

Lesson 22: The Proofs of Divine Justice and Wisdom

Philosophers and theologians have presented numerous proofs for the Divine justice and wisdom, and we shall deal with them in this lesson.

1. The Proof of Essential Necessity

Some theologians have explained the Divine Attributes on the basis of “essential necessity” (*wujūb bi dh-dhāt*) and the first theological text in which this method has been used for the first time was the book *Al-Yāqūt fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām* written by Abū Isḥāq Nawbakht (a theologian of the fourth century AH).¹ After him, this method has been used in a more lucid and extensive manner in the treatise *Tajrīd al-‘Itiqād* by Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ḥāsānī (died 672 AH). One of the Attributes which he has derived from the principle of “essential necessity” is wisdom (*‘ikmah*).²

In light of this proof, the Necessary Being in essence has all the existential perfections, and justice and wisdom are among these existential perfections. God, therefore, is All-just and All-wise. This proof establishes all the manifestations and expressions of the Divine justice and wisdom.

2. The Proof of Special Attention (‘inḡyah)

In the jargon of Muslim philosophers, *‘inḡyah* (special attention) means God’s foreknowledge of the best order and that essential knowledge is the source of materialization of the beings, and this system is consistent with the pleasure (*riḡā*)³ of God. The *‘inḡyah* of God, therefore, includes three things:

1. The Divine Essence’s knowledge of the system of being which is the best and complete system;
2. The Divine Essence as the cause (*‘illah*) of materialization of the best system of existence; and
3. The Divine Essence’s pleasure for the materialization of the best system.

These three things refer to the very Essence of God. As a result, the system of being has been realized on the basis of knowledge of the Divine Essence and His eternal special attention (*‘in‘ayah*). Since the conceptual system of the universe is the best system and its objective system is also the manifestation and expression of the same conceptual system, its objective system must also be the best system, and this is the justice and wisdom in the Divine Action.⁴

وَالْكُلُّ مِنْ نِظَامِهِ الْكَيَانِي يَنْشَأُ مِنْ نِظَامِهِ الرَّبَّانِي

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Although this proof has been presented by philosophers in a bid to prove justice and wisdom in the cosmic actions of God, its criterion or foundation also includes legislative and retributory justice. This is because legislation and retribution are also an Action of God and will be materialized on the basis of God’s essential and eternal knowledge. The proof of special attention, therefore, encompasses all kinds and manifestations of the Divine justice and wisdom.

3. The Omniscience and Self-sufficiency of God

The most popular proof for the Divine justice and wisdom presented by the theologians is based upon the absolute knowledge and self-sufficiency of God. In this regard, Q^{٤٤٤} ‘Abd al-Jabb^{٤٤٤} al-Mu‘tazil^٤ has said:

إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى عَالِمٌ بِقُبْحِ الْقَبِيحِ، وَمُسْتَعْنٍ عَنْهُ، وَعَالِمٌ بِاسْتِعْنَائِهِ عَنْهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ هَذِهِ حَالُهُ لَا يَخْتَارُ الْقَبِيحَ بِوَجْهِهِ مِنَ
الْوُجُوهِ.

That is to say, “God, the Exalted, knows the evil of the evil [act] and He has no need of doing it, and He is also aware of His needlessness to it. And anyone who has such a trait will never commit an evil act.”⁶

The following words of Khw^٤ajah Na^{٤٤٤} al-D^{٤٤٤} al-^{٤٤٤} are also an expression of this proof:

وَاسْتِعْنَاؤُهُ وَعِلْمُهُ يَدُلُّانِ عَلَى إِنْتِفَاءِ الْقُبْحِ عَنْ أَفْعَالِهِ تَعَالَى.

“And His self-sufficiency and knowledge show the absence of evil in the actions of the Exalted One.”⁷

The initial point of this proof, which is God’s knowledge and self-sufficiency, has been established in our previous discussions and its second initial point is also one of the rationally self-evident facts, as testified by experiences concerning human activities.

Criminological studies show that unwarranted acts usually originate from emotional, economic, social, and similar needs, just as in other cases also, unawareness of the evil and unwarranted acts is the cause of committing such acts. It may possibly be said that in any condition that the human being is assumed to be in need, even the most learned of people and the most pious of them such that he would never commit any indecent act, it is not because he is aware of the indecency of the act or he is not in need of it, but rather it is because he is in need of abstaining from it; that is, abstaining from indecency is a source of his spiritual perfection and earns the good pleasure of God.

