

## Part 7: Theology

**Lesson 61: The Way to Know God**

**Lesson 62: Demonstrations of the Necessary Existent**

**Lesson 63: Tawhid**

**Lesson 64: The Unity of Divine Actions**

**Lesson 65: The Divine Attributes**

**Lesson 66: Attributes of Essence**

**Lesson 67: Attributes of Action**

**Lesson 68: The Purpose of Creation**

**Lesson 69: Divine Decree and Destiny**

**Lesson 70: Good and Evil in the Cosmos**

## Lesson 61: The Way to Know God

### Introduction

The concept which common people have about Almighty God and the meaning which is understood upon hearing the word ‘God’ or its synonyms in various languages is that of an existent which has created the cosmos. In other words, God is known as ‘the Creator.’ Probably other concepts, such as the Lord and the One Who is worthy of worship are also borne in mind. In fact, God is known as the agent of the work of creation and its consequences.

With regard to the fact that these sorts of concepts are abstracted from divine action and sometimes from the deeds of creatures, such as worship, philosophers have attempted to use a concept which refers to the sacred divine essence, without need to consider God’s deeds or creatures’. In this way, they have selected the concept of the Necessary Existent (wajib al-wujud), that is, one whose being is necessary and indestructible.

This concept is universal and essentially is a common term which can be applied to numerous instances. Therefore, Allah, which is a proper name ('alam- e shakhs), must be considered the best name or word [for God]. Perhaps this noble name was first propounded by the prophets and religious leaders.

In order to understand the meaning of a proper name, it is necessary to know the named person. Such knowledge is obtained through sensory perception in the case of sensory objects, and in the case of non-sensory objects it can only be obtained through knowledge by presence. When an existent is imperceptible, the way to know the person is limited to knowledge by presence.

Although the establishment of such knowledge is related to philosophy, the knowledge itself is not obtained through philosophical discussions. That which is obtained through intellectual efforts and philosophical demonstrations will be naturally limited to intellectual universal concepts. At this point the reason for the selection by the divine sages of the expression 'the Necessary Exist' becomes clear.

In the chapters of this part we shall discuss to what extent and by what means Allah basically can be known. However, the subject of these discussions will be God, that is, the Necessary Exist, in accordance with philosophical and theological tradition.

## **The Science of Theology and its Subject**

The science of theology is the noblest and most valuable of philosophical sciences. Without knowledge of Allah, the true perfection of man is not possible, because, as was proven in its own place, the true perfection of man occurs only in the shadow of divine proximity. It is obvious that proximity to Almighty God without knowledge of Him will be impossible.

Although the establishment of the subject of a science is not considered a topic within that science itself, and if a scientific subject needs to be established, according to certain principles, this must be done in another science which is prior to it in rank, sometimes the existence of the subject of a science is discussed in its introduction as one of its principles.

Among them, discussions of the existence of Almighty God are traditionally found in theology itself. Therefore, although we have provided a satisfactory discussion of this in the chapters on cause and effect, especially in Lesson Thirty-Seven, in accordance with the tradition of the theologians, this topic will be discussed independently at the beginning of this part.

Before presenting the reasoning involved, two points should be observed. One is that a number of outstanding figures have claimed that knowledge of Almighty God is something innate and without need of philosophical reasoning. The other point is that some philosophers have expressed the view that the demonstrations for the existence of God are invalid.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is necessary first to review these two issues.

## **The Innateness of Knowledge of God**

The expression ‘innate’ (fitri) is used for entities which depend on innate disposition (fitrat), that is, the way in which an entity has been created. Therefore, innate things have two characteristics: first, that they need not be taught or learned; and second, that they cannot be changed or transformed. To these, a third may be added, that the innate things for every kind of existent may be found among all the individuals of that kind to a greater or lesser degree.

Those things that are called innate in the case of man may be divided into two general classes: first, a knowledge that is implied in human existence; and second, desires and inclinations that result from the creation of human beings. But sometimes the term ‘innate’ is used specifically for humans, in contrast to ‘instinctive,’ which is also used for animals.

With regard to Almighty God, it is sometimes said that knowledge of God is innate, and is among the first class of innate things. Sometimes it is also said that the quest for God and worship of God are due to human nature, and counted among the second class of innate things. But here, the topic is knowledge of God.

What is meant by innate knowledge of God is either knowledge by presence, some degree of which exists in all humans, and perhaps there is an allusion to this in the noble ayah:

***‘Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes.’ (7: 176).***

It was mentioned in Lesson Forty-Nine that an effect which possesses a degree of immateriality will have a degree of presentational knowledge of its creative cause, even though it may be unconscious or semiconscious and, due to its weakness, improperly interpreted by the mind.[2](#)

This knowledge becomes stronger due to the perfection of the soul and the concentration of the attention of the heart on the sacred divine presence and by means of good deeds and worship. And among the Friends (awliya’) of God it reaches such a degree of clarity that they see God more clearly than anything else, as is found in the Supplication of ‘Arafah: *“Has anything other than You a manifestation that You lack, so that it may manifest You?!”*

Sometimes what is meant by innate knowledge of God is acquired knowledge. Innate acquired knowledge is either of a primary self-evident proposition, which is related to the nature of the intellect, or it is of secondary self-evident propositions, which are what logicians call ‘innate things.’

Sometimes the term is also used in a general way for theoretical propositions (nazariyyat) which come close to being self-evident, because anyone can understand them with his God-given intellect, and there is no need for complicated technical demonstrations. Likewise, people who are illiterate and unlearned also can discover the existence of Almighty God with simple reasoning.

It may be concluded that innate knowledge of God in the sense of presentational knowledge of Almighty God has degrees, the lowest of which exists in all people, even if they are not completely aware of it, and the highest degrees are restricted to perfect believers and Friends of God. No degree of this knowledge is obtained by means of intellectual or philosophical demonstration.

However, in the sense of acquired knowledge close to being self-evident, this is obtained by means of the intellect and reasoning. Its closeness to self-evidence and simplicity of reasoning does not mean that it is not in need of demonstration.

## **The Possibility of Demonstrating the Existence of God**

Another topic which must be discussed here is whether a rational logical demonstration for the existence of Almighty God can be formulated or not. If so, how can one justify the claim of some of the great metaphysicians, such as Ibn Sina, who hold that it is incorrect to formulate demonstrations for the existence of God Almighty? If not, then how can the existence of Almighty God be established?

The answer is that without any doubt, acquired knowledge of Almighty God by means of rational philosophical demonstration is possible, and all the philosophers and theologians, including Ibn Sina himself, have formulated numerous demonstrations for this matter. But, sometimes philosophers and logicians restrict the use of the term ‘demonstration’ (burhan) to demonstrations from cause to effect (burhan limmi).

Therefore, it is possible that what is meant by those who deny that a demonstration can be formulated for the existence of God is that there is no demonstration from cause to effect for this, for such a demonstration is formulated to prove something whose cause is known, and by way of knowledge of the cause, the existence of the effect is established.

However, the existence of Almighty God is not the effect of any cause, so as to be established by knowledge of its cause. Evidence in favor of this reading is to be found in the Shifa’, in which it is said: “There is no demonstration for it because there is no cause for it.”

It is also possible that what is meant by the denial of there being any demonstration for the existence of Almighty God is that no demonstration can lead us to the entified individual existence of God. The utmost that can be obtained by demonstration are universal terms such as ‘the Necessary Existent’ and ‘the cause of all causes,’ and the like. As was mentioned in the introduction to this lesson, knowledge of the individual immaterial thing is impossible except through knowledge by presence.

Another sense can also be mentioned, that what is meant by demonstrations for the existence of God is that creatures have a Creator, or existents which are effects have a cause of causes, or that contingent existents are in need of the Necessary Existent. So, these demonstrations basically demonstrate predicates to be true of creatures, not directly the existence of the Creator or the Necessary Existent.

This reading is more compatible with those who claim: “There is no demonstration of the Necessary Existent by essence but only by accidents.”

## Demonstrations from Cause to Effect and from Effect to Cause

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Given the first reading, the question arises that if there is no demonstration from cause to effect for the existence of God, then why is this term used for some of the demonstrations regarding this problem? Doesn't the fact that a demonstration is not from cause to effect harm its validity?

A sufficiently detailed answer to this question requires research into the kinds of demonstrations, which would divert us from our goal. That which we can briefly say here is that if we define demonstration from cause to effect as is done below, then not only in other areas of philosophy, but also in the case of God Almighty, we can formulate a demonstration from cause to effect:

A demonstration from cause to effect is a demonstration whose middle term is the cause for the application of the predicate to the subject of the conclusion, whether or not it is also the cause of the predicate itself, and whether the cause is objective and real or analytic and intellectual.

According to this definition, if the middle term of the demonstration is a concept of a contingent and one ontologically impoverished (faqr-e wujudi), and the like, it can be considered a demonstration from cause to effect, for according to philosophers, “The cause of the need of an effect for a cause is essential contingency or ontological poverty.”<sup>3</sup> Hence, the establishment of the Necessary

Existent for contingent entities may be accomplished by means of something which, according to intellectual analysis, is the cause of their need for the Necessary Existent.

It may be concluded that although the essence of the Necessary Existent is not the effect of any cause, dependence on the Necessary Existent can be attributed to contingent entities because of their essential contingency or ontological poverty, and as has been indicated, this is the purport of the demonstrations regarding this problem.

However, if one requires that in a demonstration from cause to effect the middle term must be an objective or real cause, then not only in the case of the Necessary Existent, but regarding most philosophical problems, this sort of demonstration will not be found.

In any case, philosophical demonstrations based on the rational implications between the terms of the demonstration, whether they are called limmi (from cause to effect) or inni (from effect to cause), are of sufficient logical worth.

To call a demonstration ‘inni’ does not detract from its validity and worth. Rather, it may be said that every demonstration from cause to effect involves a demonstration from effect to cause that has as its major premise the impossibility of the detachment of an effect from its complete cause. Take note.

[1.](#) Cf., *Ilahhiyyat Shifa'*, maqalah 8, fasl 4; and *Ta'liqat*, p. 70

[2.](#) Cf., Lesson Thirteen.

[3.](#) Cf., Lesson Thirty-Two.

# Lesson 62: Demonstrations of the Necessary Existence

## Introduction

The arguments given to establish the existence of Almighty God are copious and of various styles, and in general they can be divided into three groups:

The first group proceeds from reasons which are established on the basis of observations of divine effects and signs in the cosmos, such as the argument from design and providence, which on the basis of the discovery of the existence of a wise design, purpose and plan from the coherence, interdependence and propriety of phenomena, establishes that there is a wise designer and a knowing planner of the cosmos.

While these arguments are clear and pleasing, they do not provide answers to all doubts and misgivings, and in reality, they mostly play the role of awakening that which is inherent and bringing about an awareness of innate knowledge (*ma'rifah*).

The second group consists of arguments which establish the existence of a needless Creator by way of the needs of the cosmos, such as the argument from temporal beginning (*burhan-e huduth*), which proceeds from the posteriority of phenomena to nonexistence and nothingness to prove their essential need, and then, with the help of the impossibility of a circle or regress, proves that there is a needless Creator, or the argument from motion, which from the need of motion for a mover and the impossibility of an infinite regress of movers, proves the existence of God as the first originator of motion in the cosmos, or the arguments which prove the existence of a needless creative cause from the origin of the soul or substantial forms and the impossibility of their production from natural and material agents. These arguments also more or less are in need of sensory and empirical premises.

The third group consists of purely philosophical arguments which are formed from utterly rational premises, such as the demonstration from contingency and the Demonstration of the Sincere (*burhn-e siddiqin*).

This group of demonstrations has some special features: first, that they do not require sensory or empirical premises; second, the doubts and misgivings which surround the other arguments have no

way here, and in other words, they have greater logical validity; and third, the premises of these demonstrations are also more or less needed in other arguments, for example, when the first designer and planner or originator or mover is established, their essential needlessness and necessity of existence must be proven on the basis of premises which are also used in the third group of arguments.

Nevertheless, the other arguments have advantages which the third group lacks, that is, the arguments of the third group merely establish that there is an existent which is the Necessary Existent, and other demonstrations are needed to establish that He has knowledge, power, wisdom, and even that He is not a body and is distinct from the material world.

Here, it shall suffice to mention some of the arguments of the third group; and first, to prove the Necessary Existent and then to explain His attributes.

## **First Demonstration (The Argument from Contingency)**

One of the famous philosophical demonstrations to establish the Necessary Existent is a demonstration called ‘the demonstration from contingency’ (burhan- e imkan) or ‘the demonstration from contingency and necessity,’ and it is formed from four premises:

1. No contingent existent essentially has necessary existence, that is, when the intellect considers its whatness, it sees it as equal in relation to existence and nonexistence, and disregarding the existence of the cause, the necessity for its existence will not be seen.

