

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > Spirituality of the Shi'ism and Other Discourses > Discourse Three: The Motive behind Creation

> The motive of God in creating the world

Discourse Three: The Motive behind Creation

From the first days of life, using their God-given intellects, humans inevitably discover the existence of a series of unknowns. Because of our natural inquisitiveness, we strive to clarify these obscurities. We ask ourselves: does this manifest world have a creator? If there is a creator, what was the motive for creation? If the world has indeed been created, are we charged with responsibilities?

Clearly, if we give a positive answer to any of these questions, a series of subsidiary questions come up regarding the properties of the Creator and the manner and effects of its existence. As we have said, the God–given nature of humankind desires a logical and decisive answer to these questions.

Without a doubt, the matter at hand is one of the most elementary and prominent issues faced by human nature. The human self understands the need to rationally and conclusively solve this problem in the first stages of life.

Analysis of the question

Certainly that which compels us to inquire about the motive and aim of creation is that we perform social and rational tasks in order to achieve suitable and worthwhile aims. We eat to satisfy our hunger; drink to slake our thirst; clothe ourselves to protect our bodies against heat and cold; build houses in which to reside; speak in order to communicate what is in our minds; etc.

In the things that are done intentionally and thoughtfully, humans—and any intelligent being for that matter—have a motive and aim.

We do not do things that have no benefit whatsoever. By observing intents in our voluntary actions and generalizing our mentality to all intelligent agents we are faced with the following question: what is the motive of the Creator, who is an intelligent agent, for creating the world?

But then, can this amount of observation and generalization guarantee the correctness of this question? Can we extend a relationship or property found in several cases to all cases? The answer is no, and the only definitive solution is through analysis of the meaning of 'motive' because it is not possible to use inductive reasoning or empirical study.

As stated in the previous example, we attain the aim of satiation through eating. Satiation is related to eating because it is the result of this action. By entering the body, food activates the digestive system and frees us of the need for more food. Thus, the body's food requirements are met and we become full which is an effect of eating.

Eating is a special process that starts with us and ends in satiation. Eating also is related to us as the agent in that we do not have the necessary materials within ourselves to go on living without nourishment. In order to preserve our lives, we are equipped with faculties with which the body may absorb necessary nutrition.

When our semi-intelligent internal faculties feel the need, through natural mechanisms they force us to procure necessary nutrition and deal with our existential weakness. Therefore, just as satiety is related to eating, in another way it is related to us.

It is a perfection that completes our existential weakness, resolves our needs, and with its manifestation upon our inner faculties, it forces us to act to get what we need to complete ourselves.

By examining each of our innumerable volitional actions such as drinking, sitting down, standing up, talking, listening, going, coming, etc., the same characteristics that we found by inspecting eating will be revealed—even among actions that are apparently completely aimless.

After careful consideration it becomes clear that we do not perform actions that give us no benefit. When we undertake actions with no motive other than philanthropy, such as giving charity, we are in truth fulfilling our emotional desires and relieving the inner sorrow caused by empathy with the poor and so on.

Therefore, we can conclude that, in general, the motive for a volitional act is an appropriate effect lying within the result of the action and is a perfection that rectifies a fault in the agent and completes it.

Purpose in all elements of existence

Even though at first we supposed that motives and aims are specific to agents that are equipped with intelligence and free will, upon closer examination we see that all the effects and properties with which we proved the existence of "motives" for volitional acts and agents also exist in natural actions and agents.

Because, like volitional agents, every natural agent or material phenomenon is equipped with faculties that are used to relieve their existential needs. By performing their specific acts, they resolve their needs and faults thus perfecting themselves. Finally, the effect of their actions is directly and systematically

related to the action and themselves as well.

This is the same in voluntary acts; therefore, intelligence is not in the least related to the realization of the result and its relationship with the act or agent.

Even though we name this issue "motive", which occurs in respect to the actions of living intelligent individuals with free will and refrain from using this term for other natural acts, instead using "result" or figuratively utilizing the term "motive", the end result is the same in both terms. What a natural agent does in the dark recesses of nature, a living human may do using the light of intellect without a change in the aforementioned relationships.

Hence, "motive" is common to all elements of the world of creation and as long as it rules over all general laws, such as the law of causality, no act will be performed without aim and no agent is free of a purpose and ideal.

All beings of every kind, whether human, insect, apple tree, wheat, hunk of iron, molecule of oxygen, and so on, adapt to the external environment using their active faculties, harmonize with active elements in their environment, and perform specific actions in order to achieve their evolutional or useful aims.

When this specific action is completed, it is substituted with the result of the action, the natural or intentional desire is fulfilled, and the perfection it sought is annexed to its being.

General types that exist all over the world, such as humans, horses, apple trees, etc. are the same. With the specific acts of their type, they strive to achieve their aims and ideals and by achieving them, they remedy their genetic faults and keep on existing. This same thing can be said of the entirety of world components, among which an indubitable relationship exists.

Basically, any movement that occurs has a direction. This movement is always intermediary and joins one thing or direction to the other. The direction desired by the object is the result and motive that completes the deficiency and aspiration of the agent.