In other words, need in the human being is something relative whereas God is absolutely self-sufficient. Therefore, one cannot confirm the above argument for the human being on the discourses related to criminology.

In principle, the abovementioned argument cannot serve as a proof because there is no way of proving that knowledge and self-sufficiency are the sole cause of refraining from indecency, and to claim that this point is rationally self-evident is also doubtful.

The reply to this is that even if there is only one instance when a person does something good only for the sake of its being good and refrains from going bad solely because of its evil, it is sufficient as evidence and such an assumption regarding the human being is not an impossible assumption. It is because although he is essentially needy and perfection-seeker, no one can imagine that without paying attention to the material or non-material benefits of a good deed, he would do it simply because it is desirable, and without paying attention to the material or non-material harm of a bad deed, he would refrain from doing it simply because it is undesirable.

Such an assumption is not essentially impossible. Whenever such an assumption regarding the human being is accepted, it will be accepted through the primary way regarding God.

Qﷲﷲﷲ ‘Abd al-Jabbār has mentioned this objection in this way: this argument is based upon the notion that the human being is absolutely self-sufficient such that he could make a judgment about God on the same basis. This is while the human being can never be absolutely sufficient. Instead, the truth of the matter is that whenever he is situated between telling the truth or a lie while having equal benefit to him, undoubtedly he will not tell a lie.

This point shows that refraining from telling a lie in the said example has no reason except that once a person knows the evil of an act and he is not in need of doing it, he will not commit it, because in the said example, his need can also be served by telling the truth. And whenever relative self-sufficiency in

a person hinders him from committing indecency, the absolute self-sufficiency in God through the primary way will hinder the commission of indecency.[8](#)

4. The Lack of Claimant and the Existence of *ʿaḥrif*

The origination of an action from a free agent depends on the existence of a motive (*dʿawāʿ*) and the absence of dissuasion (*ʿaḥrif*). Meanwhile, there is no motive in God to do indecency, because He knows its evil and is also needless of it. In other words, God's self-sufficiency and knowledge hinder and hold back the materialization of the motive for the commission of an act of indecency, and the commission of an action by a free agent is impossible without a motive. As such, origination of indecency from God is impossible.[9](#)

This proof is actually a paraphrase of the third proof and its keystone is that since God is aware of the evil of an indecent act and He is not in need of doing so, the motive for doing so will not be materialized in God, and as a result, for an indecent act to originate from God will be impossible.[10](#)

Objection:

This explanation is based on the assumption that God is an Agent by intention (*fʿil bi ʿl-qaḍ* or *fʿil bi ʿd-dʿawāʿ*), as the theologians so believe. As proved in Islamic philosophy, however, God is not an Agent by intention because this means that the essence of the agent and his knowledge of the action are not enough for the materialization of the action; it rather depends on a motive which is apart from the essence and any motive apart from the essence is not applicable to God. God is the Agent by attention (*fʿil bi ʿl-ʿinʿayah*) or manifestation (*fʿil bi ʿt-tajallī*), and not agent by intention.[11](#)

Reply:

The above evidence can also be expressed on the basis of the Agent by attention or manifestation in this manner: God is neither in need of a motive, nor ignorance has any place in Him. He is not an agent by intention as such a motive does not exist in Him. In fact, since God is not an agent by intention, and at the same time, He is immune from ignorance and need. Therefore, God is immune from any indecent act.

5. Signs of the Divine Justice and Wisdom in Nature

The ontological justice and wisdom of God can also be proved by means of studying the world of nature, for the signs of stability and firmness, as well as innate goodness and beauty are evident in the system of nature.

Since this method is based upon sensory perception and experience, understanding it is easier for the human being. For this reason, this has been emphasized in the Holy Qur'an and traditions. Now, we will mention some examples of pertinent verses and traditions. Then we will also quote the statements of

some scholars.

﴿ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَافُتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ * ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ
﴿ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِنًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ ﴾

“He created seven heavens in layers. You do not see any discordance in the creation of the All-beneficent. Look again! Do you see any flaw? Look again, once more. Your look will return to you humbled and weary.”[12](#)

Raghib al-Isfahani has said:

الْتَفَافُوتُ الْإِخْتِلَافُ فِي الْأَوْصَافِ كَأَنَّهُ يُفَوِّتُ وَصَفَ أَحَدَهُمَا الْأَخْرَ، أَوْ وَصَفَ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا الْأَخْرَ.

