

Chapter 2: The Existence of God

Angles of Approach

The question of the existence of God has been the concern of man ever since his coming into being or at least since his becoming conscious of his own self. Of the several philosophical and religious methods of dealing with this most important subject, the metaphysical is the most logical and systematic, but that method is meant only for those who are well-acquainted with the physical, mathematical and metaphysical sciences. Many of the religious methods are undoubtedly convincing to the majority of people of average understanding, but there are some who are neither satisfied with most of the religious methods of approach nor are they properly educated in philosophy or fully acquainted with the physical and metaphysical sciences.

The religious arguments are generally based on inferences from the observation of those phenomena which are natural and purposeful signs within and without the human self and which bear testimony to the existence of a mighty, conscious, creative mind responsible for planning and bringing into evidence and existence all which is seen or observed. But according to the dissatisfied group the testimony of such phenomena and signs is based on analogical arguments, the conclusion of which need not be necessarily and universally true.

The metaphysical method of approach begins with concepts and propositions which are self-evident. The most universal of them are the terms "existence" and "objects." In other words, the use of the universal predicate "is" or "exists" and the use of "particular things" or "objects" are common and familiar to everybody more than the use of any other terms. When man observes himself and the things surrounding him, he forms the following propositions: I exist, He exists, You exist, the Earth exists, air, land, trees, animals, man, sky, stars, white, blue, red, yellow, light, dark, left, right, cold, heat, electricity, gas, quantity, qualities, position, concrete things, abstract ideas, imagination, subjective and objective phenomena, etc. all have great varieties and even some are in contrast with each other but to all those, one and the same predicate "existence" is applicable.

The predicative term is so universal it can be applied to everything, to every conceivable idea other than the term itself. Everything can be made a subject in the affirmative or negative form; it does exist or does not exist. Such a universal term or idea is and must be known as *a priori* to every human mind. It need not be defined or described by any other term or idea.

As a general logical rule no proposition is found unless the idea taken as the “subject” and the idea taken as the “predicate” are different from one aspect and “one and the same” from another aspect. So in every proposition the human mind finds two aspects: (a) the aspect of differentiating the subject from the predicate and (b) the aspect of identifying the subject from the two items are entirely different from each other no “predication” between the two is possible. Similarly, if the two ideas are identical with each other from all aspects and all respects, no “predication” between them would have any meaning.

A proposition is called analytical if the difference between the subject and predicate is a mere abstract process of human thought, otherwise within or outside the human mind they are actually identical in the sense that one idea is the content of the other or the necessary property of it. For example, in the proposition “dimension is divisible” there are two different ideas meaning, but one is implied in the other inside and outside the human mind. They are so inter-related to each other one cannot be considered separate from the other.

In the proposition “the body is white” the predicative term whiteness may be identified with the body outside the human mind but whiteness is not implied in the idea of body (which means a three-dimensional being). The whiteness is neither the content of dimensional being nor an essential property. A dimensional being may be white, red, blue, or even colourless. So the predicate “white,” though identical with the body is not inherently and inseparably inter-related with the body. It is an idea added in the idea of body. This kind of proposition is called a synthetic proposition wherein the identity of the predicate with the subject is due to some cause.

In all analytical propositions either both the subject and the predicate are abstract which have no corresponding fact outside the mind or one has the corresponding fact outside the mind and the other is abstract, obtained through mental process. For example, the logical terms “genus” and “species” are two “universal” ideas. Genus is an idea which is true of individual beings of various kinds outside the mind. Species is an idea which is true of individuals of one kind. Both ideas are universal in the same sense that both can be said about any individuals of various kinds or of one kind respectively.

So we form this proposition: “Genus is universal; species is universal. But all exist outside the mind are individuals resembling each other in certain aspects” These kinds of abstract propositions are termed logical abstractions: they are ideas which the human mind derives from some common aspects of individual beings existing outside it, or they are forms given by the mind to the idea considered as the object or thing outside human thought.

There is another kind of analytical proposition where one of the two ideas has a corresponding fact

outside the mind and the other is an idea abstracted from the former by mental process or the abstracted ideas are forms given by human thought. Such analytical propositions are termed metaphysical abstractions like the proposition “fire is the cause of burning” in which all which exists outside the mind is “fire and the burning,” but the idea of “cause” has no corresponding fact outside the mind. This idea of causation is something derived by human thought from the phenomenon of fire and burning. These ideas are metaphysical abstractions.

Actually, metaphysics discusses the most universal terms in which man thinks and talks. Without studying the metaphysical problems no thorough study of any science terrestrial, celestial, ethereal, spiritual or theological, is complete. To be well-versed in metaphysics one should know logic, mathematics or at least the outline of all other physical and human sciences.