This premise is self-evident (badihi) and without need of demonstration, for its predicate is obtained through the analysis of the concept of its subject, and the assumption of being contingent is the same as the assumption of lacking necessity of existence.

2. No existent becomes real without the attribution of necessity, that is, until all the ways of nonexistence to it are blocked, it will not come into existence. As the philosophers say, ‘That which is not made necessary is not brought into existence’ (al-shay’ ma lam yajib lam yujad).

In other words: an existent will be either essentially a necessary existent, having necessary existence by itself, or it will be a contingent existent, and such existents only come about when necessitated by a cause, and their existence reaches the level of necessity, that is, it comes to shed the possibility of nonexistence. This premise is both certain and indubitable.

3. When the attribution of necessity is not required of the essence of an existent, there is no other alternative but that it is brought about by another existent, that is, a complete cause makes the existence of the effect ‘necessary by another’ (dharuri bil-ghayr).

This premise is also self-evident and indubitable, for every attribution must be in one of two states: by itself (bil-dhat) or by another (bil-ghayr). If it is not by itself it must be by another. Hence, if the

attribution of necessity required of any existent is not essential, it must derive from another existent called the cause.

4. Circles and regresses of causes are impossible. This premise is also certain and was explained in Lesson Thirty-Seven.

Given these premises, the argument from contingency may be formulated as follows: the existents of the cosmos are all brought about with the attribution of necessity by another, because, on the one hand, they are contingent existents, and do not have the attribution of necessity essentially (the first premise).

On the other hand, no existent occurs without the attribution of necessity (the second premise), hence, they must be necessary by another, and the existence of each of them is required by a cause (the third premise).

Now if we assume that their existences are required by each other, this implies a circle of causes, and if we assume that the chain of causes extends infinitely, this implies an infinite regress of causes. Both of these are invalid and impossible (the fourth premise). Hence, there is no alternative but to accept that at the head of the chain of causes there is an existent which by itself necessitates existence, that is, which is the Necessary Existence.

This demonstration may also be formulated in another version which does not require the fourth premise (the invalidity of the circle and regress), as follows. For the set of contingents, no matter how imagined, necessity will not be realized in any of them without the existence of the essentially Necessary Existence.

In conclusion, none of them comes into existence, for none of them by itself possesses necessity so that the others could derive necessity from it. In other words, the necessity of existence in every contingent existent is a borrowed necessity, and as long as there is no essential necessity, there will be no room for borrowed necessities.

This can also be formulated in a more concise version: an existent is either essentially a necessary existent or is a necessary existent by another, and every necessary existent by another unavoidably will ultimately lead to an essentially necessary existent: ‘Everything which is by another ultimately leads to that which is essential.’ Hence, the essentially Necessary Existence is established.

## **The Second Demonstration (Ibn Sina's Demonstration)**

The second demonstration is originally close to the first demonstration, and it is formulated with three premises:

1. The existents of this cosmos are contingent existents, and they do not essentially require existence, for if one of them were the Necessary Existence, the argument would be finished. This premise is like the first premise of the previous demonstration, with one subtle difference. In the previous demonstration the

stress was on the necessity of existence and the denial of it for contingents, while here the stress is on existence itself.

2. To become existent every contingent existent is in need of a cause that brings it about. This premise is another way of putting the point that every effect is in need of an efficient cause, which was proven in the discussions of cause and effect, and it is like the third premise in the previous demonstration, with the same difference as was indicated.
3. It is impossible for there to be a circle or regress of causes. This is the very same as premise four in the previous demonstration.

Given these premises the demonstration may be formulated as follows. Every existent in this world, which is assumed to be a contingent existent, needs an efficient cause. It is impossible for the chain of causes to proceed infinitely, or for there to be a circular relation among them. Hence, the chain of causes unavoidably leads to an ultimate cause at the beginning, which itself are without need of a cause, which is the Necessary Existential.

This demonstration was formulated by Ibn Sina (Shaykh al-Ra'is) in his *Isharat* as follows. An existent is either the Necessary Existential or a contingent existent. If it is the Necessary Existential, the point is proven, and if it is a contingent existent, it must ultimately lead to the Necessary Existential in order to avoid a circle or regress. He considered this to be the firmest demonstration and called it the 'Demonstration of the Sincere' (*burhan-e siddiqin*).

What is outstanding about this version is that not only does it not require recourse to the attributes of creatures and a demonstration that they have a temporal origin or motion or some other attribute, it does not require a demonstration of the existence of creatures at all, for the first premise is propounded in the form of an assumption.

In other words: the procedure of this demonstration turns upon nothing more than the acceptance of the principle of entified existence, which is self-evident and indubitable. Only those who would deny the most self-evident and most intuitive things, including the presentational knowledge of themselves, who would absolutely never accept the existence of any existent, not even their own existences, thoughts and words would deny this principle!

However, to those who accept the principle of entified existence it will be said: entified existence is either necessary existence or contingent existence, and there is no third alternative. In the first case, the Necessary Existential is proven, and in the second case, unavoidably one must accept the existence of the Necessary Existential because contingent existents need a cause and in order to avoid a circle or regress, the chain of causes must end with the Necessary Existential.

In these two demonstrations, as was noted, there is recourse to the contingency of existents, which is an intellectual attribute for their whatnesses, and by means of this attribute their need for the Necessary

Existent is established.

Hence, in a sense each may be considered to be a burhan limmi (demonstration from cause to effect), as was explained in the previous lesson. However, reliance of the discussion upon whatnesses and whatish contingency is not entirely in keeping with the position of the fundamentality of existence.

For this reason, Sadr al-Muta'allihin has formulated another demonstration which has its own particular advantages, and this he calls the ‘Demonstration of the Sincere,’ and he considered the demonstration of Ibn Sina to possess a mere resemblance to the Demonstration of the Sincere.

## **The Third Demonstration (Mulla adra's Demonstration)**

This demonstration was formulated by Sadr al-Muta'allihin on the basis of the principles of transcendent theosophy (hikmat-e muta'aliyyah) which he himself had propounded, and he considered it to be the firmest demonstration and most deserving of the name ‘the Demonstration of the sincere.’

This demonstration has been formulated in a number of different versions, but it seems that the strongest of them is the one he himself formulated, whose presentation is composed of three premises:

1. The fundamentality of existence and the respectability of whatness, which was proved in Lesson Twenty-Seven.
2. The possession of levels for existence and its particular gradation (tashkik- e khass) between cause and effect, such that the existence of the effect does not have independence from the existence of its existence-granting cause.<sup>1</sup>
3. The criterion of the need of the effect for the cause is the being relative and dependence of its existence on the cause; in other words, it is the weakness of the level of its existence, and as long as there is the least amount of weakness in an existent it will necessarily be an effect and in need of a higher existent and it will have no sort of independence from it.<sup>2</sup>

Given these premises, the Demonstration of the Sincere can be formulated in accordance with the taste of Sadr al-Muta'allihin as follows:

The levels of existence except for its highest level, which possesses infinite perfection and absolute needlessness and independence are the very relation and dependence itself, and if the highest level did not occur, neither would the other levels, because what is implied by the assumption of the occurrence of the other levels without the occurrence of the highest level of existence is that the mentioned levels would be independent and without need of it, while their existential aspect is the relation itself and poverty and need.

In addition to the fact that it possesses the advantages of the demonstration of Ibn Sina, this

demonstration also has several other excellences. One is that this demonstration relies upon the concept of existence, and neither whatnesses nor whatish contingencies are mentioned. It is clear that such a demonstration is more suitable to the doctrine of the fundamentality of existence.

The second is that it does not require a rejection of the circle or infinite regress, but rather it itself is a demonstration for the incorrectness of the assumption of an infinite regress of efficient causes.<sup>3</sup> The third is that with the help of this same demonstration, not only unity, but also some of the other attributes of perfection of Almighty God may be established, as will be indicated in the appropriate place.

1. Cf., Lesson Thirty.

2. Cf., Lesson Thirty-Three.

3. Cf., Lesson Thirty-Seven

## Lesson 63: Tawhid

### The Meaning of Tawhid

Tawhid and the oneness of God Almighty have various senses in philosophy, kalam (scholastic theology), and ‘irfan (gnosis or mysticism). The most important of the philosophical meanings are as follows:

1. Tawhid in the necessity of existence, that is, no existent other than the sacred divine essence is essentially the Necessary Existent.
2. Tawhid in the sense of simplicity and lack of composition, which has three subsidiary meanings:
  - Absence of composition of actual parts.
  - Absence of composition of potential parts.
  - Absence of composition of whatness and existence.
3. Tawhid in the sense of the negation of any difference between attributes and essence, that is, the attributes which are related to God Almighty are not like the attributes of material things, which are accidental, and do not occur in His essence, in technical terms, as ‘additions to essence’, but rather their instances are the same as the sacred divine essence, and they are all identical to one another and to the essence.
4. Tawhid in being the Creator and Lord, that is, God the Almighty does not have partners in the creation and management of the universe.

5. Tawhid in true actuality, that is, every effect which emerges from an agent or cause, ultimately can be traced back to God, the Supreme, and no agent is independently influential: ‘There is no influence in existence, but Allah’ (La mu’aththir fi al-wujud illa Allah).

## **Tawhid in the Necessity of Existence**

In order to prove the unity and oneness of the essence of the Necessary Existent, the metaphysicians have formulated some arguments, the most certain of which is formed with the employment of the Demonstration of the Sincere (in the version of Sadr al-Muta’allihin), which may be presented as follows:

Existence has a level than which it is not possible for there to be any more perfect one; that is, it possesses a limitless perfection, and such an entity cannot be numerous. In technical terms, it possesses ‘wahdat haqqah haqiqiyah’ (lit. ‘a true real unity’). The conclusion is that the existence of God, the Supreme, cannot be multiple.

The first premise of this demonstration is really the conclusion of the Demonstration of the Sincere, for from the above demonstration it was concluded that the chain of levels of existence must terminate in a level which is the highest and most perfect in which there is no weakness or imperfection, that is, it possesses infinite perfection.

With a bit of attention, the second premise becomes clear, for if it is assumed that such an existent is numerous, this would imply that each of them lacks entitied perfections of the other, that is, the perfections of each of them would be limited and finite, while according to the first premise, the perfections of the Necessary Existent are infinite.

It might be imagined that the infinity of the perfections of the Necessary Existent implies that no other existent occurs at all, for the occurrence of any other existent would mean the possession of a part of the perfections of existence.

The answer to this objection is that the perfections of other levels, all of which are created by the Necessary Existent, are the rays of His perfections and their existences do not interfere with the infinite perfections of the Necessary Existent.

However, if another Necessary Existent is assumed, the perfections of their existences would interfere with one another, because each of them possesses a perfection which is original and independent, and neither of them would be a radiance of or subordinate to the other.

In other words, two objective perfections will interfere with one another when it is assumed that they are of the same level, but if one is vertically above another it will not interfere with it. Therefore, the existence of creatures does not contradict the infinity of the perfections of the Creator.

It is not the case that when perfection is added to a creature, it is given up by the Creator and the

Creator Himself comes to lack it. But the assumption of the existence of two Necessary Existents, or the infinity of their perfections are contradictory.

This point also can be made as follows: the assumption of two independent objective perfections is incompatible with the assumption that each of them is infinite. However, if one of them is the very dependency and relation to the other or is considered to be the radiance and manifestation of the other, there will be no contradiction with the infinity of the other that possesses independence and absolute needlessness.

## **The Negation of Actual Parts**

If it is assumed that the sacred essence of God is composed of actually existing parts (God forbid), then all of the assumed parts will be either necessary existents or at least some of them will be contingent existents. If all of them are necessary existents, and none of them is in need of any of the others, this assumption leads to a multiplicity of necessary existents, which was refuted in the previous section.

If it is assumed that they are in need of one another, this would be incompatible with the assumption that they are necessary existents. If it is assumed that one of them is without need of the others, the Necessary Existent will be that needless one, and the assumed composition will not have any reality as a composition of true parts, for every true composition is in need of its parts.

If it is assumed that some of its parts are contingent existents, the assumed part which is a contingent existent unavoidably will be an effect. If it is now assumed that it is the effect of another part, it becomes clear that the other one is in fact the Necessary Existent possessing independent existence, and that the assumption of a true composition among them is incorrect. If it is assumed that the part which is the contingent existent is the effect of another necessary existent, this would imply a multiplicity of necessary existents, whose invalidity was established.

Hence, the assumption of the composition of the essence of the Necessary Existent from actual parts will never be correct.

