

Lesson 7: The Finiteness of the Chain of Causality

The materialists may insist obstinately on denying the truth and put forward another specious argument. They may say, "We do not cut off the chain of causality but, on the contrary, perpetuate it indefinitely; we defend the principle of the infinite nature of the causative link."

In that case, they should be answered as follows: To analyze the world of creation in this manner rests on the supposition of a chain of causes and effects and the infinite unfolding of a succession of causes. However, since each cause is also an effect, it lacks being in its own essence; it is unable to partake of existence apart from the cause superior and precedent to it.

So how did each part of the chain, which is dominated by neediness from one end to another, emerge from non-being? The existence of each part of the chain manifests inadequacy, impotence, and origination in time; whence did its existence arise? How can great and complex beings emerge from infinite joinings of nonbeing? Does life gush forth from the union of the numerous factors that bring about death?

However far this infinite chain is prolonged, it will still have the attributes of neediness, dependency, and origination in time. A chain from the very nature of which autonomy and freedom from need do not arise can never put on the garment of being until it connects with one who is in his essence absolutely free of need— with a being who possesses the attributes of divinity and who is only a cause and not an effect.

Without the existence of such an unconditional being, the source of all causes and the foundation of all existence, the order of creation cannot be explained.

Suppose that at the war front, a column of soldiers intends to attack the enemy but none of them is ready to begin the battle by lunging into the heart of the enemy army. Whoever is given the order to do so replies: "I will not attack until so—and-so beings to fight." Every single soldier repeats the same thing; there is no one unconditionally ready to begin the attack.

Under such conditions will the attack ever take place? Of course not, because everyone's fighting is conditional on that of someone else. It is obvious that a whole series of conditional attacks will not take place without the fulfillment of the condition, something impossible under the circumstances, and, as a result, the attack will not take place.

If we continue the chain of cause and effect indefinitely, the existence of each link in the chain will be conditional on that of the preceding link, which, in turn, will be conditional on the existence of the link preceding it. It is as if each link in the chain of causality were to proclaim loudly from the depths of its being: "I shall not don the garment of existence until that other one has set foot on the plain of being." Each link depends on a condition that has not been fulfilled, and each one is, therefore, barred from enjoying the blessing of existence.

Since we see the whole of the universe to be surging with different forms of being, there must exist in the world a cause that is not an effect, a condition that is not subject to a condition; otherwise the surface of the world would not be this thickly covered with phenomena.

That primary cause is one who, in his essence, is free of all need, who can dispense with all the different aspects of existence, and who is able to bring forth the most wondrous phenomena and the most original manifestations. He is a creator who plans all of this and then puts it into effect, who joins all of creation to a temporal mechanism, who constantly scatters the jewel of existence over the world, and who impels the great panorama of creation forward to fulfil the purposes of the order of being.

By making the world non-created and eternal, the materialists try to disprove the world's lasting need for a creator and thereby to bestow independent existence on the world. Their method, however, does not yield satisfactory results.

The materialist imagine that the world needs a creator only at the initial moment of creation; once the need is met, God and the world are independent of each other and have no links with each other. As a consequence of this belief, the materialist proceed to deny even that initial moment of need, and by rejecting the idea of a beginning for creation, they imagine they have solved the problem of God and creation and liberated the world of need for a creator.

This is because they imagine the need of the world to be temporary and passing, whereas the need is inherent in the essence of the world—the world is nothing but motion, a limited and dependent form of motion.

Each moment is, in fact, a beginning of creation; every instant, each atom in the world is engaged in origination. It follows that the whole of which the atoms are a part has similarly originated in time; it does not have an ipseity independent of that of the atoms composing it.

So the world still has the same need for a creator that it had at the moment when creation began. Even supposing the world to be eternal, it would still not enjoy autonomy of existence.

The Answer of Science to the Thesis of the Eternity of the World

Just as man gradually loses his faculties with the passage of time so that one day the lamp of his life is extinguished, so, too, the universe is constantly advancing toward collapse and dissolution. For the energies existing in the world are gradually becoming dulled; atoms become energy, and active energy becomes inactive and motionless.

