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Lesson 4: More About God

1. The Eternal Need For God

Examine the following examples, and then you will realize the extent to which the creatures of this world show the presence of a Creator.

1. How do those who construct airplanes work together to produce a plane? These specialized engineers assemble the body sections in a specific manner according to exact equations so that the plane may fly, carrying passengers and cargo. Of course, the work of the construction engineers is to assemble the basic material according to their plans, in such a way that when their work is finished their activity ends. As for the engines, the electronic control systems, the interior setting and decor, etc., these do not depend upon the body constructors.

2. If we want to build a house and we are in possession of all the raw materials, is that sufficient? Surely, we need a builder and his workmen, not in order to produce the raw materials, but so as to put them together according to their craft. It is clear that we do not need the workmen for producing the materials used in the building, but that we need them only in so far as the use of these materials is concerned. In this way a house can be built from these materials.

3. A person who has never seen the Eiffel Tower can nevertheless construct it in his imagination in no time at all, merely from having heard about it. He can even construct it higher than it is, and imagine people climbing it.

The existence of the Tower in the imagination is, as the previous two examples suggest, the work of the one who has imagined it. The basic materials of the plan and the house were not produced by their constructors, but all the materials for the imagined Tower were made by the one who imagined it, not obtained from some place or another. That is why their size is not dependent on the quality of raw material available, and it can be made larger according to the wish of the one who imagines it. We can see that imaginary forms derive their existence from ourselves. They remain in our minds as long as we want them to, and when we forget about them they become nothing again, and have no further existence

in our imagination.

From this last example, we can conclude that anything whose existence depends on the existence of something else can not be independent, and at every moment has need of the other.

Now we can understand the condition of the created things of this world which have come into existence from nothing and which are the creation of God.

Are these created things, at every moment, in need of their creator? Some people may think that the created things of this world, after their creation, do not stand in need of their creator for their continued existence. However, this is a completely erroneous concept, because the things in the world are the effects and creations of God and are identical with the imagined forms which we ourselves can construct in our imaginations, in that at every moment they need the One who created them in order to continue existing.

In order to understand this better, imagine a human figure, speaking, walking and working according to his will. Does this figure have any independence? Clearly his existence is due to you, for if you cease to want him to exist, he will be annihilated and returned to nothingness.

This is the condition of the entire universe of creation which is completely from God, created by Him, and in no way independent. It is always in need of God. Also, if God ceased to will its existence, it would return to nothingness. The Qur'ān says:

O men, you are the ones that need God; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. If He will, He can put you away and bring a new creation. **(35:15-16)**

This is a subject to which Islam directs the attention of its followers. For example, it is instructed that in daily prayer when one rises one should say *"bi hawli 'l-lāhi wa quwwatihi aqūmu wa aq`ud* — with the power of Allah do I stand up and sit down."

2. God Occupies No Space

The world we see with our eyes is a material world composed of atoms. Every object has a special place and special properties, which vary from situation to situation. Distance plays a role in the action of these properties and the nearer the cause is to the effect the stronger the effect is; the further away it is, the weaker the effect, until a distance is reached where the cause has no action at all. To elucidate this point we shall give one or two examples.

(a) The power of a magnet is not the same at all distances: the nearer the metal is to the magnet, the stronger the power of attraction. If a nail is placed at a distance of two centimeters from a magnet, the attraction will be stronger than if it is placed at a distance of ten centimeters.

(b) The light of a lamp may reach a hundred meters, but within this distance the intensity is not uniform. The nearer to the lamp we are, the greater the intensity of its light.

These two examples show that all things which are situated in a certain place do not have an equal effect at all distance, the nearer we are to the center of something, the greater its effect will be, and vice versa.

Does God Have a Center?

Some people may possibly think that like the sun and other material things, God has a place and that He has a seat from which He exerts His influence over His creation. However, this is not the case, because His influence on creation, which is His own work, is the same in every place, from the depths of the oceans to the furthest parts of outer space. There is no place to which His influence does not reach in sufficiency.

This influence is not such as has a center, such that the further we go from it the weaker it becomes, until we reach a point where there is no trace of his influence and chaos reigns. For if God had a place like other material things, His influence would vary throughout the universe. Therefore we can deduce from this that the Creator of this world has no location and no center. Indeed, God is the Creator of "place" and it is impossible that the Creator should be dependent on what He has created.

God cannot be compared with an inventor, because, as we explained previously, an inventor is not a creator. His only genius is that he understands the properties of things and is successful in bringing together certain elements to make something which, in some cases, he is himself in need of. But God, who is the Creator of all creation, is not in need of what He has created.

3. Is God Visible?

Now, since we have seen that God has no place, it is clear that he has no body either, because a body needs a place, and there can be no body which has no place. Since God has no body, he cannot be seen, because our eyes can see only bodies.

4. God Is In Need Of Nothing

Since God is the Creator of nourishment and other necessities of life and all things, we must agree that He has no need of any of these things. God, therefore, is the entire Truth who is in need of nothing. Unlike human beings, He does not need shelter, nourishment, and the other necessities of life, rather all people and things are in need of Him.

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Maybe you will now ask: "If God has no body, occupies no space and cannot be seen, then what is He

and how can we say that He exists?”

To understand this, take the following example. We can say that electricity is neither solid, nor liquid, nor gas. These negations do not deny the existence of electricity, and it could never be true to say that because electricity is none of these things, therefore it does not exist. We have to admit that electricity is a fact which is not describable by any of the aforementioned conditions.