## **The Negation of Potential Parts, Time and Space in God**

What is meant by the existence of the potential parts of an existent is that it actually has a single integrated existence, and none of its parts possesses actuality and individuality and determinate boundaries, but intellectually it is possible to analyze them and separate them from one another, and whenever such an analysis is carried out, the single existent will change into several existents each of which will possess individuality and determinate boundaries.

If the potential parts can be collected, this means that their compound existent possesses spatial extension (length, width and depth). If they cannot be collected, and each of them is brought about by

the destruction of another, this means that it possesses temporal extension. Both types of extensions are specific to bodies, as was previously explained.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the denial of potential parts in God is in fact the denial of His corporeality, and it implies that He has neither time nor place. However, the argument for the rejection of potential parts for the essence of the Necessary Existent is that, as was indicated, an existent which possesses potential parts may be divided intellectually into several other existents, and in conclusion, it will be possible for it to be annihilated, while the existence of the Necessary Existent is necessary and indestructible.

Another argument is that the potential parts of every existent are homogeneous with that same existent, just as the parts of a line or a plane or volume are of the same kinds respectively. Now, if it assumed that the Necessary Existent possesses potential parts which are contingent existents, this would imply that the parts are not homogeneous with their whole.

If it is assumed that the supposed parts are also necessary existents, this would imply the possibility of a multiplicity of necessary existents. On the other hand, it would imply that necessary existents which are brought into existence through analysis and division, for the time being, are not existents, that is, that their existences are not necessary, while the existence of the Necessary Existent is necessary and has no possibility for non-being at any time.

## **The Refutation of Analytic Parts**

The ancient metaphysicians commenced discussions under the heading of ‘the negation of a whatness for the Necessary Existent,’ and proved it by several arguments, and they took advantage of this for various theological problems.

The simplest argument is that the aspect of having a whatness is one of being indifferent to existence and nothingness, and there is no place for such an aspect in the sacred essence of God. In other words, whatness and contingency are twins, and just as contingency has absolutely no place in the divine essence, whatness also has no place in God’s sacred Being.

However, on the basis of the principles of transcendent theosophy this issue may be explained in another way which will lead to more important and more brilliant conclusions. It is that whatness is basically abstracted from the limits of finite existents, and as was earlier mentioned, it is a conceptual frame that corresponds to finite existents, and since the existence of God Almighty is free from any sort of limitation, no sort of whatness can be abstracted from Him.

In other words, the intellect can only analyze limited existents into two aspects, whatness and existence. “All contingents are composed of whatness and existence.” However, the existence of God Almighty is pure existence and the intellect cannot relate any whatness to it.

In this way, simplicity is proven for Almighty God in a more exact sense, which implies the denial of any

kind of composition in the holy presence of God, even composition from intellected analytic parts.

Among the conclusions that follow from the simplicity of the existence of God, the Supreme, in the sense of pureness and infinity, is that no perfection can be denied of God. In other words, all of the attributes of perfection are established for the essence of the Necessary Existent without being considered additions to the essence, and in conclusion, the unity (tawhid) of the attributes is established.

1. Cf., Lesson Forty-One to Forty-Three.

## Lesson 64: The Unity of Divine Actions

### Introduction

In the previous lesson we explained Unity (tawhid) in the sense of the denial of partners in the necessity of existence, and also in the sense of the denial of multiplicity within the essence of God. Meanwhile, we indicated the denial of difference between the attributes and the essence of God, which will be explained in the discussion of the attributes of God. However, a polytheism (shirk) which was and is common among different groups of polytheists is polytheism regarding creation, and especially regarding the management of the cosmos.

The previous discussions are not sufficient to refute this, for it is possible that in accepting Unity in the previous sense one believes that the unique Necessary Existent created only one or several creatures and has no other role in the creation of other creatures and the management of their affairs, which is performed by those who are not themselves necessary existents, and that they are independent and needless of God for the creation and management of other phenomena. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss Unity in creation and lordship separately.

### Unity in Creation and Lordship

In order to prove Unity in creation and to deny partners with God in the creation and management of the cosmos, the ancient philosophers reasoned that creation is not restricted to direct and immediate creation, and God, who creates the first creature directly and immediately, also creates its actions and creations by the mediation of it. Even if there are hundreds of intermediaries, all of them are also created by God through mediation.

In philosophical terms: “the cause of the cause is also the cause, and the effect of the effect is also the effect.” In reality, by adding this premise to the demonstrations for the Necessary Existent, they established that the entire cosmos is His effect.

However, on the basis of the principles of transcendent theosophy, and especially regarding the principle of the dependence of the existence of the effect and lack of independence in relation to the creative cause, this issue becomes clearer and stronger. It is concluded that although every cause possesses a kind of relative independence in relation to its effect, all causes and effects in relation to Almighty God are poverty itself, dependence and need, and do not possess any sort of independence.

Therefore, true and independent creativity is restricted to God Almighty, and all existents are in need of Him in all their own aspects and in all states and times. It is impossible for an existent to be needless of Him in any of its existential aspects or to be able to do anything independently.

This is one of the most brilliant and valuable outcomes of Islamic philosophy, which was presented to the world of philosophy in the blessed and radiant thought of Sadr al-Muta'allihin. Likewise, philosophers have constructed other demonstrations for unity in creation and lordship which are based on numerous theoretical premises, and in order to prevent prolongation of the discussion, they will be ignored. A demonstration from the Noble Qur'an will suffice:

***If there had been in them any gods except Allah, they [i.e. the heavens and earth] would both have certainly been in a state of disorder. (21:22).***

This demonstration has been presented in several versions, and among the clearest and closest to the purport of the ayah is the one presented below:

This argument is composed of two premises:

1. The existence of every effect is dependent on its own cause. In other words, every effect obtains its existence with all its aspects and associations from its own creative cause. If it needs conditions or preparation their existence must also depend on its creative cause.

Therefore, if two or several creative causes are assumed to be on the same level, the effects of each of them will be dependent on its own cause, and will not possess any sort of dependence on other causes or on their effects. In this way, there will be no relation or dependence among their effects.

2. The design of the observable world (the heavens and the earth and their phenomena) is a single design in which all phenomena, whether they are simultaneous or not, are related and dependent on each other. The relations among simultaneous phenomena are various mutual causal influences which cause changes and alterations in them, and these are absolutely undeniable.

The relations among the phenomena of the past, present and future are such that the past phenomena prepare the ground for the appearance of the present phenomena, and the present phenomena, in turn, prepare the ground for the appearance of future phenomena.

If the causal and preparatory relations among the phenomena of the cosmos were removed, no cosmos would remain at all, and no other phenomena could take place. Just as, if the relation between the

existence of man with the air, light, water and nourishment were cut off, man would no longer survive. He would no longer be able to prepare the ground for the appearance of other men or other phenomena.

From the combination of these two premises it may be concluded that the design of this cosmos, which includes a collection of uncountable phenomena of the past, present and future, is the creation of a single Creator, and under the wise control of a single Lord. For if there were one or more other creators, there would be no relation among them, and no single design would be decreed by them. Rather, every creature would be brought about by its own creator, and would grow up with the help of other creatures of that same creator.

In conclusion, numerous and independent designs would be brought about, and no relations would hold among them, while the present design of the cosmos is a single and interconnected design the connections among whose phenomena are observed.

Finally, the point must be noted that creation and lordship are inseparable, and the nurture and control of a single existent is not separate from its creation and the creation of the things it needs. For example, providing for man is not something separate from creating his digestive system, the creation of nourishment and a livable environment.

In other words, these kinds of concepts are abstracted from the relations between creatures and have no instances other than their creation. Therefore, by proving unity in [the act of] creation, Unity in controlling affairs and other aspects of lordship are established.

## **Unity in the Emanation of Existence**

Likewise, another meaning of Unity is the restriction of independent influence and the emanation of existence to the sacred divine essence, for which there is much evidence in the verses of the Qur'an and narrations from the Prophet (S) and Imams ('a), and this is established by attending to the demonstration which is formulated on the basis of the principles of transcendent theosophy for the Unity of creation and lordship. However, some misunderstandings exist in this area which must be attended to in order to keep from going to extremes.

On the one hand, a group of theologians (Ash'arites) deny that intermediate causes have any efficacy at all, on the basis of the literal meaning of a group of verses of the Qur'an and narrations from the Prophet (S). They basically deny the causality and effectiveness of these causes, and they consider God to be the direct agent of all phenomena. They hold that divine habits bring determinate phenomena into existence in certain circumstances, otherwise other things and conditions have no effect on their coming about.

On the other hand, another group of theologians (Mu'tazilites) hold that there is a kind of independence in the effectiveness [of intermediate causes], especially for those agents which are considered to be

voluntary. They consider it to be incorrect to relate the voluntary actions of man to God. This is one of the most basic differences between these two schools of thought.

Although philosophers considered it correct to relate phenomena through intermediaries even the voluntary actions of man to God, they justified it only on the basis of the fact that the Necessary Existent is the cause of all causes, until Sadr al-Muta'allihin provided the correct explanation of causal relations and proved that since intermediary causes themselves are the effects of God, they possess no independence, and basically, the emanation of existence, in the precise meaning of the word, is specific to God Almighty.

Other causes are like the channels of the emanation of existence; possessing different levels they play the role of intermediaries between the main source of existence and other creatures. Therefore, the meaning of the famous expression, “There is no influence in existence but Allah,” will be that independent influence and emanation of existence is specific to God Almighty.

It is this fact which is explained in the language of the verses of the Qur'an and narrations from the Prophet (S) and Imams ('a) as the dependence of all things, even the voluntary actions of man, on the Divine Will, permission, decree and ordinance. In fact, these cases show the different stages which are considered by the intellect in order to trace phenomena to the sacred divine essence.

In a sense, these explanations can be considered stages of teaching, for the understanding of the precise meaning of Unity in actions by those who are not sufficiently trained in intellectual problems is no easy matter, and the best method of teaching it is one which includes several stages.

## **The Refutation of Compulsion and Delegation**

One of the problems which have caused the Mu'tazilites to deny that the voluntary actions of man can be traced to God is that they have supposed that otherwise man would have to be necessarily compelled in absolutely all his actions. In addition to the fact that it is counterintuitive and contrary to what is self-evident, this assumption leaves no room for duty and guidance nor reward and punishment.

All of these would be empty notions. In this way the problem of compulsion and delegation has been presented in Islamic theology (kalam). The two sides of the issue have been the subject of numerous discussions, a review of all of which would require an independent book. Here we shall review only that which is relevant to our discussion.

The mentioned problem can be presented in the following version. Every voluntary action has an agent which performs it by its own will and volition. It is impossible for a single action to be performed by two agents and to be dependent on the wills of each of them.

Now, if the actions of man are dependent on his own will and volition, there will remain no room for them to depend on Almighty God, unless in the sense that God is the Creator of man, and if He had not

created him and had not given him the power of will and volition, man's voluntary actions would not occur. But if we consider them to be dependent on the Divine Will, we must deny their dependence on man's will. Man will be considered as merely an involuntary subject for the occurrence of divine actions. This is compulsion, which is invalid and unacceptable.

The answer is that taking a single action to depend on the will of two agents is impossible only in case both of the agents are assumed to influence its performance on the same level as each other, in technical terms, they would be 'parallel agents.' But if both agents are vertically related to each other, the dependence of an action on both of them is unproblematic.

The dependence [of an action] on two agents which are vertically related does not merely mean that the principle of the existence of the immediate agent depends on a mediating agent, but in addition to this, that every aspect of the existence of the immediate agent depends on the creative agent, and that even in the performance of voluntary actions they are not without need of Him. At every moment they obtain their existences and all the aspects of their existences from Him.

This is the correct meaning of the saying: "No compulsion and no delegation, but something in between these two things" (La jabr wa la tafwidh, bal amr bayn al-amrayn). As was earlier mentioned, the correct understanding of this saying is possible in the shadow of the correct understanding of the causal relation and the dependence of the existence of the effect, whose originality is one of the merits of the explanation given by Sadr al-Muta'allihin.

## Lesson 65: The Divine Attributes

### Introduction

Regarding the limits of human abilities to know God, and the attributes which can be attributed to the divine essence there are various tendencies, some of which go to one extreme and some to another. For example, relying on some ambiguous verses of the Qur'an and narrations attributed to the Prophet (S), some relate attributes and actions of material existents, such as sadness, happiness, going and coming, and sitting and rising, to God the Supreme. They are called in technical terms mujassimah (those who believe in corporeal attributes) and mushabbihah (those who believe in the similarity between God and creatures).