Exegetes (*mufasssirin*) have interpreted this absence of discordance in the verse to mean harmony and concordance of the creatures in accord and order.[13](#)

﴿ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ
﴿ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

“Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail at sea with profit to men, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky—with which He revives the earth after its death, and scatters therein every kind of animal—and the changing of the winds, and the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth, are surely signs for a people who apply reason.”[14](#)

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ
﴿ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

“It is He who has spread out the earth and set in it firm mountains and streams, and of every fruit He has made in it two kinds. He draws the night’s cover over the day. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect.”[15](#)

There are many such verses, and those cited above are sufficient for our purpose. Now, we will also cite some examples of pertinent traditions:

Imam ‘Alī has said:

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَىٰ صَغِيرٍ مَّا خَلَقَ كَيْفَ أَحْكَمَ خَلْقَهُ وَاتَّقَنَ تَرْكِيبَهُ وَفَلَقَ لَهُ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَسَوَّىٰ لَهُ الْعَظْمَ وَ
الْبَشَرَ أَنْظُرُوا إِلَى النَّمْلَةِ فِي صِغَرِ جُثَّتِهَا وَ لَطَافَةِ هَيْئَتِهَا لَا تَكَادُ تُتَالُ بِلِحْظِ الْبَصَرِ وَلَا بِمُسْتَدْرَكِ الْفِكْرِ كَيْفَ دَبَّتْ
عَلَىٰ أَرْضِهَا وَ صَبَّتْ عَلَىٰ رِزْقِهَا تَنْقُلُ الْحَبَّةَ إِلَىٰ جُحْرِهَا وَ تُعِدُّهَا فِي مُسْتَقَرِّهَا تَجْمَعُ فِي حَرِّهَا لِبرِدِهَا وَ فِي وَرْدِهَا
لِصَدْرِهَا.

“Do they not see the small things He has created, how He strengthened their system and opened for them hearing and sight and made for them bones and skins? Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination – how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness.”[16](#)

Elsewhere, the Imām (‘a) has said:

فَأَقَامَ مِنَ الْأَشْيَاءِ أَوْدَهَا، وَنَهَجَ حُدُودَهَا، وَلَاعَمَ بِقُدْرَتِهِ بَيْنَ مُتَضَادِّهَا، وَوَصَلَ أَسْبَابَ قَرَائِنِهَا... بِدَايَا خَلَائِقِ أَحْكَمَ
صُنْعُهَا، وَفَطَرَهَا عَلَىٰ مَا أَرَادَ وَابْتَدَعَهَا!

“So He straightened the curves of the things and fixed their limits. With His power He created coherence in their contradictory parts and joined together the factors of similarity... All this is new creation. He made them firm and shaped them accordingly as He wished and invented them.”[17](#)

In the same sermon, the Imām (‘a) has also said:

وَأَرَانَا مِنْ مَلَكُوتِ قُدْرَتِهِ، وَعَجَائِبِ مَا نَطَقَتْ بِهِ آثَارُ حِكْمَتِهِ.

“He showed us the realm of His Might, and such wonders which speak of His Wisdom.”[18](#)

In other places, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) has pointed out the signs of God’s wisdom in the creation of the bat, saying thus:

وَمِنْ لَطَائِفِ صُنْعَتِهِ، وَعَجَائِبِ خَلْقَتِهِ، مَا أَرَانَا مِنْ غَوَامِضِ الْحِكْمَةِ فِي هَذِهِ الْخَفَافِشِ.

