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God: From Seeking God to Faith in God

[The History of Belief in God](#)

The history of theism is probably equal to the history of mankind itself. Since man's mental structure, capabilities and forces have not undergone dramatic change throughout at least the last 40000 years, we must say that belief in God has at all times existed. The supernatural tendencies and prayers that have accompanied man's life ever since he came into being, prove that man has never been without believing in God.

Of course, man has at times erred in his supernatural tendencies and worshiped other beings rather than God. Some sociologists studying religions have attempted to prove that in order to evolve from ignorance to knowledge, man had to begin with idolatry, and subsequently turn to monotheism. They present these two reasons in defying the history of monotheism:

1- Man's worshipping idols and statues instead of God shows that monotheism has not existed since ancient times. In response, we must say that there are still a great many unsolved things about primitive men – such as the magic some say they did – that cannot be scientifically considered to be true and that man worshiped nothing but those; such findings should not be generalized as being the only things that really were. Even today, there are sacred places around the world in which people, although believing in God, still have deep respect for.

2- Throughout history, man has always been attracted by “gods.” Even after Abraham, “gods” were still very popular and were given specific duties. Some writers seem to have imagined that these gods were really worshiped instead of the one God.

There are several reasons proving that the word god has been used referring to particularly sacred or respected things and people.

a) As Abu –Reihan Biruni quotes from Galen, “Great men who have achieved extreme mastery and skill in industries or medicine deserve to be included among 'gods.'”

- b) Abu –Reihan Biruni believes that the fact that the public are more interested in what they can sense rather than the rational is the reason why sculptures have been so popular in nations all over the world.
- c) Plato, a monotheist philosopher, believed that human spirits were made by secondary gods. Plato used the term “gods” referring to abstract and adducent objects.
- d) Some ignorant Arabs, although believing in God, called God at first and then their idol while performing the Haj pilgrimage.
- e) The Holy Qur’an has also pointed out that Arabs thought idols would provide them with intercession with God:

و يقولون هؤلاء شفعاونا عندالله

“They say These are our intercessors with God. “ (10:18)

Void of Reasons for Defying God

None of those who defy God have ever been able to produce any reasons why God does not exist. Atheists and materialists have no reasons that show there is no origin to the universe; they have merely criticized the reasons theists have for the existence of God. Debating on the reasons why God exists cannot logically prove that God does not exist. If one is to defy the existence of God, independent reasons that God does not exist are required.

Those who defy God mainly refer to the evil and discomfort in the world. If there really is a God, they say, why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?

Such criticism will obviously never lead to the defiance of God, for the most we are able to conclude from it is that the order and harmony in the universe is not what we might expect or imagine. In fact, those who refer to evil in the world are concerned with divine justice rather than the actual existence of God itself.

As Voltaire says, those who attempt to defy the existence of God by referring to the evil and suffering in the world are like someone who enters a highly sophisticated mansion full of exquisite architecture, paintings and woodwork. Although the extremely skillful works he sees can only lead to the fact that a master must have built them, he says that since he found drops of blood and broken arms and legs on the stairs or in the hall, such a mansion cannot have a maker! This is clearly a baseless argument, for asking about the maker of a mansion is quite irrelevant to violations in the laws and rules that govern it.

Classifying People based on Their Belief in God

According to their belief in God, humans can be divided into three groups:

1– Believers in God: This group is dominant both qualitatively and quantitatively, for most scientists and great thinkers throughout history have believed in God.

2– The Indifferent: These people do not seem to have any belief in God, nor do they believe in the existence of any absolute being as God, either.

This group includes anyone who has no inclination, tendency or actions based on belief – anyone who doubts the existence of God, those who defy God in imitation of others, and those who may realize deep inside that there must be some kind of extreme origin or force, but fail to associate it with God.

These people have not turned indifferent about God in spite of their research, awareness or knowledge, for if they are provided with suitable instructions and guidance, they abandon their defiance and doubts.

3– Those who have turned against God: Some people lose their belief in God, and claim that they scientifically or philosophically doubt that God exists. Based on why they turn away from God, these people can be categorized as:

a) Personal: These people turn away from God because they fail to achieve the goals or ideals they set for themselves. For example, those who attempt to gain wealth, fame, or power, sulkily abandon their faith when they are unable to get what they aim for; in fact, they suffer from a multi-personality syndrome.

b) Ideological: Some people claim that the reasons theists have for the existence of God are baseless, because we cannot see or feel God or evil and suffering has filled the world.

Despite the philosophical and/or scientific justification these people have for their criticism, an intellectual will never accept them as reasons that can prove that there is no God; even if the theists' reasoning is baseless or the world is full of evil and suffering, it cannot mean God does not exist. How can such people claim that they have studied the universe carefully and found no God? If their criterion is feeling that God exists, why do they not observe their own thoughts, which is the base of all their activities?

Each human being knows that he/she has a “self,” an ego. In spite of this, the human body becomes ill, and suffers a lot at times. Does that mean that man has no ego, no “self,” for if he did, he would never suffer? Although man's ego adjusts his actions and behavior, it also warns him about things that might harm him physically or mentally. The ego's functions are not limited to man's physical, worldly life; yet, it is not comparable to God's role in the universe, for God influences everything about man infinitely, even things far beyond man's control. Thus, even the slightest attention to the human “self” will never lead to defiance of the existence of God.