Others have absolutely denied the power of man to know the essence and attributes of Almighty God. They rely on another set of narrations and verses of the Qur'an, and they take the attributes and actions related to God Almighty to be negative. For example, they have interpreted knowledge as the negation of ignorance and power as the negation of weakness. Some have even expressed the view that

attribution of existence to God, the Supreme, does not mean anything but the denial of nothingness!

In the midst of this, there exists a third tendency which chooses a way between the extremes of similarity and abstraction. This tendency is agreeable to reason and is confirmed by the Immaculate Imams (Peace be upon them). We shall explain something about this tendency.

## **The Limits to Knowing God**

It was previously said that knowledge of God, the Supreme, may be divided into two types: presentational intuitive knowledge, and acquired intellectual knowledge. Presentational knowledge has different levels, the lowest of which exists in every human being, and with the perfection of the soul and focusing the

attention of the heart, it becomes strengthened, until it reaches the level of the knowledge possessed by the Friends of God (awliya') who see Him with the eye of the heart more clearly than any thing and prior to every thing. But, in any case, the presentational knowledge of any 'arif (gnostic, mystic) is measured by his existential relation and the relation of his heart to God, The Supreme.

No one is ever able to completely comprehend the divine essence and know Him as He Himself knows Himself. The reason for this is clear, because every existent other than the sacred divine essence is limited in its ontological level, even if it is infinite with respect to time or in some other ontological aspects. The comprehension of the infinite by the finite is impossible.

Acquired intellectual knowledge is obtained by mental concepts and its level is subordinate to the power of the mind to precisely analyze and understand subtle intellectual concepts. It is this kind of knowledge that can be perfected by learning the rational sciences.

At the same time, the clarity of the soul, purification of the heart, refinement of morals and elimination of materialistic and animalistic pollutions play an important role in elevating this knowledge. Anyway, all intellectual and spiritual perfections are due to the grace of God.

## **The Role of Reason in Knowing God**

Undoubtedly, the tools for the work of the intellect are mental concepts, and basically, the intellect is that power which understands universal concepts.

As was explained in the section on epistemology, intellectual concepts are divided into two general groups: one group is that of whatish concepts or primary intelligibles, which are automatically abstracted from particular individual objects of perception, and which denote their ontological limits; another group is that of concepts which are obtained through the activities of the intellect itself, and although they may originate in some kind of individual and presentational perceptions, these concepts are not limited to the framework given by the perceptions, and they can be extended or limited.

All intellectual knowledge about existence and its levels and about everything which is not of whatness, and which is about metaphysics is obtained with the help of these concepts, just as the concepts of nothingness and negation are of this sort.

With this point it becomes clear that whatish concepts, which are representations of the limitations of contingent existents, are not applicable to God, but other intellectual concepts can be considered means for knowing the divine attributes and actions on the condition that they possess sufficient breadth and universality and are free from the taint of imperfection and contingency, as are the concepts of the Necessary Existent, the Creator, the Lord, and the other most beautiful divine names.

It must be observed that these kinds of concepts are graded and possess multiple instances, and there is an incomparable and immeasurable difference between the instances of such concepts in the case of God and in the case of their other instances, for it is a difference between the finite and the infinite.

It is for this reason that when they taught about the attributes of God, the Supreme, the immaculate Imams, Peace be upon them, used these concepts with the proviso of transcendence and denial of similarity to the attributes of created entities. For example, they said, “He is the Knower, but not as we know, the Powerful, but not as we are powerful,” and this is the meaning of the words of Almighty God:

***There is nothing like Him. (42: 11)***

## **Positive and Negative Attributes**

Concepts can be divided generally into the positive and the negative. Positive concepts sometimes denote limited existents or their aspects of limitation and deficiency, so that if their aspects of limitation and deficiency were neglected they would change into other concepts, such as all whatish concepts and a set of non-essential concepts which indicate the weakness of the level of existence and its deficiency and limitedness, such as the concepts of potentiality and disposition.

It is self-evident that such concepts cannot be posited of God, the Supreme, but their negations can be considered as negative attributes, such as the negation of partners with God, composition, corporeality, and time and space.

Another set of positive concepts denote the perfection of existence, and do not include any aspect of deficiency or limitation, although it is possible for them to be applied to limited instances, as well, like the concepts of knowledge, power and life. These kinds of concepts can be related to God, the Supreme, as positive attributes on the condition that the instance is considered devoid of limitation. Their negations would be incorrect because this would imply the negation of perfection of a perfect infinite existent.

Therefore, all of the concepts which denote ontological perfections and do not include a sense of deficiency or limitation can be established as positive attributes for God, the Supreme. Likewise, the negation of all concepts which include a kind of deficiency and limitation can be considered as negative

attributes of the Necessary Existent. If the absence of the application of false names to God, the Supreme, is emphasized, this is for the sake of preventing the application of concepts which include a sense of deficiency or limitation.

Those who interpret the positive attributes of God, the Supreme, in a negative sense, have imagined that in this way they can achieve an absolute transcendence and prevent the relation to God of concepts which are applied to contingent existents, while, firstly, the negation of one of two contradictories is the affirmation of the other, and if they are not willing to commit themselves to the affirmation of one of these imperfections, they will have to allow that neither of two contradictories is true, and secondly, when, for example, knowledge is interpreted as the denial of ignorance, in fact, the sense of non-being in ignorance is negated from the divine arena, and the assumption of the sense of non-being is impossible without the assumption of its opposite, knowledge. Hence, they must have posited knowledge at a prior level.

## **Attributes of Essence and Attributes of Action**

Attributes related to God, the Supreme, are either concepts which are abstracted from the divine essence by focusing on a kind of ontological perfection, such as knowledge, power and life, or they are concepts which are abstracted by the intellect through a comparison between the divine essence and His creatures, focusing on a kind of ontological relation, such as being the Creator or Lord.

The first group of concepts is called attributes of essence, while the second group of concepts is called attributes of action. Sometimes the attributes of essence are defined as those attributes which are abstracted from the station of the essence, and the attributes of action are defined as attributes abstracted from the station of action.

Relating the attributes of essence to God, the Supreme, does not mean that there exists something other than the divine essence, within it or outside it, so that the essence could be considered separate from and in lack of these attributes, contrary to the case of material entities, for example, which can be imagined to lack some specific color, odor or shape.

In other words, the divine attributes are not additional to nor other than the essence, but rather, when the intellect considers one of the ontological perfections, such as knowledge or power, it posits the highest level of this perfection for the divine essence, since His existence, in its very simplicity and unity, possesses all of the infinite perfections, and no perfection can be negated of Him.

In a third sense, the attributes of essence of the Necessary Existent are intellectual concepts abstracted from a single instance without indicating any kind of multiplicity or plurality for the divine essence. This fact is sometimes expressed in these words: ‘The perfection of tawhid is the denial of attributes for Him’ (Kamal al- tawhid nafy al-sifat ‘anhu) as is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali, Peace be with him.

In this field there are two extremist tendencies. On one hand there are the Ash‘arites who imagined that the divine attributes are entities outside the essence, and at the same time uncreated, so they held that there are ‘eight preeternal things’ (qudama’ thamaniyyah). On the other hand, the Mu‘tazilites held that attributes are to be negated, and that their attribution to God is figurative.

However, the first position implies that, God forbid, either they accept partnership in the necessity of existence, or they believe in the existence of existents which are neither necessary nor contingent existence!

The second position implies that the divine essence lacks ontological perfections, unless their statements are interpreted as arising from inadequacy of expression and they are taken to have meant the negation of attributes being additional to the essence.

Likewise, ascribing attributes of action to God does not mean that aside from the existence of God and that of His creatures, there are other entified things called attributes of action and that they are attributed to God, the Supreme.

Rather, all of these attributes are additional concepts which are abstracted by the intellect by a special comparison between the existence of God, the Supreme, and the existence of His creatures. For example, when the dependence of the existence of creatures on God is considered, the concepts of the Creator, the Originator, and the Initiator are abstracted from a certain perspective.

Therefore, the characteristic of the attributes of action is that in order to abstract them, the existence of creatures must be taken into consideration from a certain perspective. In other words, these attributes rest on a relation and the consideration of the connection between God and creatures.

This relation rests on both its terms and with the negation of one of them it would not occur. Therefore, sometimes these attributes are called relational attributes (sifat idhafiyyah). It may be concluded that the attributes of action cannot be considered the same as the divine essence, just as they cannot be considered specific entified entities.

A noteworthy point is that material phenomena possess temporal and spatial limits and conditions, and these limits and conditions influence the relations which are taken to hold between them and God, and as a result, the actions which are dependent on them are in one sense conditioned by time and space.

For example, it is said that God, the Supreme, created the existent  $x$  at time  $t$  and location  $l$ , but these conditions and limits in fact refer to creatures and are considered to be the receptacle for the occurrence of the creature and its aspects. They do not imply the ascription of time and space to God.

In other words, divine actions, which are dependent on time and space, possess two aspects: one is the aspect relating to creatures, due to which time and space are attributed to them; the other aspect is related to God, the Supreme, with respect to which the actions of God are free of time and space. This

point is worthy of much attention, and is the key to the solution of many problems.

Another point is that if the attributes of action are considered in terms of their source, and, for example, by the ‘Creator’ is meant one who has the power to create (Kawn al-wajib hayth yakhluj idha sha’), but not one who has performed the act of creation, in that case, they will be reduced to attributes of essence.

## Lesson 66: Attributes of Essence

### Introduction

As indicated in the previous lesson, the concepts which refer to ontological perfections and do not denote any kind of deficiency or limitation are applicable to the sacred divine essence. All of them can be considered to be attributes of the divine essence, such as Light (nur), Magnificence (baha’), Beauty (jamal), Perfection (kamal), Love (hubb), Bliss (bahjah), and other Names and attributes which are presented in the noble verses of the Qur'an, the sacred narrations and the supplications of the Infallible Ones ('a), which do not refer to the station of action.

However, what are usually mentioned as attributes of essence are Life (hayat), Knowledge ('ilm) and Power (qudrat), and most mutakallimin have added other attributes, such as Hearing (sami'), Seeing (basir), Willing (murid) and Speaking (mutakallim). There are discussions about whether these concepts are attributes of essence or attributes of action, which would require a very lengthy review. Here we shall present a discussion of the threefold attributes of essence, followed by a discussion of some of the other well known attributes.

### Life

Existents which are familiar to man may be divided into two general groups, the living and the non-living. The attribute called life (hayat) is attributed to living existents which are conscious and possess voluntary movement, and in the Arabic language the word hayawan (animate) is appropriately applied to living existents.

However, if we are precise, it becomes clear that the application of the attribute life to material existents is a kind of ‘wasf bi hal muta‘allaq’ (description of something in terms of another thing on which it is dependent), and actually, life is an essential description of their souls, and is accidentally related to their bodies.

After learning that animal souls have a degree of immateriality (tajarrud) (although this is an imaginal

immateriality), we come to the conclusion that life implies immateriality, and furthermore that life is more expressive than immateriality, because immateriality, as was previously indicated, is a negative concept.

In other words, just as extension is an essential characteristic of material existents, life is an essential characteristic of immaterial existence. Likewise, knowledge and will, which are also implied by life, are immaterial.

Therefore, the concept of life denotes an ontological perfection, which can be extended to existents which are not attached to matter. Hence, all immaterial things possess the essential attribute of life, the highest level of which is specific to the sacred divine essence. Hence, given that the divine essence is immaterial, there is no need for further demonstration to establish that life is one of the essential attributes of God, the Supreme.

Here, several points should be mentioned.

One is that sometimes life and living are used in another sense, which includes plants, but this sense includes an aspect of imperfection, for it implies growth and reproduction which are characteristics of material things and in this discussion such a sense is not intended.

Another point is that although life in the intended sense implies knowledge, will and power, this implication does not entail conceptual identity. The best evidence for this is that life is a self-contained concept without any sort of relation, as opposed to the other concepts mentioned for which there is a relation to their own objects (the known, the willed, that over which one has power), which are considered concepts involving relation. Therefore, if life is defined as knowledge, power and will, this will be a definition in terms of its implications.

The third point is that it is possible that the life of God, the Supreme, may be established in this way: life is one of the ontological perfections of creatures, and it is impossible for the creative cause to lack a perfection which emanates to its own creatures, but rather, the creative cause should necessarily possess that perfection in a more perfect form. Furthermore, after knowledge and power are established for God, the Supreme, life, which is implied by them, will also be established.

## **Knowledge**

The discussion of the knowledge of God is one of the most difficult in metaphysics, and it is for this reason that philosophers and mutakallimin have many differences of opinion in this area, which are presented, discussed and criticized in the detailed works of kalam and philosophy. For example, some philosophers consider both knowledge of His essence and knowledge of His creatures to be the same as the divine essence.