Now, when we say that God, the Self-Sufficient, has neither body, nor place, nor can He be seen, nor is He in need of anything, we mean that none of these imperfections can be found in the perfect, unlimited Being of God, who is the source of all existence. Here there can only be Perfection and Self-Sufficiency.

These properties distinguish His Being from other beings, and this is the God in Whom we must believe. Intelligence and human nature can accept such a God. No wise and honest person can deny His existence. The supremacy and glory of Islam can be seen when we compare this concept with the belief that God is on a level with man, having a body, children and other such attributes and appendages.

In fact, we might say that many materialists reject God because the true God has not been made known to them, and what they have considered is not the real God.

5. God's Omniscience

The grandeur and mystery of creation cannot be compared to a man-made machine. The infinite details seen in living beings and inanimate objects indicate the unlimited knowledge of God. Let us examine the following:

(a) Newton said that a study of the components of the ear and the eye would lead us to understand that the maker of the ear was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of acoustics, and that the maker of the eye was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of light and vision; a study of the heavenly bodies, he said, would lead us to understand the Truth which governs the universe.

(b) The physiology of the bat is full of amazing things. In order to be able to find its way in the dark without flying into obstacles, the animals sends out ultrasonic waves in front of itself rather like radar. If there is an obstacle in the way, the sound waves reach it and are reflected back, and thus the bat can steer clear of the obstacle.

(c) Although insects are very small, they are very delicate and wonderful in their structure. For example, some of them, instead of eyes with one lens, have compound eyes made up of individual visual units called ommatids, every one of which has three parts: a cornea, a lens and a retina. The number of ommatids varies between insects. Glow-worms have about 2,500, but in others there can be between 10,000 and 28,000. Because insects cannot rotate their heads, they can be permitted, by these compound eyes, to see things which happen beside them or behind them.

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Now we must ask if God knows all the things after He has created them. And the answer is, yes, of course He does. God knows about things, whatever their place and whenever they happen. He is aware of the shinning of the furthest star in the highest heaven, of the tempestuousness of the foaming blue waves breaking on the furthest shores of the ocean, of the most mysterious hollows of the most remote valleys in the folds of the mountains, of the rustling of even one leaf in the gentle breeze, of the doleful coo of the owl in the deepest silence of the forest, of the flicker of the glow-worm among the leaves, of the innumerable fish with their infinite colours and variety in all the waters of the world, of the birth of the fawn of the honey-coloured gazelle in the depths of the forest, of the falling of the clear, pearly dew-drop from the petal of the half-opened rosebud in the recess of the rocks. He knows the height of the mountains, the covering of the sky, the expanse of the lands and the seas and the treasures of the mines, the hidden depths of the caves and of all and everything.

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The Basis Of God's Knowledge

He who creates and gives existence is aware of His creation and always attends to it, in the same way as we are not unaware of the forms we create in our own imaginations. As long as we wish them to exist, they remain in our minds, but when we turn our attention away from them, they cease to exist. If you imagine a person, you are necessarily aware of all his movements and his resting, and his actions are never hidden from your mind, because this imaginary person is your creation, that is, he did not exist before you thought of him, and you brought him into existence by your imagination.

God, who created the world and all of creation, whose existence comes from Him, oversees it all and is never unmindful of it. Of course, the difference between us, who imagine various forms in our minds, and God, who created the universe, is that we ourselves depend on God for our existence and that our existence comes from Him. However, God is independent of all things and has given existence to all things. It is for this reason that we call only Him the real Creator.

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The Difference Between Creator & Maker

The maker of a computer is not its creator and did not give it its existence; his only skill was that he gave a new form to what was already in existence. He was not aware of the computations and the information that will be stored in it in the future. Similarly, other inventors, discoverers and artisans are not informed of all the minutiae of the movements and stillness of what they have made, because they have not given existence to them, they have not brought them from non-existence into existence. The raw materials were already in existence in the world. Only, by analysing and constructing, have they changed their form. Take the case of the airplane, which is made from raw materials in mines which were extracted,

smelted and forged and made into the finished products.

Clearly, then, the makers did not create what they made; they only changed the form of the materials. For this reason, they are not permanently aware of their artifacts, and one cannot, therefore, properly call them creators. If, in some cases they have to be called creators, they have only been called so figuratively, not literally.

But God, Who has given existence to all things, is always aware and knowledgeable of their actions, because He is the real and true Creator. The Qur'ān says, ***"Shall He not know who created?"*** **(67:14)**

Now we have understood that we ourselves and all the creatures of this world are not separated from the glorified presence of God. Wherever we are and to whatever land we travel, in the depths of the oceans, in the outer reaches of space, in the narrow places of the valleys, we are not hidden from Him. He sees the smallest of our good or bad deeds, and will reward and punish accordingly.

Can someone who has such a God and believes in Him ever fall prey to sin? Think about it.

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This lesson is based on the followings:
Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.
It has been edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

Question Paper On Lesson 4

Question 1: [18 points]
True or False:
(a) Imaginary forms derive their existence from the external world.

(b) Independent existence implies self-sufficiency.

(c) God's influence is uniform throughout the universe.

(d) Men are capable of creating and destroying things in this universe.

(e) God's influence on a person depends upon his faith.

(f) Man can neither create nor destroy anything in this universe. He can only change the form, shape or size of things to suit his needs.

Question 2: [12 points]
Describe four essential attributes of God.

Question 3: [20 points]

Explain the difference between us as the creator of our imagination and God as the Creator of this universe.

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