Factors Inhibiting Obvious Recognition of God

Man can achieve faith and knowledge about the existence of God, for there are a great many logical reasons supporting it. There are, on the other hand, various veils that inhibit it. We can categorize the inhibiting factors as:

1– Those arising from practical deviations, like drowning in sins and lusts, which make man both fail to recognize God and communicate with Him, and darken the most obvious reasons supporting God's existence, changing them into a bunch of meaningless, ineffective words. There are many thinkers and intellectuals who are highly proficient in divine philosophy and have mastered the reasons that clearly prove that God exists, but still do not believe in God. Such people are empty of any supreme human-divine sense of responsibility. Their points of view have been blinded by both scientific factors and practical deviations.

2– Some scientific perceptions about the universe have also hindered true belief in God. As we know, there are many aspects to the universe, and man has made contact with it with specific aims and viewpoints. Sometimes our discoveries make us associate one characteristic of one component of the universe with all its other components. For example, when we observe the dominance of quantity, we may regard it as an absolute fact that dominates all aspects of the universe.

The less man's mental development, the more natural occurrences and appearances penetrate into his mind, which he uses to evaluate all facts about the universe.

The inhibitions caused by incorrect scientific receptions are due to mental and spiritual weaknesses of individuals themselves, for they are incapable of freeing their intelligence of the superficial occurrences and issues of nature. The most significant of “scientific veils” is absolutist perceptions of the law of causality, which the normal mind saturates with absolute concepts and destroys his sense of absolutism toward discovering the basic principles of the universe. Inaccurate comprehension of the law of causality changes it into a thick barrier.

As we know, there is some definite information at hand on the law of causality. Some of these facts are:

- Every effect has a cause.
- A cause cannot transfer something it does not have to its effect.
- The principle of “same kinds” between the cause and its effect.

The problem with causality in regard to God starts when we extract the causes of things from nature, and suppose there is no room left for God as the creator of the whole world of nature. Thus, we put God aside from nature, considering Him as the cause of all causes among the chain of nature's components. In other words, God is regarded as the creator of the first natural reason, the manager of the whole of

nature, and nature is considered to be the one controlling itself directly.

We see in the Holy Qur'an that every event and motion in the universe is directly related to God. All of nature is an act of God:

The big mistake is that we – consciously or unconsciously – derive the main operative cause out of material and superficial causes, concluding their independence of the direct creator, and putting God at the very beginning of the creation chain. Interestingly, we even call God the primary cause – the cause of all causes.

That, indeed, is the real point. We must realize that God, though being the primary reason and the cause of all causes, is in fact the actual creator of the whole universe.”

Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi) says that as long as we human beings are imprisoned in our natural senses and theoretical intelligence, all of our receptions will be confined to natural appearances; only if we can step far beyond these superficial causes may we find God, the direct truth behind all events:

بی سبب بیند چو دیده شد گزار تو که در حبسی، سبب را گوش دار

با سببها از مسبب غافلای سوی این روپوشها زان مایلی

هین ز سایه شخص را میکن طلب در مسیب رو گذر کن از سبب

(Those who have made great effort in life and succeeded in ignoring the pleasures of natural life, stepping beyond their natural self, achieve the level in which the causes and reasons of the world are revealed to them. Their penetrative eyes can now see the underlying foundation of the universe which is independent upon the cause-and-effect relationships. But you, drowning in your mortal lusts and animal-like desires! You, who have sold the gem called 'your life' for meager selfishness!

Now that you are indeed imprisoned in this ring of senses and superficialities, keep struggling in the fatal whirlpool of causalities, and just go on desperately grabbing for something to cling to. You are so absorbed in causes and effects that you are ignoring the creator of them all; all you see is superficial effects. From these shadows you see (in fact, man's existence), you can find the shadow-maker; indeed, these apparent causes can lead you to the Master of All Causes.)

Our theoretical intelligence sometimes pays attention only to superficial reasons, failing to penetrate deep into the mysterious ways the universe works.

این سبب را محرم آمد عقل ما و آن سببها راست محرم انبیا

وآن سببها کانبیا را رهبر است آن سببها زین سببها برتر است

(It is indeed the very hidden causes that guide prophets on their mission. By contact with these causes, they can perform miracles in this world. The hidden causes are much greater than their natural counterparts in this world. We can only realize these natural causes, whereas prophets of God can use those supreme causes and reasons.)

Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi)

Essentiality Reasoning

Saint Anselm, the Christian thinker, presented this form of reasoning, and later on philosophers like Descartes continued using it. It is based upon the image man makes of God in his mind. First, man defines God as the greatest being imaginable, and then as the most complete, perfect being imaginable. Anselm believes that if God is not considered as the most perfect, things more perfect than God can exist. If God is not a being, we cannot consider God as the most perfect thing of all, and that is not what we believe. Here, we have proved that the opposite of what we want to prove is wrong; since God cannot be non-existent, He must exist. Thus, the basics of this reasoning are:

- 1- We imagine God as the greatest or most perfect existence of all.
- 2- What we imagine must exist, for if it does not, we have not imagined the most perfect being.
- 3- Thus, God, as the most perfect, complete being, must exist.

The biggest problem with this reasoning is the mixing of the first, natural concept and the secondary, popular one. Anselm has mixed up primary, natural being with consequential creation. God being existent and perfect as the primary nature is fine, but the latter is inaccurate. Merely imagining the most perfect being does not lead to the external occurrence of the most perfect. We can, for instance, consider a partner for the primary nature that must exist – God – as the first, natural idea, but that will not make such a partner for God exist externally, too.

All in all, if a concept is in nature perfect, but when actually existent is not, this does not create a contradiction for us to use this form of reasoning for.