Others consider knowledge of the essence to be the same as the essence, but knowledge of creatures to be forms dependent on but external to the essence. Yet others have considered knowledge of

creatures to be the same as their existences. Various and sometimes strange views have been narrated from the mutakallimin, some even denying God's knowledge of His own sacred essence.

The fact is that the divine essence in its very unity and simplicity is both the same as His knowledge of His own essence and knowledge of all creatures, including the immaterial and material ones.

## **Knowledge of Essence**

One who is aware of the incorporeality and immateriality of the divine essence can easily understand that His sacred essence is the same as His knowledge of Himself, just as is true for every independent immaterial (non- accidental) existent.

If one has any doubt about the necessity of knowledge of one's essence for all immaterial existents, in the case of God, the Supreme, the following argument can be employed. Knowledge of essence is an ontological perfection which can be found in some existents, such as man, and God, the Supreme, possesses all ontological perfections infinitely; so He also possesses this one in its highest level.

Anyway, the demonstration of God's knowledge of His sacred essence on the basis of the principles of transcendent theosophy (hikmat muta'aliyah) is an easy task.

## **Knowledge of Creatures**

The demonstration of knowledge of creatures, especially prior to their appearance, and its philosophical explanation is not so easy. In this regard there are various positions and views, the most important of which are the following:

1. The position of the Peripatetics is based on the idea that knowledge of creatures is by means of intellectual forms, which are concomitants (lawazim) of the divine essence.

This position has some notable problems, for, if these forms are assumed to be the same as the divine essence, this implies the existence of multiplicity in the simple divine essence. If they are external to the essence—as is understood from the expression lawazim al-dhat (concomitants of essence)—then they will be unavoidably the effects and creatures of God, the Supreme.

This implies that, aside from these intellectual forms, the divine existence at the station of His essence does not possess knowledge of His creatures and He has created these forms without any knowledge!

Moreover, the knowledge obtained through intellectual forms will be acquired knowledge. The establishment of such knowledge for God, the Supreme, would imply the establishment of a mind in the divine essence, while mind and acquired knowledge are specific to souls attached to matter.

2. The position of the Illuminationists (Ishraqiyin) is based on the idea that divine knowledge of

creatures is the same as their existence, and the relation of creatures to the divine essence is like the relation of mental forms to the soul, whose existence is the same as the knowledge of them.

Although this position does not imply relating acquired knowledge to God, the Supreme, with the previous position it shares the difficulty of the denial of detailed divine knowledge at the station of essence.

3. The position of Sadr al-Muta'allihin is based on the idea that knowledge of the essence is identical to presentational knowledge of creatures. The most important principle for the explanation of this position is the principle of the specific gradation of existence, according to which the existence of an effect is considered to be the radiance and unveiling of the existence of the cause, and the existence-granting cause in its own essence possesses the perfection of its effects, therefore, the presence of the essence to itself will be identical to their presence.

However, he believes that there can be no direct knowledge of material existence, and just as immateriality is the condition for being a knower, it is also a condition for being known in essence (*ma'lum bil-dhat*).

But as was indicated in Lesson Forty-Nine, the hiddenness of spatial and temporal parts of material entities from one another does not contradict the presence of all of them for their existence-granting cause.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, God, the Supreme, possesses presentational knowledge of all creatures, including immaterial and material ones, a knowledge which is the same as His sacred essence.

A point which should be mentioned here is that there is no way for time and space to enter into the arena of divine holiness. The sacred divine existence encompasses all times and spaces, and in relation to Him, past, present and future are the same.

Therefore, just as the priority of His existence to creatures cannot be considered as a kind of temporal priority, the priority of His knowledge to the existence of creatures cannot be considered to be a temporal priority. Rather, what is meant by the priority of His knowledge is an eternal priority (*taqaddum sarmadi*), just as the existence and knowledge of other immaterial things in relation to the material world have a perpetual priority (*taqaddum dahri*).<sup>2</sup>

## **Power**

An existent which lacks certain perfection cannot give it to another; in other words, the production of an action by an agent which does not have ontological homogeneity (*sinkhiyyat*) with it is impossible. But the production of an action by an agent which possesses its perfection will be possible, and in the case of such an agent it is said that it possesses the power and ability for performing the action (i.e., the power of agency (*quwwah f'ili*)).

When this concept is restricted to a living agent (possessing consciousness and will) and these are

limited to voluntary agents (intentional agents, providential agents, agents by agreement, and agents by self-disclosure), the concept of power is obtained.

Therefore, power means a living voluntary agent being the origin (*mabda'iyyat*) of its actions. If such an agent possesses infinite perfections, it will possess infinite power. Given this analysis, there is no need for another demonstration to establish the infinite power of the sacred divine essence.

According to this explanation, power is a graded concept whose instances possess different levels. This concept includes the power of animals, men, completely immaterial entities, and the power of God, and the same goes for the concepts of existence, life and knowledge, etc., which were previously mentioned.

It was previously indicated that the application of these kinds of concepts to God, the Supreme, does not mean that the concomitants (*lawazim*) of their imperfect instances are also established for the sacred divine essence. Rather, the concepts should be abstracted in such a way that these concomitants are omitted.

For example, the power of animals and men to perform their voluntary actions (i.e., agency (*mabda'iyyat f'ili*)) is conditioned by idea (*tasawwur*), assertion (*tasdiq*), and the appearance of psychological motivation for the performance of the act. However, these sorts of cases are inseparable attributes of souls attached to matter, and none of these things acquired knowledge, idea, assertion and motive are found in addition to essence at the station of completely immaterial entities, especially the divine Being.

However, that which is valid in all cases of power is the existence of knowledge and love in their general senses, the highest instances of which are the knowledge and love which are identical to the sacred divine essence.

A point that must be mentioned here is that the establishment of power for God, the Supreme, requires the affirmation of volition, for power, as was indicated, implies knowledge and volition, and is restricted to living voluntary agents. It was explained in Lesson Thirty-Eight that the highest level of volition is specific to the sacred divine essence which is not influenced by any internal or external factor.

Another point is that the power of God is infinite, and includes all contingent beings, but being within the power of God does not imply occurrence, and the only things which occur are those whose creation is willed.

In other words, the meaning of the Omnipotent (*qadir*) is not that He performs everything He is able to do; rather, it means that He performs everything He wants to do. Therefore, essentially impossible things are outside the ambit of things His power can bring about. The question of whether the power of God covers these things is incorrect.

On the other hand, not all the things within His power will be subjects of the Divine Will to be brought into existence. Hence, the domain of the objects of His will and of existence will be smaller than that of the

objects of His power. However, the reason why the Divine Will does not cover some contingents will be clarified in future chapters.

1. Cf., Lesson Forty-Nine.

2. Cf., Lesson Forty-Three

## Lesson 67: Attributes of Action

### Introduction

As was made clear in Lesson Sixty-Five, the criterion according to which an attribute is counted as an attribute of essence or an attribute of action is that if the concept of refers to an existence outside the essence, it will be an attribute of action, and otherwise it will be an attribute of essence.

Therefore, if we consider the concept of knowledge in such a way that it implies the existence of an external object of knowledge, it will be an attribute of action, as in verses of the following sort:

***And verily We will try you until We know which of you are mujahidin (those who struggle) and patient. (47:31)***

This verse refers to the occurrence of knowledge at a specific time, and so, the concept of knowledge contained in it bears the meaning of reference to something external to the essence, and its temporal qualification is due to the temporality of the object of knowledge.

On the other hand, if we consider the concept of an attribute of action in such a way that it does not imply an external existence, it becomes an attribute of essence, as is the case with the concept Creator which refers to the power to create.

Given this standard, we shall review several well-known attributes.

### Hearing and Seeing

These two attributes are usually considered to be attributes of essence, while it seems that according to the above-mentioned standard, they should be considered to be attributes of action, for the concepts of audition and vision still refer to an awareness of audible and visible existents, even after one divests them of material requirements such as having ears, eyes and knowledge acquired through the senses.

Their application to cases in which the objects of hearing and seeing do not have actual existence is contrary to ordinary language, although they can be so applied if they are interpreted as knowledge of

audible and visible things or the ability for hearing and seeing, and the other attributes of action can be similarly interpreted.

## **Speaking**

Speech (kalam) in ordinary usage is a word which on the basis of convention refers to a determinate meaning, and a speaker (mutakallim) uses it in order to convey his intentions to others. This requires the possession of a larynx, vocal chords, a mouth and the exhalation of air through the vocal tract, as well as the previous existence of conventions.

No matter how we develop this concept and delete the characteristics of its instances we cannot ignore the properties of conveying a meaning to a person addressed. For example, gesticulation can also be considered a kind of speech, while it possesses none of the mentioned characteristics, and even creating a meaning in the mind of the person addressed can be considered a kind of speaking.

But, if these properties are not considered, it will not agree with common parlance ('urf). Even though philosophical and intellectual truths are not subordinate to language and common understanding, here the discussion is about the employment of concepts for divine attributes, which are defined by means of language.

It may be concluded that the concept of speaking includes the existence of the person addressed and the speech which is communicated to him, and hence it should be considered an attribute of action. However, one may interpret it as the power for speech, or as something else, so that it will also become an attribute of essence.

## **Will**

Another of the most difficult problems of philosophical theology is that of God's will, which has raised many differences of opinion among philosophers and sectarian differences among theologians and has brought about abundant debates and discussion, a complete review of which requires an independent book.

On the one hand, one group considers the Divine Will to be an attribute of essence additional to the essence, while on the other hand, another group considers it to be the same as the essence itself, reducing it to knowledge of the best. Some have imagined it to be an accident of essence, like human will, which appears in the soul of man.

Others have considered it to be the first creature of God, by means of which other creatures are brought into existence. Finally, some have considered it to be an attribute of action abstracted from the plane of action. There are other minor differences about such things as whether the Divine Will is one or many, created or pre-eternal, etc.

In order to solve this problem, first, the meaning of will should be explained precisely, and then its proper place among the attributes of essence and action should be determined and its principles and implications should be discovered.

## **The Concept of Will**

As was explained in Lesson Thirty-Eight, the expression will (iradah) is employed in at least two senses: one is wishing or desiring and the other is deciding to perform an action. The objects of a person's desire and affection may be objective things, but may even be beyond the range of one's power and ability, such as man's affection for the beautiful and enjoyable things of the world

***"you desire the frail goods of this world" (8:67),***

or they may be one's own voluntary actions, such as loving the good and worthy deeds which one performs, called generative will (iradeh-ye takwini), or they may be the voluntary actions of other people, such as desiring that another voluntary agent perform some deed by his own will, in which case they would be called cases of legislative will (iradeh-ye tashri'i).

However, the will to order and to establish rules and regulations are in fact cases of the will to legislate rather than legislative will, and should be considered a kind of generative will. (Take note.)

## **The Reality of Will**

Will, in the sense of wanting and loving, are psychic qualities of animals and men, but in the sense abstracted from this, it denotes aspects of the existence of immaterial things which may also be related to completely immaterial entities and to God, the Supreme.

As was previously indicated, love can be considered one of the essential attributes of God, which is basically directed toward the essence itself, and subordinate to this, to the effects of the essence in that they are good and perfect. Therefore, in this sense will can be considered an attribute of essence the reality of which is nothing but divine love, which is identical to His essence.

Will in the sense of making decisions is a passive quality in souls attached to matter, or one of the actions of the soul, and in either case, it is a created thing in the soul, originating in idea and assertion and desire. Such a thing cannot be attributed to completely immaterial things, especially not to God, the Supreme, for the sacred divine Being is free of the occurrence of accidents and psychic qualities.

However, it can be considered to apply to God, the Supreme, as a relational attribute of action (such as creation, providence, and ordering, etc.) which is abstracted by comparing the actions of creatures to the divine essence in that He possesses love of good and perfection. Since one of the terms of the relation possesses temporal and spatial qualifications, these qualifications can be considered to apply to the Divine Will, as well, from the viewpoint of the objects of the will. As was explained in Lesson Sixty-Six,

expressions such as:

***"His command when He wills a thing is only to say to it, Be, so it is" (36:82),***

bear the same sort of meaning as was given for knowledge of created things.

It is to be concluded that divine generative will can be taken in two senses: one in the sense of love directed toward His own voluntary actions, which is a single pre-eternal essential attribute identical to the essence, whose relation to actions and objective entities is like essential knowledge, which basically is of the sacred divine essence, and subordinately of His effects and manifestations.

Likewise, divine love basically is directed toward His own sacred essence and subordinately toward the effects of His existence in that they overflow from the divine goodness and perfection, and this is why it is called will.