Universal predicative term “Existence”

Of all the concepts and propositions, metaphysics begins as the most comprehensive subject with the universal predicative term “existence” which can be used in respect of the multitude of objects or things. The first question is as follows: are both the universal predicate “existence” and the particular multitude of objects which form the subjects of the said predicate abstracts of the human mind having no corresponding fact or facts outside it? In other words, are both the predicate and the subjects unreal? Or do both have corresponding facts outside the mind to which one can point. For example, is the proposition “tree exists” like the proposition “the body is red” in the sense that tree is a real fact and its existence is also a quality added to it outside the mind, or is one of the two ideas, the multitude of subjects or the universal predicate, a real fact outside the mind and the other is the idea abstracted from the former.

To put it another way, the question is whether the universal predicate “existence” and the multitude of things are both unreal, or are both real added to each other, or is one real and the other unreal abstracted from the real one. All metaphysicians have refuted the first and the second probabilities as self-contradictory propositions. The only thing which remains is the view that one is real and the other is abstracted, and the controversy among the metaphysicians is which of the two are real and the other abstracted from it. Whether the universal predicate is the absolute real and the multiple subjects are abstracted from it or are its various aspects and manifestations, or are the multiple subjects real and the idea of “existence” is derived from this multiplicity of things in the question.

Unless and until this question is fully grasped and metaphysical solution of the problem of the existence of God can be considered as logically tenable and intelligible. To deal with problem of the existence of God, metaphysically, ignoring this fundamental problem of metaphysics, is like trying to prove or disprove any geometrical figure discarding the self evident definitions and propositions laid down at the starting point of Euclid such as “straight line means the shortest line between two points,” “the whole is greater than its parts” or “anything equal to A must be equal to B which is equal to A.” To prove the

existence of God ignoring the question of reality or unreality of existence and its implications, and jumping to the question of eternity and contingency would result in nothing but confusion in the mind of the writer as well as of the reader.

But there is a via media between the complicated metaphysical method based on sound syllogisms and the religious method based apparently on analogy. The basis of the metaphysical method based on sound syllogism is the unity and identity of the predicate of the conclusion with its subject through the identity of the middle term with the subject and the predicate of the conclusion, e.g. all A are B and all B are C, therefore, A are C. B is the middle term and the factor which makes A identical with C. But the religious method which approach appeals to men of average understanding is apparently based on analogical grounds: i.e. resemblance, e.g. A resembles B in having D in common and A has C also, like A.

This proposed via media, as it will be seen, combines in itself the appealing simplicity of the religious method of inference from the signs and phenomena, which one finds within himself or in the things surrounding him and the inferences evolved from the metaphysical ground of self-evident propositions and concepts. Thus it has side by side, both the analogical as well as metaphysical bases. This method gives two grounds for the edifice of its inferences; one is analogical meant for the average man and the other is metaphysical to convince the intellectuals.

Qur'anic Approach

In this via media there are few self-evident concepts and propositions on the basis of which all religious inferences and arguments in this connection can be converted from the analogical outlook to real, sound and conclusive syllogism or metaphysical value. The basic self-evident concepts and propositions for conversion of the religious arguments into metaphysical proofs are given in the Qur'an in a very simple and short but super-rhetorical expression comprehensible by men of all standards:

{أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ} 35

{أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ} 36

Or were they created by nothing? Or are they themselves the creators? Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They have no certainty. (52:35 – 36)

The language of these verses is so clear and simple their philosophical significance and implications may escape the notice of many thinkers who recite them. So the following lines are meant to draw the attention of the reader to some of the important parts of speech in the full verses.

(1) As the usual Qur'anic method is to appeal to common sense, both verses have been presented in the interrogative form. The answer to the questions in the two verses is left to common sense. The last sentence in the second verse, "*Nay! They have no certainty*" is not an answer to the questions concerned. It is a warning to those who indulge in conjecture rather than the judgments based on reason which is necessarily and universally true and certain.

(2) The term *Khalq* and its derivative and conjugations used in the Qur'an means "to measure" or "to create." The term in both senses applies to things which owe their existence not to themselves but depend for their existence in some way or other on something else. If it is used in the sense of creation, it means a thing had no existence before and now it has. If it is used in the sense of measuring, it implies limitation. And limitation implies necessarily being composed of parts, be the part organic, mechanic, physical, chemical, atomic, geometrical, logical (genus and differentia), or at least metaphysical which means limitation in degree of existence.

To understand the limitation in degree of existence the following examples may be helpful. Two or more white objects differ from each other not in other aspect but in the degree of whiteness; two electric bulbs differ from each other in nothing but in the degree of candle power (i.e. illumination). In both examples the difference in degree means both have the whiteness and light in common but the whiteness of one differs from that of the other in being less or more. But bulbs have light in common but the one which has less candle power than the other has less light. They differ from each other in the same aspect which they have in common.

So the composition in any aforesaid sense of the term means at least dependence on its parts; hence it owes its existence as to its parts and is not self-existent. The *Khalq* in any of the two senses means a non-self-existent thing, an object of human thought which comes into existence by assuming existence not analytically but synthetically.

