him in every matter; this is not the case for anyone but a believer. If he experiences pleasure, he thanks Allah and it is good for him. If he experiences harm, he shows patience and it is good for him.” The difference from a Socrates, therefore, is fundamental: We do not know *nothing*. We know *something* – and that “thing” is enough, for it is all that matters.

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