This reasoning is called the essentiality reasoning, also called the perfection reasoning. Here, existence arises from essentiality. This reasoning has roots in Islamic prayers and hadith. As the Sabah prayer by Imam Ali reads:

يا من دلّ على ذاته بذاته

“O God, the God Whose nature is itself a reason for the existence of His nature.”

And let us quote from Imam Zain-ul-abedin in the Abu Hamzeh Thumali prayer:

بک عرفتک و انت دللتنی علیک ... و لو لا انت ما ادر ما انت

“I discovered You through You Yourself; You reasoned me toward Yourself. If not for You, how could I ever know You?”

Now let us describe this reasoning:

1- All human beings of sound mind and soul pay attention to the concept of God. Even those who defy God must pay attention to the concept of God's existence at first. If one says that God exists, he has undoubtedly understood that God is a concept that can exist. One who says that God doesn't exist also understands that God is a concept that cannot exist. In fact, the concept of God has been distinguished from the imagination of God, because the concept of God can be paid attention to, but it cannot be imagined. We realize that we are enjoying something, but we cannot imagine it.

2- The concept of God in developed minds is, “the most perfect truth, the richest existence and the most powerful,” for even the slightest imperfection would tarnish the concept of being God.

The god some thinkers have cast doubt on has characteristics that are not compatible with the real God, so their doubt is not justifiable. Bertrand Russell, for instance, who is doubtful about God, has failed to understand God correctly; the god Russell has recognized does not exist at all.

Having recognized God as the most complete, perfect being, we must say that God needs no other being – even Himself – and if someone claims that he can understand the highest of beings in a way that it also needs something, he has not recognized the highest of beings at all.

3- God, as the most perfect, complete being, exists. In other words, recognizing God as the greatest, most perfect, is a necessity for His reality, just like confirming the fact that a triangle has three sides when we see it. Merely recognizing God as the highest, most complete being is a sign that God exists, and if one claims that such recognition cannot prove God's existence – as Anselm was criticized – we can consider his claim as due to three factors:

- a) The impossibility of God's existence
- b) The absence of reasons
- c) Inhibiting barriers

Firstly, as we have said before, no reason can defy that God exists. Secondly, this concept needs no reason. Thirdly, even if it had inhibiting barriers, it would not be recognized as the most perfect being at all. In other words, being the absolutely perfect contradicts with having reasons (causes) and also with having barriers inhibiting its existence.

Actually, the difference between these statements and Anslem's reasoning is that Anslem insists on the image of God, whereas we emphasize recognizing and understanding God. In other words, natural recognition is significant here.

In brief, this deduction consists of making man understand his own disposition, rather than having a reality outside the human mind reflected upon it. Man can understand and recognize what he has in himself by means of this deduction.

As we said about Anslem's reasoning, merely imagining something is not a sign that it really exists externally; we can imagine many things without them having any external existence.

Considering normal knowledge, such an objection is correct and logical, but we should not forget the fact that no imagination leads to its subject actually existing in the real world; thus, the existence of a fact always needs a cause. Just imagining does not imply its existence. Concerning our topic, however, our supposition is that our mind has been able to recognize a being that needs no cause.

Of course, the mere imagining of a being that needs no cause does not make us accept its reality, unless we intuitively recognize it; gained imagination is not enough. And intuitive recognition is nothing more than man's God-seeking disposition.

Some may claim that imagining such a being is hallucination. In other words, the human mind can have a wrong image of God, a God that is scared and coward, just like other cases when the human mind can imagine an effect without imagining its cause.

In response, we must say that the issue of God cannot be imagination or hallucination, for if one believes in God, he either knows that his belief is a hallucination or he does not. If he knows that he has imagined something unreal and wrong, why has he made so much effort toward proving it or defying it? If the imagination were in fact unreal, man should never have worshipped God so much throughout history. And if he does not know, there is no argument at all.

When studying this reasoning, we should keep in mind whether deep inside us we can recognize the most complete being or not. This is why merely recognizing the most perfect being brings about belief that He exists, just as simply as one accepts that $2 \times 2 = 4$. There is no need for a medium state here. In other words, the substance for its reasoning is included in itself.

Faith

The best way to define faith is: the confirmation of an active conscience. Some scholars have regarded faith as merely confirmation – so do some hadith – where it means expressing the distinct, understandable base of the public. Thus, we can conclude that the main idea here is the confirmation of an active conscience, for confirmation alone cannot make any effect in the mind; there is great difference between confirming something and making effect based upon it. Most conscious, aware people admit the necessity of justice for individual and social human life, but few men have actually executed justice. Man will definitely be just if he considers justice as part of his own life.

The Necessity of Faith

It is sometimes asked whether man can live without faith or not. In response, we must first see what life means here. If it means endeavor toward satisfying natural, animal-like desires, faith is not only unnecessary, rather even disturbing. Those who claim that man has no need for faith are in fact referring to animal life.

But if life means paying attention to all human potentials and talents, man cannot definitely do without faith.

If man has faith, all his thoughts and deeds will be in accordance with the law. Such a man will do things out of eagerness and enthusiasm, not reluctance that will later make him feel guilty.

There are three points of misunderstanding about faith nowadays:

1– Evil persons pretending to have faith. Machiavellians have no stronger tool for misleading others than pretending to have faith.

2– Mental errors concerning faith. Some people think that any kind of faith arises out of pure worship. In other words, the believer considers his every action or thought to be based upon worship.

3– Verbal manipulation. Instead of having faith in God and His prophets and considering the ultimate goal of the universe and obeying God's orders, some people confine faith to a series of concepts.