(3) This is true of all measured and measurable, defined and definable things, like man, animal, plant, inanimate beings or physical and chemical parts, atoms, parts of atoms (be it protons or anything smaller than which occupies space and is divisible is dimensional). All are at least geometrically divisible and anything divisible is composite, composed of parts, dependent and hence a non-self-existent being.

(4) The same is the case with any supposed non-dimensional being of limited and definable nature, composed of logical (genus and differentia) or metaphysical parts (limited degree of existence); such beings also are non-self-existing things and hence created.

(5) The questions put forward in the above two verses are as to how or by what means non-self-existing things become the subject of existence or are created whether from nothing or nothingness or by making themselves the subject of "existence," or in other words do they create themselves, or do they (i.e. non-self-existing things like men) make the heavens and the earth (which are also non-self-existing things) the subject of existence? Or again is a non-self-existing thing a creator or another non-self-existing

thing?

Law of Causation

It is obvious the answer to all these questions is a clear negative, because the creation of things from nothing or nothingness means the becoming of non-being a creator of another of itself, or a non-self-existing thing becomes the creator of another non-self-existent thing. It means and implies the creation of things from nothing or nothingness. In other words, it means becoming or making a thing by adding a nought to another nought, or making a being by adding a non-being to another non-being which is self-evidently impossible. The impossibility of such a proposition cannot be removed by postulating in a vicious circle, regress or infinite chain or non-self-existing things have existence from each other, as all these postulations ultimately mean the coming of non-being into being by nothing or nothingness which is evidently impossible. This is the basis of causation.

It means when two ideas or objects of human thought are not identical in all aspects and all respects, no one thought is the analytical content or necessary property of the other, the identification and unity of the two must have some justifying medium. This is called in logic *the Law of Sufficient Reasoning*. The self-evident law (Law of Causation) is one of the categorical *apriori* forms the human thought given to the object of human thought. There must be some medium to justify the affirmation. The medium is termed *cause*, the finding of which is the basis of all human investigations or enquiries whether physical, metaphysical, mathematical, ethical, social, economical, and political. In other words, this the basis of all questions, in answer to which man is striving ever since his coming into being or at least since his becoming conscious of himself.

On the basis of the truth of this law the whole edifice of human progress towards knowledge and fact-finding was raised, and it will continue to expand itself in all directions. If this law is not self-evidently true the door of all inquiries and investigations would be closed.

But the case is not so. Whether one is an atheist or a theist, materialist or spiritual, or agnostic, any man of sense, no matter to which class he belongs, is alive to this self-evident proposition in which a non-self-existing thing can only become the subject of existence by becoming in some way or other, through a middle term or directly, identified with the self-existing thing. This implies the necessity of a self-existing being responsible for the existence of non-self-existing things. Hence the postulation of the necessity of a self-existing being is common to every man of sense. It is a real irrefutable fact of common sense. All the lovers of truth and knowledge and in fact everyone with common sense is in search of that self-existing being. Some may see "it" in terms of matter and material things and some may see "it" in terms of immaterial beings. However, none denies the existence of an uncaused cause. The difference of views lies in the description of the uncaused cause but the fact is what the Qur'an has said: "***Mimma Yasifun,***" "***He is above all descriptions.***" (6: 100)

Uncaused Cause, Infinite Absolute One

The postulation of an *Uncaused Cause*, responsible for the affirmation of a predicate for a subject, which is not the clear analytical content or the necessary and the inherent property of the other, is an irrefutable necessary and universal truth. This is true of all synthetic propositions, be the predicate “existence” or some other predicate. Let alone a philosopher, none save a sophist or quibble disputes the necessity of the above universal postulation. But it is said about a famous contemporary thinker who decided there was no God because he could not answer the question – “Who made God?” This form of argument may be expected from a child when his parents begin to teach him that man and all observable things surrounding him are created by God. The child’s mind begins to work psychologically through an analogical process and his judgment would be in the same manner as he was created, God must also have been created, and His Creator must have had a creator.

Similar to this way of thinking is the anthropomorphic way of describing God as the creator of the universe. It is obvious such a God or Lord of the universe presented as (a) sitting on His Throne with His Son on the right and the Holy Ghost on His left or (b) with other deities as His issues or, as sitting all alone as a king on the throne and the angels as His servants, or (c) in any form or description which implies His being of composite nature, should be the subject of the question “Who has created Him?” Thus, it is not only for a philosopher but it is for any man of sense to deny such a composite God and question who has created Him. Most probably the great philosopher’s denial is directed against such description or presentation of the Godhead and not against the proposition in which God is Absolute and Self-existing.

But the Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes, “He” the Absolute is One in the true sense of Oneness from all aspects and in all respects in His essence and attributes. He is Infinite, indefinable in any physical, metaphysical or mathematical term of finitude. “God has not adopted any issue. Nor are there with Him other gods, otherwise each god would have taken away what he had created and there would have been no unity and continuity in the system of creation, and there would have been conflict among the gods.” “If there would be gods with Him as they say, then they would have sought a way to the holder of the throne.” The postulation of another like Him means finitude of both and the possibility of a human being encompassing two finite beings. Therefore, He is ‘*Samad*’ (All in All) and “Transcendent” and “Indivisible” in the sense of being of non composite nature, “Omniscient” and “Omnipresent” having no second, match nor partners, the like of whom is not possible. Such descriptions, particularly the last one, cut the roots of all analogical presentation and description of the “Absolute.”

{وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ} 49

“And of everything have We created in pairs, in which you may reflect.” (51:49)

The Absolute One is single and cannot be in pairs. One in His essence and attributes, full in the true sense of fullness, in the sense nothing is devoid of Him and He is devoid of nothing. He is with everything but nothing is co-extensive in existence with Him, nothing can match Him nor bear any resemblance to Him.

If the term personal God means such a Unique Unit, Creative Might of Infinite and Absolute Reality that by His agency everything has or may come into being, then it is true He is the real person to whose personality (reality) all other limited beings owe the extent of the personality they have. If Personal God means any quantitative (be it the biggest or smallest) or qualitative or logical or metaphysical limitation, then God is Impersonal, but gives personality to all limited entities.

To postulate an atom or the smallest part of it, the photon, as the indivisible self-existing unit and component of the universe is a self-contradictory proposition. Anything spatial, however small it may be, is dimensional, hence geometrically divisible, containing parts on which it depends. It may not be practically divisible by us now, as it was the case with the atom until a few years ago, but practical indivisibility does not exempt the smallest particle from the possibility of further division, nor from mathematical divisibility. The proof of is this: if the supposed infinite small particle is entirely non-dimensional then the side which meets another particle like it no dimension can be formed.

If it has the same dimension then the side which meets another particle is different from the side which does not meet the other particle, so it is divided into two different sides. Therefore, the theory of non-dimensional infinitely small particles as self-existing units by the combination of which bigger bodies are formed is untenable. Moreover, such infinitely small and indivisible units cannot escape the logical composition. They are composed of particular material and formal parts (matter and form) and of the specific parts (genus and differentia) and of the metaphysical particular degree of existence. So the composition and dependency as their necessary property is there, and the problem remains unsolved.

The same or worse is the case with all sorts of anthropomorphic presentations of God: (a) as a very huge well-bodied person made of pure light or (b) a being who is supposed to have created man after His image, to represent Him as His miniature. These descriptions given by some theologians of different schools or any other description which undermines the Absolute Oneness of God in His essence and attributes are anti-reason and anti-Qur'anic as interpreted by the *Ahl al-Bayt*. According to the Qur'an, and the sayings of the Prophet and his *Ahl al-Bayt*, all the Qur'anic descriptions of God go back to the negation of limitation and composition about Him and the affirmation of His absolute Oneness in the sense detailed before. It means:

{قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} 1

{اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ} 2

{مُ يَلِدُ وَلَمْ يُوَلَدْ} 3

{وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ} 4

Say, "He is Allah the One! Allah is the Eternal. Besought of all! He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him. (112:1 – 4)

Any Qur'anic word, phrase, sentence or passage concerning God which may appear to mean anything not in agreement with the aforesaid Oneness of God should be interpreted in light of the clear and unequivocal wording of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Holy Prophet and his *Ahl al-Bayt* (vide the Qur'an, *Nahj al-Balagha*, *I'tiqadat* by Sheikh Saduq and *Wafi* by Musin Faid on the Unity of God). It takes man higher and higher towards the realization of the fact that in spite of His being closer to everyone than one is to himself, He is far away from being encompassed by any sense and being describable by any means. Imam Ali says about the efforts to describe God, "Whatever is known to us and grasped by human thought is made and created." The sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq says, "Whatever you distinguish and define with your power of understanding in the most subtle sense of distinction and definition, it is created like you and is the product of your thought. Perhaps the ant would also feel God to have the two feelers which are the means of its getting information from its surroundings."

Here the question arises: how is it that in spite of all the aforesaid arguments, the Absolute Self-existing is indefinable and indescribable, we find all the theists describing Him with such attributes as are found in man? He is described in terms of life, knowledge, will, might, etc. the only difference between Him and man as given in the description being a question of degree and extent. He is unlimited and infinite in His said attributes while the same attributes in others are on a limited scale and degree. Anyway, the resemblance is there. The final answer to this question given by the thinkers of high standard is actually we do not know what He is in His essence as well as in His attributes.

Atheist

If the ultimate answer to this question is: We do not know and cannot know the nature of the Absolute as He or It is in Himself or Itself and whatever we say about Him just shows our limitations and not His nature, why should we blame the atheist or agnostic in presenting Him in terms of space, time, nature, matter, etc. or in expressing their ignorance in scepticism? The theist and all similar schools of thought are unanimous in confessing their ignorance about the nature of the Reality in Himself. The views of all these schools have only subjective value, so far as His Nature is concerned. Then let everyone have the chance of expressing his limitations. Why should we insist on a particular view and reject others? The answer is we should not forget that throughout our arguments we have proved beyond doubt the postulation of the Self-existing Absolute One is a self-evident reality.