Once the atoms are uniformly and equally divided, nothing remains but absolute silence and immobility. It is, therefore, impossible to regard matter as the eternal essence or substance of being, and there is no choice but to regard the world as created.

The second principle of thermodynamics, entropy or the decline of thermal energy, teaches us that although we cannot fix a date for the appearance of the world, the world certainly did have a beginning. The heat in the world is gradually decreasing and falling, like a piece of molten iron that gradually diffuses its heat in the air until finally the heat of the iron will be identical with that of the objects and the air surrounding it.

If there were no beginning or point of departure for the world, all the existing atoms would have dissolved and been transformed into energy an infinite number of years ago. In the course of a very long past, the heat of the world would have come to an end, for matter, in the course of its successive and continuous transformation, is transformed into perishable energies. It is not possible for all the energy dispersed to be transformed anew into matter and mass comfortable to the world of being.

In accordance with the principle just mentioned, once usable energy is exhausted, chemical action and reaction can no longer take place. But given that chemical action and reaction do take place that life is possible on the earth, and that a huge body like the sun is divisible each day and night into three hundred thousand million tons, it is clear that the world has originated in time.

The death of planets and stars, the disappearance of suns, is a proof of death and mutation in the existing order; they show that the world is advancing towards non-being and an inevitable conclusion.

We see, then, that the natural sciences have expelled matter from the stronghold of eternity. Science not only proves the creation of the world but also bears witness that the world came into existence at a given time.

The world at the time of its birth stood in need of a preternatural force, for at the beginning, all things were formless and undifferentiated. It was necessary for some primordial spark of motion and life to alight on the world of nature. How could an environment devoid of all active energy, characterized by absolute silence and formlessness, serve as the origin of motion and life?

Mechanics tells us that a motionless body is always motionless unless it becomes subject to a force external to itself. This law represents an inviolable principle in our material world, and we cannot,

therefore, believe in a theory of probability or accident. Not a single motionless body has entered in motion up to now without being subject to an external force.

So, based on this mechanical principle, a force must exist which being other than the world of matter, creates that world and imparts it with energy so that it takes shapes, differentiates itself, and acquires various aspects.

Frank Allen, an outstanding scientific personality, proposes the following interesting argument in favor of the creation of the world by God: "Many people have tried to demonstrate that the material world does not need a creator. What is above all doubt is that the world does exist, and four explanations can be proposed for its origin.

"The first is that despite what we have just said, we regard the world as a mere dream and illusion. The second is that it has emerged from non-being entirely of itself. The third is that the world did not have a beginning and that it has existed eternally. The fourth is that the world has been created.

"The first hypothesis depends on our accepting that there is, in reality, no problem to be solved apart from the metaphysical problem of man's awareness of self, which can also be dismissed as a dream, a fantasy, an illusion. It is possible that someone might say that imaginary railroad trains, full of imaginary passengers, are crossing non-existent rivers over immaterial bridges.

"The second hypothesis, that the world of matter and energy came into being entirely of itself, is as meaningless and absurd as the first; it is not even worth considering in discussing.

"The third hypothesis, that the world has always existed, has one element in common with the concept of creation, for either lifeless matter and the energy intermingled with it or a creator have always existed. Neither attribution of eternity presents any particular problem in itself. However, thermodynamics has proven that the world is advancing toward a state in which the heat of all bodies will be at a similarly low degree and usable energy will no longer be available. Life will then become impossible.

"If the world had no beginning and existed from all eternity, such a state of death and lifelessness would already have occurred. The brilliant warm sun, the stars and the earth full of life bear faithful witness to the world having originated in time; a particular moment in time marked the beginning of creation. The world, then, cannot be other than created; it must have been a supreme, primordial cause, an eternal, omniscient and omnipotent creator that brought the world into being."¹

If man thinks deeply a little and reflects on reality with broadness of vision, he will understand that faced with the vast geographic dimensions of existence and the need in some way to comprehend them, he can hardly regard his own capacity as adequate to the task. The knowledge of the system of creation accumulated by man through his untiring efforts is next to nothing. Although science has taken great

steps forward, there is an utter disparity between man, what man has learned, and what he still does not know.