Nowadays, concepts like humanism or advocating science or freedom have become playthings in the hands of the selfish, who have deprived man of a series of realities, because they themselves have no faith in these concepts at all.

We must remember, however, that the three above-mentioned orientations cannot defy the necessity of faith for a human being who tends to live an interpretable life in this world.

The consequences of having faith are:

- Faith makes people be trusted by their fellow beings.
- Faith corrects man's thoughts.
- It makes man interpret and account for his life.
- It makes man morally dependent.
- Faith has man abandon personal desires and turn to serving people socially.
- It provides man with internal, constant liveliness.
- Man finds innate dignity and elegance through faith.
- Faith makes man himself carry the heavy load of his life instead of imposing it upon others.
- With faith, man is freed of mental anxieties and worries.
- Faith helps man accomplish great achievements.
- It makes man feel greatness in the universe, and observe moral principles.

If man's faith in God makes him constantly pay attention to God, he will always admit that God is watching him, and if man accepts God's continual supervision of what he does, the results will be:

- 1- Man will spend every moment of his life seeing God before him.
- 2- Man will act upon devotion and commitment, for he has realized without doubt that only God – and nothing else – can deserve to be man's goal in his deeds.
- 3- Man will make savings for his eternity in this world.
- 4- Man will avoid forbidden actions – even if they are not sins, like unsuitable actions or deeds based upon imagination or hallucinations.
- 5- Man will not waste his life.
- 6- It is only through recognizing God's constant supervision that man can harness his lusts and desires.
- 7- Such a man will realize that every action of his in this world leads to reactions.

این جهان کوه است و فعل ما ندا سوی ما آید نداها را صدا

(This world is like a mountain, and our actions are shouts; their reactions come back to us.)

Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi)

8- Man will give up his far-reaching wishes, and will not allow baseless illusions replace facts and realities.

9- God's supervision makes man be patient and tolerant toward events.

10- Man will regard piety as the tool to pass the bridge of death.

11- Man tries to keep moving on the right path amidst all the dangerous cliffs and deviating ways full of thorns during his life.

12- Man considers every moment and aspect of his life as precious and valuable, and will not let apparently-fatalistic events disturb his life.

Such a man will adjust his life in a way that it seems he is on the verge of death:

Man's Mental States during Worship

When worshipping God, man may be in a state of fear or a state of flourish and joy.

Basically, man's mental state depends on his viewpoint of his position in the universe. If he does not see himself as of great meaning in the universe, his mental state will also suffer from meaninglessness; if, however, he interprets his life as related to the origin of the universe and regard his development and progress as due to God's kindness, he will always remember God, and his worship will be in an elevated mental state.

Of course, human beings differ in their degree of development and progress, and those who have achieved high levels of development intuitively see God while worshipping. This is why some perfected human beings weep strangely in their worship. It has been said, for example, that Imam Ali writhed like a snake when he worshipped God in the dark night.

When man pays attention to God's qualities of greatness and beauty, he will be in a state of hope; if man considers qualities of God's power and anger, he will feel fear of God. The reasons for fear of God can be:

1- Fear of the results and consequences of the sins man has committed; sins make the soul deteriorate and become evil, and developed man cannot remain insensitive about that.

2- Fear of the fact that man may not have put the blessings and potentials God has given him to correct use.

3- Fear of the significance and glory of the meaning of the universe and man's existence in it.

4– Fear of God, i.e. realizing God's immense glory and His absolute dominance over the universe; such a realization can fill man with awe and intimidation.

5– Fear of God's great, divine position, which makes man realize how absolutely dependent he is upon God – the originator of the universe – and this makes man terrified of disobeying God.

Since man has extremely numerous and diverse aspects, and God's qualities are also endless, man can thus make contact with a divine quality with each of his mental aspects, and each contact will lead to a different mental phenomenon. For example, if man feels God's absolute dominance as the Creator of the universe, he will realize the glory of God. And since God is constantly dominant over the whole universe, man will always feel that God, the extreme witness and supervisor, watches his every move and behavior.

Such a feeling is itself a special mental phenomenon, and realizing the fact that God is the absolute just and has accurately calculated every single detail about the universe and all of man's deeds and words, man will acquire a feeling of how just and fair God is. Furthermore, when man realizes that God has created man to bestow him with kindness, and is affectionate and merciful toward man, and when man realizes God's brilliant beauty by means of intuition, he will have a feeling of high joy.

Is Religion a Personal Matter?

Some Western thinkers have regarded religion as a persona; spiritual state irrelevant to all elements of life.

We must say that mismanagement on behalf of churches and other places of worship has led to this kind of viewpoint about religion, which should, in fact, provide man with awareness of himself, which leads to awareness about the universe, and eventually development on the path of intelligible life. As Iqbal Lahouri says:

چیست دین؟ برخاستن از روی خاک تا که آگه گردد از خود جان پاک

(What is religion? It is rising from the earth – this world – so that you can be aware of your pure soul.)

If various educational systems used religion to develop the human character, such thoughts would have never arisen.

As we know, man needs to find answers to the six basic questions: Who am I? Where have I come from? Who am I with? Where have I come to? Where do I go from here? Why am I here? It is only religion that can provide him with the answers.

Those thinkers and intellectuals, who separate religion from man's life and try to confine it to something

personal, are in fact throwing man into countless aspects of nervous and spiritual retardation; such people would only think about God on Saturdays or Sundays, never taking God into consideration in any other parts of their lives.