“An example of His delicate production, wonderful creation and deep sagacity which He has shown us is found in these bats.”[19](#)

[Design and Perfection as Viewed by Scientists and Scholars](#)

Through scientific studies and investigations, mankind has been able today to obtain considerable

amount of information about the world of nature and to reveal many instances of spectacular perfection and design in the book of nature. For this reason, it can be said that “Science is the harbinger of faith and the vanguard of the faithful.” Lord Kelvin,²⁰ a great physicist in the world, has left these immortal words: “If you consider science very well, it will give you no option but to have faith in God.”²¹

Max Planck,²² a scientist who had knowledge of some secrets of the atom, said, “Religion and natural sciences jointly fight against doubt, atheism and superstition, and their stimulator has been always God.”²³

Design in the Plant Kingdom

The materials used for growing plants are taken from the air and soil, and fertile soil is composed of mineral substances which have great amount of organic materials which come from the remnants of the primary plants and animals... The existence of water, air, light, and chemical elements contributes as a whole in the growth of a plant, but this is not enough. In fact, that which makes the growth of plant possible is a mysterious energy which is hidden in the seed and begins to act at the appropriate time. This energy's action begins with a somehow complex yet harmonious interaction.

At the initial stage, two tiny cells of seed, each of which consisting of different elements and having diverse functions, jointly begin to work but afterward, each of them will take its own way to growth and development. The fruit of every seed which falls onto the ground and grows is exactly similar to that of the plant from which the seed originates. If a clear-sighted eye takes a look at these functions and processes of growth and development of the seed, a world of beauty, harmony, design, and order can be observed.

This design and order can also be observed in tall plants and giant trees, and all plants – regardless of difference in outward forms – have common functions. For example, one of them is that of a combination of light through whose radiance the plants acquire food for themselves from carbonic acid light and water. Another is the structure and function of the root, stem, leaf, and flower. A third example is the reaction of plants in facing external instigations. For instance, they will become soft when exposed to light, or they will fade and become dry when they are deprived of light and oxygen. These are laws which regulate the plant kingdom.²⁴

Factors that Contribute to the Suitability of the Earth for Living

By enumerating the factors that contribute to the suitability of the earth for living, Frank Allen,²⁵ a bio-physicist professor, has proved the baselessness of the notion of accident in the emergence of the universe. The said conditions are as follows:

1. The earth is a planet which is freely in equilibrium in the outerspace and rotates daily in its own orbit, thereby giving rise to the day and night. At the same time, it revolves around the sun annually. These

movements cause the maintenance of equilibrium and stability in the earth's axis in the outerspace...

2. The atmosphere which consists of gases that protect the earth's surface is so thick and dense (approximately 800 kilometers) that it could keep the earth safe from the deadly falling of twenty million meteorites daily with a speed of approximately fifty kilometers per second.

3. Moreover, the atmosphere keeps the temperature of the earth's surface suitable for life, and it also transfers very essential amount of water and water vapor from the oceans to the arid parts of the earth. Without this, all the continents would have turned into deserts not suitable for living. As such, it must be said that the oceans and the atmosphere are considered flywheels for the earth.

4. The remarkable properties of water have a significant role in making life possible in oceans, seas and rivers during long winters. One of these properties is the ability to draw large amounts of oxygen in low temperature degrees. Another is that its density in four degrees of temperature is freezing point, and for this reason, the water at the bottom of the oceans and rivers remains liquid. The third [property] is that the density of snow is less than that of water and thus it remains on the surface of the water and does not sink. The fourth [property] is that once the water becomes solid, it emits a large amount of heat.

5. The soil in itself has special mineral elements which are absorbed by the plants and turn into edible materials needed by the animals.

6. The existence of metals just beneath the earth's surface has made possible the various arts which are products of human civilizations.

7. Regarding the size of the earth, if it were as big as the moon and its diameter were only one-fourth of its present diameter, the gravitational force would have been sufficient to keep its waters and air on it and its temperature would have fatally done up. If our planet were only as big as the sun while it could have still kept its density, the gravitational force would have been 150 times stronger, the atmosphere's altitude would have been ten kilometers lower, boiling of water would have been impossible, the air pressure would have reached approximately 150 kilograms per square centimeter, a kilogram of worms would have weighed 150 kilograms, and the human organ would have become as small of that of a squirrel.

8. Concerning the distance of the earth from the sun, if the earth's distance from the sun were two times its present distance, its heat that reaches the earth would have tremendously decreased, the speed of the earth movement along its orbit would have been half, the length of winter would have doubled, and therefore, all living creatures would have been frozen.