Having this positive fact in view, all the discussions about His positive or negative attributes started with the question as to which attribute or which description is the necessary property of His Absolute Oneness to be asserted and maintained and which attribute or description is contradictory of His Oneness to be negated and rejected? All positive attributes and descriptions should be reduced into an assertion of His Absolute Oneness and all negative attributes should be reduced into a negation of His Composite Nature. For example, everything which occupies space is dimensional whether big or small. Every dimensional being is composed of geometrical parts in the sense each part occupies a space other than the space occupied by its immediate adjoining part.

So each part though joined with the other, is absent from the other. So the whole which is the total of the parts is absent from itself. Therefore, the whole is unconscious of itself, because consciousness (knowing) means the presence of the thing perceived to the conscious being (the knower – the perceiver). In other words, knowing means the presence of the known to the knower. It implies one's being conscious of oneself. Self-conscious is the necessary condition of one's being conscious of other things which is absent in dimensional beings. Dimension and unconsciousness are inter-related, and one is the necessary property of the other.

But it is not the case with the beings which are non-dimensional, yet limited and composed of logical parts (genus and differentia) or composed of metaphysical parts (having a lesser or bigger degree of existence) like mind, soul, spirit or intellectual entities. They are composed of parts to which they are limited and as such they are dependent and non-self-existing beings. But the parts of which they are composed are not spatially different. They are merged into each other. So they are absent from each other and such is the whole. It is not absent from itself. Hence, it is conscious of itself and thus conscious of whatever is in touch with and is present to it. So non-dimension and consciousness are correlative.

But non-dimensional beings of limited nature have limited consciousness and have no Absolute Oneness of the Self-existing Being. There is no limitation of any kind in the Absolute One, and hence there is no limitation of His consciousness.

Absolute One, Self-consciousness and Unlimited Attributes

Therefore, the Absolute One is necessarily self-conscious and conscious of whatever is His manifestation, and the reference to the Absolute One should be with the personal pronoun meant for conscious beings – He, You, and I.

The Qur'an says:

وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُو مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ ۗ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ
عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ {61}

And you (Muhammad) are not (engaged) in any affair, nor do you recite any part of the (Holy) Qur'an and nor any deed you (humankind) be doing, but We are witness over you when you are engrossed therein. And do not lie concealed from your Lord (even) the weight of an atom in the Earth or in the heaven, or anything lesser than that nor greater, but it is (recorded) in a clear book. (10:61)

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۗ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظِلْمَاتٍ
{الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ} 59

And with Him are the keys (of the treasures) of the unseen – know it not anyone but He, and He (alone) knows what is in the land and the sea, and (there) falls not (even) a leaf (of a tree) but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness (in the deepest parts) of the Earth, nor anything wet or dry but (it is) in a clear book. (6:59)

{هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ} 3

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۗ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ} 4

He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is the Knower of all things. He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, then firmly established (Himself) over the “Arsh” (the seat of supreme authority). He knows whatever enters the earth and whatever goes forth from it, and whatever descends from the heavens and whatever goes up into it, and He is with you wherever you are, and God is the Seer of whatever you do. (57:3 – 4)

{وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا} 2

And follow you what is revealed unto you from your Lord. Verily God is aware of what you do, well-aware. (33:2)

{أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ} 14

What! Knows not He that created? And He is the Subtle, the All-aware. (67:14)

These and many other verses of the Qur'an assert the fact which Absolute Oneness and Absolute Consciousness are the two analytical aspects of Reality. Non-absoluteness of one affects the

absoluteness of the other. Thus self-consciousness, perpetuity, fullness, all-pervasiveness, omniscience, omnipresence, all-encompassing, are various expressions of one and the same absolute reality, according to the Qur'an.

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ ۗ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

Say, "Call upon Allah or call upon Rahman (the Beneficent) whichever you call upon, for Him (alone) is all the best names. (17:110)

He is Living in the sense of a self-conscious being. Being conscious of Himself and all His existence He loves Himself. So He is the Knower, Knowing and the Known. He is the Lover, Loving and Beloved. He is evident to Himself by Himself for by the agency of which other things come into existence. He is the Witness, Witnessing and the Witnessed. All these are various terms pointing towards the Absolute One. So He loves to express Himself and His excellence. The love of self-expression means Will. He is the All-sufficient to bring into being what He wills:

{إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ} 82

His command, when intends He anything, is only He says unto it "Be" than (and there) it is. (36:82)

This is His Might. He is the All-mighty, so everything is according to His plan and will. He is self-sustaining, sustainer of all limited beings. He is *al-Qayum* – the Being which is existing by Himself and others exist by Him. He loves His manifestation and expressions and is inclined towards them, out of Grace, expecting no return from them, nor to obtain anything from them. He is the All-gracious, the Compassionate. He brings everything up to what it deserves according to His pre-plan and He puts everything in its proper place resulting in harmony, unity and continuity in the system of manifestation. This is justice and He is all All-just. One can easily judge all these attributes and excellences and numerous multitudes of other "names" are nothing but various expressions of asserting His Absolute Oneness or negating all sorts of limitations and compositions in respect of Him.

