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Chapter 2: If the system of creation is not mentally posited, how could its reality be?

In other words: Of what kind are these hidden secrets that are concealed in the shariah?

We Say: Intellectual arguments unanimously agree that causality and effect are like perfection and deficiency, and diffusion is like the diffusion of a shadow from the object that casts it.

They also agree that deficiencies are among the exigencies of the level of effect, and that this world has other worlds prior to it in a cause and effect manner, until it arrives at the First Almighty Truth.

What can be concluded from this discussion in general is that all perfections that exist in this world exist in what is above it in a higher and nobler form and the deficiencies in this world are specific to this world, do not exist in the levels above it, and of course are not transferred to them.

This is a short explanation, and to explain and comment on this subject to its full capacity and afford it the credibility it deserves is very difficult, or impossible.

An example: The perfections of this world, like delicious food, quenching drinks, beautiful pictures, and the like are some of the greatest things one enjoy in this realm. The first thing about them is that they do not exist permanently; they appear only for a limited time and are beset by myriads of natural afflictions and external defects or possible deformities which, if one of them is experienced the beauty of these perfections would disappear.

The pleasure sought in these things, and indeed the pleasure itself and the subject of pleasure are all posited between thousands and thousands of negating factors which if [any of these three] incline towards them, the pleasure will become nullified and be ruined.

Moreover, if we contemplate enough we will find that all of these deficiencies and negative factors like physical and delusional deficiencies, go back to matter, whether from the beginning or through the

mediation of something else. Accordingly, if there was no matter then there would have been no deficiency to go back to.

Therefore, these pleasures are restricted to this world only, and the world that is above this one is devoid of these deficiencies and free of these defects. For indeed without argument, they are forms without matter and are imaginal pleasures.

What we mean by matter is non-sensual that is disposed towards passivity and not corporeality which is a non-material form, so understand this.

Furthermore, if we contemplate again we will find that the limits of the imaginal are deficient in their very selves, and the limited in itself has a rank that is free from limitation, as it is external to its essence. This has been demonstrated in its proper place.

Therefore, there is another world in which these same pleasures and perfections exist in pure form, meaning free from limitations. For example, the pleasure of eating, drinking, sex, hearing and seeing in the realm of the imaginal all have levels that they do not go beyond. For example, you will not find the pleasure of sex in hearing or in eating; or the perfection of eating in drinking; o what one individual desires in food and what is desired in it by another individual. One can compare the other pleasures in the same way.

The reason for this is because of existential limitations where the capacity of existence is concerned. The world that is above the world of the imaginal is a realm in which limitations disappear and all these perfections and pleasures are found in a unitary, integrated, universal and unlimited form.

All of these matters are truths that are the ramifications of principles that have been intellectually demonstrated in their proper places and are agreed upon by the specialists.

All of this is related to that which exists before this material world. As for its relationship to what is after the world, it involves the same argument as has already been explained, with the difference that from our existential standpoint, the imaginal realm in its return comes before the intellectual and immaterial realm, whereas from the standpoint of the beginning and the origin, the intellectual realm comes before the imaginal.

Indeed, there is another difference between the origin and the return, and that is that the ground of imaginal forms is the soul (*nafs*) in which these forms are brought about for it, by the will of its Lord. The imaginal forms exist in the material realm for a period of time and are attached to it, and this is also the realm of the illusory and the mentally posited where it acquires ingrained habits and states that may or may not be in conformity with its previous realm.

Therefore, this realm is both immersed in and veils what exist beyond it. The ingrained habits that were acquired in this world might become entrenched and become veils when the heart becomes focused on

this world and neglects the truth.

These aptitudes could also be the opposite, for example, in abandoning the adornments of this world, renouncing this vile world and cutting the attachments to it —as the necessity of attachment to the material world demands—, and turning towards what exist beyond the material world and becoming intimately acquainted with it.

Therefore, this soul, after detaching itself from materiality, spiritually surveys the forms in the world of the imaginal and spiritual lights that are in harmony with its essence.

This soul had been familiar with these forms in the past and so it has become cognizant of "ease, abundance and a garden of bliss," Quran 56:89, and the forms of perfection of the soul and its spiritual pleasures will multiply and increase in relation to the descending imaginal world that is prior to the material world.

The completely immaterial realm is also similar to this by necessity with respect to the increase of acquired knowledge in the material realm. Accordingly, it witnesses lights, secrets, imaginal angels, spirits whose forms are of the intermediate world and in the most desirable way possible, all kinds of pleasures that the soul had witnessed while being attached to materiality in its realm, like eating, drinking, clothes, sex, hearing, seeing and other things.

All these pleasures in this realm will be acquired through representative forms higher than them in capacity and in the same manner as the levels below it.

In the immaterial world there is no suffering, whether material or imagined nor is there any pain or sickness, for all of these [deficiencies] do not exist in the imaginal world.