The Origins of Defying Divine Commandments

The factors that make man disobey God and defy the worship God has obliged His subjects to carry out are:

1– Ignorance and incapability: Those who suffer from mental handicap do not know that God exists, and have no blame; how, on the other hand, can someone of sound brain and spirit see all the discipline and harmony in the universe and ignore its source?

2– Neglect toward God: Some people ignore the supreme level of divinity, for they are drowned in their lusts and desires.

3– An illusion of independence: Some people do not understand the necessity of having a relationship with God and obeying His orders, so they believe themselves to be independent. This is the most degraded form of conceit and selfishness.

If man is aware that God exists, if man realizes how great and glorious God is, and if man understands that without contact with God he can never reach the supreme aim of life, he will not avoid worshipping God.

Devotion

There are two kinds of devotion:

1– Devotion in a general meaning: Regarding a fact as innately desirable, whether the fact or reality has an aspect of merit or not, like power, wealth, ethnic characteristics, science and freedom. Such a form of devotion is not a value or a merit, and cannot develop the human character.

2– Devotion in a specific meaning: Regarding a fact that if achieved potentials and talents are activated as innately desirable.

Devotion in the first meaning inflates man's natural ego, and throws him into grief. It is meritorious devotion, however, that can bring about man's development and perfection.

The greatest of all meritorious form of devotion that is the base of other valuable kinds of devotion is devotion to God. When man is devoted to God, he is aware of what is proper and appropriate to man, and progresses toward gaining them.

In fact, if something is to be innately desirable to man, it must be a reality that can make all of man's

potentials flourish. It should be in accordance with man's sound logic, nature and his psychic observations about God.

Since complete devotion causes the true elixir of man's soul to flourish, there will be irreparable damage if such devotion is given to something other than God.

Devotion to God brings about being devoted to all realities and facts of merit and value. If man acquires a certain kind of knowledge with devotion for God, for instance, the knowledge will be innately desirable. Or, if man acts with justice in all aspects of his life with devotion to God, he will enjoy both the individual and social benefits of justice and its divine aspect, too.

The Characteristics of Valuable Devotion:

1– Value-based devotion is not compatible with selfishness or egotism, for no supreme reality can become innately desirable to man unless the natural self is moderated.

2– Like true love, devotion based on value and merit is the strongest factor of self-possession – a perfectionist human being's greatest ideal of all.

3– Value-based devotion provides man with tranquility. When man's soul is devoted to a supreme reality, he is also guiding himself toward the highest aim of life.

4– Devotion helps man concentrate his mental and psychic forces and guards him against baseless hallucinations and soul-damaging temptations.

5– Being devoted to a supreme reality makes man's attention to it change dramatically. Devotion for something makes all other facts and realities fade away.

6– Devotion has two values – an innate, dispositional value and a value as a means. Its innate, dispositional value involves “the desirability of devotion itself which purifies man's relationship with the desired truth of all contaminating factors and selfishness.”

Its value as a means, on the other hand, consists of the innate desirable that attracts the soul. The most valuable form of devotion is the one that attracts man toward God.

7– When man considers something as desirable, his entire character is attracted to it, and he accounts for and justifies his whole life based on it. Since devotion, as an innately desirable thing, makes man choose his path in life, man must make great effort to choose a reality as his goal that is really worth being devoted to.

8– Devotion is a bipolar mental development – it has innately external and innately internal poles. Its internal pole consists of man's tendency toward a reality that is considered as innately desirable. Its external pole consists of the reality that is innately desirable to man. Such a reality should be able to

activate all of man's potentials and aspects.

9- In value-based devotion man deals with everything logically.

One of the most fundamental characteristics of value-based devotion reveals itself when the desired reality shows its true face and attracts the soul; it's not that it cannot hear the disagreeing sounds or cannot see the protestors, or that it does not confront those who conflict with the reality. If it can, it defeats the protestors and destroys those who fight reality and righteousness; if it fails to do so, it continues on its way without the least attention or influence from them.

10- Having devotion in one's thoughts, deeds and speech purifies man's inside. Devotion in thoughts makes realities able to be received by man intuitively, and prevents the facts from being contaminated by hallucinations and illusions. Pure and devoted speech also keeps man away from deceitful words. Devoted deeds are the soul of deeds, and builds up man's existence on the path of intelligible life.

Having God in Mind

Remembering God at all times has various effects and benefits. Let us point out some of them:

1- Faith in God makes one always have God in mind. When one has faith in God, he sees nothing in the whole universe worth remembering and calling but God. When God infiltrates man's heart, there will be no more room for anything else at all.

2- Remembering God creates a special spiritual state in man which safeguards him from falling for worldly and materialistic affairs. This spiritual state makes man's life become meaningful and logical, his purely natural life will be replaced by intelligible life.

3- Remembering God makes man fresh, and keeps him safe from the sorrow of the disorders that occur in purely natural life. Likewise, it does not allow the relative joys of purely natural life spoil the secret of human character.

4- Remembering God removes all temptations, imaginations and mental illusions, safeguarding the human mind and soul from being baselessly exhausted and used up.

5- Remembering God adjusts man's mental and psychic activities, and his existence will illuminate. The tranquility that remembering God creates in man will balance his entire existence. As Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi) says:

این قدر گفتیم، باقی فکر کن فکر گر راکد بود، رو ذکر کن

ذکر آرد فکر را در اهتزاز ذکر را خورشید این افسرده ساز

(Now go and think about the rest, and if your thoughts lead nowhere, remember God and call out for him, for that will elevate your thoughts. It will be like a sun you're your thoughts are down and depressed.)