As far as those periods of the past are concerned that are shrouded in total darkness, for all we know, thousands or even millions of human species superior to the present one may have existed. Such species may yet come into being in the future.

What is called science by the science-worshippers of the present age and regarded by them as equivalent to the sum total of reality, is simply a collection of laws applicable to a single dimension of the world. The result of all human effort and experimentation is a body of knowledge concerning a minute bright dot comparable to the dim light of a candle-surrounded by a dark night enveloping a huge desert of indefinite extent.

If we turn back millions of years, the dust of obscurity will cover our path as one emphatic indication of man's weakness and ignorance when confronted with the grandeur and vastness of nature.

It may be that the period in which man has existed is nothing more than an instant in the life of the world; it is certain that there was once a dark ocean of non-being in which there was no trace of man. In short, we know very little of the beginning of our journey and nothing of its future.

At the same time, it is impossible to believe that the conditions necessary for life exist exclusively on this tiny planet. Many scientists today regard the sphere of life as extremely vast and broad; they present countless millions of planets to our gaze and we look upon them by various means. But what we are thus enabled to see is nothing more than the field of vision of an ant when compared with the vastness of the universe.

Describing an imaginary journey to the world of infinity, Camille Flammarion, the famous scientist, says the following in his book on astronomy: "We continue to advance for a thousand years, for ten thousand years, for a hundred thousand years, at the same speed, steadily, without slowing down our vehicle, constantly moving forward along a straight line. We advance at a speed of three hundred thousand kilometers a second. Do we imagine that after travelling at that speed for a million years we will have reached the limits of the visible world?"

"No, there are further dark, vast spaces that must be traversed, and there, too, new stars are visible at the limit of the heavens. We advance toward them, but will we ever reach them?"

"More millions of years; more fresh discoveries; more splendor and grandeur; more new worlds and universes; more new beings and entities-will they never end? The horizon never closes; the heavens never bar our path; continual space, continual void. Where are we? What is the path we have followed? We are still in the middle of a dot-the center of the circle is everywhere, its circumference nowhere to be seen.

"Such is the infinite world that lies open before us, and the study of which has barely begun. We have seen nothing, and we turn back in fear, collapsing in exhaustion from this fruitless journey. But where are we to fall? We can fall for an eternity into unending whirlpools, the bottom of which we never reach, just as we cannot reach their summit.

North becomes south; there is neither East nor West, neither up nor down, neither left nor right. In whatever direction we look, we see infinity, and within this endless expanse, our world is nothing more than a small island in a great archipelago spread out across an unending ocean. The entire life of humanity, for all the pride man takes in his political and religious history, or even the whole life of our planet with all of its splendor, is like the dream of a fleeting moment.

"If it were desired to write out again all the works of research penned by millions of scholars in millions of books, the ink required for the task would not exceed the capacity of a small tanker. But to describe and arrange in orderly fashion the forms of all existent things upon earth and in the heavens, in invisible past ages and in the infinite future—to write down, in short, all the mysteries of creation—might require more ink than the oceans contain water."²

As Professor Ravaillet says: "In order to have a complete conception of the world, it is enough to know that the number of galaxies in the infinite expanse of the universe is greater than that of all the grains of sand on all the shores in the world."³

Such considerations concerning what we know and what we do not know make it possible for us to escape imprisonment in the cocoon of our narrow life; to become humbly aware of how small we are; to go beyond this limited life of ours, to the degree that we are able; and to contemplate reality with greater care and profundity;

¹. Isbat-i Vujud-i Khuda, p. 17

². This is reminiscent of the Quranic verse that says,

"If all the trees in the world were to be turned into pens, and the seven seas together with an additional ocean were turned into ink" the recording of God's words would still be incomplete, for truly God possesses wisdom and power." (18:109)

³. Dau Hazar Danishman dar Justuju-yi Khuda-yi Buzurg, p. 13.

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