When it is achieved, movement ceases. That is, it gains a static state in relation to its previous state. Even though on a different perspective, this static state is a new movement that aims at a new result and motive.

We cannot imagine the realization of a movement that does not have a direction or that has a direction but the "direction" has no relationship with the movement and is realized solely through happenstance. Or that a force creates movement without being causally related to it. Or that even though the force has a relationship with the movement, its relationship with the movement is accidental.

The awe-inspiring order that is seen throughout the world in causes and agents and the general incontrovertible laws that impartially govern the world of existence demonstrate that this world or existence was not accidental.

A scientist has said that the assumption that ten different elements combine by chance in a certain arrangement is one in ten billion. Causeless occurrence of one possibility out of ten billion minus one other possibilities cannot be considered anything but following of baseless and unreasonable notions.

The intellectual thought and natural reason of humankind can never deny the relationship between actions, agents, and the result of actions, for this would debunk all human scientific reasoning and self–evident thoughts.

Universal motive and ideal

There is an authentic relationship between the components of the wide world of existence, from the tiniest particle to the greatest collection of celestial objects and wondrous galaxies. According to scientific and philosophical theories, this relationship makes the world an integrated unit that transforms and evolves in a general direction.

According to the irrefutable aforementioned theory, when the world reaches the boundary between movement and target, the objective replaces its movement and the turbulent evanescent world transforms into a calm and stable place.

The world of tomorrow will doubtless be calm and stable in relation to the world of today. The deficiencies of this world will be resolved, the world perfected, and all potentialities realized. Yet will this stability and perfection be relative to the current conditions of the world or will it reach ultimate inner stability and the end of evolution?

In other words, will the general movement of the world—which is substituted with its goal after reaching it—gain relative calm and stability like current lesser movements, even though it is still moving and evolving in other dimensions or will the future world attain true internal perfection and stability where evolution—the existential role of all phenomena—is completely terminated; where the compasses of existence reach the starting point, stop turning, and leave a permanent and perfect circle; where, in colloquial terms, the world becomes four dimensional; and where phenomena no longer revolve around time?

The conclusion of this synopsis is compact, complex, and esoteric. There is a stable and complete world in the wake of this mobile and incomplete world. There is a calm stopping–place towards which the caravan of existence strives with all its might and one day, all these wayfarers will realize the result of their endeavors there.

Of course, on the path of understanding this conclusion we are faced with the preceding question and many more. The gloom of these obscurities is far-ranging. In reality, these mysteries form a series of discussions that may be considered the most complex and profound general discussions in philosophy.

This is because general theories that do not have tangible support are difficult to understand. From the

first time we opened our eyes we have only seen material things. We are traveling on a path that cannot be retraced. Those who leave this world have gone beyond the bounds of our knowledge.

Nonetheless, by relying on positive reasons based on logical and incontestable premises, critical philosophic discussions answer the bulk of these questions. The theory that "the mobile and fleeting world has a stable and fixed objective" conforms to the issue of eschatological truths imparted upon us through revelations upon religious leaders.

The motive of God in creating the world

Therefore, "motive and aim" is related to action in that it transforms active movement into immobility and tranquility and is related to the agent in that it transforms the existential defect of the agent into perfection. In addition, according to logical discussions regarding the Attributes of the Creator of the world. His Pure Essence is Absolute Perfection and contains no defect or need.

By merging these two theories, we can hypothesize and prove a motive for the acts of the Lord of the world. If questions such as "What is the motive behind creation?" and "Why did God create beings external to Himself?" mean "What are the aims of God's actions?" then the "action motive" of this deficient world is a perfect one. However, such questions are erroneous if they mean: "What defect does God resolve within Himself by creation and what perfection or benefit does He desire?"

The answer that is given for the issue of motive in religious discourses is the same as what was discussed above: "The motive of God, the Almighty, in creating the world is bringing benefit to others, not to Himself."

In conclusion, we must note that a motive is possible only when the action or both agent and action have a deficiency that is resolvable through the motive. Therefore, if we presuppose the existence of an act (i.e. creation) that has no resolvable deficiencies—such as, in philosophical terms, an abstract—our premise would be invalid.

Indeed, philosophers have found through careful analyses that the motive of an act is perfection of the act and the motive of an agent is perfection of the agent. To conclude, sometimes acts are gradual and perfection is annexed to them at the end and sometimes they are instantaneous and abstracted from materiality and movement. In this case, the reality of the act is the act and its perfection and motive.

Moreover, the agent is sometimes flawed, attaining its perfection after its act, and sometimes it is perfect; therefore, it is the agent and the motive and aim. Thus, the motive of God in creating the world is His own Essence and the aim of His act, i.e. this imperfect world, is a more complete world. The aim of a more complete world is an even more complete world. As for the aim of the creation of a perfect creature, it is the creature itself.1

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/spirituality-shiism-and-other-discourses-sayyid-muhammad-husayn-tabatab ai/discourse-three-motive#comment-0