If the earth's distance from the sun were half [the present distance], the temperature would have been four times, the speed of movement along its orbit would have been doubled, and the length of seasons would have been half [if ever it were possible to have any change in season] and the earth would have been in burning temperature in which life will be impossible.[26](#)

These are examples of spectacular greatness, wonderful design and exact laws that govern the world of nature. Many things have been said about these and many examples of them have been presented in the book *Ithbāt-e Wujūd-e Khudā* (*The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*). In order to make the discussion brief, we will refrain from mentioning those examples here. For the fair-minded and wise person, what have been said so far, nay even less than these, are enough for him to constitute a book of knowledge about the Origin of creation.

برگ درختان سبز در نظر هوشیار هر ورقش دفترست معرفت کردگار

For the conscious, each leaf of the green trees

Is a book of knowledge about the Creator.

Review Questions

1. State the first proof of the justice of God.
2. State the proof of special attention (*inʿiyah*) about the justice of God.
3. State the third proof of the justice of God.
4. Write down the fourth proof of the justice of God.
5. Write down the objection to the third proof of the justice of God, and the refutation to it.
6. Write down the objection to the fourth proof and the refutation to it.
7. How can the cosmic justice and wisdom of God be proved?

1. Al-Yūqūʿāt fī ʿIlm al-Kalām, p. 43.

2. Kashf al-Murād, station (maqāʿad) 3, chap. 2.

3. What is meant by the pleasure of the Essence of God toward the best system of existence is that the system of being is the Divine Action (fiʿl-e ilāhī), and the Action has the perfection of amenity and harmony with its Agent (fiʿil). Al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah, vol. 7, pp. 56–57, footnote provided by ʿAllamah al-ʿAbabʿābī.

4. Ibn Sīnā, Sharḥ Ishrāqī, vol. 3, p. 318; ʿAdr al-Mutaʿallihīn, Al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah, vol. 7, pp. 56–57.

5. ʿAkḥam Sabziwārī, Sharḥ-e Manḥamah, “Ghurur fī Marʿtib ʿIlmahu Taʿālī.”

6. Sharḥ al-Uḥḍ al-Khamsah, p. 203.

7. Kashf al-Murād, station (maqāʿad) 3, chap. 3.

8. Sharḥ al-Uḥḍ al-Khamsah, pp. 205–206.

9. Qawāʿid al-Murād fī ʿIlm al-Kalām, pp. 111–112.

10. ʿAllamah al-ʿIllī has also considered it as distinct from the previous proof. See Nahj al-ʿAqq wa Kashf al-ʿIdq, p. 85.

11. Al-Ilḥiyāt ʿalā Hadī ʿl-Kitāb wa ʿs-Sunnah wa ʿl-ʿAql, vol. 1, p. 288.

12. Sūrat al-Mulk 67:3–4.

13. Al-Mʿzẓn fī Tafsīr al-Qurʿān, vol. 19, p. 350.

14. Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:164. For the interpretation of this verse, see Al-Mʿzẓn fī Tafsīr al-Qurʿān, vol. 1, pp. 3, 6.

- [15.](#) [Sūrat al-Ra'd 13:3.](#)
- [16.](#) [Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 185.](#)
- [17.](#) [Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 91.](#)
- [18.](#) [Ibid.](#)
- [19.](#) [Ibid., Sermon 155.](#)
- [20.](#) [Lord Kelvin, more fully William Thomson, 1st Baron Kelvin \(1824 – 1907\): a Belfast-born British mathematical physicist and engineer who is widely known for determining the correct value of absolute zero as approx. -273 Celsius. \[Trans.\]](#)
- [21.](#) [John Clove Monsma \(ed.\), Ithbāt-e Wujūd-e Khudā \(The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe\), trans. Aḥmad Ḥurām, 4th ed., p. 39.](#)
- [22.](#) [Max Karl Ernst Ludwig Planck \(1858–1947\): a German physicist, father of quantum physics, and winner of the 1918 Nobel Prize for physics. \[Trans.\]](#)
- [23.](#) [Ithbāt-e Wujūd-e Khudā \(The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe\), p. 286.](#)
- [24.](#) [Ibid., pp. 228–230.](#)
- [25.](#) [John “Jack” Frank Allen \(1908–2001\): a Canadian-born physicist who discovered, along with Pyotr Leonidovich Kapitsa and Don Misener, the superfluid phase of matter in 1937 using liquid helium in the Royal Society Mond Laboratory in Cambridge, England. \[Trans.\]](#)
- [26.](#) [Ithbāt-e Wujūd-e Khudā \(The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe\), pp. 19–22.](#)

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