The second sense of generative will is a relational attribute which is abstracted by comparison between divine actions and His attributes of essence, and because it is subordinate to the newness (huduth) and multiplicity of actions, temporality and multiplicity are attributed to it.

Likewise, the divine legislative will which is directed to the production of good deeds by voluntary agents, will be an attribute of essence in the sense of liking these actions because of their goodness, which is a manifestation of the goodness of the divine essence; it will be an attribute of action and be temporal in the sense of relation of legislation, which occurs in the temporal realm, by essential love.

## **Wisdom and the Best Order**

Another of the divine attributes of action is the attribute of wisdom, whose essential origin is love of goodness and perfection, and knowledge of them. That is, since God, the Supreme, loves goodness and perfection, and also is aware of the aspects of goodness and perfection of existents,<sup>1</sup> He creates creatures in such a way that they may possess as much goodness and perfection as possible. Of course, divine love is fundamentally directed to His own sacred essence, and subordinately to His creatures.

The same fundamental and subordinate relations exist among creatures, as well, that is, a creature without any imperfection other than that of being contingent and created and possessing all contingent perfections characterized by unity and simplicity, will be in the first rank of being loved and favored, and other creatures will be in the succeeding ranks according to their ontological ranks and perfections, until the level of material things is reached, where there is conflict among their ontological perfections.

On the one hand, the continuation of existents that exist at a specific time slice conflicts with the appearance of the succeeding existents, and on the other hand, the perfection of some of them depends on the transformation and obliteration of others, as the growth and development of an animal or man is

obtained by means of nourishment by vegetables and some other animals. The more perfect an existent is the more favored it will be.

It is here that divine wisdom requires an order that causes the occurrence of more and higher ontological perfections, that is, the chain of material causes and effects is created in such a way that to the extent possible the maximum number of creatures partake of the best perfections. This is what is called ‘the best order’ (nizam-e ahsan) in the language of philosophy, and the attribute which necessitates this is called ‘providence’ (‘inayah).

The divine sages have proved that the order of creation is the best in two ways: one is from cause to effect (limmi): divine love for perfection and goodness requires that the order of creation possess maximum perfection and goodness and that the imperfections and corruptions which are necessary for a material world and the interferences among corporeal existents be reduced to a minimum.

In other words, it can be said that if God, the Supreme, had not created the world with the best order, this would be due to the fact that He lacked knowledge of the best order, or because He did not like it, or because He lacked the power to create it, or because He was stingy. In the case of God, the Wise and Gracious, none of these assumptions is correct. So, it is proven that the world possesses the best order.

The second way is from effect to cause (inni): through the study of creation and inquiry into the secrets and wisdom and exigencies which are observed in their qualities and quantities. To the extent that human knowledge increases, awareness of the wisdom of creation also increases.

In view of divine wisdom, it becomes clear why the Divine Will is directed to specific cases, and in conclusion, the realm of things that are willed is more limited than the realm of things within divine power. This was the question which was raised at the end of the previous lesson. The answer is that only the cases within the perimeter of the best order are objects of Divine Will.

This topic will become clearer in subsequent lessons. The position of those who have claimed that the Divine Will is only directed to those things which possess exigency, and that it is exigency which limits the Divine Will, should be interpreted in this way, otherwise, exigency is not an objective and entified thing to have an effect on the Divine Will, and the effects of an action cannot have an influence on its cause.

Also, those who say that divine power, mercy, and will are conditioned by His wisdom should be interpreted in this way; otherwise, in the sacred divine essence it does not make sense to say that there is a plurality of faculties or an interference among the attributes.

1. Cf., Lesson Thirty-Nine, in which there was an explanation of goodness and perfection

# **Lesson 68: The Purpose of Creation**

## **Introduction**

One of the important problems of metaphysics and theology (kalam) is the problem of the purpose of creation, which has been the subject of discussions and different views. On the one hand, some experts have denied that divine deeds have a purpose or final cause. On the other hand, there are those who consider the divine purpose to be to profit creatures; and there is a third group which believes in the unity of the efficient and final cause of immaterial entities.

In general, in this area there have been many views the citation and critique of which would become overlong. Therefore, first we will explain the concept of purpose and other similar philosophical expressions, then we will mention some useful introductory points in order to explain the problem and remove doubts about it, and finally, we will explain the correct meaning of divine purposefulness.

## **Purpose and Final Cause**

The literal meaning of the word hadaf (purpose) is target. In common conversation, it means the result of a voluntary action which is the aim of a voluntary agent from the beginning and for the sake of which the action is performed, so that if the result of the action had not been taken into account, the action would not have been performed.

The result of an action is called the end (ghayah) insofar as it is the terminus of the action; it is called the purpose (hadaf or gharadah) insofar as it is taken into consideration and intended by the agent from the beginning; and it is called the final cause ('illat-e gha'i) insofar as the result of the action is desired and this desire is the cause for the will of the agent to be directed toward the performance of the action.

However that which really influences the performance of the action is knowledge and the love of the result, not its objective existence; rather, the objective result is the effect of the action, not its cause.

The term ghayah (end) is usually used in the sense of the terminus of a motion, and the relation between its instances and those of hadaf (purpose) is that of partial overlapping ('umum wa khusus min wajh), for, on the one hand, in natural motion no purpose can be considered for a natural agent, while the application of the concept of ghayah to its terminus is correct.

On the other hand, in creative acts in which there is no motion, the concept of final cause and effect can be correctly applied although there is no place here for ghayah to have the sense of a terminus of motion. However, sometimes it is used in the sense of the final cause, and here one must take care not to confuse these two senses, and not to relate the characteristics of one to the other.

The relation between agent, action and result has been the topic of numerous philosophical discussions, some of which are presented in Lesson Thirty-Nine. Now we shall begin to explain some issues pertaining to the present discussion and which are useful for explaining the correct meaning of the divine purpose of creation.

## **Some Points**

1. Usually, the voluntary actions of human beings are performed in this way: first, there appears the idea of the action and its result, an assent of the priority of the act for obtaining the result and the benefit accruing therefrom, followed by a yearning in the soul for the good, perfection and benefit resulting from that act.

When requisite conditions obtain and obstacles are removed, one decides to perform the action, and, in fact, the main factor and stimulus for the performance of an action is the yearning for its benefits.

Therefore, the final cause must be considered to be this yearning. That to which the yearning is directed is figuratively and accidentally called the final cause.

It must not be imagined that this process is necessary in all voluntary actions nor that if an agent lacks acquired knowledge and a yearning of the soul, his action will not be voluntary or lack a final cause. Rather, what is necessary in any voluntary action is knowledge and yearning in general, regardless of whether the knowledge is by presence or acquired, and whether the yearning is added to the essence or is the essence itself.

Therefore, the final cause of complete immaterial things is the same as the love of their own essences, which is subordinately, directed to their effects as well, a love which is identical to the essence of its agent. Therefore, for such cases, the efficient cause and the final cause is the essence of the agent.

2. As was indicated, an action is desired subordinate to the desire of the goodness and perfection that result from it. Therefore, the desirability of the purpose is prior to the desirability of the act, and the desirability of the act is subordinate and respectival.

However, the purpose taken into consideration in performing an action may itself be a preliminary for the achievement of a higher purpose and its desirability may take shape in the radiance of the desirability of another thing. But, ultimately, every agent will have a final and fundamental purpose and the intermediary and proximate purposes, and the preliminaries and means, all obtain their desirability in its radiance.

Anyway, the desirability of an action is subordinate and respectival, while the priority of purpose depends on the view, intention and motivation of the agent such that it is possible for a determined purpose to be intermediary for one agent and to be the final and fundamental purpose of another agent.

3. The fundamental desirability of a purpose, and the respectival desirability of an action and means

appear in the form of a yearning in the soul, and the object of this yearning is an absent perfection realizable as an effect of the action.

However, for completely immaterial entities, all of whose possible perfections actually exist, no lack of goodness or perfection can be imagined which might be attained by means of an action. In reality, it is the love of the existent perfections which is directed subordinately to its effects which causes the emanation of these effects, that is, it causes the performance of a creative action.

Hence, the desirability of action of immaterial existents is respectival and subordinate, but subordinate to an existent perfection not to the desirability of an absent perfection.

4. The deeds one performs may have numerous effects, not all of which one is conscious of or motivated to acquire. Therefore, one usually performs an action in order to acquire one of its effects or results, although it is also possible that a deed may be performed for several parallel purposes.

However, in the case of completely immaterial entities, every good effect which results from an action is considered and desired, although the desirability of each of them may be subordinate to the desirability of an existent perfection in it. But it is possible that among the subordinate desirabilities there is a relation of relative priority and subordination.

For example, although the existence of the cosmos and the existence of man, insofar as they are radiances from divine perfection, are subordinately desired by God, the Supreme, since man possesses more and higher perfections and the appearance of the cosmos is a preparation for man's appearance, therefore, the desirability of man can be considered fundamental in relation to the desirability of the cosmos.

## **The Purposefulness of God, the Supreme**

Given the points already made, it becomes clear that the existence of a final cause for every voluntary action is necessary, whether it is creative or preparatory, whether it is instantaneous or gradual, and whether the agency is intentional, by agreement, providential or manifesting.

In reality, the final cause is something in the essence of the agent, not an external result of the deed, and the application of the concept of final cause to an external result is figurative and accidental, because the love, satisfaction or yearning of the agent is directed toward the obtaining of it, and the finality of the external result of preparatory gradual deed, in the sense of being the terminus of motion, has no relation to a final cause. The essential end of motion is not the same as the essential final cause. (Take note.)

Therefore, divine deeds, insofar as they are voluntary, possess final causes and the fact that the divine Being is free of acquired knowledge and yearnings of the soul does not imply that the divine essence is without final causes. Likewise, this does not imply any lack of knowledge or love in the divine essence.

In other words, the denial of a motive and final cause additional to the essence for completely immaterial entities and for agents by providence, by agreement, and by manifestation, does not mean the absolute denial of purpose for them, nor that purpose is to be restricted to intentional agents.

Just as the intellect obtains concepts from the attributes of the perfections of creatures, and after divesting them of their limitations and their material and contingent implications relates them to God, the Supreme, as positive attributes, the intellect also abstracts love of the good and perfection after divesting them of imperfection and contingency and establishes them for the divine essence and considers them final causes for His actions.

Since all the divine attributes of essence are the same as His sacred essence, this attribute of love which is considered to be the final cause for creation and the source of His actual will, is the same as His essence, and, in conclusion, the efficient cause and the final cause for divine actions are the very same as His sacred essence.

Just as divine knowledge applies fundamentally to His sacred essence and subordinately to His creatures, which are aspects of His existence with differences in level and grade, divine love also applies fundamentally to His sacred essence and subordinately to the good and perfection of His creatures, and among them there is also a relative priority and subordination in being loved and desired. That is, the divine love for creatures applies in the first degree to the most perfect of them which is the first creature and then to other creatures, the most perfect [love] for the most perfect [creature], al-akmal fal-akmal.

Even among material and corporeal entities among which there is no specific gradation, one may consider the more perfect to be the purpose for the creation of the less perfect, and conversely, one may consider material things to be preparatory to the appearance of man,

***“It is He who created for you all that is in the earth.” (2:29)***

Finally, one can consider the love for the Perfect Man to be the final cause for the creation of the material cosmos. In this sense, it may be said that God, the Supreme, has created the material world for the perfection of corporeal existents and for the attainment of their actual good and perfection, for every existent which possesses different levels of perfection and imperfection, the most perfect level has a relative priority in being loved and desired.

However, this does not imply those imperfect existents or the levels that are less perfect than the existence of some existent has no level of desirability at all. In this way, one may consider there to be vertical purposes for the creation of man. That is, the final purpose is the attainment of the ultimate level of perfection, nearness to God, benefiting from the highest and most lasting emanation, eternal mercy and God’s pleasure. The intermediary purpose is the realization of worship of and obedience to God, the Supreme, which are means to the attainment of the higher stations and final purpose.

The proximate purpose is the preparation of the material and social conditions and realization of the

necessary knowledge for free choice of the right way of life and the spread of the worship of God in society.

For this reason, after emphasis that the creation of man and the world are not vain and absurd, and possess wisdom of purpose,<sup>1</sup> one finds in the Qur'an that, on the one hand, the purpose of the creation of the cosmos is to prepare the grounds for the free choice and trial of man,<sup>2</sup> and on the other hand, the purpose of the creation of man is declared to be the worship of God, the Supreme.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the ultimate purpose is considered to be proximity to the divine mercy and to benefit from eternal triumph, welfare and felicity.<sup>4</sup>

Considering that which has been said, a common approach among the three mentioned positions may be formulated. That is, what is meant by those who consider the final cause to be only the sacred divine essence is that the essential and fundamental object of desire for God, the Supreme, is nothing but His sacred essence which is absolute goodness and possesses infinite perfections.