6- Remembering God prevents man's character from being decomposed into the scattered components of this world; instead, by means of realizing the rules governing the universe and gaining complete knowledge of it, man will find a certain tranquility, and feel that he is always close to God.

7- Remembering God makes God's will start to purify and illuminate man internally, and man's positive internal potentials will flourish.

8- Remembering God frees man from all his imagining and hallucinating, and makes him speak of things that he will really act upon. Remembering God leads to living and speaking realistically.

9- Remembering God is a path to reach the truth and benefit from man's internal treasures. Remembering God makes God reveal some realities and secrets to man as a reward for remembering Him.

10- Remembering God leads to the knowledge of God's glorious blessings. Deep thought about God's blessings guides man toward constant remembrance of and calling out for God.

11- Remembering God makes man never weaken in the battle on the boundary of life and death. Those who remember God in a battlefield never forget God's rules and Godly values.

Remembering God is the strongest builder of human nature. Calling God's name is a comprehensive book including all the chapters of mental and spiritual development and training, a divine trainer and teacher that accompanies man day and night.

The Conditions for Calling and Remembering God

Of course, this does not mean merely utterances from the mouth; saying the word without considering what it means is worthless. In other words, attention to the meaning is the essential preliminary.

Remembering God in one's heart also needs the attention of the soul.

- Man must remember God when his soul is eager to do so, not when he is forced to externally. And when an action becomes like a habit, it will be something compulsory, with little interference on behalf of man's free will. We must keep in mind that the habit of remembering and calling God should not be in a way that makes it deft man's free will and awareness.
- Man should act and behave in accordance with his remembering God. If someone says "God is great," he must not drown in selfishness, greed for power or wealth.
- Remembering God must be considered as the factor that activates man's heavenly soul, not a tool for

self-conceit. Man should not remember God in order to remove his frustrations over a monotonous life. It should not be the means for performing extraordinary acts either, like what ascetics do.

Divine Justice

The principles that make up our viewpoints on divine justice are:

- 1- The universe is orderly and harmonious. Otherwise, there would be no laws either, for laws are general theorems that arise out of the harmony and discipline in the world. We cannot understand the role of divine justice in the universe without accepting the existence of order, discipline and harmony.
- 2- The creatures in the world can be divided into two groups. First, creatures that are alive, and have a "self" (an ego) of their own, and second, creatures that are not alive, and submit to the flow of nature.
- 3- Order and harmony, where divine justice manifests itself, is different in the two mentioned groups of creatures. Something that applies to a living creature as a law may not be applicable to a non-living one. For instance, reproduction and avoiding unsuitable habitats is a law for living creatures, but for lifeless creatures it can be a violation of law and order.
- 4- Justice is equal to order and harmony for creatures that have a 'self.' When we come to harmony, law and orderliness for the universe (that has a 'self'), we are in fact speaking of justice.
- 5- When the human mind sees the universe, it sees the order and harmony it includes, but when it comes to creatures in the world, the concept of order and harmony fades, and concepts like joy and sorrow and justice and atrocity arise. Likewise, when discussing the issue of man and human relationships, we come to concepts such as right and wrong, good and evil, and justice and atrocity become deeper and clearer to us.

The more developed, deeper and more diluted the "self" (the ego) is, the more accurate and profound its imagination of justice and atrocity will be. A well-developed self will expect a higher level of justice from himself and others, and – at the highest level – from God, and if man were to picture justice himself and make it come true, it would be justice at its supreme level.

6- Each human being defines justice based on his/her own knowledge and tendencies. As Tolstoy says, "When a child is stung by a bee, it might think that bees live only to sting people; a beehive keeper, on the other hand, believes that bees live to gather honey, and to a poet, who enjoys watching bees on flowers, will see bees' mission as extracting nectar from flowers, and a botanist will call it fertilizing flowers. This example shows how diverse viewpoints can be. Man may look upon justice from various points of view, and reach diverse interpretations.

7- Normal people associate justice with natural tendencies, but developed human beings see the root of justice in ideal tendencies. People like Napoleon and Tamberlaine see divine order and justice in there

being nothing inhibiting their triumph and victory; however, developed human beings interpret justice not in regard to their own desires; they believe that the universe is based on order and harmony, and does not proceed in accordance with man's wishes. Thus, we must say that the more developed man is, and the deeper and more accurate his observations are, the more his view of justice will shine.

8- If man had abstract perception and had no sense of joy or sorrow, he would never think about justice, for then his mind would be like a mirror, reflecting everything equally; a human being's painful suffering would sound like the exquisitely beautiful bird singing. It is the feeling of pain and joy, the pleasure of joy and inconvenience of pain and sorrow that makes man see true justice in the fact that "everything, throughout all of life, be pleasant and good," and the utmost pain and atrocity be regarded as suffering from pain at one point of the life of living things.

9- Since joy and pain depends on a variety of changeable factors dominating the world of creatures, man assumes an average level of justice to use as his criterion for assessing justice and interpreting it. Such a viewpoint makes some people consider death – even after a lifetime of 10,000 years – as contradictory to divine justice. They expect all people to be as handsome as Joseph and as fair and just as Imam Ali, and be able to conquer like Napoleon and travel around the globe like Alexander. Such a state of mind shows how intensely playful the human mind is.

10- If man takes a clear look at the universe, he will see the order and harmony in it, but if he attempts to interpret the universe from merely a natural point of view, he will fail to see any divine justice in the universe. Thus, we should be true observers, and eliminate all of our natural tendencies. In other words, we must change our natural tendencies into ideal ones. If that happens, the bitternesses and inconveniences we suffer will not make us protest to divine justice.