If the self (*nafs*) has certain aptitudes that are not veiled from the universals, it will in certain times oversee the lights of the immaterial world and its existence, and it will acquire radiance, sublimity, beauty and perfection in a way that cannot be compared by forms or cannot be measured with imaginal measurements. This overseeing of the self-repeats itself until the self completely masters itself and takes it as its station (*maqam*), elevating it level by level until it then oversees the realm of the Names (*al-Asma'*), which is the realm of the pure nature (*mahd*) of all meanings and the sheer form of all radiance and sublimity.

It will witness everything sheer and pure; like pure knowledge, pure power, pure life, existence and consistency, radiance and sublimity, beauty and majesty, perfection and felicity, dignity, happiness and delight. This pure witnessing will continue until the self-connects with the Names and Attributes and then it will merge in the Transcendent Essence, and will vanish in its vanishing, annihilate in the annihilation of its self and will stay with the subsistence of Allah, may Thee be Exalted from any deficiency:

"Indeed to your Lord is the return." Quran 96:8

The achievement of this status is possible if the aptitudes of the self are holy and compatible with the realm of the Holy (*alam al-quds*).

However, if the self is more complementary with the material realm, and not complementary with the realm of the Holy, then it will be the opposite. Whatever the self-experiences, it will endure pain and punishment in its various forms, and whenever it seeks to escape from this sorrowful situation, trying to use the impure habits it has, it will always return to that same state and it will be said to it:

"Taste the punishment of the burning." Quran 3:181

It is not, as the common people might claim, that the heavens of the felicitous is nothing but a garden and the hell of the wretched is only a hole of fire. Rather, it is a complete and vast realm, vaster than this world to such an extent that it cannot be described.

It has become clear from what we have presented that from two aspects, there is a difference between the beginning and the return [of the self]:

The first: The return is vaster than the beginning in that the self is vaster in its acquisition of knowledge in the material realm.

The second: The self in returning [ascending] is different to the beginning [descending], in that it is given two paths: the felicitous and the wretched, pleasure and pain, heaven and hell contrary to the beginning.

This of course does not conflict with the matter of the precedence of the wretchedness of the wretched and that there is no interference from Divine Providence.

Know that in the meanings of these things, some are self-evident and do not require validation, and some can be proven through arguments which have been accomplished where it is necessary.

From what has been explained above, the relation between the acts and exercises according to the shariah and that which has been promised and pledged by Allah Almighty through the teachings of the sent prophets become clear, and this will soon be explained in detail.

Addendum: References from the Holy Quran and Traditions regarding the aforementioned

We Say: If we contemplate upon the particulars of the shariah of Islam, or rather all the divine religions, we will find that the ultimate goal they have is to steer humankind towards the world beyond this natural realm. This is their method, which is to call to Allah with insight, thus this is the absolute objective of religion in all its perspectives and which encompasses this criterion in any way possible.

People, according to their level of devotion to Allah and their abandonment of this material realm, are divided into three levels:

The first level: Those that are completely prepared, who are able to detach their hearts from this world with complete certainty in the essentials of the divine teachings and with submission to the Almighty Truth. This enables them to witness what is beyond this material realm and, like the prophets (a.s) they become able to oversee the divine lights. This is the level of 'Those brought near' (*al-muqarrabin*).

The second level: Those with complete certainty but not with complete detachment from the material world. They are still under the influence of mental states and despairing thoughts that make them lose hope in yielding to the possibility of submitting to what is beyond this material realm while being in it.

This group worships Allah as if they see Him. They worship with truth and without amusement, but behind a veil believing in the unseen, and they are benevolent in their actions.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) was asked about benevolence (ihsan) and He said:

"It is to worship Allah as if you see Him and if you do not see Him, He sees you."

The difference between this level and the previous one is like the difference between the word 'verily' and 'almost'.

The third level: Those who belong to neither of the two former levels and who comprise the remainder and majority of people. This group, with the exception of obstinate and stubborn deniers, is a group that has the capacity to believe in true doctrines related to the Beginning and the Hereafter and act according to it, but in an overall general form, and not in the particulars.

This is because of their attachment to this earth, their submission to desires and to their personal love of this world. Love of this world and its adornments will inevitably make one become excessively occupied with it and hence makes one obsessed with it and take it as the goal in all his movements and actions.

This necessitates the self-becoming devoted to this world and limits it to being concerned about the world alone. It [the self] will become inattentive to the world of the hereafter and to the states and deeds that come about from true beliefs. This will necessitate the slackening of the self and it becomes inactive in becoming acquainted with true beliefs in their proper forms.

It is not affected by them nor does it become active in this regard. Physical activity and exercises will be stagnant in their outer forms and appearance without transmitting their outward states, effects and actual conditions to the heart. What is mentioned here is evidently clear and sufficient.

