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The First Spurious Argument: Seeing Allah

Some people spuriously criticize the Shia for saying that it is impossible to see Allah whether in this world or in the Afterlife, and they quote some prophetic traditions saying that Allah can be seen in the Afterlife.

The Answer

Allah says:

Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends all vision; and He is the Knower of Subtleties, the Aware. (Qur'an 6: 103)

He, the Almighty, also says addressing the Prophet

Moses (a):

You will not see Me. (Qur'an 7: 143)

Az-Zamakhshary says in his book al-Inmuzage

Will does not means never; so the verse proves that Allah cannot be seen at all.

He, the Almighty, also says:

And those who do not hope for Our meeting say: Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord? Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted in great revolt. On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say, It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited.” (Qur'an 25:21-22)

The Qur'anic verses informs about three things:

1) Meeting Allah is definite and inevitable although the arrogant ones do not want such.

2) Those who deny meeting Allah, say, Why have not the angels been sent down upon us, or why do we not see our Lord?’

3) Seeing the angels on the Day of Resurrection is possible.

The verses showed that those who did not believe in Allah said, Can we see our Lord?” So, Allah answered that they can see the angels on the Day of Resurrection. If seeing Allah had been possible, Allah would have granted them such.

What will happen on that day is meeting Allah without seeing Him. There are only four Prophetic traditions in the books of the Sunnis apparently proving that Allah will be seen on the Day of Resurrection. These are traditions narrated by Jarir, Abu Hurayra, Ibn Razin, and Suhayb.

These four traditions, besides the weakness of their series of narrators, have been attested to only once (Ahaad) and are not beneficial in arriving at certainty; therefore, we cannot depend upon them as beliefs. There must be definite evidence. Allah says:

And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; surely, the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that. (Qur'an 17:36)

It has been definitively proven that seeing Allah is impossible. Rational and traditional proofs have stood up against the corporeality of Allah and honored Him against such. To meet Allah on the Day of Resurrection means to perceive Him without any means, including the means of sight. A blind man can meet some physical object without seeing it. After that, there are many proofs showing that Allah is not a physical object, because a physical object is limited in place and time.

We have said in our book titled Jami' Baraa'in Usul ul- I'tiqadaat (A Collection of Proofs–The Principles of Beliefs) pp. 64–67, that it is impossible for the Necessary Being to be a physical object. We had mentioned many proofs concerning them. Here are some of them:

The First Proof

A physical object has three dimensions: width, length and depth. It is a combination of parts, and a combination is in need of its parts. That which is in need of its parts in order to exist is not a Necessary Being.

The Second Proof

A physical object is finite and is constantly facing the threat of annihilation from all sides, while the Necessary Being cannot be annihilated at all, and this has been proven in many ways. The following are some of them:

If a physical object has infinite dimensions, we can suppose that there is a point in it from which two

lines emanate thus forming an angle, these two lines extending along the expanse of the physical object. If the physical object is infinite, then the two lines will extend to infinity. Because the amount of the separation between the two lines of the angle is the same as the rate of the extension of the two lines, and because the two lines are infinite, the separation between them must also be infinite. This contradicts its being limited between two lines.

Let us suppose that there is a line extended to infinity (line A) and beside it, there is a sphere rotating around its line of axis. One of its poles lies above the infinite line and the other is under it. Before beginning its rotation, let us suppose that there is a line (line B) from the sphere perpendicular to the axis and parallel to the infinite line, extending along with it to infinity. Thus, if the sphere rotates towards the infinite line, the line coming from the sphere (line B) will intersect with the infinite line (line A) point by point. The first point at which the two lines intersect would be the point on the two lines where no intersection had occurred before between them. Hence, it is proved that the first point of intersection is the last point of the two lines. So, the two lines are finite and cannot be infinite.