And what is meant by those who deny that divine actions have final causes is that the motive for them is not something additional to the essence, and His agency is not a kind of intentional agency. And what is meant by those who declare that the final cause and the purpose of creation is the welfare of creatures or their perfection is that they wanted to explain the respectival and subordinate purposes. It may be concluded that one who holds any of these positions may interpret the other two in a way that is acceptable.

A point which must be indicated at the end of this lesson is that in discussions of will, wisdom, and the purpose of creation, we have relied upon the aspects of goodness and perfection of creatures. For this reason, the question arises as to how to justify their evils and imperfections. The answer to this question will be found in the last lesson of this section.

<sup>1.</sup> See 3:191; 38:27; 21:16–17; 44:38–39; 45:22; 14:19; 15:85; 16:3; 29:44; 30:8; 23:115.

<sup>2.</sup> See 11:7; 67:2; 18:7.

<sup>3.</sup> See 51:56; 36:61.

<sup>4.</sup> See 11:108, 119; 45:22; 3:15; 9:72.

## Lesson 69: Divine Decree and Destiny

### Introduction

One of the problems raised in heavenly religions, especially in the sacred religion of Islam, in the field of theology, which has been explained intellectually and philosophically by theologians (mutakallimin) and metaphysicians, is the problem of decree and destiny (qadha' wa qadar), which is one of the most

complicated problems in theology and at the core of whose complexity is its relation to man's free will in his voluntary actions, that is, how can one believe in divine decree and destiny while accepting the free will of man and man's role in determining his own destiny?

Here, some have accepted the inclusiveness of the divine decree and destiny with respect to the voluntary actions of man but have denied true human freedom. Others have restricted the scope of decree and destiny to involuntary matters, and they consider the voluntary actions of man to be outside the limits of destiny and decree.

A third group has tried to combine the inclusion of the voluntary actions of man in destiny and decree with a demonstration of man's freedom and volition in choosing his own destiny. They have presented different views the review of which would require an independent book.

For this reason, here we shall first present a short explanation of the concept of decree and destiny, and then provide a philosophical analysis and explanation of the relation between destiny and man's voluntary actions. Finally, we will explain the benefits of this discussion and the reasons for its emphasis in divine religions.

## **The Concepts of Destiny and Decree**

The term qadha' (decree) means passing, bringing to an end, finishing, and also means judgment (which, figuratively, is a kind of finishing). The terms qadar and taqdir mean measurement and measuring and building something to a determinate size. Sometimes qadha' and qadar are used as synonyms in the sense of [the Persian] sarnevesht, destiny.

It seems that the reason why the term nevesht (written) is used in the translation of the Arabic terms is that, according to religious teachings, the destinies (qadha' wa qadar) of existents are written in a book or tablet.

Regarding the difference between the literal meanings of qadha' and qadar, one can consider the stage of qadar to be prior to qadha', because until the measure of something is determined it does not come to completion, and this is the point which is indicated in many noble ahadith.

## **A Philosophical Explanation of Destiny and Decree**

Some of the great scholars have identified destiny and decree with the causal relation among existents and have considered qadar to be 'the contingent relation between a thing and its incomplete causes,' and qadha' to be 'the necessary relation between effect and its complete cause.'

That is, when an effect is compared with each of the parts of its complete cause or with all of them, except for the last part, the relation will be one of contingency by analogy (imkan bil-qiyas), and when it is compared to the entire complete cause, the relation will be one of necessity by analogy (dharurat bil-

qiyyas), the former being called qadar and the latter qadha'.

Although in itself this identification is acceptable, that which requires more attention here is the relation of causes and effects to God, the Supreme, for qadha' and qadar are basically divine attributes of action, and must be discussed as such.

In order to clarify the place of these attributes among the divine attributes, some points must be made about the levels which the intellect considers for the realization of an action.

## **Levels of Action**

Whenever the intellect considers an whatness which does not have to exist or not exist, in other words, whose relations to existence and nothingness are equal, it judges that in order to escape this indifference another existent is needed, which is called its cause.

This is the issue about which the philosophers have said, ‘the criterion of the need for a cause by an effect is whatish contingency (imkan-e mahuwi).’ It was previously said that according to the fundamentality of existence, contingency of whatness must be replaced by ontological poverty (faqr wujudi).

If a cause is compounded of several things, all of its parts must be obtained in order for the effect to occur, for the assumption of the occurrence of an effect without one of the parts of its complete cause would mean the lack of efficiency of the absent part, and this would be contrary to the assumption that it is a part of the complete cause.

Hence, when all the parts of a complete cause obtain, the existence of the effect due to its cause becomes “necessary by another” (wujub bil-ghayr), and it is here that the cause creates its effect and the effect comes into existence.

These stages, all of which are obtained by means of rational analysis, are explained in the language of the philosophers as follows: “Whatness is contingent, then in need, then is made necessary, then becomes necessary, then is made to exist, then comes to exist” (al-mahiyatu amkanat, fa’htajat, fa-ujibat, fa-wajibat, fa-ujidat, fa-wujidat). The succession of stages of each of these concepts is distinguished by the “then” (fa) of succession.

On the other hand, we know that in intentional agents, the will of the agent is the last part of the complete cause, that is, although all the preparations for an action may be provided, the deed will not be performed until the agent wills to perform it. The occurrence of will depends on ideas and assertions and the acquisition of a fundamental yearning for the conclusion of the deed and a secondary yearning for the deed itself.

Therefore, here a succession may be posited of idea, assertion, yearning for the conclusion, yearning for

the deed, and finally the decision to perform the action, in which the idea and assertion include considering the characteristics, limits and preparations for the deed.

Although this succession in the origination of the will is specific to intentional agents, by divesting it of the aspects of imperfection it can be considered to be a rational succession including knowledge, fundamental love for the result and secondary love for the action in any voluntary agent. It can be concluded that every voluntary agent has knowledge of his own action and its characteristics, and likes its consequence, and because of them performs the action.

Now, if we consider a deed which must be performed gradually and by bringing about causes and means and making preparations, it is necessary to consider the relation between the action and its preparations and temporal and spatial conditions. The preparations must be arranged in such a way that the action is performed with specific limits and characteristics so the desired result is obtained.

This review, evaluation, and estimation and the determination of limits and characteristics may be called the determination of the action (taqdir-e kar), which in the realm of knowledge is called epistemic-determination (taqdir-e ‘ilmī), and in the realm of the external world is called objective determination (taqdir-e ‘ayni). Likewise, the final stage may be called ‘decree’ (qadha’), which in the realm of knowledge is called ‘epistemic-decree’ and in the realm of the external world is called ‘objective decree’.

Given these introductory remarks, we should heed the following noble verse:

***“When He decrees an affair He only says to it, ‘Be’ and then it is” (2:117).***

In this noble verse, the existence of every creature, which is denoted by the sentence “then it is,” succeeds the command “Be” of the Supreme Creator, which is similar to the succession of existence (wujud) after being made existent (ijad) in the words of the divine sages. Likewise, making existent (ijad) succeeds the divine decree, which naturally will result in being the object of decree, and these two concepts (decreeing and becoming the object of the decree) may be compared to the terms ‘being made necessary’ and ‘becoming necessary.’

Since making necessary depends on the completion of the cause, and the last part of the cause of a voluntary action is the will of the agent, the level of will must be considered to be prior to the level of decree.

***“His command, when He wills anything, is only to say to it: ‘Be,’ then it is” (36:82).***

The point to be noticed here is that, as was explained in previous chapters, action and the attributes of action, insofar as they are related to God, the Supreme, are free from temporal and spatial restrictions, but these restrictions are attributed to actions and attributes of actions insofar as they are related to temporal, gradual, material creatures. Therefore, there is no contradiction in saying that divine bringing into existence is instantaneous and without duration, but the existence of creatures is gradual and

temporal. (Note carefully.)

In this way, a series of attributes of action is obtained at the head of which is knowledge and then will, then decree and finally making existent (ijad) (imdha', execution). The position of permission (idhn) and Divine Will (mashiyyat) can be considered as being between knowledge and will, just as taqdir (destining) can be inserted between will and decree, and this accords with the noble narrations [from the Prophet (s) and Imams ('a)]. It should be added that determination of the term (temporal limits of existents) is also considered a part of destiny.

Given that the real bringing into existence is specific to God, the Supreme, and the existence of every existent is ultimately traced back to Him, we may conclude that everything (even man's voluntary actions) is included in divine decree and destiny, and here the main problem displays itself, that is, how can one combine decree and destiny with human volition?

## **The Relation of Destiny and Decree to Human Volition**

The problem of how to combine divine destiny and decree with human volition is the same problem which is raised with even greater intensity with regard to the unity of divine acts (tawhid af'ali) in the sense of unity in the emanation of existence, whose solution was dealt with in Lesson Sixty-Four.

The conclusion drawn from the answer to this problem was that tracing an action to a proximate and direct agent and to God, the Supreme, has two levels, and divine agency is placed in a vertical position above man's agency. It is not the case that the actions done by humans must either be traced to them or to God, the Supreme, but rather these actions, while they are traced to the will and volition of man, at a higher level, are traced to God, the Supreme.

If it were not for the Divine Will, there would be no humans, no knowledge or power, no will or volition, and no action or consequence of any action. The existence of all of them in relation to God, the Supreme, is their very relation and attachment and dependency on Him. None of them has any sort of independence of their own.

In other words, the voluntary actions of man, with the attribution of being voluntary, are objects of divine decree (qadha') and their being voluntary are part of characteristics and aspects of their being destined (taqdir). Hence, if they occur deterministically, that would be a violation of the divine decree.

The main source of the problem is that it is imagined that if a deed depends on divine decree and destiny, there will be no room for the agent's volition and choice, while a voluntary action, disregarding the agent's will, will not become necessary, and every effect depends upon divine decree and destiny only through its own causes.

It may be concluded that destiny and decree in the realm of knowledge are two levels of actual knowledge, one of which (epistemic–destiny) is abstracted from the discovery of the relation between the

effect and its incomplete causes.

The other (epistemic-decree) is abstracted from the discovery of the relation between the effect and its complete cause, and according to what is inferred from the verses of the Qur'an and ahadith, the level of epistemic-destiny is related to 'the tablet of clearing and establishing' (lawh mahw wa ithbat), and the level of epistemic-decree is related to 'the guarded tablet' (lawh mahfuz), and those who are able to become aware of these tablets will be aware of the knowledge related to them.

Objective destiny (taqdir-e 'ayni) is the regulation of creatures so that they will be subject to specific phenomena and effects, and naturally, this destiny will be different for phenomena according to their proximity and distance, just as it will be different in relation to genus, species, individuals, and the states of individuals.

For example, the destiny of the human species is to live on the earth from a determined time of origin to a determinate termination. The destiny of every individual is such that he comes into existence from a determinate mother and father in a limited slice of time. Likewise, the destinies of his livelihood and the various aspects of his life, and his voluntary actions, amount to the availability of specific conditions for each of them.

The objective decree (qadha'-e 'ayni) is the attainment of every effect to the limits of ontological necessity through the occurrence of its complete cause, including the attainment of voluntary actions to their limits of necessity, by means of the will of their proximate agents. Since no creature is independent in existence and its ontological effects, naturally the necessitation of all phenomena may be traced back to God, the Supreme, Who possesses absolute self-sufficiency and independence.

It must be noted that decree (qadha'), in this sense, is unchangeable. Therefore, that which is stated in some noble narrations about the change in 'decree,' means that the word 'decree' is used for destiny (taqdir), whose decisiveness is relative.

Meanwhile, it has become clear that the objective destiny, insofar as it is related to special relations among phenomena, is changeable. It is this sort of change in destinies which, in religious texts, is called 'bada' (surprise).<sup>1</sup> It is related to the tablet of clearing and establishing:

**"Allah clears away and establishes what He wills, and with Him is the Mother of the Book."**  
**(13:39).**

Subordinate to objective destiny, epistemic-destiny is also changeable, for epistemic-destiny is knowledge of contingent relations and the conditional occurrence of phenomena, not knowledge of necessary relations and the absolute occurrence of phenomena.

## **The Benefits of this Discussion**

Given the emphasis which is placed on decree and destiny in religious teachings, the question arises as to why so much emphasis is placed on it.