Ali (as) says, "The perfect recognition of His Oneness means the negation of all attributes from Him because every attribute gives evidence of its being other than the essence and the essence gives evidence fits being other than the attribute." These are the terms in which man can express the extent of his own realization of Him, knowing what really transcends all expressions and is beyond and above all manifestations and expressions. A man's highest approach towards God could be, "Oh One who is beyond my imagination, my talk and tales: let dust be thrown on my forehead and on my parables about You. But man cannot refrain from effort to have a fine description of You. Every now and then man says, "My soul may be spread under Your feet." The Holy Prophet says, "Oh my Lord we have not recognized

You as You ought to be recognized and we have not obeyed as you ought to be obeyed. Oh Lord, I cannot Praise You. You are as You have praised Yourself.”

Again we repeat all anthropomorphic usages in the Qur'an are figurative expressions of the aforesaid facts. The terms throne (*'arsh*), chair (*kursi*), face (*wajh*), ear (*sama'*), eye (*basr*), hand (*yad*), meeting (*liqa'*) seating (*ruyyat*), being carried (*wal*) or carrying (*hamad*), coming (*maji*), etc. are all figurative expressions which should not be taken literally. We have given the figurative significance of all these usages in their proper place according to the interpretation of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

The Relation of Conscious Creative Will and Might to the Created

Man Ibda'

The relation of the Absolute One, the Unique Unit of Infinite Reality cannot be other than the relation of the Infinite Conscious Creative Will and Might to the Created Many. It is by the agency of that creative Will and Might which all finite beings or spiritual, intellectual, psychical and physical nature or seen and unseen objects have into being.

Non-self-existing things can be brought into existence only in the following probable ways: (a) division of the origin into parts, (b) composition of the original parts into the shape of the whole, (c) transformation by assumption of the origin into a new form, (d) reproduction and growth or decay. [1](#)

The relation of the source to the product or the cause to the effect is presented below.

(a) The relation of matter and form, i.e. the material and formal causes, the structural causes to the result or product through the combination of the former two causes, which are components of the result.

(b) The relation of the builder, engineer or architect or the producing agent (not the creative) to the building, plan or drawing in which the latter requires the former only coming into being but not in its subsistence. Once the latter comes into being it does not need the former, who is not the component of the latter, nor the creative agent.

(c) The relation of the object (purpose) of the building which becomes the motive for the agent to undertake the action (the ultimate or final cause). This has also nothing to do with the subsistence of the building.

(d) The relation of the source of light, the illuminating object to its rays and reflections or any thermodynamic forces to its effect: here the relation of the source to the effect may seem to be of a creative nature because the source is not the component of the effect and the effects depend on the source both in respect of its coming into being and in its subsistence. But the process of the said effect from the source is not due to the medium of consciousness and will of the source. Radiation is the necessary property of the illuminating object and reflection is the necessary property of the ground which

receives the radiation.

(e) The relation of the human ego cognitive self, the one to which one refers to as “I,” to the ideas which are formed by the attention of the ego, within the region of the mind. Here the relation of the source is purely creative. The effect owes its coming into being to the sole agency of the attention of the conscious source.

Of all these probable ways mentioned to the above (a), (b), (c) and (d), none can be taken as a probable or possible way of a non-self-existing thing being brought into “being” by the Absolute One. In all of these probabilities the Absolute One loses His Oneness and Absoluteness. All of the four probable relations of the Absolute One to His finite effects and manifestations imply limitation of the cause in some way or other. Excepting the last one (e), all are inconsistent with the absoluteness of the self-existing One. In the case of the relation mentioned in (a) it plays the role of structural cause. The Absolute becomes the formal or the material component of the whole which requires for its coming into being or for its subsistence of producing a holding agent.

In the case of the relation mentioned in (b) the Absolute’s role is to bring the components together and give shapes to the matter. It has no creative or holding power on the material for the formal components of the structure. Moreover, it is inconsistent with the Law of Identity; i.e. a non-self-existing being becomes self subsistent (self-existent after coming into being). The limitation of the causal role of the purpose mentioned in (c) is clear. It causes only a conscious agent to produce the effect. The relation mentioned in (d) is inconsistent with the infinite conscious nature of the Absolute One and His will and might. The rays and the recipient ground yet the source or ground being dimensional is not conscious of its production and effect.