Proof of Application

Let us suppose six lines emanating from a point inside the physical object in six directions, extending along with the expanse of the physical object. Then we cut off a section from each line from the side towards the point. Afterwards we apply the section to the point from which the line itself begins before sectioning. It would either extend to infinity, its increase being the same as its decrease and this is impossible, or it would become less by the same amount as the section cut off, and thus it would be finite. The increase in the line itself should be as much as the section only and no more. Thus the finitude of the dimensions of every physical object is proved. The proof can be determined without hypothetical application. If the rest of the line, after cutting off a section is equal to the original line before sectioning, then the part must be equal to the whole. This is impossible. If it is less, it must be finite. Thus the original line, because of its increase, only does so by the amount of the section alone.

The Third Proof

Every physical object is originated; therefore, it is impossible for the Necessary Being to be a physical object.

This will be made clear by elucidating the following points:

1. It is self evident that a physical object cannot be separated from being in motion or at rest. There is no doubt that a physical object is either at rest in one place or it is in motion from one place to another.
2. Movement means to be in one place at one moment and to be in another place at the next moment. Being at rest means to be in a particular place at one moment and to be in the same place at the next moment. Thus, every physical object has two cases: to be in one place in the first moment and, in the second moment, to be in the same place or in another place.

3. Being in one location at one moment and in the same location or another location at the next moment are two existential states different from each other, it is possible if one of them occurs the other will not.

4. Every physical object has a special existence and a particularity by which it is distinguished from other physical objects. This particularity is being at a certain time in a certain place. And since the source of all particularity is existence and the particularity of a physical object is by means of its very essence, then all its essential concomitants and particularities have the existence of the physical object as their source. Thus the change of being in a certain place at a certain time necessitates a change of the existence of that physical object.

5. Being is existence. Thus a change in being is a change of existence. A physical object always changes. At every moment its existence is different from its existence prior to that moment. Movement and change are in its very existence and not in anything external to its existence. Movement is in the essence and substance of the physical object itself. This proves that every physical object has substantial motion.

6. Becoming non-existent and becoming existent is the reality of movement i.e. becoming non-existent at one moment and existent the next moment. Moment by moment, all physical objects become existent and then non-existent, and every existence is preceded by its non-existence and succeeded by its non-existence. Indeed, if we consider the quiddity of a physical object, movement and being at rest are not included in its quiddity, rather they are external and accidental to it.

However, the existence of the physical object and its being is not different to its existence and being in the first moment. Thus it becomes evident that the physical object does not have two existences at the same moment, one of the two being its existence and the second being its existence at that moment. Rather it has but only one single existence. Thus the change in the second moment is the non-existentializing of its existence in the first moment and the existentializing of another existence and so on in successive moments.

This is not inconsistent with the existences of the physical object having a (common) connected form at all successive moments and in terms of this common form, considered to be one physical object. The connected form of movement in the same way requires the designation of a single motion to this connected form from its beginning to its end.

You may say that the Category, when, is one of the nine accidental categories which have two sides, one of which is time, and time is abstracted from the movement of the heavens.

My answer is that time, which is nights, days and their parts, is an abstraction from the movement of the heavens which contains the sun, or from the positional movement of the earth and its revolution around its axis as had been discovered in the last few centuries. However, substantial motion and the essentiality of the physical object have been established through the already mentioned proof. Therefore the relationship of the moments– from which time is composed–, to it (substantial motion) and to the

movement of the heavens is the same, whether the heavenly movement is spatial or not.

7. A physical object is always originated, its origination being renewed at every moment, and that which is originated at every moment is not the same as that which had originated prior to it.

8. It has been established that it is impossible for a physical object to be the Necessary Being, and it is not necessary for Him, the Most High to be a physical object because nonexistence is impossible for Him. And how could non-existence be possible for Him whilst the existence of all that exists is from Him. He is the Creator of all beings, immaterial and physical, earthly and heavenly, of all places and all times, of those things that stand still and those that move, of all states and of all moments.

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