This is why the great men of history have tolerated cruelty and torture, and never had the least doubt in God's justice. If Imam Ali had a natural viewpoint as his spiritual guidelines, even a thousandth of the amount of cruelty and torture he bore was enough to make him skeptical about the whole universe and all of mankind, and defy divine justice.

11- Man's big mistake is losing ideal tendency, which makes him fail to fulfill his duty entirely and eventually fall into doubt about divine justice. When man achieves the supreme 'self,' attaining development and perfection, he can find with internal intuition that divine laws call for him to relieve others from pain and suffering. When man is at the level of natural tendencies, however, he does not think of the relief of others; all he thinks about is himself. Thus, being content with what there is, and watching God's geometry – in which human lives play the most important part of its illustration – being deformed is in fact fighting against divine justice.

12- Man's endeavors and actions can be divided into two basic groups:

a) Things man does out of his free will.

b) Non-voluntary actions that occur without the supervision and dominance of the human character. These actions are like the actions and movements seen in animals and other living creatures. All of the voluntary or non-voluntary actions of man and other living creatures affect the universe. In other words, the general destiny or interpretation of the universe is the product of various actions and fixed and changeable affairs.

13- Elaborating on physical and mental inconveniences and defections: we should first discuss two important issues:

a) Imperfect life: The handicaps and disabilities seen in some people and the pain and suffering they undergo is regarded as imperfect life.

b) The flame of life going out: When some living creatures, or even human beings, are destroyed in the fight for survival, it is a sign of the fire of life being put out.

There are several points we must mention concerning the relationship these issues have with divine justice:

a) The source and origin of the universe has no need for favoritism or unfairness. So the inconveniences seen in the creatures in the universe cannot be due to that.

b) It cannot be imagined that God acts cruelly. "Because cruelty happens when the object cruelty is done upon is somehow beyond the ability of the oppressor to conquer; there must be some issue or law absent in the cruel one to make it commit the cruelty. On the other hand, we know that all creatures are absolutely under control and possession of God, with all their laws and affairs."

c) The base and foundation of life gives the same importance to the minimum level of life as it does to the highest level.

Serious defense of life indicates that the important thing is true life itself, not its time length. The absence of some of the characteristics or means of life does not make it bad. All creatures endeavor to make their life flourish and go on, and prevent any factor that tends to inhibit that. Wishing for death or tending toward suicide does not arise out of the origins of true life; it is despair and social problems that cause them. The flame of life being put out does not conflict with divine justice, for both the cruel and the oppressed ones' free will also has a part.

14- Feelings of evil, imperfection, and disorder in creation is due to man's limited thoughts and viewpoints; when discussing such imperfections we must always keep these three points in mind:

a) There is a difference between the universe and discovering the universe.

b) The order, harmony and discipline that governs the universe has not been established in accordance with man's wishes.

c) God's position is too great for us to be able to know about it completely.

The life-oriented viewpoint means that man's only criterion in determining the rules of the universe is considered his own wishes and desires; however, many of man's wishes and desires can never be fulfilled. In other words, when studying the imperfections of the universe, we use standards that pertain to our own observations and desires, and practical reasons can never confirm them.

Handicapped or disabled people – though having become disabled or handicapped due to natural reasons and causes – never feel hatred for life, for life is the incredible phenomenon that man will always want to continue, unless a mental or spiritual blow is delivered onto it.

I once visited a nursing home for deaf and mute people in Isfahan, Iran, in order to study their handicaps and disabilities. I arranged with the officials of the nursing home, who were dear friends of mine, that I watch and observe the children and young people there alone for a while, so that I could have a better chance of seeing how their mental and spiritual state was considering the handicap they also had.

The result was quite near to what I had expected – they did not feel any suffering or defection due to their deafness or muteness, and their behavior clearly showed that they were not dissatisfied with their lives. There was no indication of feeling disabled or imperfect in how they played, treated each other or even others. I also studied young people who were paralyzed or crippled. I was amazed to see that they had no sadness or depression when they were alone, or were playing. They looked exactly like other, normal young people. So, it is obvious that life is the astonishing, incredible reality that will go on trying to survive, even if it means mere existence – unless, of course, man's own soul delivers it a crippling blow.

The Rule of Kind Favors

There are several preliminary explanations on the rule of kind favors:

1– Creating man has no benefit for God, and avoids no harm from God, either; God is too great to need anything or anybody to help Him.

2– Humans have been created so that their character can be developed. In other words, God has set a perfect existence for man, and wants man to reach it.

3– Man is not perfect when he is born.

4– Man cannot achieve the desired perfection that is considered as his aim without endeavor.

5– Not all kinds of endeavor can guide man to perfection; the endeavor that is based upon conscience and reason, and is supported by divine sermons given by prophets can do that.

6– The above-mentioned principles can flow through two kinds of affairs:

a) Non-voluntary affairs: Affairs that influence man's fate although he can do nothing to change them, like being born, having certain instincts, having wisdom and conscience, hereditary backgrounds, social and geographical conditions, etc. These non-voluntary affairs are related to God's justice, for if we suppose that the aim of creating man (evolution and improving and developing the human character) is related to these non-voluntary affairs, there is no way except God's justice to adjust them.

b) Voluntary affairs: These affairs also influence man's fate. Non-voluntary affairs are related to God's justice, but these affairs are up to man himself.

7- Now we can present a definition of kindness: Kindness consists of a certain effect of God's justice that motivates man in the boundaries of lack of clarity, and can be voluntary or non-voluntary.