An example: If we were to be in the presence of a king we would find that our inner state would change and this change in our [internal] state will appear in our outward physical actions. But complete focus, humility and submissiveness are things that we would certainly not find in our prayers although we are in

the presence of the Lord of kings.

If a king was to oversee what we were doing, our souls would be in an unusual state, one that we would not have been in before, yet we believe that Allah Almighty sees and hears and that He is closer to us than our jugular veins.

We rely on normal causes that are sometimes correct and sometimes incorrect in such a way that we won't find Him in our hearts, yet we believe that all affairs are in the hands of Allah; He does according to what He wishes and rules what He wants.

We would place great reliance upon people's promises or certain actions of theirs, yet we would not rely on one part in a thousand of the promises of Allah Almighty concerning life after death and the resurrection.

Examples of this contradiction in our beliefs and actions are infinite, and all of this is because of our reliance on this world. This is because the total devotion of the self to worldly ways will result in the self–achieving the power of assuming worldly forms upon itself which would make worldliness dominate it. The world both excludes forms from being assumed by the self and creates forms and continues to do so repeatedly.

This will force the forms of these true fundamentals and teachings to weaken, which in turn would weaken the souls acquisition of the prerequisites of these fundamentals and teachings:

"Love of this world is the origin of all sins".

This third group is not able to acquire any absolute attachment to Allah Almighty more than having true beliefs in the general sense, and performing certain physical actions which do bring, to a certain extent, a kind of general attentiveness and direction to the Origin Almighty in acts of worship.

Moreover, if we were to contemplate the state of these three levels, we would find that they converge on certain things and diverge regarding others, thus there are types of attentiveness and devotion that exist on the third level and which can exist on the second and first, but the opposite is not the case. Likewise, what exists in the second also exist in the first, but again not the opposite.

It therefore becomes clear that: The disciplining of these three levels share convergent and divergent things. It is for this reason we find that the sacred Islamic shariah stipulates general theoretical and practical laws, and none of these levels can neglect any of them, for they comprise obligatory or forbidden acts.

Then, as is appropriate to the taste of the third level, the Islamic shariah then establishes all the acts outside those two according to the particulars and universals of things, as recommended (*mustahab*), disliked (*makruh*), and neutral (*mubah*).

These rules are strengthened in their essence by the promises and threats of heaven and hell, and this, in turn is protected by the practice of the enjoining of good and the forbiddance of the wrong, as repetition is the best arguments among the common people.

These laws and methods are applied to the second group the same way as that of the third group, with particular additions of moral laws and other dimensions. As you now, the main difference between the two groups is in the strength and weakness of knowledge and its effects.

This rule applies to the first group in a more precise way than the second and the third. An act might be neutral, recommended or disliked for the second and the third, and might be an obligatory or prohibited act for the first group, because [the Prophet (s.a.w.) said] 'the good deeds of the righteous are the sins of those who are near', so this station is for those of the first group and not of any other.

There are other issues and laws that are particularly exclusive to this group which do not exist in the second and third, and these other levels would not understand anything concerning these specialties and will not be guided to the path of learning them.

All the differences this group has with the others are due to the fact that its foundation is based on the Divine Love they possess and not on love of the self. The difference between this group and the other two groups is in the form of knowledge and perception they have, and not in the strength and weakness of knowledge and its effects and non-effects.

If you would like to comprehend in general any of this then you must deeply contemplate the states of unification (*ittihad*).

Relationships have laws, and so do friendship, amity, and such subjects like love, passion, ecstasy, enthrallment and what is called annihilation, each of which has its own laws. Each law is special for the level it is designated for and does not ever go beyond its level into another.

In summary, the Divine shariah, and in particular the shariah of Islam in all its general and particular dimensions aim towards this goal, which is directing people towards Allah and having them turn only to Him Almighty.

This goal is achieved by acquiring the appropriate aptitudes and states through the appeal to true beliefs and the performance of deeds that produce pure inner states that will make one attain sacred aptitudes.

This will be manifested in its most complete way to those who follow the contents of the Quran and Traditions, and it is clearly understood from this that the criterion is obedience and defiance, and nearness and remoteness in relation to the Exalted Truth with differences in the kind of laws and duties.

Moreover, what Allah Almighty has promised them in His Book and through the tongue of His Messenger (s.a.w.) is clearly stated in the shariah concerning stations (*maqam*), miracles (*karamat*) and other qualities, in accordance to their different states and aptitudes.

These stations being related to aptitudes means that the soul attains stations and miracles through these states and habits, and these stations and miracles have been explained by the sacred Islamic shariah within the teachings on the Origin and End.

It has been explained in the addendum of the end of the first chapter that it is these teachings that have realities and inner secrets that are above the level of explanation and that they are beyond the endurance of common people whose mind cannot tolerate, which has also been explained.

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