Therefore, the only probable relation free from all objections is mentioned in (e) wherein an effect (idea) is brought into being in the region of the mind by the ego through conscious attention without the slightest change, division, combination, transformation, reproduction, growth and decay, or any other form of change in the essence of inherent attributes of the ego. The activity does not affect His Oneness, nevertheless, the effect (idea) so produced by the ego depends in his existence on the attention and will of the ego, and it remains non-self-existent in itself before, after, and with its present existence. This causal relation can only be true of the Absolute One in His relation to the created many. This is called creation in the true sense of the Qur’anic term *ibda’*. (This is what the verse reveals: **“Be, then it is.”** *Kunfayakuni. 33:82*)

It means the universe as a whole with parts with their formal and material components in its substance and attributes is nothing but the outcome of the will and command of the absolute creative, conscious might Who is Infinite Reality, God (Allah). He has innumerable beautiful names. The Qur’an says among His signs is one which the heavens and the earth are standing, subsisting by His command. He has brought and brings every sign into existence out of love of Himself – love of expression. From this angle, whatever existed, exists or will exist in any form is the “created word” of God and whatever “ought to

have been, ought to be now or in the future” is the “legislative word of God.” The Qur’anic presentation of God supports the metaphysical proposition, “the finite things are created and nothing created can be created by nothing or nothingness. Therefore, the finite things are not created by nothing or nothingness: thus they are all created by something.”

That something must be infinite, self-existing by nature, otherwise the chain of finites will continue, all non-beings and nothings, the whole will become non-being and nothing, which is impossible. Therefore, basically the Qur’an asserts the circular system of creation begins with the highest finite, and continues downward to the lowest one, the primal matter, the end of the arc of descent, and again the process continues upward from the primal matter up to the highest intellectual being in an arc of ascent, corresponding to the intellectual beings of the arc of descent. Meanwhile both arcs are in ever proportionate and well-balanced expansion.

The use of the term self-love and love of expression may raise suspicion of an attempt to resort to analogical argument. To remove this suspicion we have given further explanation about the implications of the creative method of causation which can be ascribed to the Absolute One in His relation to the finite beings.

The best example of this “creative method” known to everyone is the relation of the human cognitive self, as a creative cause to the various ideas which come into being within the region of the mind. An idea comes into being in the region of the mind by mere attention to the cognitive self. This attention does not underlie any change – transformation or division, decay or growth in the essence or essential attributes of the cognitive self. Nor does the idea so caused by the attention to come into being become independent of the attention in its subsistence. Unlike the relation of a building to its builder, the idea in its coming into being and in its subsistence is entirely dependent on the attention.

This argument is not based on analogy. It is purely based on logical syllogism of proving one of the several alternative hypotheses by proving the impossibility of the others: “A” is either “B,” “C” or “D” but it cannot be “B” or “C,” therefore, “A” is necessarily “D.”

Self-love, Self-expression

Attention, intention, will, wish, desire, decision, decree, care and command are terms with slightly different shades of meaning denoting, connoting or implying the creative and active attitude of a conscious or cognitive being (or self) towards the objects other than self. All these terms imply *apriori* self-consciousness which is the attitude of the conscious being to itself, wherein the “known, knowing and the knower” are one and identical. So there are two different attitudes of the cognitive self; its attitude toward the objects other than itself, and its attitude towards itself. There must be a connective medium between the two attitudes of the cognitive self. The appropriate connective medium in between is self-love, the inseparable property of self-consciousness. And self-love implies, as its inseparable property, the love of self-expression.

This is the base of all the above-mentioned terms of creative and active attitudes. This connective medium between the two attitudes of conscious beings, in the case of the human cognitive self and possibility in the case of other finite cognitive selves may be associated perceptibly or other finite cognitive selves may be associated perceptibly or imperceptibly with some emotion and affection. Such a connective medium associated with any process of affecting the true of the Absolute One uncaused cause. Therefore, such emotional or affectionate love is to be negated from the absolute cause. But there should be some connective medium in between the two attitudes there also.

To the best human ability, that known medium may be termed as self-love and love of expression, but not associated with anything, as emotion and affection, affecting His Absoluteness, which is love-knowledge or intellectual love. In other words, the Absolute One being conscious of Himself means His absolute beauty. This knowledge makes Him to express all He is conscious of. Thus, by negation of the anthropomorphical aspect of love from the love attributed to Him, the analogical outlook of the argument is changed into another logical syllogism of affirming for Him the excellent aspect of an essential attribute, while negating from Him the defective aspect of the same attribute.

This is the height of human efforts in translating man's realization of the essence and the essential attributes of the Absolute Reality into conceptual terms. But the fact should never be forgotten in which to experience and realize a thing does not always mean to be able to express and describe the thing in exact conceptual terms. The best example is the human ego "I" which is the closest thing realized and experienced by everyone, but none can claim to be able to express and describe it in exact conceptual terms.

The eighth Imam Ali al-Rida pointed out though man in the state of realization of the Absolute Reality finds Him nearer to him than he is to himself, yet he is sure the most excellent terminologies are not adequate to be used about Him. Thus the Imam said, "All the divine names made known to us are created just to suit our intellectual limitations, otherwise He is so far above our understanding. His essence and attributes cannot be understood and adequately described by us." In reply to a question about the unity and justice of God, Ali says, "The height of recognition of His Absolute Oneness is one should not try to imagine Him, and the height of recognition of His actions."