The Consequences of the Rule of Kind Favors

The following four conclusions can be made from the rule of kind favors:

- 1- All the divine knowledge man can gain comes from the rule of kind favors.
- 2- According to the rule of kind favors, there is a series of duties and instructions which must be fulfilled if the human character is to develop.
- 3- The necessity to appoint leaders arises from the rule of kind favors.
- 4- The acceptance of the overall opinion of jurisprudential scholars, which is one of the sources of jurisprudence, is also based upon the rule of kind favors, for the rule of kindness says God prevents the leaders of a school of thoughts from falling into error – when the scholars confer, there is either disagreement or agreement, and the leader is in one of these two groups.

The Relationship between God and His Creatures

Ever since a long time ago, the relationship between “the existence that has to be” and “the existence that can be” – the creator and the creature – has been subject to debate. Since man gets most of his philosophical and scientific input from nature, he cannot discover exactly the relationship between God and the universe. Most of the material at hand on the subject is also mere personal ideas or literary metaphors that satisfy just a few. As the famous Iranian poet Sheikh Mahmoud Shabestari says,

عدم آیینہ، عالم عکس و انسان چو چشم عکس در وی شخص پنہان

تو چشم عکسی و او نور دیده است بہ دیده دیده، را دیده کہ دیده است؟

جهان انسان شد و انسان جهانی از این پاکیزه‌تر نبود بیانی

(Absent is the mirror, and the universe is like a reflection. Someone is hidden in him, like the eye of the reflection. You are the eye of the reflection, and He is the light of the eyes; who has ever seen that true light with his/her eyes? Indeed, man becomes the universe, and the universe becomes man can it be worded any better than that.)

The universe being a picture of God in the mirror of oblivion is merely a metaphor, for oblivion is not a thing to be able to reflect the truth. Can infinity ever be reflected within finite components?

The relation we use in order to discover the relationship between God and the universe – the cause–and–effect relation – is not accurate. The law of causality is derived from things in this world, associating things with one another, but God cannot be compared to things found in nature. Normally, causes consist of a subject cause and also a material cause, whereas God, a subject cause, needs no material cause.

Things in this world occupy space and time in regard to one another, but God does not; His position is high above others. Thus, the concepts we conclude from the phenomena and effects in nature cannot be used to interpret God's relationship with the universe.

Man can see the relationship between God and nature by referring to his own self, his own nature, for though the human soul and body interact, they are not at all one of a kind. Likewise, although God created this world, He had no need for materiality. The human soul can invent imaginations that are not comparable with it at all.

The Relationship between God and His Creatures in the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an mentions different forms of relationships between God and the universe. We can categorize them into ten groups:

1– Surrounding: The Qur'an believes that God surrounds and dominates everything, material or abstract.

و كان الله بكل شى محيطا

“And God encompasses everything.”(4: 126)

God dominates and surrounds everything, both in knowledge and in existence, like the human soul which controls its entire actions.

2– Establishing: The universe has its strength and foundation from God. God has established the universe, like man's existence is founded upon his soul.

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم

“God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting.” (2:255)

3– Accompaniment: God is with all creatures. This does not mean physically near; it is a relationship of soul with physique, far beyond time and place.

و هو معكم اينما كنتم

“He is with you, wherever you are.” (20: 111)

4– Creation and Production: Various verses in the Qur’an refer to this form of relation:

لا اله هو خالق كل شى فاعبدوه

“That then is God your Lord; there is no God but He, the creator of everything. So serve Him.” (6: 102)

5– Absolute Possession: Here, possession does not mean conventional or credit-based ownership; we are referring to true possession. God's possession of creatures refers to the facts that God gave them their existence. It is similar to the relationship between the intellect and its creations.

6– Protection: This is one of the most important issues in theology, for normally people think that God has created everything and then left them on their own, whereas God is always protective of the universe and everything in it.

ان ربي على كل شى حفيظ

“Verily, my Creator and Nurturer is the Protector over all things.” (11:57)

“I believe God is the protector and keeper of laws,” Einstein has said.

As we know, laws have no observable reality in the world; there is order and harmony in the external world, and from that laws are abstracted. It is God's will that makes events continue in a fixed, orderly fashion.

7– Creation and Nurture: Over 1000 verses in the Qur’an emphasize this form of relationship.

و هو رب كل شى

“And He is the Creator–Nurturer of everything.” (6:64)

According to this relationship, the creator – or nurturer – constantly dominates and takes care of its creations.

8– Worship: Everything worships God.

ان كل من فى السموات و الارض الا اتى الرحمن عبدا

“Nothing is there in the heavens and earth but it comes to the All-merciful as a servant. “ (19:93)

Here, worship means complete submission of all creatures to God's will.

9– Divinity: God is the absolute dominant upon all levels and basics of the universe.

فسبحان الذى بيده ملكوت كل شى و اليه ترجعون

“So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything, and unto whom you shall be returned.” (36:83)

Here, “malakoot” in this verse refers to the supernatural picture of all things, for the human “ego” has two faces:

a) The observable, created face

b) The supernatural face

This face of the universe describes the relationship between divine absolute ownership and the supernatural face, nullifying the thoughts of some philosophers who believe that God has no control or dominance over the fundamentals of the universe.

10– Light: As the Holy Qur’an says:

الله نور السموات و الارض

“God is the light of the heavens and the earth.”(24:35)

This verse explains both the existence of God and God's dominance and control over the whole universe. God exists in the universe, illuminating it without becoming connected or united with it, just like light which penetrates into transparent things without becoming part of them.

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