The answer is that the belief in decree and destiny has two important benefits, theoretical and practical. Its theoretical benefit is an increase in the level of man's spiritual knowledge with respect to the divine plan of things, and a preparation to understand the unity of divine actions in the sense of unity in the emanation of existence, and attention to the divine presence in the ordering of all aspects of the cosmos and man.

The effects of this understanding are profound in the perfection of the soul in its intellectual dimension. Basically, the deeper and firmer man's knowledge of divine attributes and actions is, the more perfect the soul is.

From the practical aspect, there are two important benefits to this doctrine: one is that when man knows that all the events of the cosmos appear on the basis of decree and destiny, and the wise ordering of God, he will bear with difficulties and hardships more easily, and will not give up in calamity and crisis, but he will be well prepared to acquire virtuous characteristics such as patience, gratitude, reliance on God, contentedness and submission.

Secondly, he will not become inebriated and conceited with the pleasures and joys of life, and he will not be enamored or infatuated with worldly pleasures and negligence of God.

***"So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you; and Allah does not love any arrogant boaster" (57:23).***

Anyway, care must be taken so that the problem of decree and destiny is not incorrectly interpreted so as to provide an excuse for laziness, complacency and a negation of one's responsibilities, for this sort of misinterpretation of religious knowledge is the ultimate desire of the satans among men and genies.

It causes one to fall into the deepest and most dangerous valleys of wretchedness in the world and in the hereafter. Perhaps it is for this reason that according to many narrations, entrance into this sort of problem for those who are incapable is forbidden.

<sup>1.</sup> See W. Madelung, "Bada'" in Encyclopedia Iranica, 3:354–5, and Martin J. McDermott, The Theology of Al-Shaykh Al-Mufid (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1978), pps. 329–338.

# **Lesson 70: Good and Evil in the Cosmos**

## **Introduction**

In Lessons Sixty-Seven and Sixty-Eight, it was stated that due to their possession of perfections and goodness, the entities of the world are objects of divine love and will, and divine providence requires that the cosmos be brought into existence with the best order and utmost goodness and perfection.

Given this, the question may be raised as to what is the source of the evils and imperfections in the world. Would it not be better if the cosmos were free of all evil and imperfection, both the evils which are the effects of the natural elements, such as earthquakes, floods, illnesses and plagues, and the evils which are brought into existence by human malefactors, such as the various kinds of injustice and crime?

It is here that some polytheistic religions hold that there are two sources of the cosmos: one the source of its goods, and the other the source of its evils. There is also a group of those who imagine that the existence of evil shows that there is no wise ordering of the cosmos, and they have tumbled into the valley of disbelief and atheism. It is for this reason that divine philosophers have paid particular heed to the problem of good and evil and have reduced evil to an aspect of nothingness.

In order to solve this problem, it is necessary first to explain something about the ordinary concepts of good and evil, and then to provide a philosophical analysis of them.

## **The Concepts of Good and Evil**

In order to discover the meaning of good and evil in ordinary language, it is profitable to be precise about the common features among their obvious instances. For example, health, knowledge and security are obvious instances of good, while illness, ignorance and insecurity are counted among the obvious instances of evil.

Undoubtedly, this is because man considers something for himself to be good or evil according to its desirability or undesirability, that is, whatever is found to be in agreement with his own innate desires, man considers to be good, and whatever is opposed to his innate desires, he calls evil.

In other words, in order to abstract the concepts of good and evil, first of all one compares one's own desires with things, and wherever a positive relation exists to that thing, it is considered good, and wherever the relation is negative, the thing is considered evil.

Secondly, the characteristics of man are omitted from one side of the relation and the relations among all conscious entities which possess desires and inclinations to other things are considered, and in this way,

good will be equivalent to desirability for all conscious entities and evil will be equivalent to undesirability for all conscious entities.

Here the problem may be raised that sometimes something is desirable for one kind of conscious existent and undesirable for another. Should we consider such a thing good or evil?

The answer to this question is easy. The given thing is good for the first thing and evil for the second. This multiplicity of aspects is true in the case of two individuals of a kind, and even in the case of two faculties of an individual. For example, it is possible for a kind of food to be desirable for one individual and undesirable for another, or for it to be good for one faculty of a body and evil for another.

Thirdly, the characteristic of consciousness is also omitted as a term of the relation or comparison, and, for example, greenness, freshness and fruitfulness are considered to be good for a tree, and wilting, dryness and unfruitfulness to be evil for it.

Here, some people have imagined that such generalizations of the concepts of good and evil originate in a kind of anthropomorphism applied to nature, and others have imagined that its standard is human benefit or harm, e.g., the fruitfulness of a tree is, in fact, good for man, not for the tree. But we think that there is another point to this generalization which will be indicated.

The application of good and evil in ordinary language is not limited to essences and entities; rather it is applied in the case of actions, as well. Some actions are considered to be good and others evil. In this way, the concepts of good and evil are presented in the fields of ethics and values.

There has been some controversy among philosophers of ethics about how to explain value concepts and how to determine the standards of moral goodness and evil. In Lesson Thirty-One, we discussed this problem to the extent appropriate for this work, and more details must be sought in philosophical ethics.

## **A Philosophical Analysis of Good and Evil**

In order to provide a detailed analysis of good and evil from a philosophical point of view, several issues must be taken into consideration.

1. From one perspective, the cases to which good and evil are attributed may be divided into two groups: one group is of those things whose goodness or evil is not causally dependent on anything else, such as the goodness of life and the evil of death, and the other group is of those things whose goodness or evil is causally dependent on other things, such as the goodness of those things on which the continuation of life depends, and the evil of that which causes death.

In reality, the goodness of actions is also of this second type, because their desirability is subordinate to the desirability of their ends and results. If their ends are also means for the realization of higher

purposes, the relation to the final purposes will be judged according to the relation between the action and its results.

2. All innate inclinations and desires are subsidiary and respectival to the love of self; and since all conscious existents love themselves, their own survival, and their perfections, they have inclinations toward the things which effect their survival and perfection, in other words, toward the things which satisfy their physical and psychic needs.

In fact, these inclinations and desires are the means which the Creator has placed in the nature of every conscious existent to lead it toward the things it needs. Therefore, the most fundamental object of desire is the self, and then come the survival and perfection of the self. The desirability of other things is due to their effects on providing these basic desirable things.

Likewise, that which is fundamentally hateful is the destruction and imperfection of the existence of the self, and other things are hateful because of their effects on the fundamentally hateful things.

In this manner, a clear way is obtained to generalize good and evil to perfection and imperfection, and then to existence and nothingness. That is, by replacing these terms with the instances of desirable and undesirable things (perfection and imperfection of existence) in one side of the relation, and by omitting the characteristics of conscious entities and their inclinations from the other side of the relation, generalization to perfection and imperfection is achieved.

Then, given that the desirability of the perfection of existence is subordinate to the desirability of existence itself, and that the perfection of everything is merely a level of its existence, it may be concluded that the most basic good for every existent is its existence, and the most basic evil for every existent is its non-existence.

From a philosophical point of view, this generalization is not only correct, but necessary, even if it does not correspond to the general view of the matter, for in philosophy the truth of the case itself is at issue, regardless of whether or not it is desired or the object of anyone's inclination.

3. If the perfection of an existent is conditioned on an absence (absence of an obstacle), this absence, in one sense, can be considered to be a part of the complete cause for obtaining the given perfection. In this respect, it will be considered good for such an existent; and conversely, whenever an imperfection of an existent is an effect of the interference of another existent, the interfering existent may be considered evil for the other existent.

However, from a precise philosophical perspective, the attribution of non-being to good and likewise the attribution of existence to evil is accidental, because good is attributed to an absence insofar as the perfection of another existent somehow depends upon it, and likewise, evil is attributed to an existence insofar as the imperfection of another existent depends on it. So essential goodness is the same as existential perfection, and essential evil is the same as privative imperfection.

For example, health is essentially good, and the non-being of disease-causing microbes is accidentally good. Weakness and illness are essentially evil, while poisons and microbes are accidentally evil.

4. In existents possessing different dimensions and aspects, or numerous parts and faculties, it is possible for there to be interference among their perfections or the means of acquiring perfections (although, interference may be assumed only in the case of material things). In this case, the perfection of every part or faculty is good in relation to itself, and it is evil in respect of its interference with the perfection of another faculty.

The resultant of the perfections and imperfections of the parts and faculties will be considered to be good or evil for the existent itself. This explanation may also be applied to the entire material universe, which includes interfering existents; that is, the goodness of the entire universe depends on whether it possesses the most and highest perfections on the whole, even if some existents do not attain their required perfections.

Likewise, the evil of the entire universe depends on whether it is quantitatively or qualitatively dominated by the aspects of imperfection and privation.

Given the above points, it may be concluded that, firstly, good and evil are secondary philosophical intelligibles, and just as there is no entified existent whose whatness is a cause or effect, no entified existent is found whose essence is good or evil.

Second, just as causation and other philosophical concepts are not derived from entified objects, but are meanings abstracted from specific existences by the intellect from certain perspectives, good and evil are also only meanings whose source of abstraction should be sought in the external world, but not in any entified instances.

Third, there is no existent whose existence is evil for itself and, similarly, the survival and perfection of every existent is good for itself, and the being evil of an existent for another is accidental. Hence no existent is evil in respect of its whatness nor can it be considered an essential source for abstraction of the concept of evil.

Therefore, that which is considered to be the essential source of evil is an aspect of imperfection pertaining to an existent capable of possessing perfection contrasting with it. In other words, an essential evil is privation of a good, such as deafness, blindness, illness, ignorance, and weakness, which contrast with hearing, sight, health, knowledge and ability.

Therefore, the imperfection of any completely immaterial thing in relation to a higher immaterial entity, or the absence of perfection in immaterial things of the same level in relation to the perfections of other things, cannot be considered to be evil, because they are not capable of possessing that perfection.

It may be concluded that there is no existent to whose existence evil is essentially attributed. Therefore,

evil does not need any origin or creator, for creation and being brought into existence are restricted to existence. This is the answer to the first question presented in the introduction to this lesson.

## **The Secret of the Evils of the Cosmos**

Another question is why the world was created in such a way that it contains so much evil and imperfection. This question may be raised even after it is accepted that the source of the abstraction of evil is nothingness, for it may be asked why the cosmos has not been created in such a way that existence replaced nothingness.

The answer to this question is obtained by focusing on the essential characteristics of the natural world. In explanation it may be said that the reciprocal actions and reactions of material existents, change, alteration, conflict, and interference are essential characteristics of the material world. If these characteristics did not exist, there would be no material world.

In other words, the specific causal system of material existents is an essential system required by the very nature of material existents. Therefore, the material world must either come into existence with this system or it would not come into existence at all.

However, in addition to the fact that absolute divine grace necessitates its creation, it is contrary to wisdom to abandon its coming into existence, for its goodness is much more than its accidental evil; and even the ontological perfections of perfect men alone are sufficient to outweigh all the evil of the cosmos.

On the one hand, the appearance of a new phenomenon depends on the destruction of an earlier phenomenon; likewise, the survival of living existents is due to nourishment from vegetables or other animals. On the other hand, perfections of the souls of men are obtained only in the shadow of difficulties and misfortunes borne by them. The existence of calamities and disasters leads man to dispel his negligence, to discover the real essence of this world and to take lessons from events.

Thinking about the scheme of human life will be enough to discover the wisdom of this system. Even thinking about a single aspect of this order, e.g., human life and death, will suffice us, for if there were no death, not only could man attain no heavenly felicity, but also, no man would take warning from the death of others, and basically, not even worldly comfort would be possible.

For example, if all earlier people survived, today, the earth could not provide sufficient dwellings for man, let alone food and other necessities of life. Therefore, such evils are necessary for goods of these kinds to occur.

It may be concluded that, first, evils and imperfections of this cosmos are necessities which are inseparable from its causal system, and its evil aspects, which originate in aspects of nothingness, are not essentially objects of divine love and will. They can only be considered to be objects of Divine Will,

creation, decree and destiny accidentally.

Second, the goodness of the cosmos overweighs these accidental evils, and it is contrary to wisdom and purposefulness to abandon excessive goodness for the sake of preventing the appearance of limited evils.

Third, even these limited relational accidental evils have many advantages, some of which were indicated. The more human knowledge develops, the more does man discover the secrets of the cosmos and the wisdom that underlies them.

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**Lord, increase our knowledge, faith and love with respect to You and those beloved by You, and let us be true followers of the last of Your chosen prophets and his pure household, and let us be included in the graces of Your great friend, the present Imam, may his emergence be hastened, and grant that we may be successful in thanking You for Your blessings and in performing the best deeds which are pleasing to You with perfect sincerity. And may Your salutations be sent without end for Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad, salutations whose blessings may overflow to include the rest of Your creation.**

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