He is the One though realized by very finite being, yet is far beyond their conceptual faculty to encompass and describe Him. This is the actual meaning of the name "Allah," the One who is known to all, in some way or other, whom all adore and to whom all resort for help with the utmost awe and reverence when the hope in all other means is lost, and in describing whom the understanding faculty of the finite beings is perplexed. This is the most comprehensive name of the Absolute One as it is known to every finite being. Though it is an abridged form of an abstract noun, *Elah*, with the definite article *Al* (The), it is inapplicable to any other being. It is treated as the sole proper name for the Absolute Self-existing One.

Meditate His Bounties

Even this name “Allah,” notwithstanding its comprehensiveness and inapplicability to any other being, simply denotes the relation in which He stands to all finite beings. It is the greatest name of the Absolute which can be known to His creatures, otherwise His essence and essential attributes are far beyond the creature’s power of comprehension. This is the reason the Prophet admonishes man not to mediate about the essence of the Absolute (Allah) but to mediate more and more on His bounties. Meditation on His bounties enables one to realize Him, but meditation on His essence perplexes one.

Nevertheless, in some stages of realization, even perplexity is unavoidable. The Holy Prophet prays, “Increase, oh Lord, my perplexity in You!” All these statements may look paradoxical but on the threshold of Infinity all paradoxes are the outcome of our limitations. Ali says, “By bringing opposite and paradoxical things into being one should realize He has no opposite and nothing is a paradox to Him. In Him all paradoxes vanish and by Him every being is reconciled and harmonized with the other.”

1. (a) In other words, the division of the origin into parts like the breaking of larger body into smaller bodies or pieces. – A huge nebula in its rotational movement of utmost velocity is broken into small pieces which are revolving around the parent nebula as its satellites. So the satellites were non-existent but came into existence by the process of separation from the parent nebula.

(b) Composition of the original parts into the shape of the whole. – Like the process of bodies of infinites (atoms) coming together in a particular way to form the parent nebula.

(c) Transformation by assumption of the origin of a new form. – Like transformation of a silkworm in the cocoon into a form of a butterfly or the change of a body into a solid, liquid or gaseous state.

(d) Reproduction, growth and decay. – Which is the process observable in living beings, i.e. plants, animals and humankind. These three processes (reproduction, growth, and decay) are always associated with the above process mentioned in (a), (b) and (c). These are termed (a) Tajzia (division), (b) Tarkib (composition), (c) Tahawwul (transformation), (d) Talid (introduction), (e) Numuw (growth), and (f) Dhubul (decay), respectively. These kinds of relations of the source of its product or cause to this effect are true of the structural causes, i.e. material or formal causes of a thing. By the term material or formal cause, we mean the cause which becomes the component, out of which the effect is made or the shape by which the effect becomes what it is.

(e) The relation of an agent to his work. – Like the relation of the builder, engineer, architect or the producer to the building, plan or drawings. In the process the agent is not part of the effect. He is not the originator of the material or formal components of the effect. He is only the producer, bringing the already existing material parts together in a particular shape. This effect is subsistence is not dependent on the producing agent.

(f) The relation of the object (purpose) to the building, the concept of which becomes the motive for the agent to undertake the production. – The relations of these two causes (e) and (f) to the effect are agential nature in the sense in which they are neither the components of the effect nor the originator of the effect. They do not bring the material or the formal part of the effect into existence. But one acts in bringing the material and formal parts together, and the other (purpose) makes the agent to act.

It is obvious the causal relation of the above-mentioned causes to their effects is not the relation of a complete determinative cause which does not require a further cause. Moreover, of these incomplete causes there is none to remain unaffected and unchanged in producing the effect. And none is consistent and in conformity with the absolute Oneness of

the uncaused cause.

(g) The relation of a cognitive and volitive self to the idea produced by it (the self) within the region of the mind, with no other means but his own attention and will. – The ideas so originated in that region are totally dependent in their coming into being and their subsistence in their material and formal part on the will and intention of the self. The self is neither the formal nor the material components of the ideas, so it may in its effectiveness be affected by division, composition or transformation. Not is its activity like the incomplete producing agent or the motive of his action mentioned in (e) and (f).

The effectiveness of the cognitive self in bringing the ideas into existence within the region of the mind is not associated with any change in the essence or essential attributes of the self. The activity does not affect His Oneness. So this last causal relation can only be true of the Absolute One in His relation to the created many. This is called creation in its true sense and the Qur'an terms it as *Ibda'* and this is what the term, "Be, then it is" (*Kunfayakun*) means (36:82).

It means the universe as a whole and part in its formal and material components, in its substance and attribute, is nothing but the outcome of the command, intention and will of the Absolute Conscious Creative Might. The Qur'an says that among His signs is the heavens and the earth are standing, subsisting by His Command and will.

It is from this angle what whatever was, is or will be – whatever existed, exists or will exist in any shape and form – is termed as the created word of God, i.e. the outcome of His creative will. And whatever ought to have been, ought to be now or in the future is the legislative word of God, the outcome of His legislative will.

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